

# Regensburg, Eastern Bavaria & the Bavarian Forest



Threading through Eastern Bavaria's patchwork of bleached gold and green fields, white-washed red-roofed villages, dense forests and vibrant cities is one of the world's most celebrated waterways, the Danube. This epic river has captured the imagination of poets, painters and composers, and delivered the region power and prosperity.

For over two millennia, the Danube has lured Celts, Romans, missionaries, kings, Kaisers, merchants, and, more recently, international cruise goers, to Eastern Bavaria. Even so, its charms remain far removed from the theme-park feel of Neuschwanstein or the see-and-be-seen slopes of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Life is unhurried, the locals are welcoming and genuinely glad to see you, and their traditions haven't been hijacked by Hollywood or kitsch promoters.

The region's centrepiece, the Unesco-listed city of Regensburg, is a vibrant blend of medieval architecture and 21st-century verve, and an ideal starting point for your explorations: Landshut's proud castle, Straubing's treasure-packed churches and Passau's riverside Altstadt (old town) are all easily reached from here. Blanketing the far-eastern edge, the mountains and valleys of the Bavarian Forest shelter a centuries-old tradition of glass-making and pristine hiking and skiing, along with Germany's oldest national park, the Nationalpark Bayerischer Wald. Combine this with some of the country's lowest-priced quality lodging, and Bavaria's east makes an affordable, active and unforgettable getaway.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Scaling the sheer marble staircase to encounter a pantheon of Germany's greatest minds and achievers at the opulent temple **Walhalla** (p202)
- Forging through the heart of the **Bavarian Forest** (p209) on its single-track railway as spruce branches smack the carriage windows on either side
- Savouring local brews in river-front **beer gardens** (p200) with the romantic skyline of Regensburg as a backdrop
- Dining beneath the vines or in the candlelit cellar of Passau's historic **Heilig-Geist-Stift-Schenke** (p207)
- Taking a pilgrimage to the pope's hometown, the little village of **Markt am Inn** (boxed text, p209)





## REGENSBURG

☎ 0941 / pop 150,000 / elev 330m

At once ancient and vibrant, Regensburg is one of Bavaria's most beautiful cities and among the best-preserved medieval towns in Europe. Its magic reveals itself in countless, often surprising, places. You'll find it in a leafy beer garden on the banks of the Danube, in the Altstadt's honeycomb of laneways and beneath the soaring spires of the Dom (cathedral). This is a city where you can eat pasta in a former Gothic chapel, lean against a wall erected by the Romans and prowl the corridors of a royal residence bigger than Buckingham Palace. You'll also find spirited nightlife (thanks to 25,000 university students), no fewer than three local breweries

and enough engaging sights to keep you busy for at least a couple of days.

### History

Regensburg is so beautifully situated, someone had to settle here,' rhapsodised Goethe. And indeed, that's what's happened: the Romans built a fortress housing a 6000-strong legion here in 179 AD, marking their northern boundary; St Boniface founded a bishopric; and the Bavarian dukes made the town their capital.

Regensburg's prominence rose steadily through the Middle Ages, and so did its fortunes, especially after the completion of the Steinerne Brücke (Stone Bridge), which put the city at the crossroads of both the east–west

and north–south trade routes, turning it into a medieval trading metropolis. By 1200, it had a population of 20,000 – one of the largest in Europe. The Altstadt's pastel-shaded patrician town houses, with their tall, square towers, date back to Regensburg's heyday as a Free Imperial City from 1245 to the end of the 15th century.

Competition from Augsburg and Nuremberg led to Regensburg's decline, although it regained some prestige as the seat of the Perpetual Diet (permanent parliament) of the Holy Roman Empire from 1663 to 1806. That competition, however, largely spared Regensburg from destruction come WWII, when a mere 13% of the city was destroyed. Oskar Schindler lived in Regensburg for years; his house at Watmarkt 5 bears a plaque.

Today, this thriving capital of the Oberpfalz (Upper Palatinate) boasts an acclaimed university (where Joseph Ratzinger – now Pope Benedict XVI – taught theology), modern industries (notably Siemens and BMW) and a proud heritage. City pride hit an all-time high when Regensburg's medieval Altstadt was recently proclaimed a Unesco World Heritage site.

### Orientation

Regensburg's major sights cluster in the Altstadt, which is hemmed in by the Danube on the northern edge and is almost entirely closed to private-vehicle traffic (driving to your hotel is OK). The Hauptbahnhof (central train station) is about a 10-minute walk south of the heart of the Altstadt, ie the area around the Dom.

### Information

#### BOOKSHOPS

**Bücher Pustet** (☎ 569 70; Gesandtenstrasse 6-8) Good selection of maps, English-language travel guides and novels.

**Presse + Buch** (☎ 585 750; inside Hauptbahnhof) English books and magazines.

#### EMERGENCY

**Ambulance** (☎ 192 22)

**Police** (☎ 110, nonemergencies 5060; Minoritenweg 1)

#### INTERNET ACCESS

**Acom Center** (☎ 599 8318; Fröhliche-Türken-Strasse 5, entry via Graspasse; per hr €1; ☎ 10am–10pm) Online computers plus broadband access for laptops.

**Dali** (Speirchergasse 1; per hr €3.50; ☎ 6am–2am) Cavernous internet hall with roomy workstations and licensed bar.

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Evangelisches Krankenhaus** (Hospital; ☎ 504 00; Emmeramsplatz 10)

### MONEY

**Sparkasse City Center** (Neupfarrplatz 10; ☎ 24hr) Automated foreign-exchange machine and English-enabled ATMs.

### POST

**Post office** Altstadt (Domplatz 3); Hauptbahnhof (Bahnhofstrasse 16) The Hauptbahnhof branch also changes money.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist office** (☎ 507 4410; www.regensburg.de; Altes Rathaus; ☎ 9.15am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9.15am–4pm Sat, 9.30am–4pm Sun & holidays)

### Sights

#### DOM ST PETER & AROUND

Lording over Regensburg, **Dom St Peter** (St Peter's Cathedral; ☎ 597 1002; Domplatz; admission free, 75min tours in German €3; ☎ 6.30am–6pm Apr–Oct, 6.30am–5pm Nov–Mar, tours 10.30am & 2pm Mon–Sat, 2pm Sun) ranks among Bavaria's grandest Gothic cathedrals. Construction of this twin-spired landmark began in the late 13th century, mostly to flaunt the city's prosperity. The cavernous interior's prized possessions include kaleidoscopic stained-glass windows and a pair of animated sculptures attached to pillars just west of the altar: the Angel of the Annunciation beams at the Virgin on the opposite pillar as he delivers the news of her pregnancy.

If that whets your appetite, the attached former bishop's residence, the **Domschatzmuseum** (Cathedral Treasury; ☎ 576 45; adult/under 14yr €2/1; ☎ 10am–5pm Tue–Sat, noon–5pm Sun Apr–Oct, 10am–4pm Fri & Sat, noon–4pm Sun Dec–Mar) brims with vestments, monstrances, tapestries and other riches. Still more religious treasures await at the nearby **Diözesanmuseum St Ulrich** (☎ 516 88; Domplatz 2; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct), inside a medieval church.

Just north of the Dom, the arched gate called **Porta Praetoria** (Unter den Schwibbögen) is the most impressive reminder of Regensburg's Roman heritage. It was built in AD 179 by Emperor Marcus Aurelius as part of the Castra Regina fortress. To see more remains of the Roman wall, stroll along Unter den Schwibbögen.