

Where fairy tales come true!

Massive stone town walls studded with 42 towers; halftimbered houses with red-tiled roofs; cobblestone streets and flower-filled window boxes: That is Rothenburg ob der Tauber, the "Red Fort on the River Tauber." One of Europe's most beautiful medieval towns looks like a movie set – but it is all real! Over the past 1,000 years, the narrow lanes have welcomed kings and emperors, pilgrims and, now, international visitors. All have been – and still are – bewitched by this town, where past and present live side by side. And it is just a couple of hours' drive

from Munich or Frankfurt. Picturesque by day, the town is mysterious at night, when the night watchman's tour leads visitors through picturesque lanes. Dressed in a black cape and a broad-brimmed hat, he carries a lantern. He speaks in English as well as German and his tales bring the past to life, from the Thirty Years War and the Plague to white gold (salt) and the Herrngasse, Rothenburg's main shopping street. Rothenburg was also important in the past as a destination for pilgrims, eager to see the precious relic at St James' Church: The Heilig Blut, the drop of Christ's holy blood. This fine Gothic church is also famous for its Altarpiece of the Holy Blood. Carved in wood by the German master, Tilman Riemenschneider, its complexity and detail are as impressive now as they were five centuries ago.



A town for all four seasons

Rothenburg is a delight at any time of year. In summer, nights are long and warm; in winter, the snow turns spires and rooftops into a living Christmas card. In spring, fresh flowers add color to the old stone walls; in fall, the mellow days herald the grape harvest in the local vineyards. Year-round, festivals and celebrations ensure that there is a buzz in the air. Most atmospheric is the 500-year-old Reiterlesmarkt, the Christmas market. One of Germany's oldest and best, it sets individually-decorated stalls against a backdrop of medieval houses. The frosty air carries the tempting scent of mulled wine; unusually, this is made with local Franconian white wine. Warmer months, too, have their festivals. In the middle of August, the heart of the old town is turned into a "wine village", where some 20 Franconian winemakers show off their wines, from Sylvaners to highly-prized ice wines. And, there is good food and music, too – of course! In early September, Rothenburg turns back the clock to medieval times, complete with costumed knights, soldiers and peasants. This annual Reichsstadt-Festtage, or Imperial City Festival, includes markets and torchlight processions, with music, thundering cannon and fireworks providing an exciting finale to each day. Then there is a play, called Der Meistertrunk, the Master Draught. This commemorates an event in 1631 involving a former mayor, an invading general and a giant goblet of wine. Legend has it that the victorious general challenged the old mayor to down seven pints of wine in one go. Failure meant execution for the citizens, but the mayor succeeded and the townsfolk were spared. (Whitsun, Friday to Monday). For the past 100 years, the Schäfertanz, Shepherds' Dance, has been a highlight on the market square in April, May and September. As a display in St Wolfgang's Church explains, sheep and the wool trade have been important here since medieval times.

Food, glorious food – and wine!

Say Franconia and everyone in Germany immediately thinks of good food, great wine and genuine hospitality. In fact, wine growing is a Tauber Valley tradition stretching back 900 years! Surrounding Rothenburg ob der Tauber are rolling hills and charming valleys, all dotted with vineyards and pretty villages – perfect for exploring by bicycle or on foot. At the crossroads of both the Romantic Road (Romantische Strasse) and the Castle Road (Burgenstrasse), Rothenburg also makes a fine base for exploring nearby cities, such as Nuremberg, Würzburg and Dinkelsbühl. With lovely old country inns, taverns and restaurants, hospitality is a way of life. Drink the award-winning local white wines, served in a Bocksbeutel, the classic flat green Franconian bottle. Menus offer everything from hearty snacks to gourmet dishes, often made with local



wine, conjured up by Michelin-starred chefs. Think Franconian pot roast of venison with Savoy cabbage; pike perch (like walleye) with apple horseradish-sauce; and, for dessert, sweet dumplings with cherries and vanilla sauce. Stop by any of the traditional, family-run bakeries for Bauernbrot (farmer's bread), spicy Hutzelbrot, Walnusskuchen (walnut cake) and Rothenburg's specialty: Schneebälle. These snowball-shaped treats are a bit like shortbread. Some are covered with sugar or cinnamon, others with chocolate, coconut or almonds. All are irresistible!



Where history comes to life

Rothenburg offers much more than pretty houses and medieval walls. An array of museums provides a time machine that takes visitors back through the ages. Have you ever wondered how Christmas traditions began? Find out at Käthe Wohlfahrt's German Christmas Museum, with its collection of wonderful old Christmas tree decorations, cribs, and historic Father Christmas figures from the 19th and 20th centuries. Families also love the Handicrafts House that traces the everyday story of the barrel makers, shoemakers and weavers, who lived in this house over 500 years. In what used to be a convent is the RothenburgMuseum, with a grand collection of paintings and sculptures, furniture and ceramics, guns and drums, covering nine centuries. The 13th-century kitchen is the oldest convent kitchen in Germany; the so-called Rothenburg Passion is a series of 12 panels painted in 1494; and the collection of Jewish artifacts includes an 18th-century Hanukkah lamp. Toppler Castle dates back to 1388 and is named for Heinrich Toppler, a former Lord Mayor. He met his end in 1408 in what are now the Historical Vaults of the Town Hall. Even more gruesome is the Medieval Crime and Justice Museum, Europe's largest museum devoted to the history of crime and punishment. Be warned: there are scary examples of instruments of torture and methods of execution.

Brief History of the City

960 First community in Detwang in the Tauber valley. | **1142** Erection of the Imperial Castle (lat. "Castrum Imperiale") by the Hohenstaufen King Konrad III. | A community, later named Rothenburg, develops on the hill next to the castle. | **1167** After the death of Friedrich, Duke of Rothenburg, the castle is abandoned. Thanks to its geographic location, the city develops over the years into a commercial center. | **1274** King Rudolf of Habsburg elevates Rothenburg to a Free Imperial City. | **1356** An earthquake destroys the entire imperial castle and parts of the city. | **1400** The city experiences its heyday under mayor Toppler. With over 6000 inhabitants, Rothenburg is one of the largest cities of the empire. | **1525** The city allies itself to the rebels' leader, Florian Geyer, during the Peasants' War. The city's decline begins. | **1544** The Reformation occurs in Rothenburg. | **1618** During the Thirty Years' War, Protestant Rothenburg is occupied 1648 several times. | In **1631** the so-called "Meistertrunk" (Master Draught) saves the city from destruction. | **1802** After 500 years of independence, the Franconian Rothenburg is reluctantly annexed to the Bavarian Kingdom. | **1945** The city is victim of a bombing attack by the allied forces. The eastern part of the city is destroyed and a total of over 40 % of the old buildings goes up in flames. Generous financial support from all over the world enabled the destroyed areas to be restored. It is still protected by exemplary preservation laws.



Opening hours of museums and historical sites (subject to change)

- (A) Town Hall Tower**
Apr. – Oct.: 9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. + 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. (daily),
Nov.+Jan. – March: 12 p.m. – 3 p.m. (Sat.+Sun.)
Dec: 10.30 a.m. – 2 p.m. + 2.30 p.m. – 6 p.m.
- (C) The Historical Vaults**
March: Mon. – Fri. 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Sat./Sun. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
April: daily 10 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.
May – October: daily 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.
For other opening times see sign
- (D) St James' Church**
Apr.-Oct.: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Nov. and Jan. – March:
10 a.m. – 12 p.m. + 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Dec: 10 a.m. – 4.45 p.m.
- (E) RothenburgMuseum**
Apr. – Oct.: 9.30 a.m. – 5.30 p.m.,
Nov. – March: 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
- (H) Franciscan Church**
Apr. – Dec.: daily from
10 a.m. – 12 p.m. + 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Jan. – March: closed
- (I) German Christmas Museum**
April to 23 December:
daily 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
24. December to March and public
holidays: limited opening hours
- (L) Medieval Crime and Justice Museum**
April – October: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
November – March: 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
- (O) Old Rothenburg Craftsmen's House**
Easter – Oct.: Mon. – Fri. 11 a.m. – 5 p.m., Sat.+Sun. 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Dec: daily 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.
- (T) St Wolfgang's Church**
April to July, September and October:
open on Saturday and Sunday
August: open daily except closed
on Tuesdays
- (Z) Toppler Castle**
on request, see also placard on the
door



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It's worth visiting

Käthe Wohlfahrt

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www.visit-rothenburg.com

www.fb.com/Rothenburg.Tourism

The A to Z of our best sights

A The Town Hall

The Town Hall on Market Square features two architectural styles: Gothic at the rear (1250 - 1400) and Renaissance at the front (1572 - 1578). It's worth the steep climb up the 200-ft tower for views over the ancient rooftops (via Town Hall's main entrance).

B City councilors tavern/ Tourist Information Office

The Tourist Information Office is in a former tavern that was once exclusive to city councilors. On the building, figures emerge from the astronomical clock and recreate the legend of the Der Meistertrunk, the Master Draught (10 am to 10pm).

C The Historical Vaults

In the dungeons beneath the Town Hall, this museum reflects the Thirty Years War, when this part of Europe was in turmoil. Rothenburg's most powerful Lord Mayor, Heinrich Toppler, died here in 1408
www.meistertrunk.de.

D St James' Church

Construction of this church began in 1311. Rent an audioguide to appreciate highlights, such as the Altarpiece of the Holy Blood, carved in wood by the great Tilman Riemenschneider.

E RothenburgMuseum

Housed in a former convent, the local history museum covers the art and culture of this former imperial city. Highlights include the 13th-century kitchen, the Rothenburg Passion painting (1494) and an important collection of weapons and pottery
www.rothenburgmuseum.de

F Castle Gate

The castle is gone, but the impressive outer gate remains. Note the mask with a "mouth". Through this hole, the castle's defenders poured hot tar onto attackers. The side doors were deliberately small, so that only one person at a time could enter at night.

G Castle Garden

Where the garden is now was the site of the Hohenstaufen Castle in 1142.

The castle was destroyed by an earthquake in 1356. Only the St Blaise Chapel was rebuilt. The castle garden offers a stunning view of the old town and the Tauber Valley.

H Franciscan Church

The oldest church in the city, built in early Gothic style in 1285, is home to yet another fine altarpiece carved by Tilman Riemenschneider.

I German Christmas Museum

An exhibition, open year-round, on the history of Christmas, its traditions, celebrations and decorations
www.weihnachtsmuseum.de.

J George's Spring

The largest spring in the city is 25 feet deep, holds 25,000 gallons. The decoration on the pillar is from the late Renaissance period (1608).

K Meat and Dance House

This patrician's house with its half-timbered gable is where you will find the exhibition space run by the members of the Rothenburger Künstlerbund e.V. art collective. In the old days, the vaulted rooms on the top floor were a place for dancing and celebrations, while butchers sold their wares down below.

L Medieval Crime and Justice Museum

Devoted to the history of crime and punishment from the late Middle Ages to the 19th century, the collection includes instruments of torture, as well as historical documents and pictures
www.kriminalmuseum.eu.

M St John's Church

The Catholic Church, built between 1390 and 1410.

N Plönlein/Siebers Tower

One of the world's most popular photo opportunities is the Plönlein (Little Square), at the end of Schmiedgasse. Beyond, the Siebers Tower (dating back to 1385) was part of the "new" fortifications.

O The Old Forge

A photogenic and historic half-timbered house.

P Röder Gate

This town gate, dating from the late 14th Century, still has its toll booth and gatekeeper's cottage. The Röder Tower is the only lookout tower along the city walls.

Q Old Rothenburg Craftsmen's House

Learn about the everyday life of a family of craftsmen in the Middle Ages in this house, built in 1270. The 11 rooms have original furnishings.

R Röder Arch/Markus Tower

Look at the beautiful design of the doors. The buildings were part of Rothenburg's first fortifications around 1200.

S White Tower

Part of the 12th-century walls, the 900-year-old White Tower is attached to the pink, half-timbered building that was the town's Jewish Community Center from 1390 to 1520.

T St Wolfgang's Church

The late-Gothic church of St Wolfgang is behind the Klingen Tower, and was once part of its fortifications, complete with gun emplacements and dungeons. It is also known as the Shepherds' Church and houses a display about the annual Schäfertanz, the Shepherds' Dance
www.schaeuertanzrothenburg.de.

U Galgen Gate

Entrance to the Old Town

V Spital bastion

One of the most impressive of the town's fortifications, this 17th-century bastion has two inner courtyards, seven gates and an upper walkway. The Latin inscription over the gate says: "Peace to those who enter; Farewell to those who leave."

W Imperial Town Congress Hall

Dating from 1699, this was where farmers delivered their tithes, or "taxes". Renovated and reopened in 1975, this is now a conference and event venue.

X Kobolzell Gate

Built around 1360, this is part of the city's fortifications, with four gates.

Y Kobolzell Church and Double Bridge

Walk through the Kobolzeller Gate (1360) with its views of the Tauber Valley and the famous Double Bridge. The Kobolzeller Church dates back to the 14th century.

Z Toppler Castle

Built partly as a defensive tower, partly as a residence in 1388, this moated castle once belonged to the powerful Lord Mayor Heinrich Toppler. Now it is filled with furniture from the 16th to the 19th century.

Dear Guests,

Our aim is to introduce you to the whole host of wonderful things to see and do in our town.

Guided tours of the city:

From the days of Easter to 31 October and during the Christmas Market, daily at 2 p.m.

Guided Night Watchman's Tour:

From mid-March to 5 January at 8 p.m., starting at the Market Square / Town Hall Porch, pay the guide directly

Ghost-Tour with executioner:

Beginning of April to beginning of January at 7 p.m., starting at the Market square, pay the guide directly

Tours are available out of season on request.



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| Staircase for city wall walks | Car park | Children's playground | Airfield | Youth hostel |
| Viewpoint | Parking for coaches | Vineyard | Tennis court | Short tour - duration app. 1,5 h |
| Rest room | Parking for caravans | Camping ground | Horse riding | Grand tour - duration app. 2,5 h |
| Rest room for handicapped | Railway station | Ballooning | Swimming bath | City walls |

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Rothenburg City Guide

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