

The Top 10 Things about Rothenburg ob der Tauber! (from a well-travelled American's perspective)

1. The Buildings

The architecture in the Old Town consists predominantly of medieval stone or half-timbered buildings, creating a coherent and quaint atmosphere rarely found elsewhere. Centuries have proven that the houses, towers, walls, churches, fountains and statues were constructed by skilled craftsmen. Countless details can be found everywhere - good examples are the "Auslegerschilder", medieval-style metal signs hanging in front of the stores, indicating the type of business. Additionally, the garden boxes in every window with flowers blooming literally everywhere add wonderful colors to the scenery. Europeans might be more used to this, but even they are regularly amazed. For an American, it is like stepping into a movie, except that it is all real. This is not a replica of a medieval town - it really is one. We regularly hear people commenting about how amazing it is that people are actually living here in this fairytale place.



2. Conservatism and Tradition

The city's knack for tradition is visible to everyone during one of the annual public festivals like the Meistertrunk or the Imperial City Days. It can also affect everyday life though. One example are the strict regulations describing how a house in the Old Town needs to be renovated in order to keep the medieval character. The mentality here is that those historic buildings represent a cultural heritage that belongs to more than just one person – and future generations have the right to enjoy them just the same.



3. The Streets

Park your car and forget it for a while - everything is walkable here. Consequently, there are very few cars driving around the Old Town (watch out for horse carts though). While major roads can get packed with tourists during high season, just turning into a cozy side alley can make it seem you are all alone in town. Don't be afraid to explore - due to the city walls and tall landmark buildings like St. Jacob's Church it is near impossible to get lost.

After a day of city sightseeing, it is great to sit down on the City Hall steps at sunset and enjoy a touch of Spanish Stairs ambience.



4. The Food

Sure, you can get great Pizzas, Döner Kebabs or Japanese food here too. But in this setting, nothing beats a tasty “Schnitzel mit Pommes” or some other regional specialty paired with a local beer or an excellent Franconian wine. In summertime you can sit outside and listen to the locals jammer and joke at their “Stammtisch” (regulars’ table). You will be hard pressed finding large fast-food or coffee chains here though.



5. **St Jacob's Church**

Although buildings in general are already on this list, St. Jacob's Church is a highlight that must be discussed. More than just a great example of historic architecture and home to a famous hand-carved medieval altar, the church and its ringing bells greatly add to the time-traveling atmosphere. And hands-down... how often have you been walking underneath a church?

Tip: There are year-round concerts inside featuring a huge, historic organ.



6. The Tours

The “Nachtwächter” (Night’s watch) tour is world-famous for good reason - it is fun and immersive. History is very accessible and alive here, with no books needed. There are also many other daily tours that begin at the City Hall, all at a reasonable price.

For a self-guided tour at your own pace, try walking the city wall with it’s views into places you might miss at street-level.



7. The Museums

My favorite is the Rothenburg Museum, which displays various historic epochs starting from prehistoric times and leading up to the Thirty Years War and later. Housed in the old cloister, it has been renovated in a way that keeps its historical authenticity while also being a modern and innovative place. Tip: download the Museum's AR app before you start.

The Kriminalmuseum, the City History Museum inside the City Hall (with the City's Dungeon, where famous medieval mayor Toppler found his untimely end), and the Christmas Museum are all worth a trip.



8. Nature

With a city that has so much to offer, it's easy to forget to take a look beyond the city walls. However, it is highly recommended to spend at least a few hours in the "Taubertal", or Tauber River Valley. Since it is right outside the city walls, it can come as a surprise how quickly one finds oneself in nature - one minute you're walking through the busy city center, and the next you walk through a small side gate of the city wall and suddenly are in the midst of a chorus of birds. We also have ample opportunities for biking, hiking, camping, horseback riding and swimming in lakes here, and there's a climbing forest ("Kletterwald") too for the more adventurous type.



9. **Quality of Life**

Basic key indicators like air or water quality are top here, but more than that it's the lack of stress that enriches life. Things you will miss (or not) when living here: commutes and traffic (see #3), neighbors you don't know, and real crime - the worst thing you might find in the local news could include misbehaving dogs or stolen bicycles.



10. **Guests**

Otherwise known as “tourists”. This may seem surprising, but having frequent visitors from all over the world changes the city too. Most locals speak English and will happily step out of their way to make sure visitors have a great time. It makes adapting to the new environment so much easier, as I can assure from my own experience.



About the author:

Jennifer Menzel grew up in Utah, USA and Okinawa, Japan. So far, she has visited 20 countries. While on vacation, she and her family fell in love with the city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber and decided to move here from California in 2019. They have since been running the guesthouse „Edelzimmer“.

