



*Active experience
Saxon Switzerland*





Saxon Switzerland – A Miracle of Nature between Dresden and Prague

If you were looking for a holiday by the sea, you are about 100 million years late ... Over time, the sea of the Cretaceous period evolved into the romantic landscape of the Elbe Sandstone Mountains, where wild canyons and sandstone stacks, tors and mesas serve as the hallmarks of Saxon Switzerland. In southeastern Saxony, some 30 km from Dresden and 150 km from Prague, rugged mountains and sweeping river valleys form the backdrop to a 760 km² adventure playground stacked with natural wonders. At the heart of this dramatic gift of ancient history is a vast National Park: as far as the eye can see, lush, green nature spills from the fossilised Cretaceous sea through which the River Elbe has carved its course.

Experience Heaven in the National Park

The National Park of Saxon Switzerland offers endless ways to spend your holiday. The 93 km² region between Pirna and the Czech border is one of the most beautiful landscapes in Europe. More than 700 summits are available to rock climbers, while for those who prefer to keep their feet on the ground, there are 400 km of marked trails, steep treks, paths and an abundance of cycle routes through the National Park. Nearby resorts and spas serve as oases for those who seek a cure or simply want to be pampered.

Travellers, from families to adventure-seekers are transported to a quirky and wildly romantic world. The crystal clear waters of the Elbe's tributaries flow quietly through valleys forged between mighty table mountains. Salmon, otters and kingfishers are at home here. Lynx prowl woods that retain the feel of primeval forest, while hawks, black storks and eagle owls soar and hover high above steep canyons ...

From Switzerland with love

The name Saxon Switzerland is no coincidental reference to the alpine feel of the landscape. About 200 years ago, Anton Graff and Adrian Zingg, painters of the Romantic period, visited Dresden. Excursions into the magnificent mountain-like landscape reminded them of their homeland, Switzerland. Impressed by the breathtaking sandstone formations, they came to a conclusion: such a masterpiece of nature should bear the name of "Switzerland". In letters home, they declared "Greetings From Saxon Switzerland" – and the name stuck.

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Travel tips

Swift Arrival!

No matter where you are travelling from, you can look forward to a comfortable and romantic journey to Saxon Switzerland. By car, you can reach the region via the A17 or A4 motorways. Dresden Airport is just 30km or so away, while Prague Airport has good connections to the Deutsche Bahn rail network that serves Saxon Switzerland. Car rental is widely available, the modern S-Bahn (urban railway) departs every 30 minutes from Dresden to the towns of Saxon Switzerland, while there is no shortage of regular bus services. Or there's the old stage-coach for the romantic at heart.



Beyond the standard forms of travel, there's the free-standing "Ostrauer Fahrstuhl" (Ostrau's Elevator) that takes visitors 50 m above the banks of the Elbe to the Ostrau district of Bad Schandau. The lift is structurally identical – though four times smaller – to the one at Lake Lucerne in the real Switzerland.

The rarest form of transport in the region has to be the "Kirnitzschtalbahn" tram line, built in 1898. In peak season, the historically



important electric tram – the only tram in the world to enter a National Park – runs every 30 minutes from 8am to 8pm between Bad Schandau and the Lichtenhain Waterfall. The best-known passenger of late was British actress Kate Winslett, who filmed scenes on the Kirnitzschtalbahn line for Hollywood production "The Reader".

Information

www.saechsische-schweiz.de
www.dresden-airport.de/en
www.bahn.de
www.vvo-online.de/en
www.poststrassen-erleben.de

Perfect planning!

Maps and guides:

Would you like to plan your tour even before you leave home – and get some insider tips in the bargain? Look no further than the Tourism Association of Saxon Switzerland, which offers a variety of regional hiking maps for the region. Day trips and hiking tours can also be planned online: at <http://karte.saechsische-schweiz.de> you will find a free tour planner with information on bus departure times, accommodation, gastronomy and opening times.

Climate:

You will definitely need sturdy (hiking) shoes. But it is safe to leave your crampons at home. In this "Switzerland" you will rarely encounter the extreme weather conditions typical of mountain regions that are thousands of metres higher. At an

altitude of between 100 and 560 m, the Elbe Sandstone Mountains have a distinct climate of their own: cold at the bottom and warm at the top. If the Elbe Valley experiences the lowest levels of precipitation in the area, you'll find the most sun up on the exposed table mountains, while the canyons afford protection from wind and heat.

As a Tourism Association we are happy to assist with your travel plans in Saxon Switzerland. We offer the following services: booking accommodation, sourcing package deals and other offers, and provision of information and printed material that will help you to make the right choices for a happy holiday. You can reach us here:

Bahnhofstr. 21 | D-01796 Pirna
 Tel.: +49 (0) 3501 47 01 47
www.saechsische-schweiz.de



Accommodation

From rustic comfort to luxury

Depending on how you would like to spend your holiday or day trip you can choose from a variety of accommodation in the Elbe Sandstone Mountains. Hotels of 3-, 4- and 5-star rating offer complete packages and services, including saunas and gourmet restaurants. Private rooms with enchanting views are on offer for visitors who prefer the quiet, cosy life in a family atmosphere, while self-catering apartments, farm accommodation and holiday homes provide an ideal, tailor-made environment for families. Hostels and Bed-and-Breakfast inns are popular with the younger market and with those passing through on a short stay. A number of inns also offer rural gastro-



nomny and accommodation. And if being closer to nature is your thing, there are options for those who like to sleep in the great outdoors: beyond many a good camp site, provision is made for those who simply wish to unroll their sleeping bag at a "walkers' quarter".



There are more than 700 listings in the current accommodation index for the area. You can find more information at www.saechsische-schweiz.de or order a brochure online. The tourist board is at your disposal should you need help in making your booking and can provide details of the latest offers and discounts.

Tip: During peak times for hiking (May/June and September/October), customers are advised to book in advance.



Hiking

Ragged rocks and wild canyons

More than 1,200 km of hiking trails of varying degrees of difficulty – from gentle walking paths to steep climbing treks, from the very quiet to the most thrilling – meander from one famous destination to another, linking the Bastei to the Kuhstall (Cow Shed rock archway) and the Königstein Fortress.

The romantic “Malerweg”

The “Malerweg” (Painters’ Way) guides you through the fascinating, rocky landscape of the Elbe Sandstone Mountains and connects the region’s most beautiful places. It dates back to the 18th century when, on returning from the region left of the Elbe (downstream), hikers spread the news of the wooded, wild and romantic canyons, bizarre rock formations and breathtaking views. It is not surprising that Adrian Zingg and Anton Graff, from Switzerland, were wooed by this picturesque world. Their sketches and paintings enticed many artists down the years to come to the Elbe Sandstone Mountains, including such famous names as Romantics Caspar David Friedrich, Carl Gustav Carus and Ludwig Richter. They all followed a special route, which started at the Liebethaler Grund, led through the Bastei Massif and some of the most striking summits of Saxon Switzerland and ended at the “Prebischtor” (Prebisch Gate), in what is today the Czech Republic. This route became known as the “Malerweg” and still re-

mains today. The Way leads through places, such as Pirna and Königstein that provided the inspiration for artists such as Robert Sterl and Bernardo Bellotto, also known as Canaletto. In the “Schweizer Haus” (Swiss House) on the Bastei (Bastion), you can admire the works of numerous artists.

Today, the Painters’ Way is 112 km long. To have enough time to admire the many attractions and natural wonders along the way, the route is best divided into 8 stages. Of the total length of the trail, 68 km lead mainly through the National Park. Narrow paths that run between wild canyons and rugged rocks lead to the most beautiful lookouts via steps of stone, wood and steel that have been either carved out of living rock or build into the landscape by man. One trail leads to the mighty rock massif known as the Bastei. It towers 190 m above the Elbe and affords a breathtaking panoramic view over raised rock needles, deep canyons, surrounding table mountains and the wonderful Elbe Valley. The path continues past the “Felsenbühne Rathen” (Rathen’s Rock Theatre) and into the pristine inner reaches of the National Park. The 44 km stretch on the opposite (left) side of the Elbe leads past the Königstein Fortress – for which you should allow at least two hours for a visit - towards Pirna and affords particularly beautiful views over the Papstein and Pfaffenstein peaks.

Malerweg
ELBSANDSTEINGEBIRGE

Recommended gear

Apart from ankle-high hiking boots and a drinking bottle, you should carry a map – and don't forget the camera. Numerous signposts bearing estimates of the time it takes to cover particular stretches of a route provide useful orientation, particularly where steep climbs occur. Ladders and stairs ease access to many of the heights. Not all trails remain open in winter.



Hiking tip: Wilde Hölle and Heilige Stiege

The letter "M" is used to indicate the "Malerweg" (Painters' Way). It points the way from the Lichtenhainer Waterfall to the Kuhstall (Cow Shed rock archway) at the Neuer Wildenstein. A narrow and steep path leads down to the Wildenstein Forest and the Wetzinplatz, starting place of the climb to one of the mightiest massifs of the Central Uplands. The trail leads to the Kleiner Winterberg, where you can follow green signs that point the way to the Frienstein and its "Idagrotte" grotto

(Beware: an exposed rock path leads to the grotto). The trail then continues from the Affenstein (Ape's Rock), becoming very narrow in places on the way to the Sattel formation between Bloßstock and the Langes Horn. From there, the Affenstein path continues until giving way to a steep climb through the Wilde Hölle onto the Carolafelsen. Then, proceed down the 1,000 steps of the Heilige Stiege into the Heringsgrund. Even if counting steps is fun, caution is advised. The remaining route levels off gradually all the way to the banks of the Elbe at Schmilka.

Hiking without borders

It is possible to cross from the Czech Republic to Germany and back without going through passport control. There are four border-crossing trails in the National Park.

Guided hikes

Those who seek more information on the Elbe Sandstone Mountains can join a guided



hike. The rangers of the National Park of Saxon Switzerland or official National Park guides offer tours with different themes, none less fascinating than the next, several times a week. The tours offer visitors a deep insight into the relationships between nature and history.

Tip: Package deal "Hiking without luggage"

Are you planning a hiking tour spanning several days? With our package deals, we can help you to enjoy your holiday from beginning to end. Your hosts will look after the details of your visit, including multiple accommodation and luggage transfer.

Hiking parking spaces

A limited number of parking spaces are available at the hike starting points. We recommend you arrive by public transport.



Information

- Hiking-friendly accommodation along the "Malerweg", extensive directions and further hiking: The "Malerweg" Brochure or at www.malerweg.de
- Guided hikes: for dates and times, see www.nationalpark-saechsische-schweiz.de or consult the National Park administration schedule, which is published yearly
- Package deal "Hiking without luggage": bookings via the Tourism Association of Saxon Switzerland



Climbing

“The Elbe Sandstone Mountains are the Earth's most beautiful climbing region” Climbing pioneer Jean Claude Droyer

Little wonder that elite climbers refer to “their” Saxon Switzerland as the centre of the “Old World”: this is the true home of the sport. In 1874, stonemason Otto Ewald Ufer and his companion H. Frick managed to reach the summit of the Mönchstein near Rathen using only ladders and iron clamps. In their wake, the rock was conquered by Oscar Schuster and later by Rudolf Fehrmann. And so Saxon Switzerland became the birthplace of free climbing. From the first climbing shoes with hemp soles and summit registers to the first difficulty scale, of I to III, and climbing regulations, the framework for the sport of climbing was made in Saxon Switzerland.

Today, more than 1,100 climbing rocks, with approximately 18,000 routes, are available to free climbers of all levels and against the breathtaking backdrop of the Elbe Sandstone Mountains. Opportunities to ascend and descend are endless in what is a theatre of dreams for climbers who seek a unique experience in a precious natural environment. Names such as “Lokomotive” (locomotive), “Talwächter” (keeper of the valley) or “Wehlnadel” (the needle) describe well nature’s works of art.

Safely up the wall

With few limitations (some areas have been afforded special conservation status) elite climbers come from all corners of the globe to find freestanding sandstone rocks and climbing trails of all degrees of difficulty, from I to XII.



Community path at the Wilde Zinne, 1938; first ascent 8a



Climber in a time lapse

Saxon Climbing Regulations protect the sensitive nature of the sandstone and important fauna and flora habitats in the National Park region. To protect the soft stone, the

The most important climbing regions:	Summits
Bielatal	239
The Rathen Region	148
The Schmilka Region	127
Affensteine	119
Gebiet der Steine	93
Grosser Zschand	80
Schrammstein Region	80
Brand Region	84

use of metal aids (clamps etc.) is prohibited. Traditionally, nooses have been used. It is forbidden to modify the rock surface except



when affixing safety rings (only possible on permitted virgin ascents!). Climbing on wet or unsound rock is prohibited. At times of inclement weather, a climbing arena and indoor high-wire garden offer good alternatives.

Why not climb in the most famous and undoubtedly most attractive climbing area in the region

- Climbing taster courses for beginners; also with and for professionals (all year round). Equipment is available for hire
- Climbing is possible on climbing rocks and when raining in climbing arenas

Fearless and ready for a steep climb?

In addition to more than 1,200 kilometres of marked hiking trails, there are some fully developed steep terrains. Some exist along signposted hiking routes such as the "Wildschützensteig" in the "Schrammsteine" range, while others are off the public trail. The most famous steep climb is the "Häntzschelstiege" in the "Affensteine". It was extensively reconstructed by National Park authorities in 2002. To complete a climbing tour in the Elbe Sandstone Mountains you will need to watch your step – and be fearless!

Cycling

Discovery Cycle Tours

Huge sandstone rocks and historic buildings line the horizon like a string of pearls: anyone of a variety of cycle tours is guaranteed to include impressive scenery.

40 km on the Elbe Cycle Path

The well-signposted 860 km long cycle path, identified by a blue "e", extends from Schöna to Cuxhaven in north Germany. The popular Elbe Cycle Path (Elberadweg) shadows Germany's second-largest river. The 40 km stretch that runs through Saxon Switzerland is the most spectacular section. It takes cyclists

along the water's edge in a valley lined all the way by fascinating sandstone formations. Along the way, numerous restaurants offer a wide choice of regional cuisine, including a menu of the day with a drink for around €10.

Information

www.elberadweg.de



Tip:**A cycle tour through the Bielatal**

Family tour: Rosenthal, Bielatal, Cunnersdorf, Bielatal, Königstein.

For sportier cyclists: Bielatal, Hermsdorf, Hirschstange, Festung Königstein (Parking area), Thürmsdorf, Bärensteine, Pötzscha and then the ferry to the pretty town of Wehlen.

Cycle tours:

The National Park of Saxon Switzerland boasts some 50km of eventful and challenging cycle routes. These are indicated by green signs

with the word “Radroute” (cyclepath) in yellow and a bicycle logo. In addition, there is a well-developed cyclepath network around Neustadt, Hohwald, Sebnitz, Kirnitzschtal, Stolpen and Hohnstein.

Bicycle hire:

There are several local companies that hire out suitable equipment, from classic bikes to mountain bikes and tandems. Private hire is also available at some hotels, inns and holiday homes.

Bicycle bus service:

From April to October, a regular bus service catering for cyclists and their bikes runs at the weekend and on public holidays. The service is particularly useful for those who wish to skip the most difficult and steep climbs and pick up the route when the going gets easier.

Information

- Bicycle hire company addresses: www.saechsische-schweiz.de
- Cycle path maps for the National Park: www.nationalpark-saechsische-schweiz.de
- You can get an overview of all bicycle bus routes at: www.vvo-online.de



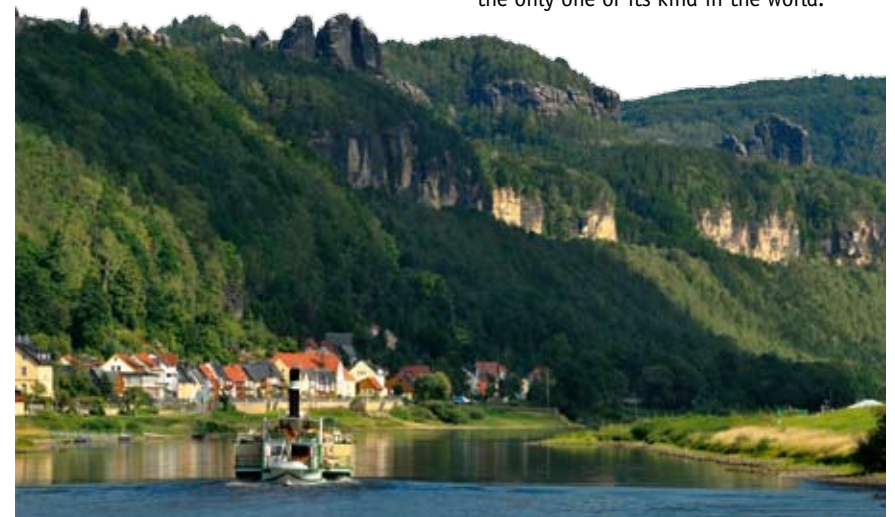
Water and more ...

There's more than just the Elbe ... for water lovers, amateur captains and pirates

At 1,383 m above sea level, the source of the Elbe bubbles from mountains in the Czech Republic. After travelling 364 km, the waters reach the Elbe Sandstone Mountains, spilling into tributaries of the Elbe via ravines that drop between 200 m and 300 m past rock walls and through crevices. A fitting entrance to a world of water that holds something for every visitor: take a leisurely steamboat down the Elbe, set your own pace in a rubber dinghy or take the plunge in one of the region's many lidos, most to be found in lush, green setting.

Set sail on the world's oldest and largest paddle steamer fleet

Steam navigation not only facilitated the transport of wood and sandstone that went into creating the classical cities of Dresden and Prague and many of Saxony's stately homes but now provides a glorious way for visitors to arrive in Saxon Switzerland. Regular scheduled and special boat services operate between Meißen and Bad Schandau, allowing passengers to alight at a number of stops along the way. Saxon Steam Navigation's fleet of nine historic steamboats aged between 79 and 128 years old is the only one of its kind in the world.



Ahoy there!

If you would like to discover the Elbe alone, a number of unforgettable experiences await you – just ask anyone who has conquered the Elbe in a **dinghy, canoe or kayak!** Whether alone, in a pair or with a group, you'll find something for you in a wide selection of boats: from canoes to 20-person rafts and 400 bhp powerboats. After professional instruction, beginners may also take to the water. The Saxon Switzerland stretch of the Elbe boasts five landing stages, while the region offers a variety of "water sport-friendly" accommodation.

Magical rides on crystal clear water "Obere Schleuse" Hinterhermsdorf

From Hinterhermsdorf, romantic forest paths cut through mysterious and mythical woods and rugged sandstone rocks on their trail deep into the valley. More than 120 years ago locals established boating, in place of wooded rafts, on the dammed waters of the River Kirnitzsch. Today, you can take a truly magical boat trip along 700 m of crystal clear waters. Watch out for rock forms and shapes moulded by wind and weather into the likeness of animals and fairytale figures. After a 20-minute ride, the boat reaches the lock, beyond which the water roars over the dam.



From April to October you can captain your own rowing boat against a backdrop of bizarre rock formations at **Amselsee** in the spa town of **Rathen**.

Gone fishing

Myriad rivers created our unique landscape – and you can fish in all of them. Whether in the Sebnitz, the Polenz, the Kirnitzsch or other kilometre-long river sections, trout can be found in abundance, along with grayling, brook trout, bullheads and young salmon, which have been resettled to the area. In cold water so clear that you can see the fish, cast your line and off you go. There are also many overgrown stretches of river, where the catch is just as abundant but not quite as easy to hook. All waters are open for fishing, provided you have a permit. In some areas where trout are being bred, an extra permit is required.

Swimming, spas, saunas, thermal springs

A wealth of healthy pursuits: dive into the warm-water world of Saxon Switzerland, through artificial waves, off high-diving platforms, down gigantic slides, then relax and recover in sauna, spa and thermal spring.

Geibeltbad Pirna

Swimming for fun and fitness: gigantic aqua-slide, water playground with a boat canal, water jets and various saunas and Turkish baths.

Toskana Therme Bad Schandau

Heavenly pleasure: steep yourself in sauna, spa & beauty treatments and sink into Liquid Sound® for an unparalleled bathing experience in colour and light.

Dr.-Petzold-Kräutervitalbad Sebnitz

Outdoor swimming pool and great pampering programmes: various saunas and natural health spas that include treatments with "Cleopatra's milk", algae, hay and evening primrose oil to moor and mud packs.

monte mare Neustadt

Adventure pool with Caribbean flair: take to the local South Seas, let artificial waves wash over you and hold your breath on the brink of shooting down a thrilling 103-m-long slide.

When the sun comes out, take the plunge in the great outdoors

Summer heat means outdoor bathing. 30°C in the shade, the sun is beating down and you need to cool off? Head for one of the many lidos and open water swimming areas of Saxon Switzerland for an invigorating experience you won't forget.

Beach volleyball on the banks of the Elbe

Playing volleyball on the beach is not only great fun but gets you fit in the bargain. There are riverside beach volleyball courts at Königstein and Bad Schandau.

Information

- www.saechsische-schweiz.de, www.saechsische-dampfschiffahrt.de/en/, www.flusswandern-elbe.de
- Information on booking volleyball courts can be obtained at local tourist offices

Culture

Historical facts and fairy tales right in front of your eyes

Saxon Switzerland is much more than a haven of sporty pursuits. On those days that you may need a rest from the trek, the cycle ride and all that messing about on water, a wonderful world of culture awaits.

Through Pirna's old town alleys

In the middle of the 18th Century, Bernardo Bellotto, also known as Canaletto, captured the city of Pirna in 11 paintings that have no equal. Today, you can still catch a glimpse of the town that he saw: two of the most distinctive features are the dainty tower of the town hall and the mighty Marienkirche (St. Mary's Church), with its steep roof.

A wander through the old town is a delight: romantic alleyways are stocked with small shops, cosy restaurants, pubs and cafes that spill out onto the pavements in summer.

Castles, stately homes & gardens

What became known as the "Five without equal" are not to be missed:

Weesenstein Castle

On a peak overlooking the Müglitz Valley towers a fairytale castle. Founded around 1200 AD, the castle later became the favourite residence of Saxon King Johann. The royal living quarters, with their precious interiors and wallpapers of the 18th

and 19th Centuries, the Christian chapel and the resplendent gardens and grounds are well worth a visit.

Königstein Fortress

Never conquered in battle, the fortress in the air has been perched on its lofty sandstone mesa since 1241. You can reach the rock massif 247 m above the Elbe via 3 drawbridges or a lift. Originally the site of a medieval border castle, the fortress was extended into a hilltop citadel before serving as a federal prison from the 16th Century onwards. Its most famous prisoner was Johann Friedrich Böttcher, co-inventor of European porcelain in 1706-07. The fortress was popular with Saxon royal August the Strong, who hosted sumptuous festivities there. Themed mediaeval evenings, with dinner, are now held in the underground vaults and casements, while the historic Christmas market, held annually at the castle conjures up the spirit of bygone times: to wander through the torch-lit yuletide market stalls is to be

intoxicated by the sights, scented smells and spicy tastes of yesteryear.

The Baroque Garden of Großsedlitz

The Baroque Garden is one of the greatest and most beautiful examples of garden art from the 18th century. It was created in 1719 by Count Wackerbarth. In 1733, August the Strong designed it as a symmetrical site, with Friedrichschlösschen (a style of small castle), orangeries, fountains, cascades and basins.



Fort Stolpen

Fort Stolpen sits aloft a 35 m high basalt peak and is visible from afar. Originally a border castle, it later became a prison. Countess Anna von Cosel, August the Strong's most famous and possibly most beautiful mistress, was forced to spend the last 49 years of her life here in keeping with the prevailing culture: men preferred intelligent women to keep well away from state affairs ... Today, the fort is an historic museum with a collection of arms, a torture chamber, the Cosel tower, the castle dungeons and a well dug 82 m into the basalt.



Canaletto's historic view of Pirna can still be seen in the old market square

The Baroque Castle of Rammenau

Located in magnificent scenery, the Barockschloss and park is one of Saxony's most beautiful attractions. Halls and quarters that speak of noble pomp and ceremony transport the visitor back to the 18th century. Traditional chamber music is played in the sophisticated ambience of the Hall of Mirrors.

Kuckuckstein Castle, Pirna-Zuschendorf Castle and Hohnstein Castle

have many stories to tell. Hohnstein, once a border castle and haunt of robber barons, served many purposes down the centuries: as hunting lodge, courthouse, federal prison, concentration camp and prisoner of war camp. Today, the castle offers accommodation within the castle walls and makes for an interesting day visit, with its historic buildings, bear gardens and torture chamber.

Concerts & Theatre

The "Sandstein & Musik" festival in Saxon Switzerland has boasted the exquisite musical delights of world-renowned artists



down the years. Ludwig Güttler, Artistic Director of the festival, vouches for the quality of all concerts associated with the event. The festival takes place in the most beautiful of venues to be found in the Elbe Sandstone Mountains:

The "Felsenbühne Rathen" (Rathens' Mountain Theatre) is known as one of Europe's most stunning natural stages. Set in the sandstone rocks of at the heart of the National Park, the theatre boasts an impressive ambience that is perfect for operas, fabulous fairytales and classical concerts. No surprise then to come across Winnetou and Old Shatterhand there, or Shakespeare's famous lovers Romeo and Juliet, as well as magic forest sprites and spirits. Weber's romantic opera "Der Freischütz" is staged to spectacular effect against the rocky backdrop of the Rathener Wehlgrund.

Muse temples, monuments and more ...

In need of a rest from the elements on a rainy day? Saxon Switzerland is rich in museums, arts and crafts and exhibitions that tell of the region's chequered history.

Information

Event calendar and ticket sales from the Tourism Association of Saxon Switzerland or at: www.saechsische-schweiz.de

At Pirna's DDR Museum visitors can enjoy a spot of Ostalgia. In an area covering 250m², flats typical of the German Democratic Republic reflect the development of radio, television, cameras and record players from five decades of the past century. Learn too about the lives of young pioneers, the FDJ (youth organisation), the NVA (army) or the ABV (community policeman).

The "Robert-Sterl-Haus" in Naundorf near the town of Wehlen was the last home of the great German impressionist painter. The house, now a small museum, holds a surprisingly large collection of his works. Exhibits are staged in a way that leaves the visitor with the impression that the artist has just laid down his brush to pop out for a while before returning any moment soon.

On a tour of the "National Park Centre of Saxon Switzerland" you can learn more about those beauties of nature that

are hidden from the human eye. Children marvel at red wood ants as they go about their busy lives in Saxony's only ant zoo. The dynamics of the wilderness are explained through interactive exhibitions at the centre – and the questions are not only posed to children, but adults too. Like, how can a rugged mountain range evolve from the bottom of the ocean? And where does the sandstone for the Dresdner Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) come from? Atmospheric photos, text and music form part of a multivision show that takes you into the secret world of the National Park.

Sebnitz was once the centre of European silk flower manufacturing. Today, this great tradition can be relived in the demonstration workshop of the "Deutsche Kunstblume Sebnitz" house and in a few other, smaller, enterprises. Visitors are invited to have a go at making flowers themselves.



Performance of "Der Freischütz" at the Rathens' Mountain Theatre

Family

An exciting day for the whole family

Popular attractions and hidden delights await visitors young and old in Saxon Switzerland.

In the **Elbe-Freizeitland (Elbe leisure park) Königstein** visitors can climb the rock face, leap for joy on the bungee trampoline, soar on the sky rail or find their way through the adventure maze and climbing garden. For those who prefer a quieter life, there's miniature golf or a chance to relax in a beach chair on the shores of the Elbe.

Magnetic ore used to be mined at the "**Marie Louise Stolln**" mine in Berggießhübel on the edge of Saxon Switzerland. Today, guided tours bring alive the thrilling story of the mine. Children can hunt for the treasure of Marie Louise, listen to fantastic fairytales and sagas and experience what it was like to celebrate yuletide here on the last shift on Christmas eve.



In the "**Felslabyrinth (Rock Maze) Langenhennersdorf**" don't forget to follow the numbers. The maze is a delight for children but adults will need to watch their girth: it gets a little tight in places beyond the widest places at entry and exit. The "jumble of rocks" is marked with ascending numbers so that nobody needs to worry about getting lost on their adventure through the maze, though the guidance makes the experience no less thrilling.

Pixies, trolls and other mythical creatures await your presence at the **Fabel- und Mythenpark (Fable and Mythical Park of) Königstein**. Busy pucks and villains all they tell many an interesting tale about the world of the mythical creatures at an exhibit that stretches over 15,000 m². Visitors can watch figures being born in "live" demonstrations of Elbe sandstone sculpting. There is also a farmyard Pets Corner for young visitors.

In the **Urzeitpark (Primeval Park) Sebnitz** you can step back into long-forgotten times. In a 10,000 m² park, lifelike statues of early humans, mammals and monsters, such as sea creatures, are set amongst primeval fauna.

The “**Waldhusche**” **Hinterhermsdorf** is just right for little explorers. How did people begin to utilise the forests of Saxon Switzerland in the Middle Ages? Why were fences erected by early settlers? How did they transport felled timber? The “Waldhusche” answers those and other questions in a 60-hectare adventure playground with four tours over rough and smooth terrain. Visitors can listen to explanations on how the forest was created, what shapes it and how it evolves with time. Beyond the learning, there is pure fun too: balance on tree trunks or explore a hardwood maze. The tours conclude at the Beizehaus information point.

At “**Krietzschwitzer Kerzenträume**” (**Candle Dreams**) **store** children and adults are invited to make candles themselves. If the process is simple – with each immersion the wick takes on an ever-thicker layer of wax to the colour of your choice - the result is one that everyone can take pride in.

Welcome to an oasis of fun for the family: Lilienstein. Away from the hustle and bustle of town, the Lilienstein area boasts a climbing school, childcare, accommodation for cyclists, a holiday farm and rafting on the Elbe.

Flock to see a shepherd. Picture the scene: clouds float past in the skies over the Elbe Valley between the Königstein and the Lilienstein ... an idyllic atmosphere ... fragrant meadows and grazing sheep. But don't imagine there's nothing to do: follow the work and art of the shepherd as he demonstrates his work with his flock and a cheeky sheep dog, sheep shearing (remember to book early), wool processing and felting. When the work is done, the shepherd tells stories about his life and flock.

Yipieh-Yah-Yeah ... Saddle up! Many boys and girls dream about riding or

being up in the saddle like a cowboy. The riding farms of the region are excellently equipped to take you on horseback ride. And if that sounds too adventurous for you, there's always a trip in a carriage or charabanc.

More tips: details of gold digging, climbing, miniature golf, swimming and hiking trails suitable for pushchairs can be found in the family brochure “Mit Kindern in der Sächsischen Schweiz” (Travelling with children in Saxon Switzerland).



Railway adventure

Model railways, miniature railways & more

Walk through a tiny version of Saxon Switzerland - or travel miniature format yourself ...

Miniature Park "Little Saxon Switzerland"

In Wehlen's miniature park you'll find a reconstruction of the best-known rock formations, from the Bastei (or Bastion) to the bizarre shapes of the Affensteine (Ape Rocks) and the Elbe valley. Historic means of transportation, such as steam engines, steam boats and the tram, animate the small-scale replica of the region to the delight of children and adults alike. And in the workshop, you can watch as sculptors carve their beautiful sandstone souvenirs.



Railway romanticism with a view of the Bastei

Railway lovers will thrill at the sight of the world's largest miniature garden exhibit "Eisenbahnwelten im Kurort Rathen" (Railway worlds in the spa town of Rathen). An area of 7,300m² contains 4.2km of tracks, 125 buildings, 14 stations and between 20 and 30 trains that

are constantly on the move. The whole working exhibit is staged against the backdrop of the magnificent Elbe Sandstone Mountains.

In a scale of 1:87 from Bad Schandau to Obervogelgesang

The "Miniatur Elbtalbahn" (Miniature Elbe Valley Railway), right next to the "Elbe-Freizeitland" leisure park in Königstein includes a detailed reconstruction of the railway between Obervogelgesang and Bad Schandau, complete with authentic track layout, working trains, carriages and signalling.

Model railway exhibit

The "Modelleisenbahn-Museum" (model railway museum) Sebnitz, presents over 100 years of model railway history and more than 50 years of TT railway manufacturing in a 250m² exhibit. A fascinating world of miniature railways from past and present, the exhibit features toys that our grandparents might have played with to the modern trains of today. The museum also has a 12m-long exhibit on the Elbe Valley and features that focus on themes of winter and night.

Saxon Semmeringbahn

8 times a day the railway travels along the 100-year old track from Bad Schandau to Neustadt via the dreamy Sebnitz Valley. During the 30-minute journey, it crosses 27 bridges and passes through seven tunnels.

A lap on the Feldbahnzug (Feldbahn train)

The Herrenleite Feldbahnmuseum (Light Railway Museum) displays narrow-gauge industrial railways used in former brickyards or quarries. Visitors can take a spin on the light railway.

Recapturing a romantic narrow-gauge railway

The **Schwarzbachbahn (Schwarzbach Railway)** is the only narrow-gauge railway in Saxon Switzerland. From 1897 to 1951 it ran from Gossdorf Kohlmühle to Hohnstein. The track and the two tunnels are being rebuilt today but curious visitors can hike all the way to the

exhibition on the old railway embankment at Lohsdorf Station.

A special tip:

Have your order brought to the table on a mini train!

The **Gartenbahnstübl Stolpen** takes your order in a rather special way: every table has an original replica of a station on it, and when the train stops you simply put your order inside it on a piece of paper. A few laps later the drinks arrive on the train. When it comes to settling the bill, the conductor arrives at the table, dressed in a bygone style with conductor's bag and money changer.



Motorbike

Here, every biker's heart beats faster

A motorbike tour on winding roads with splendid views of the Elbe Sandstone Mountains is an intoxicating experience. Whether you are travelling alone or in a group, on a classic motorbike or a quad bike, hours of driving pleasure are guaranteed!

On the move with the experts

Expert guidance can lead you down the most interesting and diverse routes. Unique guided weekend tours, day tours, multi-day tours and individual tours are on offer from professional biking tour companies that take you down long and winding roads through breathtaking scenery.

Tip:

The Grand Saxon Switzerland Tour

At Sebnitz Station, five classic motorbikes await you. The accompanied tour starts in Sebnitz and leads through Ulbersdorf, Ehrenberg, Cunnersdorf, Heeselicht, Bastei, Hohnstein, Bad Schandau, Königstein, Leupoldishain, Langenhennersdorf, Bielatal, Pfaffendorf, Gohrisch, Papstdorf, Kleinhennersdorf, Krippen, Bad Schandau, Panoramastrasse (or Kirnitzschtal) to Sebnitz. The tour covers 100km, though taster tours are also available.



Experience even more ...

Metropolis, shopping and ...

Dresden, a classical masterpiece

Dresden is a wonderful destination for an excursion less than an hour's drive or train ride from the heart of Saxon Switzerland. Many of the architectural highlights of the Saxon capital were built with Elbe sandstone, including the **Frauenkirche** (Church of our Lady) or the **Zwinger Palace**. Over the past few years, the old **Neumarkt** (New Market), with its hotels and boutique shopping malls, has grown at a rapid pace at the foot of the Frauenkirche's mighty dome. Visitors ought not to miss the **castle** and the **Semper Opera** in the old town, while **Dresden's Neustadt** offers colourful culture and a thriving pub scene as well as upmarket specialist boutiques that line the narrow lanes and passages. If you have a little more time to spare, there are 37 museums and Baroque monuments that are related to Saxon prince "August the Strong", say much about

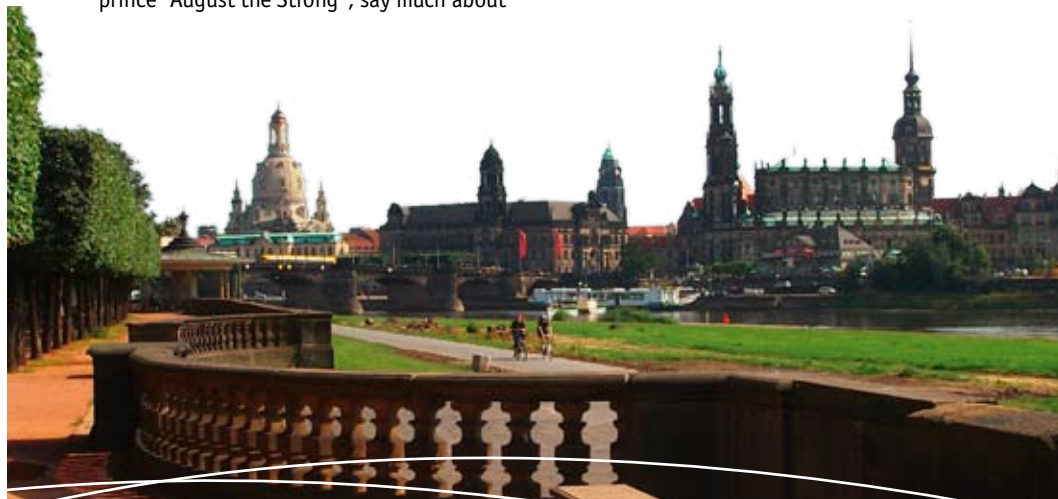
the city's history and provide Dresden with its characteristic cityscape. The **Panometer** provides a special highlight, transporting the visitor on a journey back in time to the Baroque Dresden of 1756. The large panoramic image, some 105 m in length and 27 m in height, provides the visitor with an all-round 3D view and conveys a real-world feel. Up on the viewing platform, visitors get a fabulous overview of the old town and out across the countryside beyond Dresden. At Volkswagen AG's "**Gläserne Manufaktur**" (transparent manufacturing) site, car lovers can watch luxury limousines being built. Every year in May, the international **Dixieland Festival** attracts about 500,000 Swing Jazz enthusiasts. And in the Christmas period, the old market is ablaze with the lights of the **Striezelmarkt** (Striezel Market), Germany's oldest Christmas market.

Step this way to Narnia

A glance at the map is enough to see that a border runs through the Elbe Sandstone Mountains, which separate **Bohemia** in the Czech Republic from Saxony. A closer look tells us that Bohemia also borrowed the name of Switzerland: that part of the national park and the mountains that fall inside the Czech Republic are known as Bohemian Switzerland. This is the home of Europe's largest natural rock gate, the "**Prebischtor**" (Prebisch Gate). The sandstone rock bridge, with a span of 26.5 m, a height of 16m and maximum width of 8 m is one of the most outstanding natural monuments of the Elbe Sandstone Mountains. Some of the scenes featured in "The Chronicles of Narnia" were shot here, while the film features a digitally enhanced image of the gate.

Romance in Prague

Prague can be reached by car in just two hours. Winding alleyways and historic buildings, Gothic cathedrals, Baroque and Renaissance palaces have preserved the charm of the Czech capital for centuries. The "**Hradschin**" (castle district) with Prague Castle and the old town, including the "**Karlsbrücke**" (Charles Bridge), are part of the World Cultural Heritage, as are Josefstadt and Neustadt. The cityscape is characterised by almost 500 towers and belvederes. The vast range of art treasures and the splendour of the aristocracy's palaces bear witness to a glamorous period. An evening walk through narrow alleyways under gas-light that floods from ornate lanterns in a romantic and beautiful city is a must for anyone seeking to capture the essence of Prague.



A view of Dresden's Altstadt (old town)



Prebischtor (Prebisch Gate)

Credits

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Saxon Switzerland

Germany



- Border Crossings**
- ① Weißbachtal - Brtnický potok (Zeidelbachtal)
 - ② Niedermühle - Vlčí deska (Wolfstafel)
 - ③ Hinterhermsdorf - Zadní Doubice (Hinterdaubitz)
 - ④ Rabensteine - Zadní Jetřichovice (Hinterdittersbach)

