



PICTURE: Shutterstock/ Sergey Dzyuba

Shore thing

Clients can bank on plenty of opportunities to get active on an escape to Lake Constance and its surrounds, says **Richard Mellor**

Overlooked by snow-capped Alps, Lake Constance extends into Austria, Germany and Switzerland, with the micro-state of Liechtenstein only a few miles south. Fed by the Rhine, its 170-mile shoreline sees scenic, hilly vineyards divide medieval towns. Factor in beckoning blue water which heats to 26C in summer, and Lake Constance makes an ideal setting for outdoor activities.

The key to holidays here is discerning how energetic clients wish to be. Trips to Central Europe's third-largest lake can easily be adrenaline-packed, or gentle. Here, we take a look at all that's on offer, by country.

SWITZERLAND

Easily accessed by Brits thanks to regular, 80-minute trains from Zurich airport to the waterside town of Rorschach, Switzerland's section of Lake Constance is shared between two cantons. Descending south from the smaller Lower Lake Constance section, Thurgau's shores are characterised by mild hills and apple orchards. It's known as a good place to hike or bike, thanks to lots of short circular trails. A much meatier challenge is the circumnavigating Lake Constance Trail, well signposted and available for walkers or cyclists in four to 11 stages.

Southeast of Rorschach in St Gallen's canton below the Alpstein massif, are a series of popular beaches. And as with the lake as a whole, most towns also offer boat hire. Bumpier hiking awaits inland here, too, as do fine lake vistas.

LIECHTENSTEIN

Only a scenic, 40-minute drive from Rorschach is the principality of Liechtenstein, which measures just 6.7 square miles. Here clients can enjoy the pedestrianised centre of capital Vaduz, before heading for a tasting at the reigning Prince's winery.

Outside Vaduz, the Malbun resort village and Sareisjoch mountain ridge host skiers or snowboarders in winter, and summer walkers enjoying more stupendous views from numerous grassy paths.

“Other walking options include the six-mile Grüşchaweg circuit, which crosses forests and passes royal residence Vaduz Castle

Particularly fun is a ramble with local mountain guides who'll tell you interesting anecdotes. Far quirkier is the option to trot alongside llamas or alpacas, with Lama & Alpakahof Triesenberg. Just as unusual is the Adler Tour, where a falconer and their golden eagle accompany visitors on one-and-a-half to two-hour hikes.

Other walking options include an all-encompassing, 30-mile Panoramic Trail of Liechtenstein or the six-mile Grüşchaweg circuit, which crosses forests and passes pointy-towered royal residence Vaduz Castle. ➤

DESTINATIONS

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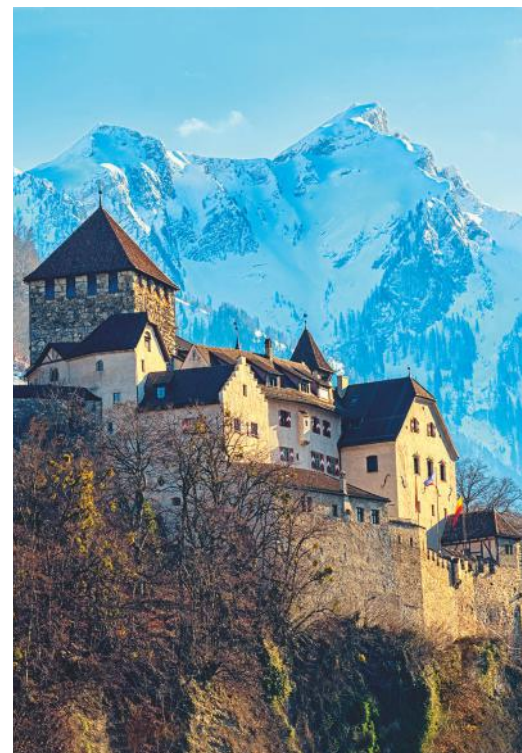


Lake Constance's signature meal is the Swabian dish *käsespätzle*. This comfort-food classic involves layers of cooked noodles and grated Emmental cheese topped with fried onions. Apple strudel often follows.



Plentiful apple orchards yield wonderful white blossoms in spring, then bountiful autumn harvests. A good place to taste some of the 20 varieties is on Germany's northern shore at the Seehotel Villa Linde's locally oriented Michelin-starred restaurant (seehotelvillalinde.de).

Wine lovers can tour Switzerland's scenic, six-mile Weinfelden Wine Trail, or taste award-winning, organic tipples at the Haug winery near Lindau. Most esteemed, however, is the Baden region, and especially vineyards around Birnau (*below*) and Meersburg, which also hosts an annual Wine Festival on September's second weekend.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Stand-up paddleboarding on Lake Constance; Vaduz, Castle, Liechtenstein; and boat ride on Lake Constance **PICTURES:** Makasana Photo; Boris Stroujko; Mario Krpan; Chris Redan; ON Photography Germany

AUSTRIA

Austria's short shoreline lies within the mountainous state of Vorarlberg. And just beyond the Alpine Rhine's delta lies Hard, a former logging town where stand-up paddleboarding equipment can be rented from provider Surfmax. Beginners' classes make use of Lake Constance's light winds and shallow waters, while group SUP sunset tours also run regularly in summer.

Two miles away is the architectural city of Bregenz, above which is a famous lookout: from the summit of the 1,064-metre-high Pfänder mountain, accessed by gondola, clients can enjoy stunning views over Constance and hundreds of Alps. At the top guests will also find a wildlife park. Its 30-minute circular trail lets visitors spy rabbits, deer, wild boar and ibex all year round, and groundhogs from March to September.

GERMANY

Germany encompasses the bulk of Lake Constance's shores, including almost all of its northern flanks. There are three constants: fabulous cross-water views of the Alps, pebbly or sandy beaches and handsome settlements featuring cafe-lined promenades. None of the latter are prettier than the Bavarian island-town of Lindau, its harbour guarded by a lion statue; or Meersburg, where steep, atmospheric lanes lead to a thermal spa whose waterside saunas let attendees swelter, then swim, then swelter. Sitting high above the water, clients will also find Meersburg castle – a landmark and one of the most visited museums on the lake.

Between the two towns is Friedrichshafen, home to the huge Zeppelin Museum. Here, tourists can enjoy scenic flights over the lake in one of these distinctive, 12-seater airships. They're pricey, though, starting at £325pp. From Meersburg, suggest clients take one of the lake's many ferries to the elegant city of Constance itself; try one of numerous watersports, including windsurfing and scuba-diving, on the way up the lake's northern 'finger'; and visit flower-filled island Mainau, home to more than a million plants.

West of Constance's ancient buildings and cobbled old town sprawls the Wollmatinger Ried nature reserve. Lining Lower Lake Constance, its wetlands host thousands of migrant waterfowl. The Rhine Falls, Europe's largest waterfalls, are also close, as is vegetable-growing Reichenau Island. Coastal tours allow canoeists to admire its Benedictine monastery from the water. **TW**

BOOK IT

Headwater's self-guided seven-night Highlights of Lake Constance by Bike combines Switzerland, Austria and Germany. It runs from April to October and costs from £1,499 including flights, bike hire, B&B and luggage transfers. headwater.com

Swiss flies from London to Zurich, from £159 return (swiss.com). Three-day **'Bodensee Tickets'** covering the region's trains, buses and ferries start from £37 (bodensee-ticket.com). See bodensee.eu for hotels, walking routes, watersports providers and more.