

## UNESCO Global Geopark Swabian Alb

The term "Swabian Alb Geopark" refers to an **area** of around 6,200 km<sup>2</sup> covering 10 districts and 190 municipalities. The Swabian Alb has been recognised in an international context for its unique landscape since 2015 with the designation "UNESCO Global Geopark". The reasons are:

- unique karst landscape with one of the highest number of caves in Europe
- richness in fossils
- volcanism 12-15 million years ago, leaving behind over 350 volcanic vents, craters, bogs, thermal and mineral springs
- meteorite impact, which created the Steinheim Basin

The Swabian Alb Geopark is run by an association (**Geopark Schwäbische Alb e.V.**)

Members: Alb-Donau district, Esslingen district, Göppingen district, Heidenheim district, Ostalb district, Reutlingen district, Sigmaringen district, Tübingen district, Tuttlingen district, Zollernalb district, the municipalities of Beuren, Schelkingen and Steinheim am Albuch, the Swabian Alb Tourism Association, the Stone and Earth Industry Association of Baden-Württemberg and the Kessler Foundation for Education and Culture Abtsmünd.

Chairman: Ulrich Ruckh (Mayor of Schelklingen)

Deputy Chairs: Dr. Joachim Bläse (Administrator of Ostalb district) and Dr. Ulrich Fiedler (Administrator of Reutlingen district)

Manager: Dr. Sibylle Knapp

Office location: Schelklingen in the Alb-Donau-Kreis district / staff: four

The **Geopark info centres**, the **Geopark schools** and the project "**Journey into Earth's History**" (**Geopoints**) make a significant contribution to anchoring the various themes of the international Geopark movement on a regional level.

Info centres:

- Museums and other locations in the Swabian Jura are designated information centres by the Geopark
- each of them addresses a topic of the unique natural and cultural area
- The Geopark info centres show the diversity of the UNESCO Global Geopark Swabian Alb

Geopark schools:

- Schools in the Geopark area can apply to become a Geopark school if they have a focus on geology, the natural and cultural environment of the Swabian Alb, the topic of sustainability or human-environment relations
- Geopark school network across the Swabian Alb

"Journey into Earth's History" (Geopoints):

- designated geopoints show the geodiversity of the Swabian Alb
- short explanations on panels or via QR codes offer visitors an insight into the geological history of the Swabian Alb
- landscape phenomena can be experienced at one's own pace on a self-guided excursion

The Geopark is part of **national** and **international networks**:

Association of German Geoparks (AdG): Geopark Swabian Alb is certified as a National Geopark and is thus a member of the AdG. Here, all of Germany's UNESCO Global Geoparks work together with the National Geoparks to place the topics of the geopark movement ranging from geology to sustainability in Germany's society.

Forum of German UNESCO Geoparks: Network of all German UNESCO Global Geoparks (8 in 2023) with joint projects, such as currently an ESD project (ESD= Education for Sustainable Development).

European Geopark Network (EGN): Working groups with the other UNESCO Geoparks in Europe on topics such as ESD. Publication of the EGN magazine displaying the ideas, challenges and successes of the individual geoparks.

Global Geoparks Network (GGN): meets every two years in a conference to exchange ideas, initiate cooperation and develop projects.

## **Background information on the UNESCO Global Geopark Programme**

In 2015, UNESCO launched the "UNESCO Global Geopark" designation. Currently, 195 UNESCO Global Geoparks worldwide are recognised as model regions for sustainable development. Their development is reviewed by UNESCO every four years as part of so-called revalidation missions.

All geoparks are united by an outstanding, internationally significant earth and landscape history, which is to be protected and made tangible through education for sustainable development and projects in the region. In addition to gentle geotourism, the goal of all UNESCO Global Geoparks is the sustainable development of the region.

As model regions for sustainable development, UNESCO Global Geoparks use a bottom-up approach. At the same time, they develop ideas in the international network of UNESCO Global Geoparks that aim at global sustainable development. This focus brings the principle of "think globally - act locally" to life and also takes into account the Past-Present-Future principle: learning from the past, shaping the present and working together towards sustainable development for future generations.

In Germany, eight geoparks currently hold the prestigious "UNESCO Global Geopark" designation. Three of these geoparks are located partly or completely in Baden-Württemberg: the Swabian Alb Geopark, the Bergstrasse-Odenwald Geopark and the Ries Geopark. They thus bear the highest distinction for landscapes that the global community can award and, with their unique history, rank among the most important natural areas on our planet.

There are currently 195 UNESCO Global Geoparks worldwide, including 98 in Europe.

**Appendix (three pages):**

The **Geopark info centres** and their focus listed by district

Alb-Donau-Kreis	Touristinformation Blaubeuren	Karst and caves, Prehistory
	Museum Ehingen	Local history
	Tiefenhöhle, Laichingen	Karst and caves
	Erlebniswelt Grundwasser, Langenau	Water supply
City of Ulm	Naturmuseum Ulm	Natural history collections
Esslingen	Freilichtmuseum Beuren	Local history and traditions
	Panorama Therme Beuren	Thermal water and heat anomaly of the Swabian Alb
	Naturschutzzentrum Schopflocher Alb	Biodiversity and nature conservation
Göppingen	Naturkundliches Museum Göppingen	Natural History Collections of the Swabian Alb
Heidenheim	Burg Katzenstein, Dischingen	Middle Ages
	Riff-Museum, Gerstetten	Jurassic Sea
	Schloss Brenz, Sontheim an der Brenz	Renaissance and local museum
	Meteorokrater-Museum, Steinheim am Albuch	Meteorite impact
Ostalbkreis	Tiefer Stollen, Aalen Wasseralfingen	Mines
	Explorhino Science Center	Experiments on natural science topics for young and old, Alb in 3D
Reutlingen	Entdeckerwelt Bad Urach	Nature and landscape of the Swabian Alb
	ALB-GOLD Kundenzentrum Naturgarten	Biodiversity, Cultivated Plants and Soil
	Biosphärenzentrum Schwäbische Alb, Münsingen	Biodiversity, human-environment relations
	Bärenhöhle/Nebelhöhle, Sonnenbühl	Karst and caves
	Umweltbildungszentrum Listhof, Reutlingen	Biodiversity and nature conservation
Sigmaringen	Haus der Natur Obere Donau	Biodiversity and nature conservation
Tübingen		
Tuttlingen	Kolbinger Höhle	Karst and cave
	Freilichtmuseum Neuhausen ob Eck	Local history and traditions
Zollernalbkreis	Im Kräuterkasten, Albstadt	Prehistory and early history, geological collection

The **Geopoints** of the project "Journey into the history of the earth" and their respective topics listed by district

Alb-Donau-Kreis	Hohlesteinstadel (Höhle des Löwenmenschen)	Cave and Karst
	Schertelshöhle Westerheim	Cave and Karst
	Steinernes Haus	Cave and Karst
	Hohle Fels	Cave and Karst/Archaeology
	Jurafenster Gerhausen	Jurassic Sea
	Blautopf Blaubeuren	Spring, National Geotope
Esslingen	Gußmannshöhle	Cave and Karst
	Gutenbergerhöhle	Cave and Karst
	Neidlinger Kugelmühle	Handicraft, Rocks of the Alb
	Vulkanschlot Neuffener Steige	Magmatism
	Höllsternquelle Gutenberg	Spring
	Lenninger Talschluß	Landscape development
	Lösungsdoline Binsenlache Hasental	Karst
	Sintertreppe weiße Lauter Gutenberg	Karst
	Neidlinger Wasserfall	Water
Göppingen	Tuffterrasse Unterdrackenstein	Karst, lime tuff, tuff grotto, Marian grotto
	Aichelberg	Sinkhole and volcanism
Heidenheim	Urweltpfad Bohlheim	Nature trail
	Heldenfinger Kliff	Molasse Sea
	Hungerbrunnen bei Heldenfingen	Karst water level
	Brenztopf Königsbronn	Spring and karst
	Aufschluss Steinheimer Schneckensand	Fossils, meteor craters
	Wental mit Felsenmeer	Jurassic sea, karst, dry valley
Ostalbkreis	Ursprung Weißer Kocher	Spring/retrograde erosion
	Wental mit Felsenmeer	Jurassic sea, karst, dry valley
Reutlingen	Falkensteiner Höhle	Cave and karst
	Wimsener Höhle	Cave and karst
Sigmaringen	Bohnerzgruben Veringenstadt	Mining sites, Tertiary weathering
	Erratischer Block Sigmaringen	Ice Age
Tübingen	Mössinger Bergrutsch am Hirschkopf	Geohazards, National Geotope
	Ofterdinger Ammonitenpflaster	Fossils, National Geotope
	Schwefelquellen Bad Sebastiansweiler	Water
Tuttlingen	Vulkanlandschaft Höwenegg	Hegau volcanism
	Mühlheimer Felsenhöhle	Cave and Karst
Zollernalbkreis	Nusplinger Plattenkalk	Fossils
	Zillhauser Wasserfall	Water
	Schwefelbrunnen Balingen	Water/historical use

**Geopark schools** and school type listed by district

Alb-Donau-Kreis	Joachim-Hahn-Gymnasium, Blaubeuren	High school
	Kleiner Einstein, Arnegg	Primary school
Esslingen		
Göppingen		
Heidenheim	Egauschule, Dischingen	Comprehensive school
	Hillerschule, Steinheim	Primary and secondary school
Ostalbkreis	Schubart-Gymnasium, Aalen	Grammar school
	Friedrich von Keller Schule, Abtsgmünd	Primary and secondary school
	Parkschule Essingen, Essingen	Comprehensive school
Reutlingen	Freibühlschule, Engstingen	Primary and secondary school
Sigmaringen	Sonnenlugerschule, Mengen	Comprehensive School
Tübingen	Karl-von-Frisch-Gymnasium, Dußlingen	High school
Tuttlingen	Wachtfelsschule, Kolbingen	Primary school
Zollernalbkreis		

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