**UNESCO Global Geopark Swabian Alb**

The term "Swabian Alb Geopark" refers to an **area** of around 6,200 km2 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 Reutlinen 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 |
| Meteorkrater-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 |  |  |

**Always up-to-date on www.geopark-alb.de/en/info-und-service/press-and-media/**