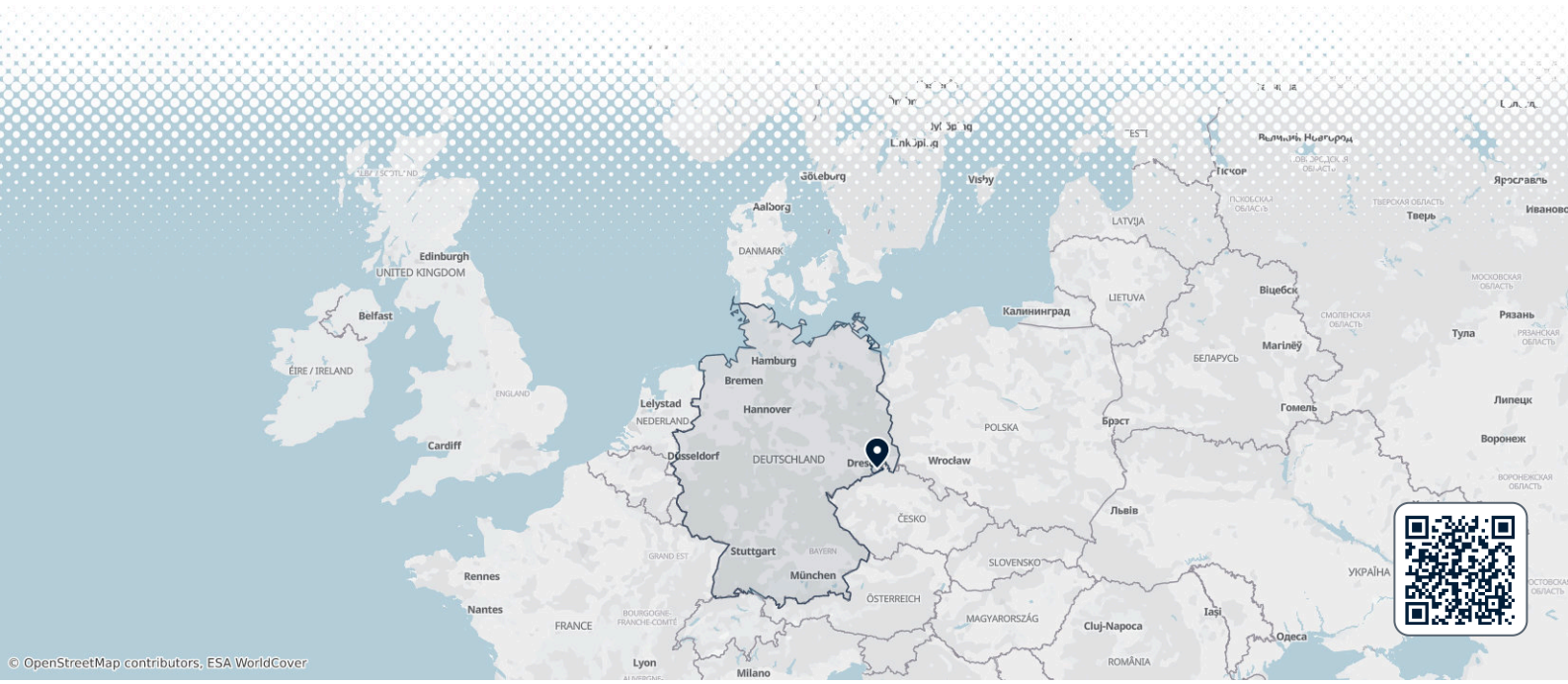


Saxon Switzerland

Saxony · Germany

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Saxon Switzerland is a hiking region of sandstone cliffs, rock towers and deep valleys. It lies along the Elbe river in eastern Saxony, next to the Czech border. The national park is Saxony's only one.

The region suits walkers and first-time visitors who want views more than museums. Most visits are day trips or a few nights in small towns and villages along the Elbe.

When to visit

Late spring to early autumn is best for walking. Summer is warm, and rain is common. Autumn is quieter and good for views.

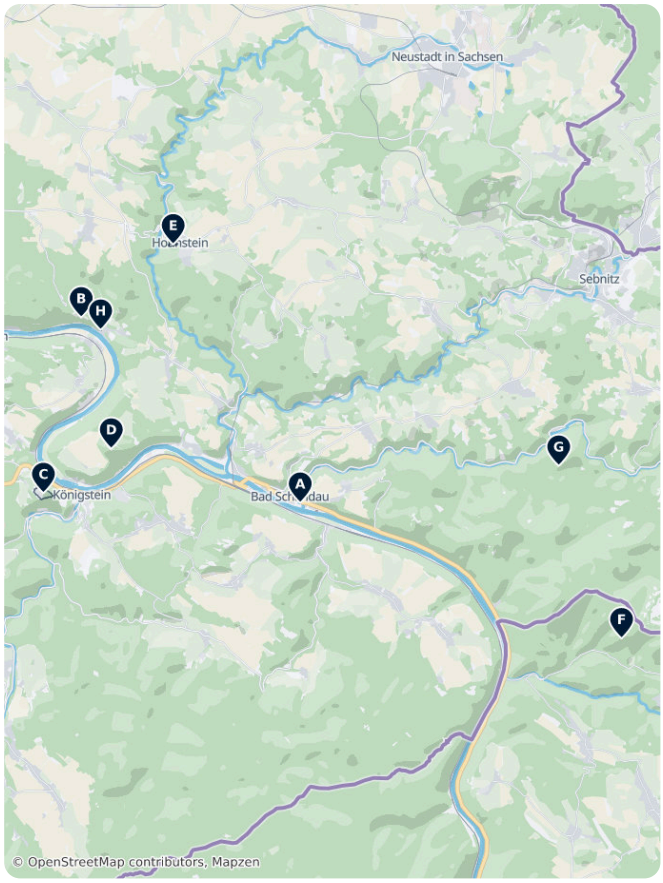
Winter is cold, and some trails are icy or closed. Königstein Fortress holds a Christmas market.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for hiking	2° / 9° Feels like -4°	-4° / -13°	14 rainy days · Dry air
February	Poor Poor for hiking	4° / 11° Feels like -2°	-3° / -12°	12 rainy days · Dry air
March	Poor Poor for hiking	9° / 17° Feels like 4°	0° / -7°	12 rainy days · Dry air
April	Good Good for hiking	14° / 22° Feels like 10°	4° / -2°	Dry air
May	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 26°	9° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 30°	13° / 8°	14 rainy days · Dry air
July	Good Good for sightseeing	25° / 32°	15° / 10°	16 rainy days
August	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 33°	15° / 10°	13 rainy days
September	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 29°	10° / 5°	Dry air
October	Good Good for hiking	15° / 22° Feels like 11°	6° / -1°	12 rainy days · Dry air
November	Poor Poor for hiking	8° / 14° Feels like 3°	2° / -4°	Dry air
December	Poor Poor for hiking	3° / 9° Feels like -3°	-2° / -12°	13 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: June, August, September

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Sächsische Schweiz is the national park and the main hiking area. It has a marked trail network with many viewpoints.
- B Basteibrücke is a stone bridge between rock towers high above the Elbe. It is very popular, so go early.
- C Königstein Fortress is a large fortress on a rock above the Elbe. It has exhibitions and underground tours.
- D Lilienstein is a table mountain beside the Elbe. The summit has wide views over the valley.
- E Burg Hohnstein is a castle above the town of Hohnstein.
- F Pravčická brána is a natural sandstone arch across the border in the Czech Republic.
- G Kuhstall is a natural rock gate in the cliffs. Walk to it on a forest trail.
- H Burg Altrathen is a castle ruin on a rock near Rathen.

Saxon Switzerland – Plan Your Trip
Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.
3M+ downloads · 4.6 stars · 15 years of trip planning
App Store · Google Play
Scan to download the app

What to experience

- Hike the Malerweg. It is an 8-stage trail of 116 km, and you can walk single stages.
- Ride the Kirnitzschtalbahn, a tram in the Kirnitz valley that starts in Bad Schandau.
- Cross the Elbe on the ferry at Rathen.
- See a performance at the Felsenbühne Rathen, an open-air theatre in the rocks.
- Go rock climbing on the sandstone towers with a local guide.

Where to explore

- Dresden is the state capital and the usual gateway to the region.

Getting there

- By air: Dresden Airport is the nearest airport. Continue from Dresden by train.
- By train: Dresden has direct S-Bahn trains into the region. The S1 line follows the Elbe through the main towns.
- Tourist information is in Pirna.

Saxon Switzerland tourism

Getting around

- **S-Bahn and buses**: Stops include Kurort Rathen, Königstein and Bad Schandau. Regional buses reach villages and trailheads. Overnight guests in many towns receive a guest card that covers local buses, trains and the Kirnitzschtalbahn.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

Villages are small and walkable. Sights are spread out, and trails have many steps.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

A cycle path follows the Elbe valley. Trails in the rocks are for walkers.

Safety & health

- Stay on marked paths. Some trails have steep steps and iron ladders.
- Sandstone is slippery when wet. Wear shoes with good grip.

History

- The name "Saxon Switzerland" comes from two Swiss artists who taught in Dresden in the 18th century. They thought the landscape looked like Switzerland.
- Painters of the Romantic period followed. The Malerweg follows routes that early artists and travellers walked.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Germany at a glance:

CURRENCY

EUR €

EMERGENCY

112

ELECTRICITY



Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES

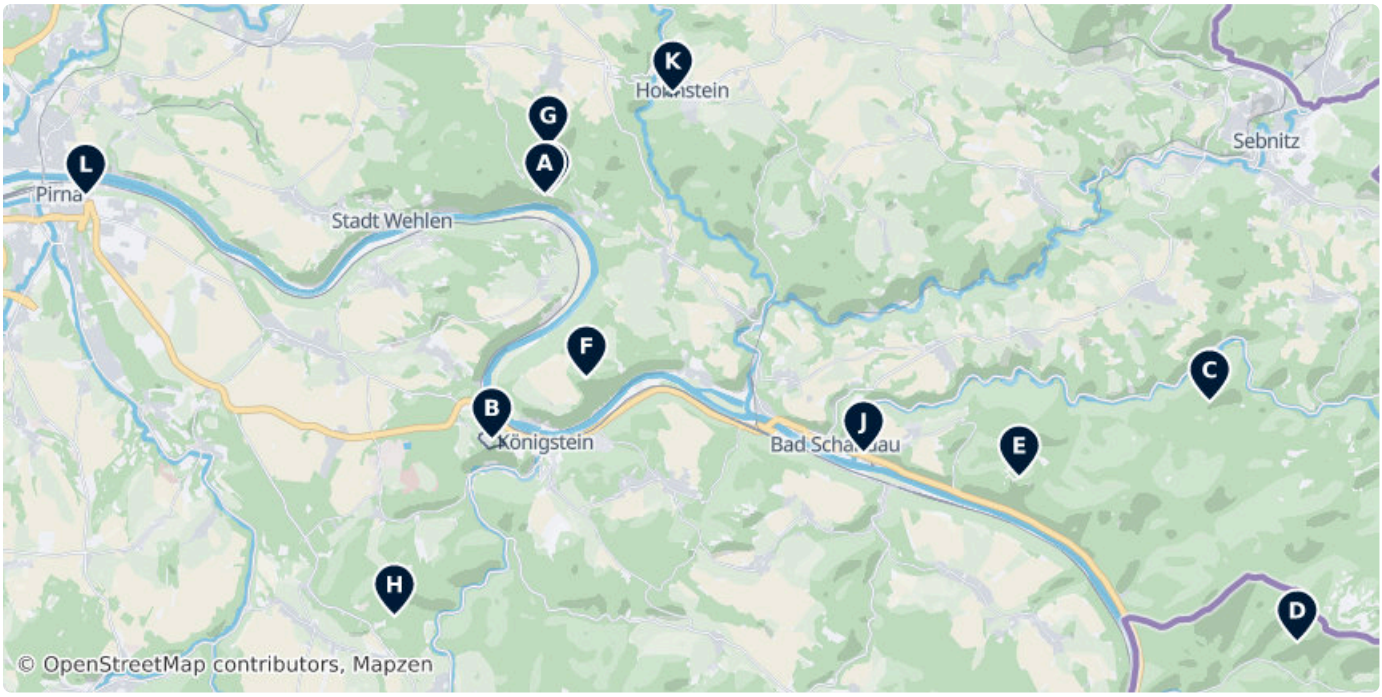
German

TAP WATER

Safe to drink

Saxon Switzerland Essentials

Saxon Switzerland features a dramatic landscape of sandstone pillars and deep gorges along the Elbe River. This collection includes the iconic Bastei Bridge, the massive Königstein Fortress, and the Pravčice Gate, the largest natural sandstone arch in Europe. The region is characterized by medieval ruins like Neurathen Castle, the distinctive flat-topped Lilienstein mountain, and the labyrinthine rock formations of the Schrammsteine and Schwedenlöcher.





A Bastei Bridge

The Bastei is a rock formation rising 194 metres above the Elbe River in the Elbe Sandstone Mountains of Germany.

01824, Germany (50.96175, 14.07302)



B Königstein Fortress

Königstein Fortress, the "Saxon Bastille", is a hilltop fortress near Dresden, in Saxon Switzerland, Germany, above the town of Königstein...

Festung 1, 01824 Königstein, Germany (50.91904, 14.05845)

Apr 24-Oct 31 Mo–Su	09:00–18:00
Nov 01-Mar 23 Mo–Su	09:00–17:00

festung-koenigstein.de, +49 35021 64607



C Kuhstall

The Kuhstall is the second largest natural arch in the Elbe Sandstone Mountains after the Pravčická brána.

1 Kuhstall, 01814, Germany (50.92567, 14.25704)

Mo–Su	Open 24/7



D Pravčice Gate

The Pravčická brána is a narrow rock formation in Bohemian Switzerland in the Czech Republic, approx. 3 km northeast of Hřensko.

40717, Czech Republic (50.88371, 14.28125)

Apr-Oct Mo–Su	10:00–18:00
Nov-Mar Fr–Su	10:00–16:00
Dec 26-Jan 01 Mo–Su	10:00–16:00

pbrana.cz/en/

E Schrammsteinaussicht

A panoramic lookout point atop the jagged Schrammsteine rock group, accessible via a series of steep iron ladders and stairs. It offers views over the Elbe Valley and the surrounding sandstone spires.

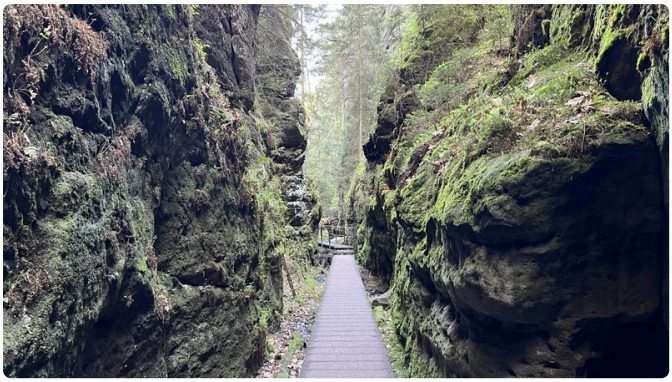
01814, Germany (50.91245, 14.20433)



F Lilienstein

Lilienstein is a highly distinctive mountain in Saxon Switzerland, in Saxony, southeastern Germany, and was once the site of a Bohemian...

01814, Germany (50.92984, 14.08460)



G Schwedenlöcher

A narrow, moss-covered gorge featuring over 700 stone steps. The ravine served as a refuge for locals during the Thirty Years' War and connects the Bastei plateau with the Amselgrund valley.

Schwedenlöcher, 01847 Lohmen, Germany (50.96999, 14.07399)

saechsische-schweiz.de/en/tour/schwedenloecher-rathen...

H Felsenlabyrinth

A natural cluster of eroded sandstone blocks near Langenhennersdorf. The site features narrow crevices, caves, and tunnels formed by natural weathering, creating a physical maze through the rock formations.

01816, Germany (50.88825, 14.03147)

badgottleuba-berggiesshuebel.de/ausflugsziele/felsenla...



I Neurathen Castle

Neurathen Castle, which was first mentioned by this name in 1755, is located near the famous Bastei rocks near Rathen in Saxon Switzerland...

01824, Germany (50.96182, 14.07436)



J Bad Schandau Elevator

The Bad Schandau Elevator is a passenger truss-tower elevator built in 1904 at Bad Schandau, a spa town in Saxony, Germany.

21A Rudolf-Sendig-Straße, Bad Schandau 01814, Germany (50.91670, 14.16126)

Apr Mo–Su	09:00–18:00
May-Sep Mo–Su	09:00–19:00
Oct Mo–Su	09:00–18:00
Nov-Mar Mo–Su	09:00–17:00

bad-schandau.de/personenaufzug-2/



K Hohnstein Castle

Hohnstein Castle is a medieval castle in the village of the same name, Hohnstein in Saxon Switzerland in the Free State of Sachsen in East...

Markt 1, 01848 Hohnstein, DE (50.97949, 14.10846)

burg-hohnstein.info, +49 35975 81202; +49 35975 849410



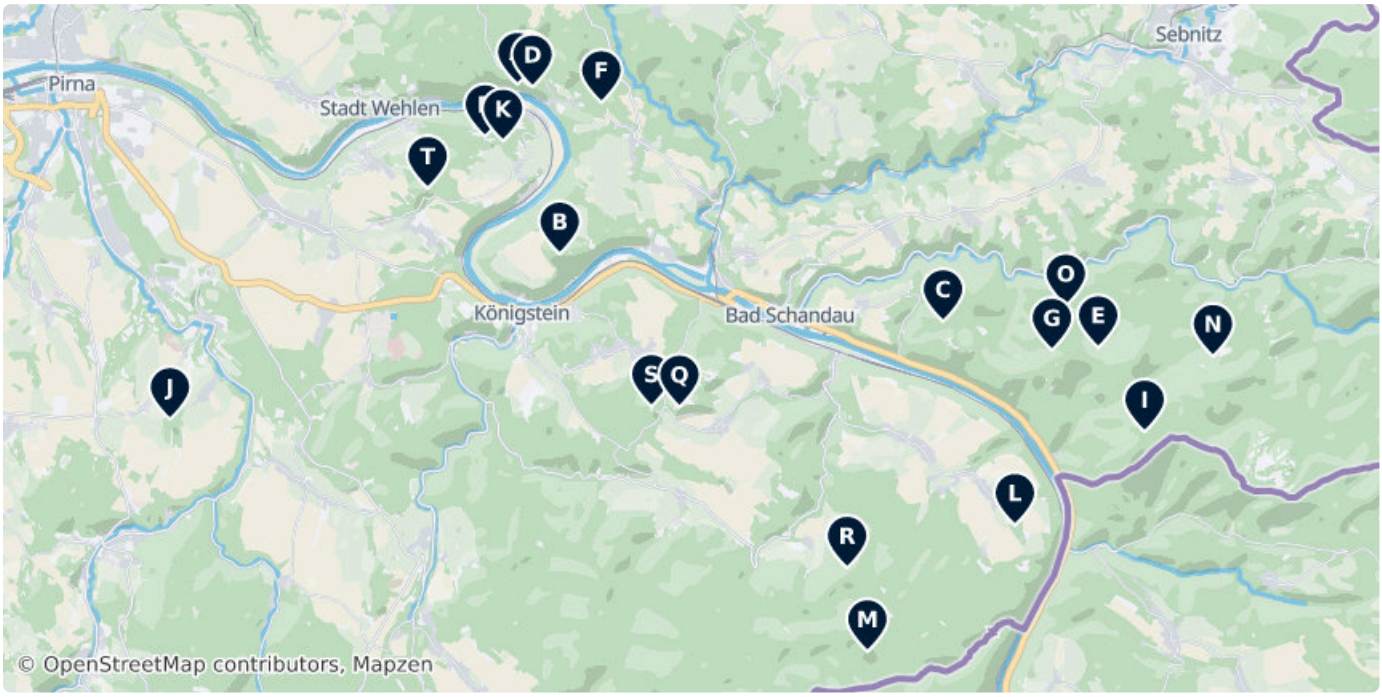
L Sonnenstein Castle

The Sonnenstein Castle is a castle in Pirna, near Dresden, Germany. It housed a mental hospital, which operated from 1811 to the end of...

4 Schloßhof, Pirna 01796, Germany (50.96151, 13.94604)

Best Viewpoints in Saxon Switzerland

This collection highlights the most significant summits and panoramic viewpoints within the Elbe Sandstone Mountains. It features the Bastei rock formation, the distinctive Lilienstein table hill, and the Großer Zschirnstein, the region's highest point. The selection includes medieval rock castle sites like the Winterstein and geological landmarks such as natural sandstone arches. These locations offer clear views across the Elbe Valley, the national park's deep gorges, and the surrounding volcanic peaks of the Bohemian Highlands.





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B Lilienstein

Lilienstein is a highly distinctive mountain in Saxon Switzerland, in Saxony, southeastern Germany, and was once the site of a Bohemian...

01814, Germany (50.92984, 14.08460)



C Falkenstein

The Falkenstein is one of the best known climbing peaks in Saxon Switzerland.

01814, Germany (50.91709, 14.19924)



D Mönch

The Mönch is a rock pinnacle and popular climbing peak in Saxon Switzerland in Germany near the spa town of Rathen.

01824, Germany (50.96126, 14.07643)



E Frienstein

The Frienstein, also called the Vorderes Raubschloss, is a rock formation, about 130 metres high, in Saxon Switzerland.

01814, Germany (50.91216, 14.24563)



F Gamrig

A 253-meter-high sandstone peak located east of Rathen, offering views across the Elbe Valley toward the Bastei massif.

01824, Germany (50.95834, 14.09706)



G Kleines Prebischtor

A natural sandstone arch and rock formation located in the hinterland of Saxon Switzerland, near the Frienstein.

01814, Germany (50.91167, 14.23178)

Mo–Su

Open 24/7



H Felsenburg

The remains of a medieval rock castle situated on the Bastei rocks, featuring reconstructed walkways, rooms carved into the stone, and ancient cisterns.

01824, Germany (50.96181, 14.07521)



I Großer Winterberg

Großer Winterberg is a mountain of Saxony, southeastern Germany. It is the second highest mountain of the Saxon Switzerland and is located...

1 Auf dem Winterberg, 01814, Germany (50.89628, 14.25953)



J Cottaer Spitzberg

The Cottaer Spitzberg is a 390.8 m high basalt dome on the western edge of Saxon Switzerland.

01796, Germany (50.89865, 13.96804)



K Nonne

The Nonne is a roughly 18-metre-high, isolated, standing sandstone rock and climbing peak in Saxon Switzerland in Germany.

01796, Germany (50.95108, 14.06766)

dav-felsinfo.de/ajaxdav/



L Zirkelstein

The Zirkelstein is the smallest table hill of Saxon Switzerland, in Germany.

01814, Germany (50.87866, 14.22075)



M Großer Zschirnstein

The Großer Zschirnstein is the highest hill in the Saxon and German part of the Elbe Sandstone Mountains.

01814, Germany (50.85485, 14.17662)



N Winterstein

The Winterstein, also called the Hinteres Raubschloss, is an isolated, elongated rock massif in the hinterland of Saxon Switzerland in East...

01814, Germany (50.91053, 14.27997)



O Bloßstock

A prominent rock pillar and major climbing peak marking the northern end of the Affensteine rock group.

01814, Germany (50.92001, 14.23597)



P Rauenstein

The Rauenstein is a table hill in Saxon Switzerland in Germany. It rises west of the Elbe inside the Elbe loop near Rathen.

01796, Germany (50.95191, 14.06222)



Q Papststein

Papststein is a mountain of Saxony, southeastern Germany.

01824, Germany (50.90101, 14.12042)



R Kleiner Zschirnstein

The Kleine Zschirnstein is a 472.7-metre-high table hill in the Elbe Sandstone Mountains in Saxony.

01814, Germany (50.87060, 14.17054)



Gohrisch

The Gohrisch is a table hill in the German region of Saxon Switzerland, left of the River Elbe in Saxony.

01824, Germany (50.90109, 14.11201)



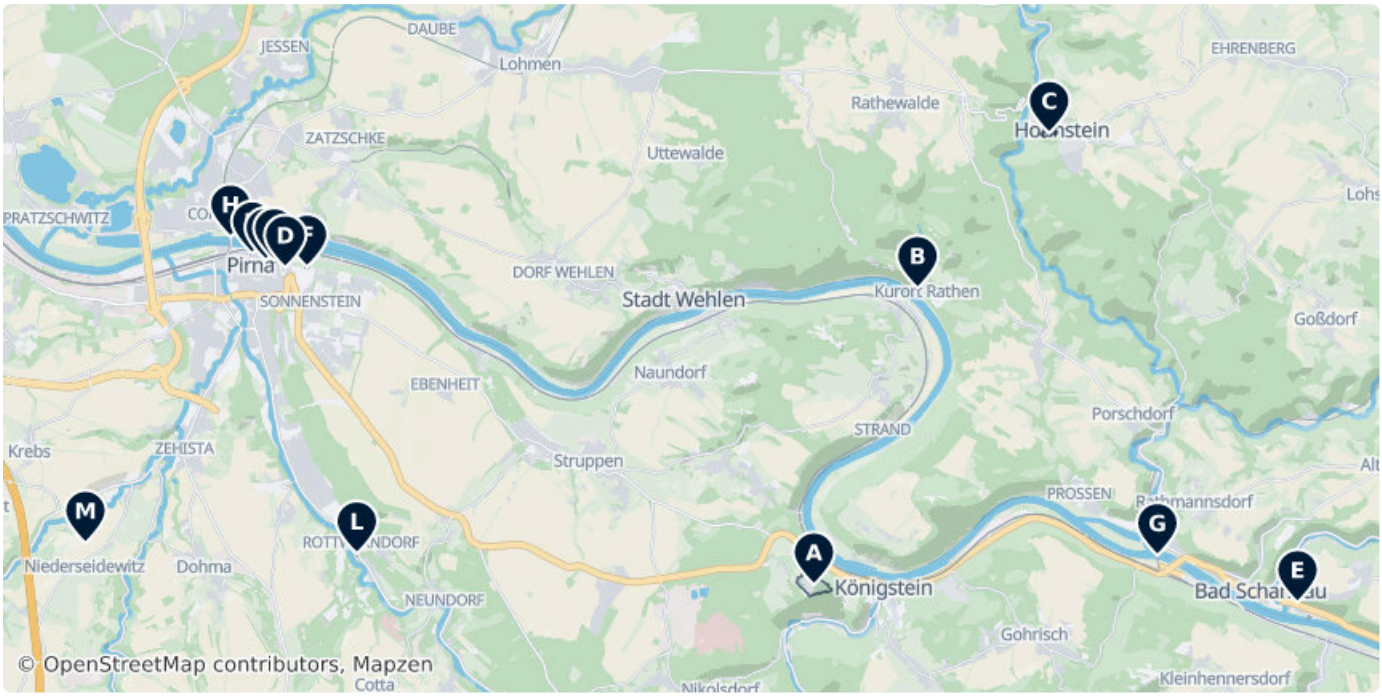
Kleiner Bärenstein

The Kleiner Bärenstein is a 338 metres high table hill in the German region of Saxon Switzerland in the Free State of Saxony.

01796, Germany (50.94216, 14.04511)

Historic Heritage Sites

Saxon Switzerland's history is preserved through its diverse architecture, ranging from the massive Königstein Fortress, one of Europe's largest hilltop fortifications, to the medieval castles of Hohnstein and Altrathen. The town of Pirna serves as a cultural hub, featuring the late Gothic St. Mary's Church and the historic Sonnenstein Castle. Industrial and transit heritage is represented by the 1904 Bad Schandau elevator and 19th-century Elbe bridges, while post milestones mark the region's historical importance as a trade route.





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Apr 24-Oct 31 Mo–Su	09:00–18:00
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festung-koenigstein.de, +49 35021 64607



B Altrathen Castle

Altrathen Castle is located on a rock outcrop near Rathen in Saxon Switzerland in the German Free State of Saxony.

Am Grünbach 11, 01824 Kurort Rathen, DE
(50.95874, 14.08049)

+49 35024 7600



C Hohnstein Castle

Hohnstein Castle is a medieval castle in the village of the same name, Hohnstein in Saxon Switzerland in the Free State of Sachsen in East...

Markt 1, 01848 Hohnstein, DE (50.97949, 14.10846)

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Oct Mo–Su	09:00–18:00
Nov-Mar Mo–Su	09:00–17:00

bad-schandau.de/personenaufzug-2/



F Sonnenstein Euthanasia Centre

The Sonnenstein Euthanasia Clinic was a Nazi euthanasia or extermination centre located in the former fortress of Sonnenstein Castle near...

Schloßpark 11, 01796 Pirna, DE (50.96159, 13.95067)

Mo–Fr	09:00–16:00
Sa–Su	11:00–17:00

stsg.de/cms/pirna/startseite, +49 3501 710960



G Carolabrücke

A 187-meter-long railway bridge spanning the Elbe River between Bad Schandau and Rathmannsdorf. It serves as a vital piece of the region's 19th-century transport infrastructure.

(50.92297, 14.13147)



H Stadtbrücke Pirna

Constructed in 1875, this 295-meter-long bridge across the Elbe connects the historic center of Pirna with the northern bank, originally serving both road and rail traffic.

Hauptstraße, Pirna 01796, Germany (50.96563, 13.93440)



I Rathaus

Located in the heart of the market square, Pirna's town hall features a blend of architectural styles, including Renaissance and Baroque elements, following various reconstructions since the 14th century.

(50.96251, 13.94187)

Mo–Fr 08:00–12:00

pirna.de



J St. Mary's Church

One of the largest late Gothic hall churches in Saxony, built between 1502 and 1546. It is renowned for its intricate rib vaulting and a detailed 16th-century sandstone altar.

Kirchplatz 14, 01796 Pirna, DE (50.96244, 13.94369)

Su 15:00–17:00

kirche-pirna.de/Gebaeude/Stadtkirche-St-Marien/447/



K Klosterkirche St. Heinrich

Originally part of a Dominican monastery founded around 1300, this Gothic church features a single-aisled nave and remains a significant example of medieval ecclesiastical architecture in Pirna.

01796 Pirna (50.96338, 13.93901)

kath-kirche-pirna.de/gemeinden/pirna/kirchen/st-heinric...



L Schloss Rottwerndorf

Rottwerndorf is a village in the municipality of Pirna, in Saxony, Germany. It was incorporated into Pirna in 1923.

Alt-Rottwerndorf 24, 01796 Pirna, DE (50.92321, 13.96125)



M Kursächsische Postmeilensäule

An 18th-century protected quarter-mile stone commissioned by Elector Frederick Augustus I. These milestones were part of a comprehensive survey to standardize postal distances throughout the Electorate of Saxony.

(50.92463, 13.90355)

DATA SOURCES

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