



SLEEP LIKE A
King
 A NIGHT AT
Auf Schönburg

By Genevieve Northup



Dozens of intact castles and ruins are scattered along the hilly landscape of the Middle Rhine Valley, each a spectacular reminder of the region's aristocratic past. On a bluff above Oberwesel, a crimson stone building differentiates Auf Schönburg, a castle hotel where you'll be welcomed with red-carpet hospitality.

Once Upon a Time

Little is known about Schönburg prior to the 12th century, when the Dukes of Schönburg governed Oberwesel. By the 1300s, the castle was a thriving residence for an estimated 250 people. The castle was largely destroyed in the 17th century and restored 200 years later by the Rhineland family.

In 1950, the estate was turned over to the city, and the Hüttl family established the hotel a few years later. The family has taken care to meld together medieval heritage with modern conveniences. Present-day Germany seems far away as you enter the castle courtyard, surrounded by fortress walls, imposing towers and half-timbered buildings covered in vines.

Affluent Accommodations

Browse the hotel website to see photos, amenity listings and prices for the more than 20 lavish rooms tucked amid historic halls and

turrets. The accommodations appear so perfect that you'll be ecstatic and a bit concerned that this place is too good to be true. I have sojourned at Schönburg and can assure you that the reality is every bit as lovely as the photos. Find the chamber of your dreams online — most likely, you'll be torn between two or three favorites — and mention your preferences when making a reservation. Here are a few to look for while browsing:

- **Rooms 16, 20, 23, 34 & 35:** These double rooms have balconies overlooking the drifting boats, vineyards and crumbling fortresses of the Rhine valley.
- **Room 21:** From this room, you can stroll along the medieval castle wall to get great photographs of the castle and unobstructed views of the sky.
- **Room 22:** Think of Sleeping Beauty and



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Think of Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel as you sip wine on the balcony...



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Rapunzel as you sip wine on the balcony of this tower room. In addition to Rhine panoramas, you can also see the inner courtyard from the castle's highest vantage point.

- **Room 36:** After much deliberation, we chose this gem located on the 3rd floor. A small rooftop porch provides outstanding views of the Rhine, ramparts, courtyard, gardens and even the countryside behind the castle. We loved it, and I'm sure you will, too!
- **Room 38:** Located in a cozy cottage within the bastion, this quaint room features a marble bathtub for two.
- **Suites:** Coming with an entourage? Consider a larger arrangement, such as the Barbarossa Suite, Schönburg Suite or Wedding Suite. Their additional salons provide areas for socializing, and you still have privacy when you retire for the evening.

Decadent Dining

The hotel rate includes a four-course dinner highlighting fresh and locally sourced fare. For an additional fee, you can have wonderful European wines to accompany your courses. Notify the hotel prior to your visit if you have dietary concerns or allergies.

Seating in multiple rooms creates an intimate atmosphere, and attentive servers are

careful not to break the romantic spell. Enjoy the company of loved ones at an elegantly appointed table, complete with white linens, fresh flowers, glimmering candlelight and formal silver place settings. If the weather is cooperative, ask for a table perched on the perimeter of the lofty terrace to take in the fresh air, Rhine views and delectable cuisine. (Avoid these coveted tables if you're afraid of heights!)

Grandiose Gardens

Overnight guests receive keys to the secret gardens. Discover new delights at every turn as you wind along the path and past an outdoor library and sitting area. Once you reach the bottom of the hill, a pristine green lawn sprawls in front of you with a small pond, gazebo and giant chessboard. But don't stop there; around the hill is a comfortable reading nook overlooking the Rhine valley. And hidden in a cluster of trees is a two-story tree house with upholstered furniture, leaded windows and more bookshelves. Spend a summer afternoon perusing books and outsmarting your chess opponent.

Happily Ever After

For a magical escape to the "Romantic Rhine," complete a booking request via www.hotel-schoenburg.com. After your stay, you'll have a fairy tale to share for years to come. ■



Pastimes in the Rhine Kingdom

During your visit to the Rhine, board a ferry traveling on the river. The Bingen-Rudesheimer and Köln Düsseldorfer (KD) lines offer pick up in Oberwesel and make frequent stops so that you can hop on and off to visit villages, castles and wineries.

Towns:

Read about dozens of Rhine destinations at www.romantic-germany.info/Romantic-Rhine.4110.0.html, and put these at the top of your list:

- **St. Goar** - Gaze at the 400-foot-tall Loreley Rock and traipse among the remnants of Burg Rheinfels, formerly the region's largest stronghold.
- **Koblenz** - Witness the convergence of the Rhine and Mosel rivers from the Ehrenbreitstein garrison.
- **Rüdesheim** - Shop along the celebrated Drosselgasse, one of Germany's narrowest streets.
- **Mainz** - Experience the bustle of the Rhineland-Palatinate's capital city.

Wine:

The Rhine River valley, known as Rheingau, is among the oldest wine-producing regions in Germany. Contact the staff at Schönburg to organize a trip to a local winery for a Riesling tasting. Or seek out vintners and wine shops to sample other regional vintages.

Fests:

Countless events liven up the quiet towns along the Rhine year-round, including Rhine in Flames, summer carnivals, harvest festivals, wine fests and Christmas markets. Check city tourism websites, the [Stripes Wine Fest Guide to Germany](#) and the [Stripes Christmas Market Guide](#) for upcoming dates. Plan well in advance because Schönburg's rooms are often fully booked months prior to big events (or even years for Rhine in Flames).

