Germany, Austria & Switzerland Self-Drive Experience
Welcome to Germany! Come and experience a medieval masterpiece! Fabled castles, quaint villages, from the hustle and bustle of skyscraper packed Frankfurt, to the glistening waters of Lake Constance, this 13-day sojourn is a magnificent step back in history.

On this self-drive experience you can do as much- or as little as you like. Head towards the majestic Rhine River, with its castles overlooking the banks of the river at almost every turn. Travel along the romantic scenery of the Rhine Valley and explore medieval villages and castles. Travel through the Black Forest to the glistening waters of Lake Constance, Germany’s largest lake. Visit the fairy-tale castles of King Ludwig, which Walt Disney used as the model for his sleeping beauty castle and Disneyland itself. Visit Munich, home to Bavaria’s finest museums and dotted with castles. Travel into beautiful, alpine Austria and see the lovely medieval city of Salzburg, home of Mozart. See the beautiful town of Innsbruck before crossing into Switzerland- a trip to this magical country will open up even more beautiful places to visit, providing memories to last a lifetime!
Day 01– FRANKFURT, GERMANY

Today when you arrive in Frankfurt, pick up your rental car and check into your hotel for the evening.

They call it ‘Bankfurt’ and ‘Krankfurt’ and ‘Mainhattan’ and more. Skyscraper packed Frankfurt is the financial capital of Germany. Take the day to relax after your long flight or perhaps explore one of the many great museums of this city.

**Suggested overnight: Villa Kennedy or similar**

Day 02 – FRANKFURT- OBERWESEL- HEIDELBERG

Begin today heading towards the majestic Rhine River, with its fabled castles overlooking the banks of the river at almost every turn.

Perhaps stop in Oberwesel and see the spectacular views 1000-year-old Schonburg Castle. Oberwesel, a town whose praises were sung by many a poet of the romantic period, is dominated by Schonburg castle. This, with its many towers, is one of the most majestic on the Rhine. Particularly characteristic is the huge wall away from the river, the "Hohe Mantel". The Lords of Schonburg constituted one of the most famous Rhine families. Friedrich von Schonburg, the last male descendant of this line, who lived in the 18th century, bore the proud title of Marshal of France. He also played an important role in English history and died when crossing the River Boyne with William III. Today the part overlooking the Rhine has been converted into an International Kolping Youth Hostel.

Continue on to Rudesheim, capital of Rheingau, one of Germany’s most famous wine growing regions, situated along the romantic scenery of the Rhine Valley. Rudesheim offers you a historical city center to explore along with wine bars and restaurants along the narrow Drosselgasse, the main drag. There are a couple of museums here worth a look and for a birdseye view over the Rhine Valley and the vineyards, head to Niederwald Denkmal.

The road then leads you to one of the most well-known tourist attractions in Germany-Heidelberg. The city’s magnificent castle and medieval town are irresistible.

**Suggested overnight: Renaissance Heidelberg or similar**
Explore Heidelberg’s large ruined castle- one of Germany’s finest examples of a Gothic-Renaissance fortress and the city of Heidelberg’s main attraction. Begun in the 13th century, its oldest remaining structures date from about 1400. The buildings half-ruined condition actually adds to its romantic appeal. The Renaissance castle courtyard is amazing. Outside, just to the east of the entry is the Gunpowder Tower, destroyed by French forces in 1693. The half destroyed wall and chimney behind it is worth a look.

As you walk through the gates, look to the left at the tiny door with the iron ring- as you will notice the ring is cracked; legend says that when King Ludwig announced that anyone who could bite through the ring with their teeth would own the castle, a witch gave it a try. There are several places to eat up here as well, so you may wish to enjoy lunch before continuing on.

Follow the Rhine Valley to Baden-Baden, an international spa town that offers a wide range of sights including the casino or spectacular horse races.

When you are ready, continue traveling through the mountainous Black Forest, reaching Lake Constance, Germany’s largest lake, by days end.

**Suggested overnight: Hotel Halm or similar**
Today you should depart for Hohenschwangau and probably the most famous castle in the world- Neuschwanstein. Due to its magical beauty it attracts many visitors from near and far, and is best visited early, before it gets too busy. Looking more like a stage set than a real palace, it is no wonder Walt Disney used it as the model for his sleeping beauty castle and later Disneyland itself. Its construction nearly brought Bavaria to bankruptcy and Ludwig’s early death in the lake is rumored to be closely connected with this.

Do try and find time to walk the Marienbrucke (Mary’s Bridge) crossing a deep, narrow gorge. From this vantage point you have the best and probably most photographed views of this stunning fairy tale castle.

Soon, a new highlight will follow: the combined resort towns of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, merged by Adolf Hitler to host the 1936 Winter Olympics, and also home to Germany’s highest mountain, the Zugspitze. Travel by cogwheel train and cable car to the plateau- an adventure in itself- for majestic views of the alpine landscape.

**Suggested overnight: Haus Weiss or similar**
When you depart for Munich today you will pass many cultural monuments throughout Bavaria such as the Monastery at Ettal and perhaps you may want to visit another castle of Ludwig II, his country retreat at Linderhof. The Rococo styling of the Schloss Linderhof is said to have been styled after Versailles.

Approximately 20km north of Garmisch-Partenkirchen is the unbelievable town of Oberammergau, celebrated for its Passion Play, performed every 10 years since the townsfolk say they made a deal with God in 1633. Throughout the town the highlights are Luftmalerei, trompe l’oeil paintings on the facades of the buildings designed to illustrate an aura of wealth. Several houses have fairy-tale motifs, such as Hansel & Gretel and Little Red Riding Hood.

After your visit here, drive on to Munich, the Bavarian mother lode. It’s the capital of the state of Bavaria and home to its finest museums, dotted with castles and is one of Germany’s most prosperous cities.

**Suggested overnight: Kempinski Hotel Vier Jahressteiten or similar**
Take a full day to explore this fascinating city. Perhaps take a walking tour through the compact Old Town center with its multitude of fantastic shops, markets and always busy beer halls such as the “Hofbrauhaus” that Munich is so famous for.

We suggest you start at Marienplatz, the heart and soul of the Alstadt. At the center of the square is the Marienslaule, erected in 1638 to celebrate the removal of Swedish forces. At the top is the golden figure of the Virgin Mary, carved in 1590 and originally located in the Frauenkirche. The blackened façade of the neo-Gothic Neues Rathaus (New Town Hall) is decorated with gargoyles and statues, including, on the corner, a wonderful dragon climbing the turrets. Inside six stately courtyards are used for festivals and events throughout the year.

The highlight of the building is the carillon, which has three levels: two portray the Schafflertanz and the other the Ritterturnier, a knight’s tournament held in 1568 to celebrate a royal marriage. The characters spring into action at 11 am and noon (also at 5 pm March to October). The night scene, featuring the Munich children and night watchman characters runs at 9 pm.

Also see the Karlsplatz Fountain, the Frauenkirche- The Church of Our Lady. In contrast to the heavy red brick exterior, the interior is a soaring passage of light with the tomb of Ludwig the Bavarian, guarded by knights and noblemen, in the choir.

**Suggested overnight: Kempinski Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten or similar**
Day 07 – MUNICH, GERMANY- SALZBURG, AUSTRIA

Depart today for the lovely medieval city of Salzburg, birthplace of Mozart.

Many towns in Austria are blessed with grand churches and squares, in none but Salzburg do they enjoy such a vibrant atmosphere and magnificent surrounding scenery. Home of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Salzburg is one of the most visited towns in Austria.

You may decide to visit Hohensalzburg Castle built in 1077 by Archbishop Gebhard, considerably enlarged by Archbishop Leonhard von Keutschach (1495-1519), is the largest, fully preserved fortress in Central Europe. The medieval princes’ apartments and the Fortress Museum are of particular interest. Since 1892 the fortress can easily be reached by funicular railway departing from the Festungsgasse.

Among other sites you may wish to see, you can visit are Hellbrunn Castle with the watergames, and Mirabell Garden & Castle.

Suggested overnight: Hotel Kasererbrau or similar

Day 08 – SALZBURG- INNSBRUCK

Drive today through magnificent alpine scenery as you head towards Innsbruck.

Innsbruck, the capital of the Bundesland Tirol, is a beautiful town situated on a wide plain formed by the Inn River. Innsbruck is a famous crossing place north to Germany, south to Italy, east to Vienna and west to Switzerland. The town is first recorded by its present name in 1187. Around 1420 the Archduke Frederick IV built a new castle here and the town became the capital of Tirol.

Within the town there is a striking contrast between old and new. One of the finest older buildings is the Franciscan or Court Church mainly in Italian Renaissance style, and the Golden Roof. The university makes the town a center of intellectual life with students from all over the world. Innsbruck is also the city where the Olympic Winter Games were twice held.

Suggested overnight: Hotel Sailer or similar
Day 09 – INNSBRUCK- VADUZ, LICHTENSTEIN- LUCERNE, SWITZERLAND

Continue driving through the alpine splendor through Vaduz, capital of the small principality of Liechtenstein and continue on to Lucerne.

Lucerne is one of Switzerland's most charming medieval cities. Lucerne is situated in the historic and scenic heart of what many believe to be the “true” Switzerland Picture Mountains, lakes, cowbells, alpine villages and meadows full of edelweiss. The town straddles the Reuss River on the western edge of Lake Lucerne and makes an excellent base for excursions.

Suggested overnight: Palace Hotel or similar

Day 10 – LUCERNE

Discover the historic lakeside town of Lucerne today. The Old Town has many interesting sites, which you can easily see on foot. Reflect on the history of Lucerne as you walk across the 14th century Chapel Bridge with its paintings of heroic town events. Then cross Mill Bridge to see the “Dance of Death” paintings. Musegg Town Wall, the old city ramparts and the stately Town Hall, displaying suits of armours, remind you of the Middle Ages.

Maybe stop for lunch at the Restaurant Old Swiss House.

Then, why not continue on to the Lion Monument memorializing the Swiss Guards who defended the Royal Palace in Versailles during the French Revolution.

Later, you can enjoy a relaxing cruise on Lake Lucerne to Vitznau and back.

Suggested overnight: Palace Hotel or similar
Day 11 – LUCERNE- ZURICH- FREIBURG, GERMANY

After breakfast today, depart for Zurich.

Zurich’s Old Town, on the banks of the Limmat River, is home to numerous places of interest just waiting for you to discover. From the Fraumuenster Church to the Kunsthau Art Museum, Zurich is home to many world-renowned places.

Continue on towards Freiburg, perhaps stopping at the dramatic Rhine Falls at Schaffhausen before you reach the Black Forest city of Freiburg.

Suggested overnight: Hotel Oberkirch or similar

Day 12 – FREIBURG- FRANKFURT

Depart from Freiburg back to your gateway city, Frankfurt.

Enjoy your final evening in Frankfurt, perhaps with a romantic dinner at one of the spectacular restaurants in the city.

Suggested overnight: Villa Kennedy or similar

Day 13 – DEPART FRANKFURT

Spend the morning at your leisure before departing for the airport in time for your homebound flight.