



Jura, Schwarzwald, Vogesen
Jura, Forêt Noire, Vosges

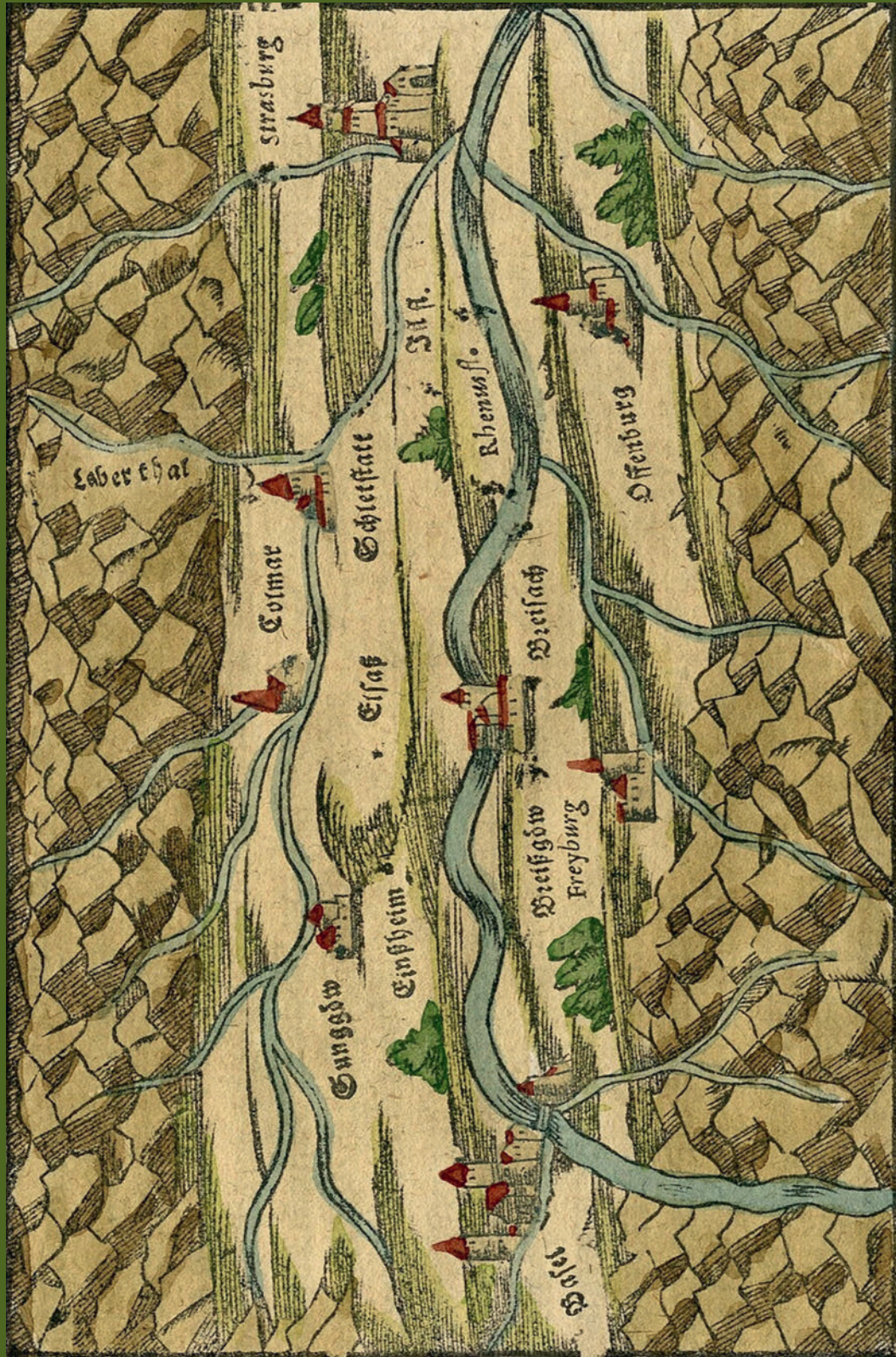
Switzerland, Forêt und Bergsen
Forêt Noire et Vosges

One region

The trinational region is a spatial unit with great diversity. In the centre of this region is the River Rhine. Its plain is surrounded by hills and the mountain ranges of the Jura mountains, the Black Forest and the Vosges.

Plants and animals inhabit this area irrespective of national borders, just as the people who first settled and lived here did. For them, this region was a shared area of settlement.

Natural forces have formed mountains, hills and valleys over the course of 40 million years. Human activities have shaped the landscape significantly over the last 2,000 years.



The Upper Rhine plains between Basel and Strasbourg, bordered by the Black Forest and Vosges ranges. Woodcut from Sebastian Münster's cosmography. Basel, around 1600 A.D. DLM K 16-67.

Lost paradise

Before the Rhine was straightened, its alluvial meadows were one of the most biodiverse landscapes in Central Europe, with running and still waters, gravel and sandbanks, water meadows and swamps, scrubland and forests in close proximity. Regular floodings prevented the forests from spreading and maintained the area's variety.

Each of these biospheres exhibited a distinct flora and fauna. Its great biodiversity was important on a European scale. Innumerable types of fish found ideal spawning grounds in the Rhine wetlands' river branches and backwaters.

Today, only about 2% of the Upper Rhine's alluvial meadows are still intact. In a transnational effort, attempts are being made to repair part of the damage by equipping weirs with fish ladders and creating new flood plains.



The village of Istein with fishermen's houses and boats before the Rhine rectification. Lithograph by Friedrich Kaiser from 1849. DLM BKKa 14.



In his large-sized oil-painting from 1882 (90 x 160 cm), Eduard Tenner depicts the Rhine River at the Isteiner Klotz in the Markgräflerland region before its rectification. Where the painting shows water, there is today a road, dry meadows and the highway between Basel and Karlsruhe. DLM BKVer 25.



View from the Kaiserstuhl range with Sponeck Castle over the 3-kilometre-wide, meandering Rhine River with its many branches; in the background: the Vosges ranges. Steel engraving by J. Riegel after a model by R. Höfle, around 1850. DLM GrLS 32.



Photo of the fishermen's village Istein in 1868, before the Rhine rectification. This is why the railway line runs above village, and through the rock "Isteiner Klotz". Since the straightening of the Rhine, the village is no longer situated on the riverbank. DLM Fo 1582.

The attraction of the Upper Rhine

The culture and nature of the Upper Rhine Valley tempt tourists. Historic treasures can be found in Basel, Strasbourg or Freiburg, but many other small towns have attraction for tourists in their sights, regional cuisine, or thermal springs.

Altitude differences of up to 1,300 m form a rich variety of landscapes. The remote regions of the Black Forest, the Vosges and the Jura were not developed until the 19th century. The Black Forest Club was founded in 1864, the Vosges Club in 1872 and the Swiss Jura Association in 1900. Together they maintain hundreds of miles of hiking paths.

The Black Forest in particular became popular for winter sports early on. In 1888, a doctor from Todtnau was the first local to use snow shoes. Around the Feldberg, ski clubs and skiing competitions developed, and the first ski-lift was built in 1907.

