

Thuringia Tourist Board | Willy-Brandt-Platz 1 | 99084 Erfurt, Germany
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Press Kit of the Thuringian Tourist Board

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Erfurt, 15 January 2021

An introduction into Thuringia

A rough summary of Thuringia may read like this: very centrally located in Germany, about 2.2 million inhabitants on slightly over 16,000 km², five nature parks, two UNESCO biosphere reserves, one national park. 18 UNESCO-listed sites, birthplace of Bach and Bauhaus, Reformation history, ca. 400 castles and palaces. 7,000 km of hiking trails, 1,700 km of long-distance cycling paths. So much about some facts – but what is Thuringia like and what can you do there? Let's have a look at four basic things:

Feel the pulse of nature Yes, in Thuringia there are regions where you stand alone in the middle of a forest and all you can hear is bird calls and the wind in the trees. Hiking takes you through unspoiled nature, cosy mountain villages and historical sites. Unexpected treats *en route* include views of distant galaxies in the Rhön Dark Sky Reserve. The primeval beech forests of the Hainich embrace you with their natural wilderness, the upper Saale valley takes your breath away with dramatic river landscapes, and the peaks of the Thuringian Forest provide for panoramic views. Slowing you down in a positive way – that's what Thuringia's nature can do for you.

Satisfy your curiosity Always looking for the hidden gem around the corner? Thuringia's towns and cities may be your choice of a travel destination then. Like Erfurt for example. The description of the old town as having 'one of Germany's largest historical city centres' doesn't prepare you for its beauty. And this is not just about architecture, it's about having all things in one place that make your stay likewise pleasant and entertaining: be it the beer-garden next to the river, the life music in a traditional German 'Kneipe' or the shopping on a medieval bridge. The secret of Erfurt? Probably the mixture of historical and easy-going. And it's just so beautiful!

Give in to fascination Have you ever stood in a place that fuelled your imagination? Felt good, didn't it? Thuringia's castles and palaces have the potential to do the same with you. One of them maybe more than the others: Wartburg Castle in Eisenach. It's the epitome of a German castle and so full of stories and legends that it has provided plenty of food for books and movies. Standing on a mountain top surrounded by dark forests it requires a little effort to get up there. It is worthwhile, however. This is the place where the 'War of Minstrels' took place that Richard Wagner immortalised in his Tannhäuser opera, it is where Saint Elisabeth lived her short but momentous life and where Martin Luther translated the New Testament. The Castle is mystic and majestic and thoroughly Thuringian.

Join the club You know all about Bauhaus, Bach or the German classics? Time to have a look at the real thing! Where? Well, where Walter Gropius founded the famous Bauhaus School, for example. In Weimar. In celebration of the Bauhaus's 100th anniversary, the city opened a brand-new museum in April 2019. By presenting a kaleidoscope of Bauhaus aspects, it gets to the bottom of the question 'How do we want to live?' Bauhaus and Modernism are two expert areas that Weimar covers. Classical literature, art and music are the others. If you're a culture lover who likes to look deeper, you will love it!

You can find more information on Thuringia on www.visit-thuringia.com.

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TRAVEL.21 *digital*

The virtual Thuringia Tourism event from 1 – 3 June 2021

With TRAVEL.21 *digital*, Thuringia presents a new virtual event for the German and international travel industry and travel media. On the first three days of June, Thuringian tourism partners will await you in a virtual exhibition environment. Beside direct networking options, inspirational elements will provide the best-possible substitute for a real-life experience.

The event will focus on great outdoor options, amazing cultural heritage and traditional Thuringian hospitality. We will also update you on hotel openings and other news. The special focus of the show will be on:

Thuringia is for outdoor fans.

Deep forests, sunny meadows, blue rivers, great views and little surprises around the corner: Whether you enjoy being alone with nature or look for attractions along the route – hikers and cyclists can choose their individual routes from a large network of quality trails.

Thuringia is for cultural explorers.

In 2022, it will be 500 years since Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German. An event that had an enormous influence on the German language and culture. Let us tell you more about “Translating the World” into letters, tones and colours.

Thuringia is a Christmas land.

A glittering world of glass is at home in the Thuringian Forest. Did you know that this is the birthplace of glass Christmas decoration? Baubles, birds and cones, and even the Christmas tree is a Thuringian. We will show you where glassmakers are at home and where they still produce the traditional way. The next Christmas is sure to come ...

The registration for the event is opening soon. You can register here beforehand for your free ticket to the TRAVEL.21 *digital*.

To reserve your free pre-registration ticket:

Go to <https://beta.thueringen-entdecken.de/travel21> (online start on 9 March 2021).

Or send an e-mail to travel@thueringen-entdecken.de stating that you are interested in attending the TRAVEL.21 *digital* event by Thuringia Tourism.

See you soon, at the TRAVEL.21 *digital* in Thuringia!

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Nine hundred years of Jewish life in Thuringia Anniversary in 2020/2021: tourism marketing for Jewish history and culture

Jewish life in Germany celebrates a milestone anniversary in 2021: the Jewish community and its culture and traditions have been a firm fixture in Germany for 1,700 years. In Thuringia, Jewish history goes back 900 years, which the Free State has been celebrating with a variety of exhibitions and events since October 2020. Thüringer Tourismus GmbH (TTG), the regional marketing organisation, will be supporting the celebrations with increased tourism marketing for Jewish culture and remembrance sites across Thuringia. The ‘Nine hundred years of Jewish life in Thuringia’ campaign will run officially until the end of September 2021 and feature numerous highlights.

“The reminders of Jewish life in Thuringia are of great importance to Thuringia’s tourism marketing,” says Dr Franz Hofmann, CEO of Thüringer Tourismus GmbH. “They raise the Free State’s profile as a world-class heritage destination and symbolise a culture of welcome particularly aimed at attracting tourists”. Four billboards calling on people to ‘Remember and celebrate together: nine hundred years of Jewish life in Thuringia’ draw attention to the anniversary at major motorway junctions in Thuringia. In partnership with the Thuringian State Chancellery and the Jewish Community of Thuringia, TTG has also published a bilingual brochure (German/English) and an anniversary events booklet of around 100 pages. These are available free of charge in the ‘360 Degrees – Thuringia Goes Digital’ showroom on Willy-Brandt-Platz in Erfurt.

Brochure and website on Jewish history in Thuringia

Thüringer Tourismus GmbH’s brochure ‘Jewish culture and history in Thuringia’ presents the key locations, festivals and events related to Jewish heritage in the region. In addition to Erfurt and the Erfurt Treasure, there are other reminders of Jewish history in other towns across Thuringia, for example in the small village of Berkach in the district of Schmalkalden-Meiningen. Alongside a magnificently preserved synagogue, the village is also home to a mikveh bath, a former Jewish school and a Jewish cemetery. In Sondershausen, the mikveh and the Jewish cemetery can be visited on guided tours, and there is a synagogue in Mühlhausen as well. In many Thuringian towns and communities, historic cemeteries are all that remains of local Jewish life, and there are 34 of these left in the Free State. Sites of remembrance also feature in the brochure and play a major role in the anniversary year. Examples include the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials and the Topf & Söhne place of remembrance. For more information visit kulturerbe.thueringen-entdecken.de

Event highlights of the year

Professor Reinhard Schramm, Chairman of the Jewish Community of Thuringia, is pleased that there will be even more Jewish culture to experience in Thuringia in 2021: “We would like to celebrate this anniversary in a fitting manner,” he explained today in the small synagogue in Erfurt. “With three festivals on Jewish culture, here in Thuringia we are already offering more than most German states, and there will be an increased

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focus on these events over the course of the anniversary year.” The events are the ACHAVA Festival, the Days of Jewish-Israeli Culture and the Yiddish Summer Weimar, which every year offer a high-calibre programme across Thuringia promoting tolerance and peace. Another highlight of the anniversary year is the presentation of a new Torah scroll to the Jewish Community of Thuringia. It is a gift from the two major churches as a sign of solidarity and hope for the future. On 30 September 2021, the new Torah scroll will be carried through Erfurt in a ceremonial procession to the synagogue on Max-Cars-Platz and placed in the Torah shrine.

Exhibitions on Jewish history throughout Thuringia

Alongside the extensive programme of events, there will also a number of high-calibre exhibitions in 2021. These include the ‘Jewish Life in Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt’ exhibition at Heidecksburg Palace in Rudolstadt, starting in September 2021, and the ‘Éva’s Apple Soup or the Smell of Home’ retrospective at the Topf & Söhne place of remembrance in Erfurt, running from January 2021. And for the first time, some of the more than 1,000 Jewish titles in the Rabbinica Collection of the Thuringian University and State Library (ThULB) will be on public display in Jena. The collection includes Hebrew texts from the 17th and 18th centuries featuring exquisite illustrations. The ‘Torah, Talmud, Tefillot’ exhibition opened in November 2020. A special exhibition at the Luther House in Eisenach is dedicated to a dark chapter in the history of the Protestant Church. The Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence in German Church Life, also known as the ‘Dejudaisation Institute’, was founded 80 years ago at Wartburg Castle by eleven regional churches. Its aim was to bring the Church’s teachings in line with the race ideology of the National Socialists. Visitors can find out more about this subject through 56 exhibits and interactive displays. Further events and exhibition dates are listed in the ‘Nine hundred years of Jewish life in Thuringia – events 2020/2021’ brochure.

Erfurt was and remains the centre of Jewish life in Thuringia

The centre of Jewish life in Thuringia, then as now, was the state capital Erfurt. In the Middle Ages, the city was one of the largest settlements in the Holy Roman Empire, an economic and cultural hub at the crossroads of important trade routes. From the late 11th century onwards there was also a Jewish community there, which had a synagogue, a cemetery and a mikveh. Many reminders of Jewish life have survived in Erfurt and highlight the eventful history of the Jewish communities since the Middle Ages. These include the Old Synagogue, the medieval mikveh and the old and new Jewish cemeteries. The Old Synagogue dates back to 1094 and is one of the oldest in Europe. As it had been used for many different purposes over the centuries, first as a warehouse, later as a restaurant and dance hall, it was not identified as a synagogue and destroyed during the Third Reich, so that it remains in exceptionally good condition today. It is now home to the Erfurt Treasure and the largest known medieval Torah. The Erfurt Treasure’s remarkable wedding ring and other exhibits relating to love, weddings and marriage is on display in the ‘With this ring ... – Jewish weddings in the Middle Ages’ exhibition running from 29 October 2020 to 14 March 2021.

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Application for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage list

The largely intact medieval old town of Erfurt contains unique architectural evidence of its Jewish community from the period between the end of the 11th and the middle of the 14th century. These architectural reminders are complemented by an unparalleled wealth of exhibits. Together, they shine a light on the religious and everyday life of the Jewish community, and reveal how Jews and Christians lived side by side in medieval towns. No other place in the world offers such a comprehensive insight, which is why Erfurt, the state capital of Thuringia, has applied for UNESCO World Heritage status for its Jewish legacy.

For further information, or to obtain the 'Jewish culture and history in Thuringia' brochure or the 'Nine hundred years of Jewish life in Thuringia' programme, please visit www.visit-thuringia.com

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2021 Federal Horticultural Show in Thuringia Garden extravaganza comes to Thuringia

This tourism year promises to be a colourful one, with plenty of gardens and green spaces to explore and get you outdoors in 2021. Thuringia will be in full bloom during the Federal Horticultural Show (BUGA) taking place from 23 April to 10 October in the state capital, Erfurt, and at 25 additional location. There are also over 2,000 parks and gardens in Thuringia that provide perfect opportunities for a stroll or to while away the hours. Among them are a number of royal gardens, botanical collections, spa gardens, country parks and modern, urban parks. “The 2021 Federal Horticultural Show will help us to raise awareness of Thuringia’s outstanding gardens and green spaces, in particular,” says Dr Franz Hofmann, CEO of Thüringer Tourismus GmbH. “The state capital, Erfurt, is the perfect starting point for days out in Thuringia,” he adds.

2021 Federal Horticultural Show in Erfurt is highlight of the year

The highlight and focus for tourism in Thuringia this year is the 2021 Federal Horticultural Show in Erfurt, running from 23 April to 17 October 2021. Erfurt has been hosting horticultural exhibitions since 1865. In 2021, it will reconnect with this heritage, as the **2021 Federal Horticultural Show** comes to the original home of garden shows and takes over two remarkable Erfurt exhibition venues – historical **Petersberg Citadel** and **egapark**, the garden of Thuringia. At BUGA 2021, visitors to Erfurt can look forward to a sea of flowers and blossoms covering some 80,000m², with the egapark venue featuring around 15,000m² of plants and flowers, rotating on a seasonal basis, that are sure to delight visitors. Themed gardens, herbaceous perennials and rotating ornamental flowerbeds will be completely reshaped according to layouts created by renowned garden and landscape designers. The new Danakil desert and jungle centre will also open its doors in time for the BUGA. Taking its name from a hostile desert in Ethiopia, the centre vividly showcases the survival strategies that animals and plants have adopted to cope with too much or too little water. Desert and jungle are two extreme opposites that place a particular focus on combating climate change around the world. The second major venue of the Federal Horticultural Show in Erfurt will be Petersberg Citadel, the largest baroque fortress in Europe. In 2021, the hill above the lively old quarter will be completely transformed for 171 days, revealing much of its more than 1,000 years of history. The design will include ‘Gardens of the Ages’ and special exhibits in the moat that recall Erfurt’s history as the birthplace of professional horticulture. In the defensive barracks, the Free State will be promoting Thuringia as a travel destination, while the beauty of the region’s gardens and parks will be the subject of a new exhibition on show in St Peter’s Church during the BUGA.

The Thuringia.MyCulture app already allows you to explore Erfurt’s relationship with horticulture. Its tour of the city of flowers features eleven stops that highlight Erfurt’s remarkable history of horticulture and show how the BUGA will bring this magnificent heyday back to life in 2021.

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BUGA 2021 in Erfurt will also feature 25 subsidiary venues showcasing Thuringia's unique gardens and parks and the history of horticulture in the region. In addition to well-known destinations such as Weimar, Gotha and Bad Langensalza, these include Thuringia's most beautiful parks and gardens, for example at Kochberg Castle and the baroque gardens of Ebeleben.

Glorious parks and gardens throughout Thuringia

Beyond Erfurt, the region has a wealth of stately homes, often with glorious parks and gardens. These 'living monuments' reveal much about the beauty and the history of horticulture. Thuringia's green spaces could not be more varied, ranging from far-eastern bonsai culture or the scent of over 450 types of roses to a 160-hectare royal country park.

Of tea and roses: Bad Langensalza's ten themed gardens and parks

Visitors to the spa town of Bad Langensalza, famous for its roses, can explore ten themed gardens and parks around the historic town centre, which provide a perfect place to relax and replenish their energy levels. The Kofuku no niwa Japanese garden, which means 'garden of bliss', is inspired by the different landscapes of the Japanese islands. Its highlights include the large plant pavilion and the Japanese tea house, where you can arrange a tea ceremony or even get married. The town's rose garden is a riot of colours and floral fragrances from more than 450 types of roses. Right by the entrance to the garden is the rose museum, which showcases more than a century of rose cultivation and rose growing in Bad Langensalza.

The English touch: Altenstein House and Park

An absolute gem and well worth a visit is Altenstein House and Park, which covers 160 hectares near the spa town of Bad Liebenstein. Built by Duke George I of Saxony-Meiningen as a summer residence, Altenstein was remodelled in the style of an English manor house at the end of the 19th century. The huge park with its varied and appealing design is a real delight. The surrounding slopes, rocky outcrops and views of the valleys were skilfully incorporated into the plans for the area, which was laid out as a landscape park. This created spectacular vistas within the park and out across the surrounding countryside. Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau, Carl Eduard Petzold and Peter Joseph Lenné designed and developed the park. Three circular trails invite visitors to explore the large park, where they will encounter hidden architectural gems such as the Knights' Chapel, the little Chinese House and a huge flower basket. All three of these sites have been constructed on rocky crags in direct line of sight with each other.

The Dornburg Palaces, home to the Rose Queen

The Dornburg Palaces, linked by their individually laid out gardens to create an overall whole, form an attractive line-up above a steep rock face. Sitting in splendour, 90 metres above the Saale valley, the three palaces dominate the picturesque landscape. Each of them has its own garden: an orchard with heritage varieties at the old palace, a charming rose-covered walk at the Rococo palace and an English landscape garden at the Renaissance palace. In between there are roses galore, in whose honour the Dornburg Rose Queen is crowned every year. Even Goethe enjoyed these "graceful gardens" and praised them as "cheerful, beautiful and spacious, yet not too vast." The Renaissance

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and Rococo palaces have been turned into museums, and tours are also available. The rooms in which Goethe lived are located in the Renaissance palace. The annual Night of the Palaces in August offers a fascinating insight into the grounds.

For further information on BUGA 2021 in Erfurt and on Thuringia's parks and gardens: www.visit-thuringia.de.

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Translating the World. Speaking in letters, tones and colours in Thuringia 500th anniversary of the translation of the New Testament into German to be the tourism theme for Thuringia in 2022

It was a historic event of universal importance: in 1521 the persecuted church reformer Martin Luther found refuge within the walls of Wartburg Castle in Eisenach and started to translate the New Testament from the original Greek into German. His translation, which took only four months to complete, shaped world history. In 2022, Thuringia is celebrating the 500th anniversary of Luther's translation of the New Testament by highlighting the impact that Luther's words have had on letters, tones and colours in Thuringia and beyond. Dr Franz Hofmann, CEO of Thüringer Tourismus GmbH: "These translations have shaped the course of history and have left their mark, especially in Thuringia. That is why we are focusing our campaign for 2022 on the way in which these translations influenced the written word, music and art, and have continued to do so right up to the present day." Thüringer Tourismus GmbH will be promoting this theme across the region from April 2022.

Luther's translation and the written word

Wartburg Castle in Eisenach is a key Luther site

Wartburg in Eisenach was the first German castle to be added to UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites. It has been shaped by many historic events and figures over the centuries. One was Martin Luther, who stayed at the castle for around 300 days from 4 May 1521 and translated the New Testament into German there. The room in which Luther lived and worked has been a destination for countless pilgrims ever since, and it is widely considered to be the cradle of written German. The exhibition '500 years of the New Testament – Luther's Translation' forms part of the campaign for 2022. It will use original sources and multimedia installations to shed light on how the content of the Holy Scriptures was tackled from a theological perspective and with the tools of language. Running from 4 May to 6 November 2022, this informative, entertaining and interactive exhibition will familiarise visitors with the history of the translation and the difficulties it posed.

'Luther and the Bible' at the Luther House in Eisenach

The multi-award-winning exhibition 'Luther and the Bible' is a permanent feature at the Luther House in Eisenach, one of the oldest and most impressive half-timbered buildings in Thuringia. Visitors looking to embark on a journey of historical discovery can look forward to inventive displays and multimedia installations that will educate, entertain and surprise. The exhibition not only examines how and why Luther translated the Bible, but also looks at the fundamental influences that Luther's work has had on language, literature and music. New content is being added for the anniversary year in 2022. The most recent acquisition is the work *man in a cube* by internationally renowned Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, which is on display in the courtyard at the Luther House.

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With his sculpture, Ai Weiwei makes a significant artistic statement about the work and influence of Martin Luther that draws particular attention to the formative power of Luther's language and ideas.

The exhibition 'Study and Eradication. The Church's "Dejudaization Institute" 1939–1945' critically examines Martin Luther's role on the 'dejudaized' New Testament. This highly regarded special exhibition at the Luther House, which has been extended until the end of 2022, sheds light on the emergence, work and influence of the 'Dejudaization Institute' of the Protestant Church.

Luther's words, immortalised in music

Bach and Luther

Five hundred years ago, Luther's translation was of inestimable value to Christians in Germany. For the first time, it was possible for them to read the Bible themselves and to understand it. The translation was an amazing achievement that facilitated the spread of information, something that Johann Sebastian Bach later perpetuated in a different form. In his later musical scores, the great composer took it upon himself to amplify the message of Luther's text through his art.

Johann Sebastian Bach spent 32 years, almost half his life, in various towns and cities in Thuringia. The first six places where he lived and worked are now commonly referred to as 'Thuringia's Bach country', because the Bach family left a musical legacy across the region that still inspires a vibrant music scene today.

The paths of Martin Luther and Johann Sebastian Bach cross nowhere more conspicuously than in Eisenach. This is where the great reformer went to school and later translated the New Testament into German. Bach, meanwhile, was born in Eisenach and went to the same school that Luther had attended. They both had their first music lessons here and sang in the choir at St George's Church. Luther later wrote 35 hymns, and often the accompanying melodies. Bach, who was already familiar with Luther's songs as a child, set many of them to music in his organ chorales, passions and oratorios. In his 'Luther Cantatas', Bach transformed Luther's congregational hymns into opening and closing chorales with rich instrumentation. Several are composed solely from Luther's texts.

Bach House in Eisenach

The Bach House in Eisenach, where Johann Sebastian Bach was born on 21 March 1685, is now home to the world's largest exhibition on Bach's life and music. Visitors to the Bach House can try to learn more about the man behind the phenomenon by reading handwritten notes and, above all, by listening to his music. Bach's music can be heard in a walk-through musical piece with a 180-degree backdrop or through headphones in a bubble chair, and it's possible to experience how Bach may have sounded live at hourly concerts featuring historical instruments. "Bach took the best compositional techniques of the time and became a master of them," says Jörg Hansen, director of the Bach House.

For more information on Bach in Thuringia, visit www.bach-thueringen.de.

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Thuringia Bach Festival starring the Castle of Heaven

Christoph Drescher, managing director of the Thuringia Bach Festival, says of Bach: “I never get bored of him. I find his music simply mesmerising and it never stops surprising me.” The festival features around 50 concerts every year, with most performed in locations associated with Bach. In 2022, the Thuringia Bach Festival will present a number of different projects that will pay tribute, either directly or indirectly, to the anniversary of Luther’s Bible translation at Wartburg Castle. A particular highlight will be the virtual resurrection of the Himmelsburg (Weimar’s court chapel), a dream destination for any Bach fan. Bach worked in Weimar between 1708 and 1717, and the town’s historical court chapel, the ‘Castle of Heaven’, had a defining influence on his music. It was here, working as the court organist, that he composed most of his pioneering organ pieces and, in collaboration with like-minded poets such as Salomo Franck, the 25 or so Weimar cantatas that made his reputation as the grand master of Lutheran church music. Tragically, the Castle of Heaven was destroyed in a fire in 1774. The chapel was a liturgical masterpiece that had a considerable influence on church music and music performance in Bach’s time. Thüringer Tourismus GmbH and the Thuringia Bach Festival have joined forces with universities in Erfurt and Berlin and the Cantus Thuringia & Capella music ensemble on a project to resurrect this building that is so closely associated with Bach. The Castle of Heaven, once thought lost forever, will be brought back to life in 2022 to be experienced in all its audio-visual glory.

Luther’s legacy, reflected in art

In 2022, the federal state of Thuringia – ‘Luther’s country’ – will celebrate the translation of the New Testament into German at Wartburg Castle in 1522, focusing on the written word and its expression in music and art. The impact of Luther’s translation on the latter will be illustrated by outstanding works and exhibitions throughout Thuringia.

In the footsteps of Cranach in Thuringia

The beautifully engraved chain around the neck of Princess Sibylle of Cleves in Weimar; the delicate fabric that barely conceals Aphrodite in Gotha; blood spurting from the torso of the beheaded John the Baptist in Neustadt an der Orla. The Cranachs always painted with remarkable attention to detail. Cranach the Elder is considered a key painter of the German Reformation and produced numerous portraits of Luther and paintings of notable individuals as well as illustrating reformatory texts with his prints. He had several of these texts and the German translation of the New Testament printed in his workshop. Cranach formed a close bond with Martin Luther and his family. He was a witness to his marriage and godfather to his first-born son, Johannes Luther. Cranach was also the only artist to paint a portrait of Luther during his lifetime. Cranach had many connections with Thuringia: he married the daughter of the mayor of Gotha and had important patrons such as the town of Neustadt an der Orla. Cranach the Elder spent his final years in Weimar and is also buried there. Anyone wanting to find out more about the legacy of the Cranach family in Thuringia will discover an impressive collection of paintings and prints here, and can look forward to exhibitions of the highest calibre in 2022.

Cranach's Deluge of Paintings in Weimar

From spring 2022, the historical main building of the Duchess Anna Amalia Library will reopen with a new look. In addition to admiring the library's famous rococo hall, visitors will be able to see an exhibition on Lucas Cranach and the art of the Reformation together with alternating displays of the library's holdings. Entitled 'Cranach's Deluge of Paintings', the exhibition, which will open on 1 April 2022, focuses on Reformation art of the 16th century. It will return to public display the Cranach paintings that have been in storage since June 2018 while the Weimar Stadtschloss undergoes restoration. The exhibition will feature works by Lucas Cranach the Elder, his son Lucas Cranach the Younger and their workshop, and will include paintings, prints and medals, plus the Luther Bible from 1534. A special copy of the Luther Bible from 1534 has been preserved in Weimar. It was enhanced with colour after printing, transforming the book, which had already been elaborately produced, into a truly exceptional copy. In 2015, this copy was included in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register together with other writings by Martin Luther. To mark the 500th anniversary of the Bible translation, the exhibition will display the famous Luther Bible from Weimar dating from 1534 with its magnificently coloured illustrations. The exhibition offers a reflective and contemporary analysis of the linguistic and artistic achievements of Luther and Cranach.

Lost masterpieces in Gotha

The Ducal Museum in Gotha will be hosting another Cranach exhibition as well as the long-lost masterpieces that were recently returned to Gotha after being stolen some 40 years ago. From 23 October 2021, Old Masters such as Holbein's 'St Catherine' and van Dyck's 'Self-Portrait with a Sunflower' will adorn the blue walls of the Ducal Museum. After careful restoration and framing, these paintings will go on display alongside other exceptional works of art in a major special exhibition entitled 'Back again! – The Return of the Lost Masterpieces', which will run until 22 May 2022.

Background information: the life and legacy of Martin Luther in Thuringia

Martin Luther's life and works have close links with Thuringia. He lived as a monk of the then-unified church at the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt from 1505 to 1511, before becoming a reformer and nailing his famous theses to the church door in Wittenberg in 1517 in present-day Saxony-Anhalt. He translated the New Testament into German at Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, and spent time in Schmalkalden to forge the alliance of Protestants against the Catholic Emperor. You can follow in Luther's footsteps in many other towns and cities in Thuringia such as Altenburg, Mühlhausen, Weimar, Jena and Gotha. The Luther Trail, which is just over a thousand kilometres in length, connects important Luther sites and places associated with the Reformation. It also passes through a variety of different landscapes and offers the option of scenic shorter walks. The trail is marked by a green letter 'L' on a white background.

For more information about the theme for 2022, please visit weltkultur.thueringen-entdecken.de or contact Thüringer Tourismus GmbH on +49 (0)361 37420, by email to service@thueringen-entdecken.de or online at www.thueringen-entdecken.de.

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Exploring Erfurt A tour of Thuringia's state capital

“Erfurt is in the ideal location. The perfect place for a city” is what church reformer Martin Luther once said about this commercial hub. And to this day, the welcoming and multi-faceted state capital of Thuringia certainly offers plenty of things to see and do. From the Merchants’ Bridge to the Old Synagogue and the cathedral, Erfurt is home to many cultural treasures. But it also has a young, student vibe about it. A great mix for anyone who enjoys exploring cities on foot. Erfurt’s glorious medieval centre, for example, is abundant with shops, cafés and restaurants that simply ooze charm and character.

One of Germany’s best-preserved medieval centres

Erfurt, the state capital of Thuringia, was founded more than 1,250 years ago. It brings the Middle Ages to life in many places and boasts one of the biggest and best-preserved medieval centres in Germany. In 2019, Erfurt’s old quarter came third in a ranking of Germany’s old quarters voted for by the readers of TRAVELBOOK. Not to be missed, for example, is the impressive backdrop from Erfurt Cathedral and St Severus Church to medieval Domplatz square, the Merchants’ Bridge – with the longest series of inhabited buildings on any bridge in Europe – and the grand town houses on Fischmarkt square, to name just a few of Erfurt’s marvellous sights.

A stroll across the Merchants’ Bridge in Erfurt

Walking across the Merchants’ Bridge is a memorable experience. Initially built of wood, the bridge was rebuilt in stone in 1325 and connected the settlements and markets on either side of the river Gera. Small dwellings line the narrow, cobbled street on either side. Generations of merchants and artisans have lived and worked on this bridge, and continue to do so; currently there are over 50 here. All manner of artists and artisans ply their trade in the 32 medieval houses. Many have won multiple awards and are considered experts or leading exponents in their field. Everything that is made, sold or presented here is quite simply the best of the best. For the first time since the bridge was built 700 years ago, the merchants, artists and artisans are sharing a joint – digital – platform to showcase themselves. Over 40 shops, ideas, and networks on the 125 metre long bridge can now be experienced online, with 360-degree views included. So it is now possible to visit the shops and workshops outside of opening hours too. www.kraemerbruecke-erfurt.de

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The Federal Horticultural Exhibition in 2021

The highlight and focus for tourism in Thuringia this year is the 2021 Federal Horticultural Show in Erfurt, running from 23 April to 17 October 2021. Erfurt has been hosting horticultural exhibitions since 1865. In 2021, it will reconnect with this heritage, as the **2021 Federal Horticultural Show (BUGA)** comes to the original home of garden shows and takes over two remarkable Erfurt exhibition venues – historical **Petersberg Citadel** and **egapark**, the garden of Thuringia. At BUGA 2021, visitors to Erfurt can look forward to a sea of flowers and blossoms covering some 80,000m², with the egapark venue featuring around 15,000m² of plants and flowers, rotating on a seasonal basis, that are sure to delight visitors. Themed gardens, herbaceous perennials and rotating ornamental flowerbeds will be completely reshaped according to layouts created by renowned garden and landscape designers. The new Danakil desert and jungle centre will also open its doors in time for the BUGA.

The second major venue of the Federal Horticultural Show in Erfurt will be Petersberg Citadel, the largest baroque fortress in Europe. In 2021, the hill above the lively old quarter will be completely transformed for 171 days, revealing much of its more than 1,000 years of history. The design will include 'Gardens of the Ages' and special exhibits in the moat that recall Erfurt's history as the birthplace of professional horticulture. In the defensive barracks, the Free State will be promoting Thuringia as a travel destination, while the beauty of the region's gardens and parks will be the subject of a new exhibition on show in St Peter's Church during the BUGA.

Erfurt was and remains the centre of Jewish life in Thuringia

The centre of Jewish life in Thuringia, then as now, was the state capital Erfurt. In the Middle Ages, the city was one of the largest settlements in the Holy Roman Empire, an economic and cultural hub at the crossroads of important trade routes. From the late 11th century onwards there was also a Jewish community there, which had a synagogue, a cemetery and a mikveh. Many reminders of Jewish life have survived in Erfurt and highlight the eventful history of the Jewish communities since the Middle Ages. These include the Old Synagogue, the medieval mikveh and the old and new Jewish cemeteries. The Old Synagogue dates back to 1094 and is one of the oldest in Europe. As it had been used for many different purposes over the centuries, first as a warehouse, then later as a restaurant and dance hall, it was not identified as a synagogue and thus not destroyed during the Third Reich, so that it remains in exceptionally good condition today. It is now home to the Erfurt Treasure and the largest known medieval Torah. The Erfurt Treasure's remarkable wedding ring and other exhibits relating to love, weddings and marriage is on display in the 'With this ring ... – Jewish weddings in the Middle Ages' exhibition running from 29 October 2020 to 14 March 2021.

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Application for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage list

The largely intact medieval old town of Erfurt contains unique architectural evidence of its Jewish community from the period between the end of the 11th and the middle of the 14th century. These architectural reminders are complemented by an unparalleled wealth of exhibits. Together, they shine a light on the religious and everyday life of the Jewish community, and reveal how Jews and Christians lived side by side in medieval towns. No other place in the world offers such a comprehensive insight, which is why Erfurt, the state capital of Thuringia, has applied for UNESCO World Heritage status for its Jewish legacy.

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Charming Weimar

A journey through the ages in the city's parks and gardens

Weimar. Weimar owes its reputation as a hub of culture, art and modernism to many famous people, such as the German classical poets Goethe and Schiller, the musicians Johann Sebastian Bach and Franz Liszt, and the avant-gardists of the Bauhaus. In 2021, the focus will not be on them, however, it will be on Weimar's parks and gardens. Six of these will be outdoor venues for the 2021 Federal Horticultural Exhibition, where they can be explored as part of an extensive programme of events.

Visitors to Weimar have always enjoyed its parks. In 2021, they will be showcased in a variety of ways during Klassik Stiftung Weimar's 'New nature' events, offering a horticultural journey through the ages. From 17 April 2021, visitors to Weimar can look forward to new and modern exhibitions, the visitor centre in Park an der Ilm, the Weimar 'Gartenlust' Festival and orange tree procession in Belvedere Palace, and numerous walks, lectures and opportunities to get involved.

2021 also marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Lyonel Feininger, a Bauhaus master with close links to the city and the surrounding landscapes and villages. The German-American painter will be the subject of a special 'Nature & Bauhaus' exhibition at the Bauhaus Museum, also from 17 April. Numerous activities such as guided tours of Weimar and tours along the Feininger Cycle Route provide ample opportunity to explore the artist's life and legacy.

Reminders of Weimar Classicism, such as the poets' houses, the grand palaces and the Duchess Anna Amalia Library are just some of the city's most popular attractions. They and the sites of the Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius in 1919, are part of Weimar's UNESCO World Heritage. There are 14 ensembles in total, all reflecting Germany's cultural and artistic history.

Three new museums are dedicated to Modernism and the period of the Weimar Republic. In the city where it all began, the Bauhaus Museum tells the story of how the Bauhaus was founded. Just a few minutes' walk away, the 'Art and Design around 1900' exhibition at the Museum Neues Weimar recalls Weimar Modernism and the forerunners of the Bauhaus movement. The history of Germany's first attempt at democracy in 1919, meanwhile, is told in the new House of the Weimar Republic.

Weimar has also been shaped by the Third Reich. The former concentration camp in Buchenwald bears testimony to the atrocities committed under the Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945. Around half a million people visit the memorial site every year to see the camp and the '1937 to 1945' exhibition.

Visitors to Weimar are attracted not just by the city's museums. As well as art and exhibitions, the cultural offering includes concerts and theatre and a superb calendar of events. The festival season begins in April with the Thuringia Bach Festival, followed by comedy and variety acts at the Köstritzer Mirror Marquee in May and June, and the Whitsun Festival at Ettersburg Palace. Then there are the open-air concerts on the floating stage in Weimarahallenpark from June to August, and the arts festival. Thuringia's oldest festival, the

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Weimar Onion Fair, takes place in autumn. Much like Weimar's Christmas Market, the fair is a popular draw for people from far and wide.

Visitors can also enjoy the city's culinary side. Both the traditional Thuringian bratwurst (the region's number one fast food!) and the Thuringian dumplings are real crowd-pleasers. Then there's Weimar beer, and wine from the local Werkstück Weimar estate – so many things to try!

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Almost a thousand years of history Wartburg Castle, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site

Wartburg in Eisenach was the first German castle to be added to UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites. It has been shaped by many historic events and figures over the centuries. Figures such as Walther von der Vogelweide, Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia, Richard Wagner and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe have all contributed to its considerable historical significance. The castle is one of the best-preserved secular buildings of the late Romanesque period north of the Alps and provided, among other things, the blueprint for Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria.

Martin Luther at Wartburg Castle

Martin Luther's stay here in 1521 is without doubt a key event. The persecuted church reformer found refuge in the castle and translated the New Testament from the original Greek into German. The room in which Luther lived and worked has been a destination for countless pilgrims ever since, and it is widely considered to be the cradle of written German. In 2021 and 2022, Eisenach and Wartburg Castle will be celebrating the 500th anniversary of Luther's translation of the New Testament. The festival will open in the Palas (Great Hall) on 12 September 2021 with a jazz concert held under the banner 'Luther's Bible Leak / Jazz, Dance and Theses'. The anniversary will also be the focus of the 'Luther's arrival – everyday life at Wartburg Castle' exhibition. From 4 May 2021 to 27 February 2022, the exhibition will explore Luther's day-to-day life during his ten-month stay at Wartburg Castle in the first quarter of the 16th century. The award-winning German writers Thea Dorn, Martin Mosebach and Senthuran Varatharajah will be exploring Luther's Bible from March 2021 onwards, with each writer in residence at Wartburg Castle for four weeks. Working close to the room where Luther wrote, they will enter into an inner dialogue with Luther's Bible and each compose a literary text. Their writing process will be documented and the results published.

Musical tradition at Wartburg Castle

In the Middle Ages, Wartburg Castle was the site of the legendary Singers' Contest. The castle is still a popular venue today, as the exceptional acoustics in the ceremonial hall are a draw for music lovers from around the world. The performances of Wagner's opera 'Tannhäuser and the Singers' Contest at Wartburg Castle' are the stuff of legend – after all, you are experiencing this romantic opera in its actual setting. The castle is also the venue for the MDR Summer of Music, the largest music festival in central Germany.

Fraternity meetings in the 19th century

In the 19th century, students from across the German states converged on Wartburg Castle with the aim of uniting as one nation. It was at these meetings that the colours and the design of the German national flag were chosen.

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Visit to Wartburg Castle

The walk up to the castle on foot, or a ride on the back of a donkey for younger visitors, is rewarded with magnificent views of the Thuringian countryside. During the festive season, visitors can enjoy the historical Christmas market, where artisans of almost-forgotten crafts, including candle, soap, robe and lantern makers, stonemasons, herbalists, pewterers and travelling traders, offer their goods for sale. On a guided tour of the castle's rooms or a visit to the museum – with its famous paintings by Lucas Cranach, priceless tapestries and furniture, Tilman Riemenschneider sculptures and Renaissance arts and crafts – you are surrounded at every step by history, culture and the arts. The castle can only be visited as part of a guided tour, for which audio guides are available in a number of languages. The five-star Wartburg Hotel guarantees a memorable stay just a stone's throw from the castle.

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Bach connects A journey of discovery in Thuringia

You never get bored of his music, and you never really get to the bottom of it. Bach always has a surprise in store – especially in Thuringia, where you can experience the great composer's works at sites closely associated with his life and legacy. A journey of discovery in Thuringia.

The Toccata begins, and then it happens: the sound easily fills more than just the church. Suddenly everything feels larger and more expansive. Life, your soul and even this moment here in the Bach Church in Arnstadt. Once you are touched by Bach's music, it will never let you go. Hearing it live is particularly impressive, even more so at a location where Bach himself had been. This is possible all year round in Thuringia, where the composer was born and where he spent a large part of his life.

Bach Church in Arnstadt

For example, in Arnstadt: Jörg Reddin, cantor at the Bach Church, is sitting at the organ and playing Bach. He pulls the organ stops, steps on the pedal, and his hands glide across the keys – in the same place where a young Bach sat so often. This is where the composer got his first job as an organist in 1703. "Johann Sebastian Bach played three organ services a week," says Reddin. "But there's a lot more to this role nowadays; in addition to church services, there are the concerts and the tours." Reddin laughs. He thinks nothing of it; for him the work in Arnstadt is a welcome challenge. "There aren't that many jobs where you directly follow in Bach's footsteps," he adds. He first heard the famous Toccata in D minor when he was ten years old, and now Reddin records music himself, including organ music composed by Bach.

Bach's life in Thuringia

The most important milestones in the life of the organist and *kapellmeister* Johann Sebastian Bach are well-known: he was born in Eisenach in 1685 and died in Leipzig in 1750. The young Johann Sebastian spent the first years of his life in Eisenach. When his parents died within a short space of time, the nine-year-old went to live with his older brother in nearby Ohrdruf. It is said that he would wake during the night and secretly copy pieces from his brother's collection of sheet music. Some years later, Bach finished school in Lüneburg. He played the violin, sang in a choir and took organ lessons. In 1703, he was appointed the organist in Arnstadt; other positions in Mühlhausen and Weimar followed, and later he moved to Köthen and Leipzig.

The church where Bach got married

Bach met his first big love in Thuringia. At the age of 22, he married his cousin, Maria Barbara, at the Church of St Bartholomew in Dornheim – on a beautiful autumn day, according to his biographies. As you walk through the village, you can just imagine the scene as the wedding party made their way on foot from Arnstadt. Today, you can visit the lovingly restored Church of St Bartholomew and hear the story of Bach's wedding. The church is still a popular place to get married, and Bach enthusiasts from as far as Asia have travelled here to say 'I do'.

The Bach House in Eisenach

In the Bach House in Eisenach, the world's largest Bach museum, you can catch a glimpse of the man behind the phenomenon as you walk through the living quarters. They might not be the original ones, but they are probably similar. You can peruse handwritten notes, but most important of all, you can listen to Bach, either in a walk-through musical piece with a 180-degree screen or in a bubble chair with headphones on. You can also experience how Bach may have sounded live at hourly concerts featuring historical instruments. The music and the story of his life may intertwine, but you realise that you never really get a handle on Bach the person. In the end, the music is all that remains.

"Bach took the best compositional techniques of the time and became a master of them," says Dr Jörg Hansen, director of the Bach House. "He brought together many influences and focused on polyphony, so that each instrument is an equal in the piece." The individual sounds play together, they take turns and they tempt and tease each other. "You never really get to the bottom of Bach," says Dr Hansen. Christoph Drescher, the managing director of the Thuringia Bach Festival, expresses his feelings about Bach as follows: "I never get bored of him. I find his music simply mesmerising and it never stops surprising me. I might be at a concert and think 'I've heard the Goldberg Variations a thousand times, but never like this pianist is playing it'. This is what keeps my fascination with Bach alive."

There are many places in Thuringia where you can get close to the great composer and his music:

10 travel tips for Bach in Thuringia:

- **The Bach House in Eisenach:** the world's largest Bach museum, where visitors can listen to hourly performances of his music featuring historical instruments.
- **The Johann Sebastian Bach Church in Arnstadt:** Bach began his musical career here as an 18-year-old in the summer of 1703. The organ, which still contains some original parts, can be heard during concerts and organ tours.
- **Church of St Bartholomew in Dornheim:** Bach married his first wife, Maria Barbara Bach, here on 17 October 1707. Church tours are available, and you can still get married here too.

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- ***An unusual Bach statue in Arnstadt:*** the Bach statue on market square is a good place to start a tour of Arnstadt. The bronze piece was unveiled in 1985 and depicts a young and relaxed Bach reclining on a seat.
- ***Parish church of St Blasius and Bach statue in Mühlhausen:*** Bach worked here as an organist from 1707 to 1708. Tours of the church and the organ, including sound samples, can be arranged through the tourist information office. There is also a Bach statue to the north-west of the Parish church of St Blasius.
- ***Bach family home in Wechmar:*** a permanent exhibition explores the life and legacy of the Bach family in Wechmar. You can also see the extensive Bach family tree here.
- ***St George's Church in Eisenach:*** Johann Sebastian Bach was christened in St George's Church in 1685. You can still see the original baptismal font today.
- ***The Bachs of Erfurt:*** Artists called Bach were active in Erfurt long before Johann Sebastian Bach was born. The residents were so taken with the musicians' skill that the Bachs became synonymous with the musical profession in Erfurt.
- ***Listen to Bach:*** The Thuringia Bach Festival is the most famous Bach festival in the region. There many other Bach festivals, such as the Eisenach Bach Festival, the Arnstadt Bach Festival, the Bach Cantata Academy and the Bach Advent in Arnstadt. Dates for 2021 are still to be confirmed.
- ***Bach in Thuringia:*** Three multimedia venues in Mühlhausen, Arnstadt and Weimar, an updated exhibition in Arnstadt and twelve audio stations offer even more ways to experience Bach in Thuringia. The twelve audio stations, designed to look like Bach organs, have already become a huge draw. Five interactive stations have also been created along the Bach Cycle Route. They all tell the story of Bach's life in Thuringia and let you listen to his music, and they all include an interactive element.

For more information about Bach in Thuringia, visit www.bach-thueringen.de. For holidays in Thuringia, please contact Thüringer Tourismus GmbH on +49 (0)361 37420, by email to service@thueringen-entdecken.de or online at www.thueringen-entdecken.de

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Thuringia's castles and palaces

The Central German state of Thuringia may be small, but it packs in more than its fair share of historical sites. There are more than 400 castles and palaces, many of which have been the setting for important moments in German history. Here are three recommendations for places to visit.

A thousand years of history: Wartburg Castle in Eisenach Germany's only castle to claim UNESCO World Heritage status stands in Eisenach. With a history of around 1,000 years, many historical references and a romantic location in the western Thuringian Forest it is a definite must-see place. The castle served as a residence for the Thuringian landgraves in the Middle Ages. It is linked with the life of Saint Elisabeth, the German Reformation and the fight for a German national state in the 19th century. Richard Wagner's 'Tannhäuser' is set here. The composer was inspired by the romantic looks of the place. He wove history and legends together and created the romantic opera, which is now inextricably linked with Wartburg Castle.

A playful porcelain experience: Leuchtenburg Castle in the Saale valley Leuchtenburg Castle in the Saale river valley is part of Thuringia's Porcelain Route and houses the exhibition 'The Porcelain Experience'. The entertaining, modern exhibition plays with myths and stories around 'the white gold', whose production has a tradition of around 300 years in Thuringia. Multimedia and hands-on installations provide for a lot of fun; among the most outstanding exhibits are the world's biggest porcelain vase (8 m high) and the world's smallest porcelain teapot (4 mm small). In an 'archive of wishes', visitors can inscribe a wish on a porcelain plate. The room is linked with an outdoor skywalk above a ravine, from where the plate with the inscription can be thrown to break on the rocks below. Breaking the plate is believed to make the wish come true...

A journey into the Baroque: Friedenstein Palace in Gotha Friedenstein Palace in Gotha was built after the Thirty Years War as a residence of Duke Ernest the Pious. The palace is the largest early baroque structure of its kind in Germany. The rather plain outer appearance pays tribute to the protestant beliefs of the builder. Its interior, however, is a glamorous parade through the centuries, from Baroque to Classicism. The palace tour takes visitors through the ducal rooms and sheds light on the relations of the Gotha dukes with the royal families of Europe. In the western tower the Ekhof Theatre, an exquisite baroque court theatre, can be seen. It has remained fully intact, including wooden stage machinery, since the late 1600s. Every year in summer, during the Ekhof Festival, the theatre comes alive again with baroque drama and music performances. Close to the palace is the Ducal Museum, founded by Ernest II of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, brother-in-law of Queen Victoria. It provides impressive proof for the ducal passion of collecting art, antiquities and curiosities from all over the world.

For more information about Thuringia please go to www.visit-thuringia.com.

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UNESCO World Heritage in Thuringia Discover Thuringia's World Heritage treasures

With four entries on the UNESCO list, Thuringia has more World Heritage than almost any other region of Germany. Its UNESCO World Heritage sites, Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, the Classical Weimar ensemble, the Bauhaus in Weimar and Hainich National Park, are a mix of impressive cultural assets and stunning natural beauty. Elsewhere, exceptional holiday experiences are guaranteed in the Thuringian Forest and the Rhön Hills UNESCO biosphere reserves. They are two of 15 model regions in Germany that represent the diversity of the country's habitats, fauna and flora, and serve as educational sites for sustainable development.

Wartburg Castle: a UNESCO World Heritage site with almost a thousand years of history

Wartburg was the first German castle to be added to UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites. The building is the most famous landmark in Eisenach and has been shaped by many historic events and personalities over the centuries. Figures such as Walther von der Vogelweide, Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia, Richard Wagner and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe have all contributed to its considerable historical significance. The castle is one of the best-preserved secular buildings of the late Romanesque period north of the Alps and provided, among other things, the blueprint for Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria. Martin Luther's stay here in the late 16th century is without doubt a key event. The persecuted church reformer found refuge in the castle and translated the New Testament from the original Greek into German. The room in which Luther lived and worked has been a destination for countless pilgrims ever since, and it is widely considered to be the cradle of written German. Wartburg Castle is still full of life today, as the exceptional acoustics in the ceremonial hall are a draw for music lovers from around the world. The performances of Wagner's opera 'Tannhäuser and the Singers' Contest at Wartburg Castle' are the stuff of legend – after all, you are experiencing this romantic opera in its actual setting. The castle is also the venue for the MDR Summer of Music, the largest music festival in central Germany. The walk up to the castle on foot, or a ride on the back of a donkey for younger visitors, is rewarded with magnificent views of the Thuringian countryside. During the festive season, visitors can enjoy the historic Christmas market, where artisans of almost-forgotten crafts, including candle, soap, robe and lantern makers, stonemasons, herbalists, pewterers and travelling traders, offer their goods for sale.

Classical Weimar: the 13 sites that make up Weimar's UNESCO World Heritage

A mere 50 kilometres or so along the motorway lies Weimar, where visitors can look forward to many memorable encounters with classical literature. In Weimar, you can still very much feel the spirit of famous writers and poets: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Christoph Martin Wieland, Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Schiller all played their part in ensuring that this former royal seat became a hub for writers and philosophers in the late 18th and early 19th century. Original books and manuscripts by these classical masters are on display in the Duchess Anna Amalia Library. The Goethe House, a baroque building that was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's home for almost 50 years, is now one of the most important examples of Weimar Classicism. Visitors can take a look

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around the poet's grand living quarters, including the rooms where he worked and where he slept, and the reception room with its collection of historical keepsakes. Just a stone's throw away, Schiller's House is a reminder of the last three years of Friedrich Schiller's life, which he spent in Weimar. It was here that he wrote his last great dramas, 'The Bride of Messina' and 'William Tell'. Classical Weimar includes other significant UNESCO World Heritage sites, such as the Residence Palace, Wittums Palace, Herder Church, Herder House and Old High School, and the Park on the Ilm. These sites can be experienced either on the award-winning Belvedere Express tour, the old-fashioned way in a horse-drawn carriage or on foot along the charming paths through the parks.

The Bauhaus World Heritage sites in Weimar

The town on the river Ilm is actually home to two UNESCO World Heritage sites. Alongside its importance as a centre of classical thinking, Weimar is also synonymous with revolutionary ideas in design and architecture. To this day, the Bauhaus is regarded as a pioneer of classical modernism in all areas of the liberal and applied arts. The heart of Weimar's Bauhaus sites is the main building of the Bauhaus University, the cradle of the movement. It was here that Walter Gropius gave the art school the name 'Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar' in spring 1919. He managed to attract international avant garde artists such as Lyonel Feininger, Johannes Itten, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Oskar Schlemmer and László Moholy-Nagy to Thuringia and thus boost the art school's profile. Bauhaus fans should definitely take time for a student-led stroll around the Bauhaus University with its original staircases, murals and Gropius's office. In 2019, the town acquired a new cultural quarter, where the striking new Bauhaus Museum Weimar and the redesigned Museum Neues Weimar lie within close proximity of one another. The Bauhaus Museum Weimar features treasures from the oldest Bauhaus collection, while the Museum Neues Weimar is dedicated to early modernist art.

Hainich National Park – ancient woodland in the heart of Germany

Hainich National Park is part of the 'Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe' UNESCO World Heritage site. One of the most popular attractions here is without doubt the rare wildcat. If you listen closely, keep still and are very patient, you might spot one of these shy forest dwellers. Around 30 wildcats currently live in the national park, but anyone who doesn't manage to catch a glimpse of one in the wild can see them up close in the Wildcat Village in Hütscheroda. Also impressive is the number of forest bats, woodpeckers and rare spring flowers that call the national park their home. This type of dense beech forest only exists in Europe, and nowhere else in the world.

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The best way to discover the national park is on one of the many marked trails, of which there are more than 100 kilometres. On a tour with the ranger, visitors can learn fascinating facts about the national park's extraordinary trees and rare animal species. Guided walks are available at weekends and on public holidays from May to October. There is no minimum group size and no need to book in advance.

Visitors can enjoy magnificent views over the entire national park from the canopy walk as it winds its way through the treetops for more than 500 metres. Taking in the heights from up there or joining a lofty yoga session are just two ways to get a completely different perspective of Hainich National Park. An overnight stay in a tree house or teepee in the Urwald-Life-Camp is a real adventure in the heart of the national park.

Application for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage list

The largely intact medieval old town of Erfurt contains unique architectural evidence of its Jewish community from the period between the end of the 11th and the middle of the 14th century. These architectural reminders are complemented by an unparalleled wealth of exhibits. Together, they shine a light on the religious and everyday life of the Jewish community, and reveal how Jews and Christians lived side by side in medieval towns. No other place in the world offers such a comprehensive insight, which is why Erfurt, the state capital of Thuringia, has applied for UNESCO World Heritage status for its Jewish legacy.

For more information about holidays in Thuringia: www.visit-thuringia.com

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The Rennsteig in the Thuringian Forest

The Rennsteig in the Thuringian Forest is Germany's best-known ridge trail, and on the must-do list of many active holidaymakers such as hikers, mountain-bikers or winter sports fans. The nature of the Thuringian Forest with its varied landscape, protected biosphere areas and panoramic views contributes to the charm of the around 700-year old mountain trail, which covers approximately 169,3 km in total.

From a traffic route to a hikers' dream path

In 1830, Julius von Plänckner, a topographer from Gotha covered the whole length of the Rennsteig trail on foot. He was the first (documented) person to do so. His reports made the Rennsteig known among nature fans. The historical traffic route, which also marked the borders between various principalities, local dialects and culinary preferences, developed into a destination for hikers. Today, the Rennsteig is a must-do for any self-respecting German hiker and increasingly so for guests from outside the country. Following the trail is easy as the route is well signposted by a capital white "R". Hikers who want to do the whole trail in one go, need approximately one week for it – no problem with luggage transfers and accommodation in little villages and towns en route. All bookable in advance.

Sights on and around the Rennsteig

If you love to combine the pleasures of nature and cultural experiences, the Rennsteig is a good option. The trail leads past the highest peaks of the Thuringian Forest, such as the Inselsberg, Großer Beerberg or Schneekopf. Towns like Schmalkalden with its wealth of timber-framed architecture, Meiningen and its ducal palace, or Lauscha, the birthplace of glass Christmas decoration, lie directly on or close to the trail and provide for cultural breaks *en route*. In Oberhof, you can find winter sports facilities where the German Olympic athletes do their training and where international sports events are held. The all-year-round skiing hall and the bobsleigh run are also open to visitors. Top-class cultural attractions await Rennsteig visitors in Eisenach: the town is home to the famous Wartburg Castle and the birthplace of composer Johann Sebastian Bach.

Rennsteig Cycling Trail

Cyclist and mountain-bikers will find a challenging terrain on the Rennsteig. They should bring along some physical fitness, however. In total, the Rennsteig Cycling Trail covers a distance of 199 km. Other than the hikers' route, the cycling and mountain biking trail only partly follows the original Rennsteig. In return, it offers some attractive side paths with real downhill feeling. The climbs and elevations will satisfy the sportier cyclists. All in all, climbs of around 3,500 metres have to be mastered throughout the course.

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Europe's largest cross-country race

Europe's largest cross-country race event takes place on Rennsteig.

Around 15,000 runners from all over Europe join the annual spectacle in mid-May. The race is among the most attractive marathons of Europe as it involves the beautiful scenery of the Thuringian Forest. However, it is also among the most demanding with competitions such as a super marathon (73,9 km), in addition to a regular marathon and a half-marathon. For enthusiasts who do not feel quite as ready for the ultimate challenges there are hiking and Nordic walking events that cover shorter distances. (website: rennsteiglauf.de)

Cross-country skiing in winter

In winter, the Rennsteig trail becomes Europe's longest cross-country skiing trail, with 142km reserved for skiing. In addition, there are 530 km of winter hiking trails as well as regions for downhill skiers, who can make use of over 30 ski lifts. Popular winter sports centres are the regions around Oberhof, Masserberg and Steinach.

For more information about active holidays, restaurants and hotels on Rennsteig, please go to www.visit-thuringia.com.

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The green Belt in Thuringia Nature knows no borders

'Nature knows no borders' is the name of a joint campaign of the Thuringian Department of the Environment and the Thuringian Tourism Board, aiming at developing Thuringia's Green Belt as a destination for travellers. The fact that the area was inaccessible for people over decades has created a special biotope where rare species have found a place to live. In 2018, the 763 km long Thuringian Green Belt was made a National Monument.

Hiking through the National Natural Monument

Several hiking routes lead through the National Monument and take visitors to forests, meadows, river valleys and viewing points. The Thuringian Green Belt forms a unique landscape, where nature and history are part of a rather contemplative experience. Approximately 1,200 endangered species live here, on an area covering 6.500 hectares. Tours take you through the Eichsfeld region, the Rhön and the Thuringian Forest. Border museums await visitors to allow insights into the time of Germany's separation and life at the border.

Little Berlin in Southern Thuringia

Mödlareuth in Southern Thuringia is often called 'Little Berlin'. Just like its much bigger namesake it had been split into two halves by a wall for decades. The village had long had a Bavarian and a Thuringian part, with the little Tannbach marking the border line. After World War II, this became a problem: the Bavarian part came under American administration whereas the Thuringian part was incorporated into the Soviet zone. Today, about 100 metres of the wall in 'Little Berlin' are preserved as a monument. They belong to the German-German Museum in the village. Annually about 80,000 people visit Mödlareuth, which only has around 40 inhabitants.

Rural idyll in the Eichsfeld: Hof Sickenberg

A terrace amid a romantic farmer's garden, home-baked cakes, vegetables and fruit from the garden and the scent of fresh-baked bread in the air: Hof Sickenberg in the Eichsfeld is a rural idyll. The 200-year old farm house used to stand right at the separation line between East and West. For a long time, the timber-framed building had been left to decay, until after the unification of Germany Kristina Bauer, an agricultural engineer from Göttingen, bought the building and turned it into a picturesque pension with café. Now it has become an insider tip for romantics and a beautiful place to rest your soul in the middle of nature. Not far from the historical farm yard is the border museum Schiffilersgrund. It shows old military vehicles and helicopters from East German times along with the longest preserved part of East German border installations.

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Point Alpha – the hottest spot in the Cold War

Point Alpha was the name of a US observation post in the so-called ‘Fulda gap’, the hottest spot in the Cold War, where NATO expected the Warsaw Pact to strike in a worst-case scenario. Today located at the Green Belt, the observation post and the old border installations form a memorial and a museum. A hiking path takes you there and to the ‘House on the Border’ museum. The exhibition focuses on everyday life at the border and shows watch towers, border installations, photographs and documents. The 14.6 km long hiking path leads along the ‘route of hope’, where 14 monumental sculptures by artist Ulrich Barnickel mark a stretch of the former death strip between Hesse and Thuringia.

For a sustainable future

Treasure chamber of nature and memorial for later generations: Thuringia’s Green Belt attracts above all visitors who seek intensive experiences, a dialogue with nature away from mass tourism. Traditional agricultural management plays an important role here, and ‘green’ local concepts’ help develop a sustainable tourism to the region. Nature forms a comforting contrast to the past. And the fact that the traces of the German separation are beginning to disappear under a carpet of trees and wild plants stands symbolically for the power of the good and the hope that it will overcome the evil, eventually.

You can find more information on Thuringia on www.visit-thuringia.com.

For the Thuringian Green Belt please visit www.gruenes-band-monumental.de.

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A is for Anna Amalia. The Duchess of Saxe-Weimar and Eisenach was an intellectual and brought poets and philosophers to her court in Weimar as tutors for her son Carl August. She not only founded one of the first royal libraries open to the public but was also a patron of art and culture.

B is for Bratwurst. The Thuringian bratwurst is popular far beyond the region. Its original recipe has been kept secret for over 600 years – the well-known basic ingredients include pork, marjoram, garlic and caraway.

C is for Clueso. Erfurt's singer-songwriter Clueso is known for his melodic and melancholic tunes and thought-provoking lyrics. His collaborations with Udo Lindenberg, Max Herre and Die Fantastischen Vier have brought him fame throughout Germany.

D is for Deutsches Reinheitsgebot. Germany's famous beer purity law, first passed in 1434 in the Thuringian town of Weissensee under its Latin name 'statuta thaberna'. Brewers who added other ingredients to their beer besides hops, water and malt risked a fine of two marks and expulsion from the town.

E is for Erfurt. Thuringia's state capital has one of Europe's most beautiful old quarters. The medieval centre with its many churches and restored town houses contains some real gems. Strolling along the Merchants' Bridge (Krämerbrücke) and the charming alleys, visitors will find shops that reflect the young, creative scene in Erfurt. And as night falls, the pubs, clubs and bars come to buzzing life.

F is for Froebel star. A Froebel star is more than just a pretty Christmas decoration, it also has an educational function. When Friedrich Fröbel developed the successful concept of kindergartens in the 19th century, the focus was on providing an environment in which small children could learn. Specially developed materials and games were used to help with this. Folding Froebel stars from strips of paper hones children's fine motor skills and remains part of the educational programme in a Froebel kindergarten.

G is for Gropius. Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus Weimar in 1919, and by bringing together arts and crafts he revolutionised design, architecture and art. Minimalist furniture and buildings were created using geometric shapes and a colour palette of red, yellow and blue. Artist such as Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger and László Moholy-Nagy taught in the Bauhaus workshops.

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H is for Health. Thuringia's unspoiled countryside provides the stunning backdrop for 18 spas and health resorts spread throughout the Free State. From massages using Thuringian forest moss to baths in a salt pool or invigorating walks through salt-evaporation works, the region's natural remedies offer health, beauty and fitness, and many opportunities to restore your energy levels.

I is for (Grosser) Inselsberg. At 916.5 metres high, Grosser Inselsberg is a real draw for visitors. It might not be the highest peak in the Thuringian Forest, but it is certainly the most striking. Its plateau offers panoramic views over Thuringia's vast forests, the Rhön hills and as far as Mount Brocken in the Harz mountains.

J is for Johann Sebastian Bach. Born in Eisenach, the great composer and musician was Thuringian through and through. Bach got his first job as an organist in Arnstadt, and lived in Mühlhausen for a year with his wife, Maria Barbara, before they moved to Weimar, where he became the court organist. The young Johann Sebastian was rebellious and headstrong, and certainly left his mark on the Free State.

K is for Klassikerstadt Weimar. Known as the home of classicism, Weimar has played host to a long list of notable personalities, including Goethe, Schiller, Bach, Liszt, Cranach and Nietzsche. Numerous museums and memorials are dedicated to them and to their legacies. The town remains a centre of art and culture to this day, and its history is reflected in its beautiful old town houses and the romantic ruins in Ilm Park.

L is for Lauscha. The small town in the Thuringian Forest is the home of Christmas decorations, and a real festive hotspot. In the 19th century, a poor glassblower invented the beautiful baubles because he could not afford the traditional red apples used to decorate the tree. Numerous glass manufactories are still located here and invite visitors to watch the glassblowers at work.

M is for Martin Luther. The church reformer has left his mark throughout the region. Luther entered a monastery in Erfurt, translated the New Testament at Wartburg Castle disguised as Squire George while hiding from the emperor, and published his Schmalkaldic Articles in the town of Schmalkalden. Visitors can explore his legacy all along the Thuringian Luther Trail, which runs for more than 1,000 kilometres.

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N is for National Park. Hainich National Park is one of the last ancient forests and the largest contiguous area of deciduous forest in Germany. This wild landscape is the perfect place for hiking or for a spot of 'forest bathing'. The canopy walk offers stunning views of the treetops from dizzying heights.

O is for Original Thuringian dumplings. No feast is complete without Thuringian dumplings. Each region has its own recipe and a different name for these round delights. In Meiningen, Mother Hulda is said to have handed over her own recipe to the mayor with the words "Hüte es!", or "Guard it well!". Ever since, the dumplings have been known locally as 'Hütes'.

P is for Point Alpha. A memorial now stands where the two German states, and therefore NATO and the Warsaw Pact, once faced each other. The former US camp OP Alpha, the Haus auf der Grenze (house on the border) and the reconstructed border installations tell the history of the two Germanys and the Cold War.

Q is for Quality walks. The entire state can be explored on 22 quality-certified walking routes that cover a wide range of landscapes and various themes, among them the Rennsteig Trail, the Luther Trail, the Hochrhöner Trail and the Schwarza Valley Panoramic Trail. Stunning views and the region's natural beauty provide a captivating backdrop to any walk.

R is for Rennsteig. The Rennsteig Trail is the oldest and best-known German long-distance walking route, running for 168 kilometres between Blankenhain and Hirschfeld near Eisenach. Hikers make their way through the pristine nature of the Thuringian Forest, the Thuringian Slate Mountains and the Franconian Forest at altitudes of 800 to 900 metres.

S is for (Thuringian) Specialities. Thuringia has a rich and varied cuisine with many local dishes and specialities, such as Thuringian dumplings, bratwurst and traditional Thuringian pork steaks. Other firm favourites include BORN mustard, artisan egg liqueur made on the Frantz farm, Goldhelm chocolate, plum jam from Mühlhausen and delicious Köstritzer dark beer.

T is for Thuringian Forest. The Thuringian Forest is the region's best-known holiday destination and has plenty to offer visitors throughout the year. When the weather is good, its amazing countryside can be explored on one of the many walking and cycling trails. And in winter, hundreds of kilometres of ski trails criss-cross the region. A ride on a dog sled or on the Oberweissbach Mountain and Schwarza Valley Railway is particularly memorable.

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U is for UNESCO World Heritage. Thuringia has a large number of cultural and natural heritage sites. The town of Weimar alone is home to 19 UNESCO World Heritage sites linked to Weimar Classicism and the Bauhaus movement. Then there's the exceptional natural beauty of Hainich National Park, the Thuringian Forest and the Rhön hills. And Wartburg Castle, another World Heritage site, is a spectacular sight as it towers above the surrounding countryside.

V is for Via Regia. In the Middle Ages, the Via Regia was an important trade route and pilgrimage trail connecting western and eastern Europe from the Rhineland through Erfurt to Silesia. Along the Via Regia lies the Krämerbrücke, or Merchants' Bridge, in Erfurt, which features the longest series of inhabited buildings on any bridge in Europe.

W is for Wartburg Castle. Wartburg Castle can be seen from afar as it sits in splendour above the town of Eisenach. It was built by Ludwig the Leaper more than 900 years ago. This is where Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia lived, Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German and Wagner found inspiration for his opera Tannhäuser.

X is for Xenien. Xenien are short poems that the Weimar poets Goethe and Schiller liked to use in their extensive correspondence. In more than 676 mocking verses, they expressed their opinions and attacked some of their contemporaries, who replied in equally mocking Xenien.

Y is for Yiddish Summer. The month-long Yiddish Summer in Weimar is one of world's leading festivals for traditional and contemporary Jewish culture. International artists and academics hold workshops, concerts and taster courses on Jewish language, music, culture and community.

Z is for Ziegenrück. Ziegenrück is often referred to as the 'pearl of the Upper Saale Valley'. The town lies on a large bow in the Saale river and is surrounded by wooded peaks. The area offers numerous attractive trails for walking, while the former Fernmühle mill is home to a museum of hydroelectric power.

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Born of a love for tradition Culinary Thuringia

Thuringia's culinary traditions evoke a sense of childhood and of home, and exploring them is a truly multi-sensory experience. These traditions not only link the joy of regional cuisine with Thuringian craftsmanship, they are also synonymous with a memorable dining experience and the desire to combine food and heritage on a plate. The focus is on regional producers and people with passion and creativity.

Thuringian *rostbratwurst* is the best-known food

What do prospective visitors immediately think of when they hear 'Thuringia'? Thuringian *rostbratwurst* was one of the top answers, named by 17.5 per cent of respondents in a survey carried out by Destination Brand in 2017. This sausage is one of Thuringia's most popular foods. It is a must-try for visitors and a popular choice for locals to throw on a summer barbecue. But what defines a genuine Thuringian *bratwurst*? For a start, it should be between 15 and 20 centimetres long and weigh 100 to 150 grams. This type of sausage has been enjoyed in Thuringia for centuries, or more precisely since at least 1404, as evidenced by an old copy of an invoice from Jungfrauenkloster abbey in Arnstadt. So what exactly is a genuine *rostbratwurst* made of? You can never know for sure, as all butchers have their own recipes, often based on secret family traditions handed down the generations. They definitely contain salt, pepper, marjoram, caraway seeds (whole or ground) and garlic. The spices are mixed with the filling, which is usually pork, though sometimes it might be veal or beef.

Thuringian dumplings on Sundays

Genuine Thuringian dumplings, accompanied by a hearty roast and red cabbage, are a firm fixture of Sunday lunch here. So much so that Herbert Roth, who writes and performs traditional Thuringian folk music, felt moved to praise the dumplings in verse.

Other regional specialities from Thuringia

Anyone who thinks that *rostbratwurst* and dumplings are all there is to Thuringia will be surprised at the culinary diversity this region has to offer. What do saffron, mustard, *mutzbraten*, *feldgieker* and *brückentrüffel* have in common? They are all Thuringian delicacies. Each one also tells a story: saffron is grown and harvested in Altenburg, mustard is made in Kleinhettstedt in one of Germany's last mustard manufactories, *feldgieker* is a type of sausage from the Eichsfeld region and *brückentrüffel* are handmade truffles from Erfurt. What's more, Thuringia is also home to Germany's northernmost wine region.

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TOP-Gastgeber Gastronomie – Thuringia’s top restaurants

A total of 22 partners belong to the TOP-Gastgeber Gastronomie network. TOP-Gastgeber is a seal of quality awarded by Thüringer Tourismus GmbH. The partners are the embodiment of warm hospitality and offer a winning combination of outstanding menus, comprehensive service and irresistible passion. The bar was deliberately set high when defining the criteria for the quality seal. The 23 partners work with the best ingredients from Thuringian producers and give local cuisine a sprinkle of international pizzazz. They repeatedly receive glowing comments on popular review platforms, are recommended by international restaurant guides, such as Gault Millau, and have even been awarded Michelin stars.

Traditional Thuringian crafts

Thuringia is home to producers with long and proud histories. To this day, the manufacture of porcelain, ceramics and glass products is one of the typical crafts of the region. You can watch the artisans at work on a visit to the glass-blowing workshops in Lauscha, and learn fascinating facts about glass manufacture at first hand. Leuchtenburg Castle in Seitenroda will whisk you away on a multi-sensory journey through the history of porcelain. Its immersive, multi-award-winning exhibition includes 350 exquisite exhibits.

Numerous manufactories, factories and museums throughout Thuringia offer fascinating insights into the history of porcelain in the region. For example at Kahla Porzellan, at Volkstedt Porcelain Manufactory in Rudolstadt, at Wagner und Apel in Lippelsdorf and across the region on Thuringian Porcelain Day. Ceramics from the town of Bürgel, famous for their distinctive blue glaze with white dots, are still manufactured there today. The region’s culinary heritage combines craftsmanship with traditional and modern Thuringian cuisine.

For more information about culinary Thuringia please go to www.visit-thuringia.com.

Thüringer Tourismus GmbH (TTG)

Thüringer Tourismus GmbH (TTG) is the tourism marketing organisation for the Free State of Thuringia. It is responsible for external marketing, promoting the state’s image and tourism products, and providing services to the tourism market. The tourism sector is a major contributor to the Thuringian economy, accounting for almost 10 million overnight stays, more than €3.1 billion gross revenue and over 100,000 jobs. The state of Thuringia owns 100 per cent of the shares in Thüringer Tourismus GmbH.