

Press Release

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www.visit-thuringia.com

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History and culture

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 With a history of around 1,000 years, many historical references and a romantic location in the western Thuringian Forest it is a definite must-see place.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

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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.

Information and brochures on the holiday state of Thuringia, accommodation and travel programmes, event information, tickets and last-minute offers are available from the Thuringia Tourist Board on the hotline +49 (0) 361-37420 or on the internet at www.visit-thuringia.com.

Thüringer Tourismus GmbH (TTG)

The company Thüringer Tourismus GmbH (TTG) is the tourism marketing organisation of the Free State of Thuringia. Its main activities and objectives include external marketing, image and product advertising and providing services in the tourism market. With nearly 10 million overnight stays, a gross turnover of more than 3.1 billion euros and over 100,000 jobs, the tourism industry represents an important economic factor for the state. The State of Thuringia is the sole shareholder of the company Thüringer Tourismus GmbH.