

## Press Release

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# Luther in Thuringia

Luther is closely linked with the Free State of Thuringia. He lived in the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt from 1505 until 1512, as a monk of the then still united church, before becoming a reformer in 1517 by nailing up his famous theses in Wittenberg in what is today Saxony-Anhalt. At Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, he translated the New Testament into German and he stayed in Schmalkalden to forge the Protestant alliance against the Roman Catholic Emperor.

## Luther in Eisenach: Wartburg Castle and Luther House

Martin Luther, one of the most famous religious revolutionaries in the world, spent a large part of his life in Thuringia and studied, worked and developed here. He first came to Thuringia to attend school in Eisenach. From 1498 until 1501, he went to the former St. George's Community School in Eisenach and lived with the Cotta family in today's Luther House. Following two years of restoration and renovation, the Luther House Eisenach is a completely new facility with bigger exhibition spaces, better offerings and all sorts of interesting information about Martin Luther. The heart of the house is the new permanent exhibition "Luther and the Bible", which features far more than its title suggests: exceptional exhibition objects, multimedia presentations and surprising insights.

As a schoolboy, Martin Luther sung in St. George's Church in the market square; later he preached there on 10 April 1521 on his way to the Imperial Diet in Worms and then again on his return on 2 May 1521. After his journey to Worms, he was taken to Wartburg Fortress, since he had now been declared an outlaw. During his period of exile there disguised as "Squire Joerg", he completed his greatest cultural achievement, the translation of the New Testament into German from the Greek original. Over the following centuries, this work was to become the most-read German book and set standards for the German language. Wartburg Fortress, today a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site, with its legendary Luther Room, is a must for every visitor, together with the authentic Luther venues and the Luther Museum in Eisenach, the town at the foot of the famous fortress.

## Luther in Erfurt: he became a monk in the Augustinian monastery

Thuringia's state capital Erfurt became Martin Luther's spiritual home. The main building of Erfurt's Old University – the "Collegium Maius" – has been rebuilt and today again breathes the spirit of Luther, who registered here 500 years ago and gained his Master's degree at the Faculty of Arts in 1505. It is said that a severe storm was the reason why he knocked at the door of the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt in 1505. He then became a monk out of gratitude for his survival. The location of this event which led to great changes in his life is still known today and is called the "*Lightning Oak*". A visit to this monument is always an interesting experience.

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### Overnight Accommodation at the Augustinian monastery

At the monastery, which is today an attractive conference centre and popular venue, the Luther Cell and the library are among the places of interest most visited by admirers of Luther from home and abroad. The Protestant Augustinian monastery still offers overnight accommodation today. It has meanwhile become a community and conference centre, maintaining the monastic tradition of a frugal way of life. The calm and peaceful atmosphere in the simple rooms with light-coloured furniture is congenial to relaxation – without television, radio or telephone.

### Martins Day at Erfurt

Martin Luther was ordained as a priest in the town's cathedral. One of the most popular events in Erfurt is the annual *Martin's Day*, when the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches hold a joint open-air church service in honour of St. Martin de Tours (for the Roman Catholics) and Martin Luther (for the Protestants). Every November 11th, Erfurt's cathedral square fills with thousands of people. Children parade with lanterns through the town streets and everyone meets for the church services outside the cathedral. There is, of course, no lack of refreshments and entertainment either. Visitors should not fail to try the traditional cuisine associated with St Martin's Day, namely Thuringian goose and "Martinshörnchen", tasty local pastries. Along a town Luther Route, which is a joint project of the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, visitors can see the various Luther venues in Erfurt. This Erfurt "Luther Mile" includes the Collegium Maius at the Old University, the Augustinian monastery, St. Michael's Church and the cathedral.

### Luther in Schmalkalden: interesting Exhibition at the Wilhelmsburg Castle

In Schmalkalden, visitors can view St. George's Church, where Luther once preached, and Wilhelmsburg Castle with its exhibition on the Schmalkadian War, the Schmalkadian Alliance and the Reformation. The town was at the focus of European politics during the Reformation. Philipp of Hesse, the local ruler, was one of the first Protestant princes and an opponent of Charles V.

### Luther in Altenburg: Luther and Georg Spalatin

The East Thuringian town of Altenburg is also linked with Martin Luther's activities. During his numerous visits to Altenburg, he usually stayed at the home of his staunch follower and friend Georg Spalatin, who was one of the major figures in the Reformation.

### The Luther Trail: in pursuit of a rebel

"Walk, look, pray, find inner peace" – this is the motto for the 1,010-kilometre Luther Trail running right through Thuringia. On four geographically oriented routes, the Trail links various Luther venues and locations important in the Reformation. Visitors will experience beautiful and varied countryside and partial sections with charming landscapes. The Trail is marked with a green "L" on a white background.

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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](http://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.