

Press Release

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www.visit-thuringia.com

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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

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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.
- *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](#).

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- *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.
- *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.

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.