

## Press Release

Thüringer Tourismus GmbH \* Willy-Brandt-Platz 1 \* 99084 Erfurt, Germany  
Mandy Neumann, tel.: +49 361 3742-219, [m.neumann@thueringen-entdecken.de](mailto:m.neumann@thueringen-entdecken.de)  
[www.visit-thuringia.com](http://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: [rennsteiglaf.de](http://rennsteiglaf.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.

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.