

Press Release

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www.visit-thuringia.com

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Mindful guests and hosts Sustainable travel in Thuringia

A mix of sustainable urban and outdoor activity offers, protected natural landscapes, climate-friendly transport options and a choice of sustainable accommodation also make Thuringia a sustainable travel destination. Numerous destinations and providers have committed themselves to the aim of making it possible to have resource-saving holiday experiences in Thuringia that help to protect the climate and the environment but also benefit the regional economy, the hosts as well as their guests.

From Erfurt to the mountain railway: sustainable urban and outdoor activity offers in Thuringia

Imposing buildings, traces of exciting architecture, plenty of internationality – travellers to Erfurt, the capital of the state of Thuringia, are usually surprised by the city's young and vibrant flair. However, this old city has more to offer than just an impressive history: Erfurt is also a certified Fairtrade Town. For example, particularly the small owner-managed independent shops on Lange Brücke and on the famous Krämerbrücke, a bridge initially made of wood and then constructed of stone in 1325 to connect the settlements and markets on the right with those on the left banks of the Gera river, offer great Fairtrade shopping opportunities. The narrow cobbled street is lined by narrow buildings on both sides that have housed generations of traders and craftspeople, and still do. Over 50 artists and artisans of all kinds, from potters and woodcarvers to glassblowers, currently live and work in the 32 houses on either side of the historic mediaeval bridge. Each of them exhibits, manufactures or sells the best their craft has to offer. Many of these shopkeepers have already won several awards and are considered experts in or significant representatives of their trade. www.erfurt-tourismus.de

Visitors from near and far are impressed by the Wartburg Castle town of Eisenach, with its picturesque lanes, smart house facades, quaint town centre and astonishing history. The local tourist information office offers tips on how to have an eco-friendly 48-hour break in this town. It includes highlights such as Wartburg Castle, the local panorama hiking trail with its spectacular views, or also the Lutherhaus Eisenach, a museum dedicated to Martin Luther which has been certified as a "carbon neutral business" this year. All of the offers can be reached by public transport or on foot. www.eisenach.info

All in all, there are currently twelve Fairtrade Towns and districts in Thuringia, including Jena, Gotha, Weimar or also Suhl and the Nordhausen district. Fairtrade Towns particularly promote fair trade at the local community level. To be awarded the title of Fairtrade Town, a community must prove that it meets five criteria which reflect a commitment to fair trade at all levels of a community. Schmalkalden may be well-known for its many half-timbered houses, but it is also a Fairtrade Town. However, its respective

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commitment also covers other areas such as tourism. The Aktiv & Vital Hotel Thüringen, for example, has been awarded the Viabono label for eco-friendly tourism, and not far from the town, you can rent ecologically designed tiny homes as holiday accommodation.

Castle Leuchtenburg, picturesquely situated high above the Saale river, is almost 1,000 years old. The visitor centre's "landscape cinema" offers almost completely unobstructed views across the countryside. Watch red kites close up and the sheep grazing in the meadows. You can even discover rare orchids growing right by the wayside on a hike. The Castle Leuchtenburg Foundation is not only committed to the preservation of the old castle with its walls and stones, and to adding more interest to the entire building complex with cultural offers: one of its primary aims is nature conservation and the protection of the local environment with the aid of a sustainability concept. One of the most important contributions: Castle Leuchtenburg defines the identity of the whole region. Its "Thuringian porcelain experience" exhibitions and activities focus on the preservation of local traditions, crafts & customs, particularly those related to the cultural good porcelain, along with that of an ancient cultural monument that is almost a millennium old – Castle Leuchtenburg. www.leuchtenburg.de

In September this year, the Toskana Therme Bad Sulza thermal baths, famous for their Liquid Sound® system, were the first thermal baths to be awarded the GreenSign SPA certificate by the GreenSign Institute for Sustainable Development, making them a pioneer in terms of eco-conscious and sustainable interior design and business practices. The core areas examined in the course of the certification process not only include criteria such as energy efficiency or water and waste management but also aspects such as a focus on regional products, transport, management and communication, as well as social commitment and cultural heritage. The on-site hotel "Hotel an der Therme" has also been awarded the GreenSign certificate. www.toskanaworld.net

It may not be immediately obvious when taking a trip on one of the three sections of the Thuringian mountain railway funicular, but again, the focus here is on the concept of sustainability. On both the flat stretches as well as the steep stretch, an almost completely silent climb up 323 metres in around fifteen minutes, the funicular is powered by electricity. On the downhill run of the steep stretch, the system generates energy that can then be fed into it again for the ascent. The train ride is therefore not only a great way to enjoy views across a fantastic landscape, but also helps to save energy. Discounted combination ticket offers also encourage people to use this eco-friendly mode of transport. www.thueringerbergbahn.com

This land is my land: protected natural landscapes in Thuringia

Thuringia's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty offer a variety that is unique, and unparalleled natural sights. None of these eight protected areas is like the next; each of them has its own specific character. Thuringia's five nature reserves, one national park and two biosphere reserves promise plenty of enjoyment of the great outdoors.

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A jungle right in the middle of Germany – without a doubt, that is a good way to describe the Hainich National Park, which belongs to the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe". Imposing ancient trees, in part with bizarre shapes. Deadwood covered in moss, lichen and mushrooms that promotes a lively biodiversity. This national park is spectacular in many ways: with a total area of around 16,000 hectares, it is Germany's largest continuous area of deciduous forest. Its attractions include wildcats, a species that is now extremely rare in Germany, and of course also the popular tree tops trail, which winds its way through the tops of the giant trees and is over 500 metres long. The quality initiative "Nationalparkpartner", which was initiated by fourteen partners, focuses on clear sustainability criteria. www.nationalpark-hainich.de

The model regions for sustainable development also include the Thuringian Forest biosphere reserve. High peaks, expansive mixed mountain forests with magnificent ancient beech trees, broken here and there, mosaic-like, by mountain meadows with a profusion of wild flowers, gurgling crystal clear mountain streams and small moors define the look of the countryside. The forest settlements are characterised by slate-roofed houses, and in the narrow valleys, the villages often stretch over many kilometres. As a "Fahrtziel Nature" ('Destination Nature') partner, guests with guest passes can use the local public transport system free of charge with the Rennsteig Ticket. www.biosphaerenreservat-thueringerwald.de

One wonderful, untamed forest area follows the next along Thuringia's heights. Due to their varied nature and richness in species, this woodland chain is also often referred to as the "jungle pearls". In these protected areas, careful forest management or refraining from forestry use altogether has led to the development of a great number of valuable forest habitats. The forested areas run in a semi-circle that reaches from the Hohe Schrecke in the north-east via the Kyffhäuser nature reserve and the Hainleite, the Hainich National Park, the woodland near Eisenach and the Thuringian Forest biosphere reserve all the way to the Thuringian slate mountains in the south-east. Fifteen primeval forest trails that are the result of the project "Thüringer Urwaldpfade" have now been completed. www.thueringer-urwaldpfade.de

Worldwide, the IDA (International Dark Sky Places) number around 40 regions where artificial light is largely banned to protect the dark night-time skies. Four of these Dark Sky places are located in Germany; the [Sternenpark Rhön](http://www.sternenparkrhoen.de) in the area where the federal states of Bavaria, Hesse and Thuringia meet has been one of these since 2014. There are guided night-time hikes through the park during which certified "star guides" explain the celestial mechanics and tell stories about the constellations. At the Hohe Geba (750 metres above sea level) in Thuringia, observing platforms have been sunk into the ground to ensure that the sensitive astronomy equipment stands on firm footing. www.sternenparkrhoen.de

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Sustainable travel: "Destination Nature" also in Thuringia

With the Hainich National Park and the Thuringian Forest, two travel destinations in Thuringia can also be reached in an eco-friendly way within the scope of the nationwide cooperative project "Fahrtziel Natur" ('Destination Nature') initiated by BUND Friends of the Earth Germany, the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), the sustainable transport initiative Verkehrsclub Deutschland (VCD) e.V. and the rail operator Deutsche Bahn. The cooperation's nationwide commitment to encouraging tourists to swap their cars for public transport is exemplary. Since then, the World Heritage region Wartburg Hainich has come up with a few ideas of its own when it comes to tourist travel. For example, not only tourists but also locals benefit considerably from the introduction of the NationalparkBus. Another project currently in the pipeline is the launch of free travel with the aid of a guest card. www.fahrtziel-natur.de

Sustainable accommodation

Besides the regions and places that attract tourists, it is especially also the accommodation providers that contribute to sustainable breaks in Thuringia. Thuringia offers a wide choice of organic hotels and suitable accommodation in this respect: the Bio Seehotel in Zeulenroda was the first organic lakeside hotel in Thuringia. In this carbon neutral spa and conference hotel, the rooms are furnished with untreated materials, and all meals are prepared from 100% certified organic ingredients. The solid wood chalets in the adjacent holiday home park MANOAH, which also belongs to the hotel, were constructed from high-quality natural materials. Stiftsgut Wilhelmglücksbrunn is an organic hotel and a Slow Food partner, and runs its own Bioland association organic farm. The Hainichhöfe chalets in the Hainich National Park are made almost completely of regional materials. In the close-by Waldresort Hainich, the site of the holiday homes has been designed to match their natural environment. It also focuses on outdoor experience, forest bathing, mindfulness and well-being offers. The urban hotel "Zumnorde" in the middle of Erfurt's historic city centre employs sustainable business practices. The owner-managed hotel has been awarded the "Gesicherte Nachhaltigkeit" sustainability certificate. The holiday home park "Wiesenglück" in the spa town Heilbad Heiligenstadt only opened this August. There are eight tiny houses on the site, created with a minimalist and sustainable approach to construction, as well as fourteen motorhome pitches. The new offer is aimed specifically at the target group of outdoor experience and activity holiday tourists who particularly value sustainability and the sparing use of resources.

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.