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An introduction into Thuringia

A rough summary of Thuringia may read like this: very centrally located in Germany, about 2,2 million inhabitants on slightly over 16,000 km², five nature parks, two UNESCO biosphere reserves, one national park. 18 UNESCO-listed sites, birthplace of Bach and Bauhaus, Reformation history, ca. 400 castles and palaces. 7,500 km of hiking trails, 1,700 km of long-distance cycling paths. So much about some facts – but what is Thuringia like and what can you do there? Let's have a look at basic things:

Rennsteig, Thuringian Forest

© Guido Werner, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

Feel the pulse of nature

Yes, in Thuringia there are regions where you stand alone in the middle of a forest and all you can hear is bird calls and the wind in the trees. Hiking takes you through unspoiled nature, cosy mountain villages and historical sites. Unexpected treats en route include views of distant galaxies in the Rhön Dark Sky Reserve. The primeval beech forests of the Hainich embrace you with their natural wilderness, the upper Saale valley takes your breath away with dramatic river landscapes, and the peaks of the Thuringian Forest provide for panoramic views. Slowing you down in a positive way – that's what Thuringia's nature can do for you.

Satisfy your curiosity

Always looking for the hidden gem around the corner? Thuringia's towns and cities may be your choice of a travel destination then. Like Erfurt for example. The description of the old town as having 'one of Germany's largest historical city centres' doesn't prepare you for its beauty. And this is not just about architecture, it's about having all things in one place that make your stay likewise pleasant and entertaining: be it the beer-garden next to the river, the life music in a traditional German 'Kneipe'

or the shopping on a medieval bridge. The secret of Erfurt? Probably the mixture of historical and easy-going. And it's just so beautiful!

Give in to fascination

Have you ever stood in a place that fuelled your imagination? Felt good, didn't it? Thuringia's castles and palaces have the potential to do the same with you. One of them maybe more than the others: Wartburg Castle in Eisenach. It's the epitome of a German castle and so full of stories and legends that it has provided plenty of food for books and movies. Standing on a mountain top surrounded by dark forests it requires a little effort to get up there.

It is worthwhile, however. This is the place where the 'War of Minstrels' took place that Richard Wagner immortalised in his Tannhäuser opera, it is where Saint Elisabeth lived her short but momentous life and where Martin Luther translated the New Testament. The Castle is mystic and majestic and thoroughly Thuringian.

Gotha, city hall

© Meeta K. Wolff, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH



Typical Thuringian: bratwurst, dumplings, sauerkraut

© Meeta K. Wolff, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH





Join the club

You know all about Bauhaus, Bach or the German classics? Time to have a look at the real thing! Where? Well, where Walter Gropius founded the famous Bauhaus School, for example. In Weimar. In celebration of the Bauhaus's 100th anniversary, the city opened a brand-new museum in April 2019.

By presenting a kaleidoscope of Bauhaus aspects, it gets to the bottom of the question 'How do we want to live?' Bauhaus and Modernism are two expert areas that Weimar covers. Classical literature, art and music are the others. If you're a culture lover who likes to look deeper, you will love it!

You can find more information on Thuringia on www.visit-thuringia.com.

The Towns of Thuringia Cycle Route

© Moritz Kertzsch, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

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Our culture

The entire region is defined by the Thuringian culture. From poets, philosophers and musicians to architects and reformers: over the past centuries, many famous minds and history itself have left indelible traces on Thuringia's cultural landscape.

Bachhaus Eisenach

© Gregor Lengler, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

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.

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Leuchtenburg Castle

© Stefan Nink, CMR, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH



Tree top trail in the Hainich National Park

© Joachim Köhler, Mediadesign, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

UNESCO World Heritage in Thuringia

Discover Thuringia's World Heritage treasures

With four entries on the UNESCO list, Thuringia has more World Heritage than almost any other region of Germany.

Its UNESCO World Heritage sites, Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, the Classical Weimar ensemble, the Bauhaus in Weimar and Hainich National Park, are a mix of impressive cultural

assets and stunning natural beauty. Elsewhere, exceptional holiday experiences are guaranteed in the Thuringian Forest and the Rhön Hills UNESCO biosphere reserves. They are two of 15 model regions in Germany that represent the diversity of the country's habitats, fauna and flora, and serve as educational sites for sustainable development.

[read the whole text](#)

Exploring Erfurt

A tour of Thuringia's state capital

“Erfurt is in the ideal location. The perfect place for a city” is what church reformer Martin Luther once said about this commercial hub. And to this day, the welcoming and multi-faceted state capital of Thuringia certainly offers plenty of things to see and do. From the Merchants’ Bridge to the Old Synagogue and the cathedral, Erfurt is home to many cultural treasures.

But it also has a young, student vibe about it. A great mix for anyone who enjoys exploring cities on foot.

Erfurt’s glorious medieval centre, for example, is abundant with shops, cafés and restaurants that simply ooze charm and character.



Krämerbrücke (Merchants' Bridge) in Erfurt

© Florian Trykowski, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

One of Germany's best-preserved medieval centres

Erfurt, the state capital of Thuringia, was founded more than 1,250 years ago. It brings the Middle Ages to life in many places and boasts one of the biggest and best-preserved medieval centres in Germany. In 2019, Erfurt's old quarter came third in a ranking of Germany's old quarters voted for by the readers of TRAVELBOOK. Not to be missed, for example, is the impressive backdrop from Erfurt Cathedral and St Severus Church to medieval Domplatz square, the Merchants' Bridge – with the longest series of inhabited buildings on any bridge in Europe – and the grand town houses on Fischmarkt square, to name just a few of Erfurt's marvellous sights.



Erfurt Cathedral and St. Severus Church

© Gregor Lengler, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

A stroll across the Merchants' Bridge in Erfurt

Walking across the Merchants' Bridge is a memorable experience. Initially built of wood, the bridge was rebuilt in stone in 1325 and connected the settlements and markets on either side of the river Gera. Small dwellings line the narrow, cobbled street on either side.

Generations of merchants and artisans have lived and worked on this bridge, and continue to do so; currently there are over 50 here. All manner of artists and artisans ply their trade in the 32 medieval houses. Many have won multiple awards and are considered experts or leading exponents in their field. Everything that is made, sold or presented here is quite simply the best of the best.

For the first time since the bridge was built 700 years ago, the merchants, artists and artisans are sharing a joint – digital – platform to showcase themselves. Over 40 shops, ideas, and networks on the 125 metre long bridge can now be experienced online, with 360-degree views included. So it is now possible to visit the shops and workshops outside of opening hours too.



Behind Krämerbrücke in Erfurt

© Florian Trykowski, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH



Jewish heritage in Erfurt

© Samuel Zuder, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

Erfurt was and remains the centre of Jewish life in Thuringia

The centre of Jewish life in Thuringia, then as now, was the state capital Erfurt. In the Middle Ages, the city was one of the largest settlements in the Holy Roman Empire, an economic and cultural hub at the crossroads of important trade routes.

From the late 11th century onwards there was also a Jewish community there, which had a synagogue, a cemetery and a mikveh. Many reminders of Jewish life have survived in Erfurt and highlight the eventful history of the Jewish communities since the Middle Ages.

These include the Old Synagogue, the medieval mikveh and the old and new Jewish cemeteries. The Old Synagogue dates back to 1094 and is one of the oldest in Europe.

As it had been used for many different purposes over the centuries, first as a warehouse, then later as a restaurant and dance hall, it was not identified as a synagogue and thus not destroyed during the Third Reich, so that it remains in exceptionally good condition today. It is now home to the Erfurt Treasure and the largest known medieval Torah.

Application for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage list

The largely intact medieval old town of Erfurt contains unique architectural evidence of its Jewish community from the period between the end of the 11th and the middle of the 14th century. These architectural reminders are complemented by an unparalleled wealth of exhibits.

Together, they shine a light on the religious and everyday life of the Jewish community, and reveal how Jews and Christians lived side by side in medieval towns. No other place in the world offers such a comprehensive insight, which is why Erfurt, the state capital of Thuringia, has applied for UNESCO World Heritage status for its Jewish legacy.

For more information, please contact Thüringer Tourismus GmbH on +49 (0)361 37420, by email to service@thueringen-entdecken.de or online at www.visit-thuringia.com

Old Synagogue in Erfurt

© Florian Trykowski, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH



Weimar celebrates Haus Am Horn centenary

Bauhaus.23: Modernity in one of the cradles of German Classicism

Weimar owes its reputation of a town associated with culture, art and the Modernity movement to many famous personalities: the German Classicism poets Goethe and Schiller, the classical composers Johann Sebastian Bach and Franz Liszt, and also the avant-gardists of the Bauhaus. In 2023, the focus is once again on the latter: the modern design pioneers presented their ideas and designs to the public for the first time at the first-ever Bauhaus exhibition 100 years ago.

The landmarks related to the classics as well as the sites associated with the Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar in 1919, are all UNESCO World Heritage Sites. All in all, the Site encompasses sixteen building complexes that are part of Germany's art and cultural history.



Duchess Anna Amalia Library in Weimar

© Jens Hauspurg, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

Modernity in Weimar

Three museums are dedicated to the Modernity movement and the era of the Weimar Republic. In the place where it all started, the story of the founding of the Bauhaus is told in a museum of the same name. In its immediate neighbourhood, there is now a show dedicated solely to the Weimar Modernity: at the Museum Neues Weimar, the exhibition “Wege zum Bauhaus” pays homage to the Bauhaus pioneers. The “Haus der Weimarer Republik” is dedicated to

the history of the establishment of Germany’s first democratic government in 1919.

However, the Nazi-era also shaped Weimar: the memories of the atrocities the Nazis committed between 1933 and 1945 are kept alive at the former concentration camp Buchenwald. Around 500,000 people visit the memorial, which consists of the camp as well as the permanent exhibition “1937 to 1945”, every year.



House of the Weimar Republic in Weimar

© Florian Trykowski, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH



Bauhaus Museum in Weimar

© Alexander Burzik, Klassik Stiftung Weimar



Haus Am Horn centenary

One hundred years ago, the Haus Am Horn was constructed in only four months on the land where an entire Bauhaus estate would be built later on. As a prototype of a new approach to building and new ideas on how to live together, this pioneering single-storey house is at the centre of the centenary celebrations. To mark the centenary, the Bauhaus Museum Weimar is hosting an exhibition entitled “Ways to Utopia – Life Between Desire and Crisis” with exhibits that are interspersed with those of the permanent exhibition.

“Odd one out” in Classicist Weimar

Whether Goethe’s home, the Duchess Anna Amalia Library or the parks and palaces – all of these groups of buildings represent the heyday of German Classicism. Next year, iconic mid-20th century designs from the Maenz and Ludwig collections will pop up in the museums and palaces under the motto of “Fremde

Freunde – Moderne in historischen Häusern” (‘Alien friends – Modernity visits historic buildings’), and explore the question of what it would be like if their former inhabitants still lived there today. Contemporary artists will also participate in these interventions.





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Great art and light entertainment

However, Weimar's visitors don't just traipse around museums. The town also offers a varied selection of great art and light entertainment, concerts and plays, exhibitions and performances. The festival season begins in April with the Thuringia Bach Festival. This is followed by the Kleinkunstfestival performing arts festival in the Köstritzer Spiegelzelt in May and June, and the Whitsun Festival at Ettersburg Castle. From June to August, the "Weimarer Sommer" festival cultural events take place in the town's streets and squares, and on open-air stages. The Bauhaus festival begins on 25 August and culminates in a great Bauhaus parade. The Kunstfest Weimar arts festival is also

on the agenda and offers contemporary artists from all over the world an exhibition stage until early September. The star attraction in the autumn is Thuringia's oldest town festival, the "Zwiebelmarkt" in Weimar. Like the "Weimarer Weihnacht" Christmas market, it is a popular visitor attraction.

The visitors can also enjoy the town's culinary side: Thuringian bratwurst sausage is the traditional answer to fast food and takeaways, and Thuringian dumplings are a must. Beer brewed in Weimar, wine from the Weimarer Poetenweg vineyard – there are plenty of local products that must all be sampled.

Almost a thousand years of history Wartburg Castle, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site

Wartburg in Eisenach was the first German castle to be added to UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites. It has been shaped by many historic events and figures over the centuries. Figures such as Walther von der Vogelweide, Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia, Richard Wagner and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe have all contributed to its considerable historical significance. The castle is one of the best-preserved secular buildings of the late Romanesque period north of the Alps and provided, among other things, the blueprint for Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria.



Wartburg Castle in Eisenach

© D. Ketz, Regionalverbund Thüringer Wald e.V.

Martin Luther at Wartburg Castle

Martin Luther's stay here in 1521 is without doubt a key event. The persecuted church reformer found refuge in the castle and translated the New Testament from the original Greek into German. The room in which Luther lived and worked has been a destination for countless pilgrims ever since, and it is widely considered to be the cradle of written German.



*Luther Room at Wartburg Castle
in Eisenach*

© Florian Trykowski, Wartburg-Stiftung,
Thüringer Tourismus GmbH



Wartburg Castle in Eisenach

© Stefan Nink, CMR, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

Musical tradition at Wartburg Castle

In the Middle Ages, Wartburg Castle was the site of the legendary Singers' Contest. The castle is still a popular venue today, as the exceptional acoustics in the ceremonial hall are a draw for music lovers from around the world. The performances of Wagner's opera 'Tannhäuser and the Singers' Contest at Wartburg Castle' are the stuff of legend – after all, you are experiencing this romantic opera in its actual setting. The castle is also the venue for the MDR Summer of Music, the largest music festival in central Germany.

Visit to Wartburg Castle

The walk up to the castle on foot, or a ride on the back of a donkey for younger visitors, is rewarded with magnificent views of the Thuringian countryside. During the festive season, visitors can enjoy the historical Christmas market, where artisans of almost-forgotten crafts, including candle, soap, robe and lantern makers, stonemasons, herbalists, pewterers and travelling traders, offer their goods for sale.

On a guided tour of the castle's rooms or a visit to the museum – with its famous paintings by

Lucas Cranach, priceless tapestries and furniture, Tilman Riemenschneider sculptures and Renaissance arts and crafts – you are surrounded at every step by history, culture and the arts.

The castle can only be visited as part of a guided tour, for which audio guides are available in a number of languages. The five-star Wartburg Hotel guarantees a memorable stay just a stone's throw from the castle.

Fraternity meetings in the 19th century

In the 19th century, students from across the German states converged on Wartburg Castle with the aim of uniting as one nation. It was at these meetings that the colours and the design of the German national flag were chosen.



Grand Hall at Wartburg Castle in Eisenach

© Stefan Nink, CMR, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

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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.

[read the whole text](#)



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.

[read the whole text](#)



Bach Church in Arnstadt

© Gregor Lengler, Bildeigner.
Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

Our nature

A biodiverse low mountain range, a hiking trail about which songs have been written and one of Germany's oldest beech woods: you'll find all of these in Thuringia's wonderful nature.

Thuringian Rhön

© Marius Holler, Rhön GmbH

That's my nature

Thuringia's areas of outstanding natural beauty

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. Five nature reserves, one national park and two biosphere reserves promise exciting discoveries for the whole family, and guarantee a wide choice of outdoor activity offers as well as relaxing, restorative breaks. Whether paddling on the Saale river, cycling along the Werra river, hiking on the Rennsteig trail or relaxing with yoga on the tree tops trail – the choice is incredibly varied, and this at any time of the year.

Eichseld-Hainich-Werratal Nature Park

© Tino Sieland



Fascinating nature in the heart of Germany

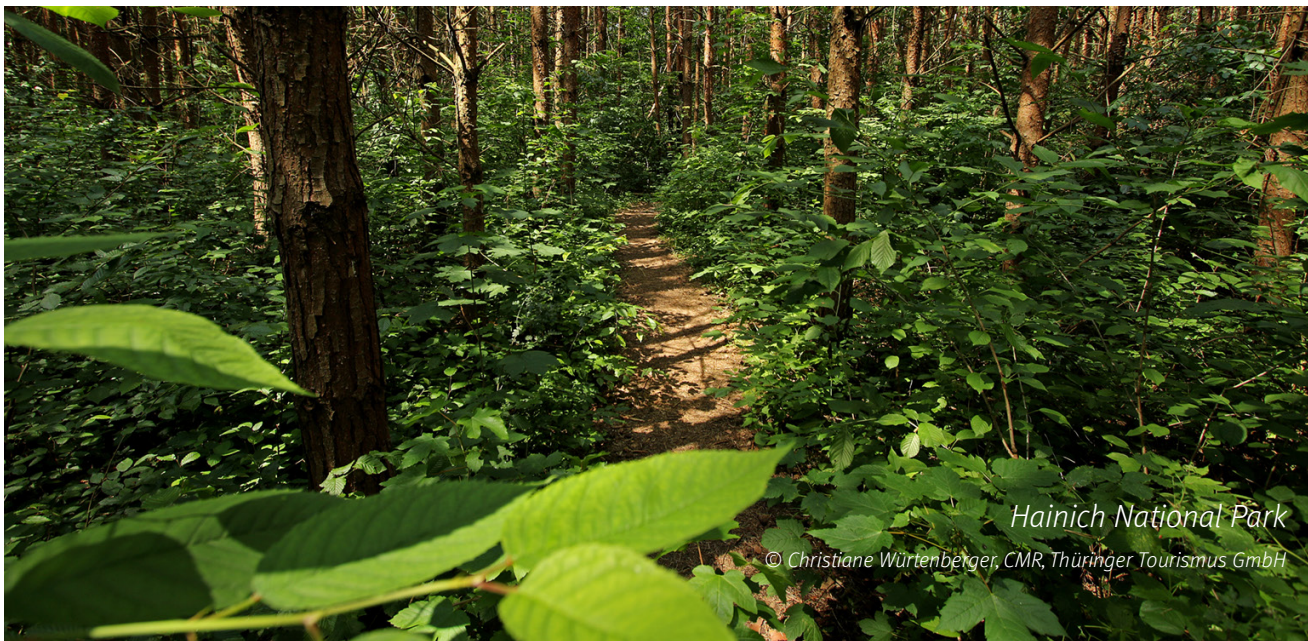
A top hiking destination

With around 7.500 kilometres of well-developed and signposted hiking trails, Thuringia is one of Germany's top destinations for a hiking holiday. One of its highlights for hikers is the legendary ridgeway of the Thuringian Forest, the Rennsteig, which is 168 kilometres long. On their journey from the Werra river near the village of Hirschel to the Saale river near the town of Blankenstein, hikers can look forward to plenty of historical, geological and botanical adventures.

Thuringia boasts an impressive total of eight national natural landscapes of Germany, which cover around a third of its area and offer visitors the opportunity to discover stunning landscapes and natural environments full of many different species. One of these natural landscapes is home to a particularly special visitor attraction in the form of the treetop trail in Hainich National Park, which takes visitors to an area of the park that would otherwise be inaccessible: the “primeval forest at the heart of Germany”.

The walkway leads right through the forest canopy at a height of 44 metres, providing a direct insight into the world of insects and other treetop residents.

It also offers a fantastic view over the national park and down into the Thuringian Basin. Thuringia is a top hiking destination in which 41 trails and over 70 hotels have already been deemed to meet the high-quality standards of the “Wanderbares Deutschland” (Germany for hikers) scheme.



Hainich National Park

© Christiane Würtenberger, CMR, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

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.



Thuringian Forest

© Gregor Lengler, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

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



Rennsteig at the Thuringian Forest

© Gregor Lengler, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

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.



Mountain-bikers in the Thuringian Forest

© Sabine Braun, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

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.

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.

www.rennsteiglauf.de



Rennsteig cross-country race

© Kevin Voigt, Rennsteiglauf GmbH



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.

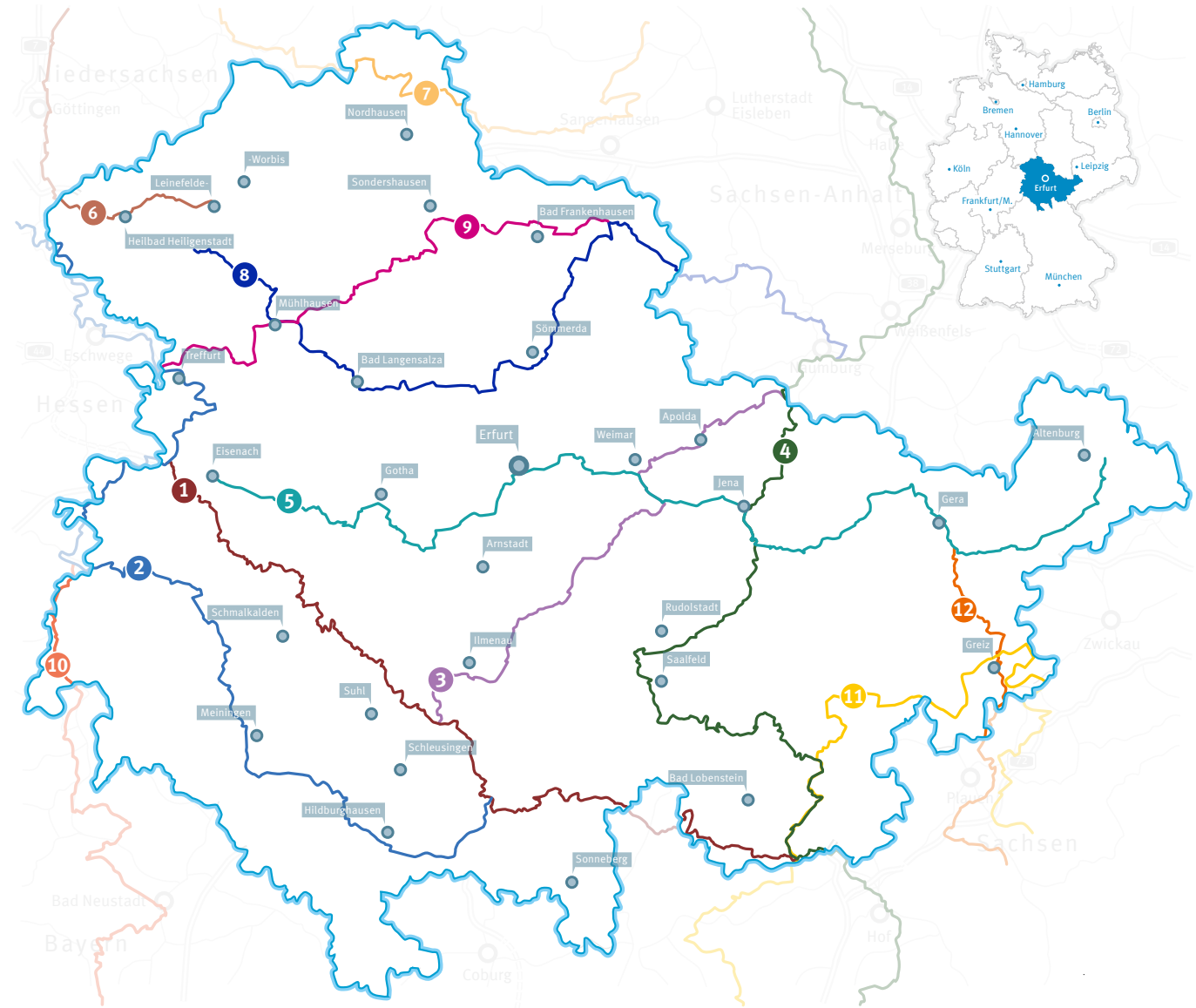
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Cross-country skiing in the Thuringian Forest

©Regionalverbund Thüringer Wald e.V.

A paradise for cyclists

Many paths not only lead through charming landscapes but also, past captivating tourist attractions, through picturesque villages and historic towns. Thuringia is criss-crossed by around 1,500 kilometres of long distance cycle routes and numerous regional routes. These also include twelve attractive long distance routes for visitors on two wheels. With around 130 “Bed & Bike” establishments where cyclists are welcome, Thuringia also offers a wide choice of suitable accommodation. On tours with a low to moderate ride difficulty rating, cyclists can enjoy many charming riverside landscapes along the Werra, Saale, Unstrut and Ilm rivers. More ambitious cyclists can also tackle the Rennsteig cycle route, which runs almost parallel to the famous hiking trail through the Thuringian Forest. There is also a well-maintained network of less challenging cycle routes through Thuringia’s plains and hills, such as the “Thüringer Städtekette” route, which takes in various towns.



- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Rennsteig-Radweg | 5 Thüringer Städtekette | 9 Unstrut-Werra-Radweg |
| 2 Werratal-Radweg | 6 Leine-Heide-Radweg | 10 Rhönradweg |
| 3 Ilmtal-Radweg | 7 Harzradweg | 11 Euregio-Egrensis-Radfernweg |
| 4 Saaletal-Radweg | 8 Unstrutradweg | 12 Elster-Radweg |



The Green Belt in Thuringia

Nature knows no borders

‘Nature knows no borders’ is the name of a joint campaign of the Thuringian Department of the Environment and the Thuringian Tourism Board, aiming at developing Thuringia’s Green Belt as a destination for travellers. The fact that the area was inaccessible for people over decades has created a special biotope where rare species have found a place to live. In 2018, the 763 km long Thuringian Green Belt was made a National Monument.

The Green Belt in the Eichsfeld region

© Toma Babovi, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

Thuringia: environmental pioneer

Nature conservationists from Thuringia and the neighbouring federal state of Franconia realised immediately after the Fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 that the unique countryside along the former border fortifications, despite the fact that these certainly had to be dismantled, called for protection.

Over the years, it had become the habitat of some otherwise extremely rare bird species such as whinchats, great grey or red-backed shrikes, for example. Only a month later, on 9 December 1989, BUND Friends of the Earth Germany passed a resolution for the protection and development of the border strip at its first-ever meeting attended by environmentalists from both sides of the former border in Hof. It remains in place to this day. The strip was named the “German Green Belt”. With a total length of 1,193 kilometres, the belt is now a protected environmental area that runs through Germany from Travemünde on the Baltic Sea to the border with the Czech Republic near Hof.

The majority of this belt, a length of 763 kilometres in total, is located in Thuringia. In late 2018, Thuringia was the first German federal state to designate its share of the German Green Belt a “Nationales Naturmonument (NNM)”, a National Natural Monument, to mark the 19th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.



A treasure trove of biodiversity

Today, the German Green Belt is one of the German reunification’s major success stories, a living monument to the area’s history and a treasure trove of biodiversity. It is home to over 1,200 of the species on Germany’s Red List of Threatened Species. Some of these can be observed on various hikes along the German Green Belt.

Hiking through the National Natural Monument

Several hiking routes lead through the National Monument and take visitors to forests, meadows, river valleys and viewing points.

The Thuringian Green Belt forms a unique landscape, where nature and history are part of a rather contemplative experience.

Approximately 1,200 endangered species live here, on an area covering 6,500 hectares. Tours take you through the Eichsfeld region, the Rhön and the Thuringian Forest. Border museums await visitors to allow insights into the time of Germany’s separation and life at the border.

Little Berlin in Southern Thuringia

Mödlareuth in Southern Thuringia is often called ‘Little Berlin’. Just like its much bigger namesake it had been split into two halves by a wall for decades. The village had long had a Bavarian and a Thuringian part, with the little Tannbach marking the border line. After World War II, this became a problem: the Bavarian part came under American administration whereas the Thuringian part was incorporated into the Soviet zone. Today, about 100 metres of the wall in ‘Little Berlin’ are preserved as a monument. They belong to the German-German Museum in the village. Annually about 80,000 people visit Mödlareuth, which only has around 40 inhabitants.

Rural idyll in the Eichsfeld: Hof Sickenberg

A terrace amid a romantic farmer’s garden, home-baked cakes, vegetables and fruit from the garden and the scent of fresh-baked bread in the air: Hof Sickenberg in the Eichsfeld is a rural idyll.

The 200-year old farm house used to stand right at the separation line between East and West. For a long time, the timber-framed building had been left to decay, until after the unification of Germany Kristina Bauer, an agricultural

engineer from Göttingen, bought the building and turned it into a picturesque pension with café. Now it has become an insider tip for romantics and a beautiful place to rest your soul in the middle of nature.

Not far from the historical farm yard is the border museum Schiffersgrund. It shows old military vehicles and helicopters from East German times along with the longest preserved part of East German border installations.

Point Alpha – the hottest spot in the Cold War

Point Alpha was the name of a US observation post in the so-called ‘Fulda gap’, the hottest spot in the Cold War, where NATO expected the Warsaw Pact to strike in a worst-case scenario. Today located at the Green Belt, the observation post and the old border installations form a memorial and a museum. A hiking path takes you there and to the ‘House on the Border’ museum.

The exhibition focuses on everyday life at the border and shows watch towers, border installations, photographs and documents. The 14.6 km long hiking path leads along the ‘route of hope’, where 14 monumental sculptures by artist Ulrich Barnickel mark a stretch of the former death strip between Hesse and Thuringia.

For a sustainable future

Treasure chamber of nature and memorial for later generations: Thuringia’s Green Belt attracts above all visitors who seek intensive experiences, a dialogue with nature away from mass tourism. Traditional agricultural management plays an important role here, and ‘green’ local concepts’ help develop a sustainable tourism to the region. Nature forms a comforting contrast to the past. And the fact that the traces of the German separation are beginning to disappear under a carpet of trees and wild plants stands symbolically for the power of the good and the hope that it will overcome the evil, eventually.



Our culinary

The combination of locally made tableware and the Thuringian cuisine is an experience for all the senses; for the locals, it is a reminder of childhood and represents “home”. Not only does it unite the enjoyment of regional specialties with an appreciation of Thuringian artisanry, the entire experience also stands for good food and an enthusiasm for serving guests culinary delicacies as well as the local culture on a plate. At its heart are people with passion and creativity, along with the regional producers.

Goldhelm chocolate manufactory in Erfurt

© Andreas Weise, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH



The most famous speciality: Thuringian bratwurst

What do people immediately associate with Thuringia as a travel destination? Thuringian bratwurst is always one of the first things they think of. It is one of Thuringia's most popular culinary specialities, a must-have for visitors, and one of the stars of the locals' summer barbecues.

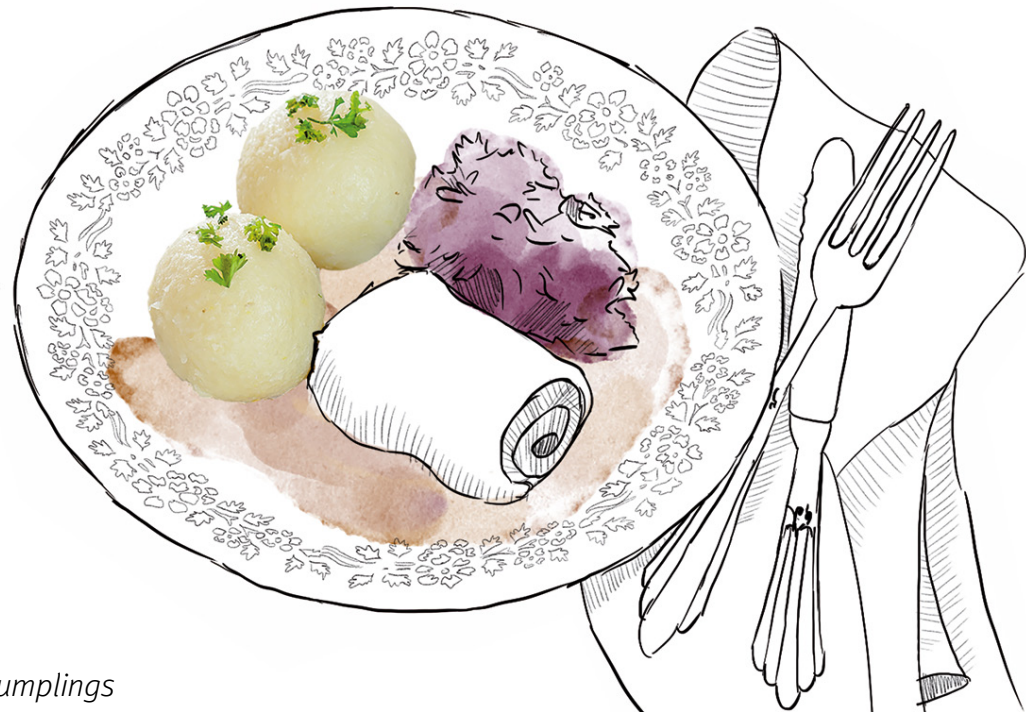
However, what makes an original Thuringian bratwurst what it is? An original Thuringian bratwurst is around fifteen to twenty centimetres long and weighs around 100 to 150 grams. This kind of sausage has been enjoyed in Thuringia for centuries, or since 1404, to be precise, as proven by an ancient copy of a priory invoice from the Jungfrauenkloster convent in Arnstadt.

You are unlikely to find out 100% of the ingredients of a genuine Thuringian bratwurst, as every master butcher has their own secret recipe that has often been passed down through the generations.

The sausages are always seasoned with salt, pepper, marjoram, cumin (either whole or ground) and garlic. The seasoning is added to the filling, which consists of pork, in part also of veal or beef.

Thuringian dumplings as a Sunday treat

In many of Thuringia's regions, they are a firm element of a successful Sunday lunch: genuine Thuringian dumplings, served with a savoury roast and red cabbage. The Thuringian composer and interpreter of folk songs Herbert Roth once put it like this: "A Sunday without Thuringian dumplings would lose much of its meaning."



Thuringian dumplings

© Thüringer Tourismus GmbH



Thuringian bratwurst

© Guido Werner, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

Other regional specialities from Thuringia

People who associate Thuringia only with bratwurst and dumplings will be surprised at the culinary diversity it has to offer beyond its two most famous specialities.

What do saffron, mustard, “Mutzbraten” (spit roasted pork shoulder), “Feldgieker” (a type of cured sausage) and “Brückentrüffel” (a praline speciality) have in common? All of these are also delicacies made in Thuringia, and there’s an amazing story behind each of them, like that of the saffron, for example, which is grown and harvested in Altenburg, or that of one of Germany’s last mustard factories still in operation today, which is located in Kleinhettstedt.

Then there’s the sausage specialities from the Eichsfeld region, and the handmade “Brückentrüffel” pralines from Erfurt, or the fact that Germany’s northernmost quality wine producing area is located in Thuringia.

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Thuringian artisanry

Thuringia is home to many renowned factories that can look back over a long history. The manufacture of porcelain, ceramic and glass products is still one of the artisan crafts that is typical for the region. See glass being made on a visit to the stained glass works in Lauscha, where you can also learn many interesting facts about how glass is made from the people who make it. Castle Leuchtenburg invites you to go on a multisensory journey back through time and the history of porcelain. The multi-award winning interactive exhibition also includes 350 very valuable exhibits.

Numerous smaller production companies, industrial factories and museums throughout Thuringia offer interesting insights into the region's porcelain-making tradition, for example the Kahla porcelain factory, the Aelteste Volkstedter Porzellanmanufaktur in Rudolstadt, Wagner und Apel in Lippelsdorf, or factories throughout the country on the "Day of Thuringian Porcelain". Another typical Thuringian ceramic product is "Bürgeler Keramik", slipware made in Bürgel with a distinctive blue-and-white design, white dots on a blue background. It is still produced in Bürgel to this day. In Thuringia, these typical artisan crafts are combined with the traditional and the modern Thuringian cuisine.



Christmas country Thuringia

Many Christmas traditions originated in Thuringia: including both the Christmas tree as such as well as the Christmas tree decorations, or also many classic Christmas carols. Hardly surprising, then, that Christmas is a very important season in Thuringia.

In March 2021, the German National Commission for UNESCO honoured the manufacture of mouth-blown glass Christmas decorations in Lauscha by declaring this artisan craft a part of Germany's intangible cultural heritage. A high accolade for the region, and also a motivation for future projects such as "Weihnachtsland am Rennsteig ®", a new and unique Christmas-themed holiday region currently under development in South Thuringia in order to highlight the local traditions and their history. It will open officially for the locals and visitors from elsewhere in December 2023.

Bauble-making in Lauscha

© Marco Fischer, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

Lauscha: the birthplace of the Christmas bauble

Lauscha is a small town on the southern end of the Rennsteig trail. Its main claim to fame, however, is the fact that the Christmas bauble was invented here. According to the legend, the Lauscha glassblowers were too poor to decorate their Christmas trees with nuts or apples. One of them therefore resorted to copying the fruit in glass. The first written record that mentions Christmas baubles dates back to 1847. However, it would take another



Glass-maker at work

© Florian Trykowski, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

20 years to develop the technology that made it possible to mass produce thin-walled large baubles. The Thuringians received kick-start support from the USA: around 1880, F. W. Woolworth heard of the precious glass decorations and sold them for a whopping 25 dollars apiece in his shop in Pennsylvania.

Around 1900, by which time Woolworth's had become a chain of department stores, the glittering baubles, angels, Santas and other variations of the theme in glass had already conquered the world. The "Museum für Glaskunst" in



Traditional baubles from the Thuringian Forest

© Florian Trykowski, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH

Lauscha is dedicated to the art of glassblowing and documents this successful episode in the region's history. The museum visitors can also learn how glassblowing developed here since the early modern age. Numerous companies in the region still make and decorate Christmas decorations by hand to this day. Glassblowers invite you into their workshops, where their fragile works of art are for sale. For the past 150 years, the stained glass works, where visitors can see the glass tubes and rods used by the local industry being made, have been the beating heart of the glassblower town Lauscha.

A gherkin on the Christmas tree

Sometimes, things go together that have nothing in common all, at first glance. Like a pickled gherkin and Christmas, for example. However, a closer look reveals the obvious connection, as it is an old tradition to hang a pickled gherkin onto the Christmas tree as decoration. Its green colour makes it difficult to spot, but the first one to find it without touching the tree is also the first one to get their present. The first Christmas pickle, the "original gherkin", so to speak, was apparently blown in Lauscha in Thuringia way back in 1900. They are still genuinely handmade in the old traditional way here.

Thuringian lady exported the Christmas tree tradition

The fact that the Christmas tree became famous all over the world is down to a lady from Thuringia. Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen (1792 – 1849) was Queen of the United Kingdom for seven years, and brought the German Christmas tree to Great Britain, to the delight of her numerous nieces and nephews.

It is thanks to her that the Christmas tree became famous all over the world. Adelaide grew up in the theatre town of Meiningen in Elisabethenburg Palace, where the Blue Cabinet was furnished in honour of her memory.

Classic carols from Thuringia

Many German carols are well-known all over the world: “O Christmas Tree”, “Alle Jahre wieder”, and the famous “Weißt du, wieviel Sternlein stehen”, and some of the best-known and most popular of these originated in Thuringia. “O Christmas Tree” was turned into a Christmas carol by Ernst Anschütz; the other two songs were penned by the Thuringian Wilhelm Hey and by Martin Luther. You will also hear the song “O du fröhliche” being played almost permanently at the German Christmas markets.

The lyrics of the first verse were written by Johannes Daniel Falk, an author and educator who lived in Weimar.

During Weimar’s occupation by Napoleon’s troops, he had lost four of his seven children within only a few months, which prompted him to establish the “Society of Friends in Need”. This charitable institution took in children and youths who had lost their parents and homes due to the war.

In 1815, Falk wrote the lyrics to “O du fröhliche, o du selige, gnadenbringende Weihnachtszeit” for the children in his care, setting the words to the melody of a Sicilian fisherman’s song. A member of his staff later added two further verses.

The tradition of singing under the Christmas tree also began in Thuringia

Talking about Christmas carols and the fact that they are often sung under the Christmas tree: this tradition also originated in Thuringia. In 1815, the bookseller Hoffmann put up a Christmas tree on Weimar’s market square for the poor children of the town. This was the first time a Christmas tree was put up in a public place in Germany, and the custom soon spread beyond the town’s borders.

Christmas stollen, a. k. a. “Schittchen” in Thuringia

In Thuringia, stollen is an essential Advent treat, although it is known as “Erfurter Schittchen” here. The first written records of the Thuringian Christmas stollen date back to 1329, making it one of the oldest in Germany. The establishment of a dedicated protection society, the “Thüringer Stollenverband”, and the fact that a “Thuringian stollen queen” is chosen every year prove the importance of this culinary tradition to the locals.



Christmas Stollen

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Belvedere palace garden in Weimar

© Marcus Glahn, Stiftung Schloss Friedenstein

Gotha für die Schatzkammer Thüringen

The green side of the travel destination Thuringia

Parks & green spaces

Gardens with bonsai inspired by the horticulture of the Far East, the fragrance of over 450 rose varieties, a ducal 160-hectare landscaped park: Thuringia's parks and gardens couldn't be more varied. In Thuringia, over 2,000 of these invite you to go for a stroll and to linger in them for a while, including a great number of parks and gardens created by the local aristocracy, botanical collections, spa parks, landscaped gardens and modern urban parks. As "living monuments", they give their visitors access to the history and beauty of the art of gardening.

Goethe's Garden Cottage in Weimar

© Gregor Lengler, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH



Green-fingered Goethe: parks & gardens in Weimar

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe loved gardening. His passion for nature was captured for posterity in his huge oeuvre of poems and observations. What Johann Wolfgang von Goethe described was literally outside his front door and still exists to this day. Goethe, then in his mid-twenties, found his inspiration in the park by the Ilm river. His love of nature, botany and gardening lasted throughout the five decades he lived in Weimar. Weimar's charm is down to its parks and gardens, where visitors can tread in the footsteps of the poets, dukes and ladies in waiting, visionaries and, of course, the gardeners who became famous on a stroll through Weimar's horticultural gems.

Tea and roses: Bad Langensalza surprises with ten themed gardens and parks

The rose and spa town Bad Langensalza offers its guests ten themed gardens and parks throughout the historic town centre with the primary aim of allowing people to switch off and recharge their batteries.

A touch of the English aristocracy: Altenstein Palace and its park

An absolute revelation and a Thuringian gem is the Altenstein Palace park, sprawled over 160 hectares close to the spa town Bad Liebenstein. The palace was built by Georg I, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen as a summer residence and remodelled in the late 19th century in the style of the English aristocracy. The huge park is also a highlight, thanks to its varied design.

Altenstein Park in Bad Liebenstein

© Florian Trykowski, Stiftung Thüringer Schlösser und Gärten, Thüringer Tourismus GmbH



Residence of the “Queen of Flowers”: the Dornburg Palaces

Charmingly situated above a steep rock face, the Dornburg Palaces sit side by side, united into an ensemble by their differently designed gardens. A lofty 90 metres above the Saale valley, the three adjacent palaces govern the picturesque countryside. Each of the three palaces has its own garden.

[read the whole text](#)

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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.

All in all, there are currently twelve Fairtrade Towns and districts in Thuringia, including Erfurt, 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 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.

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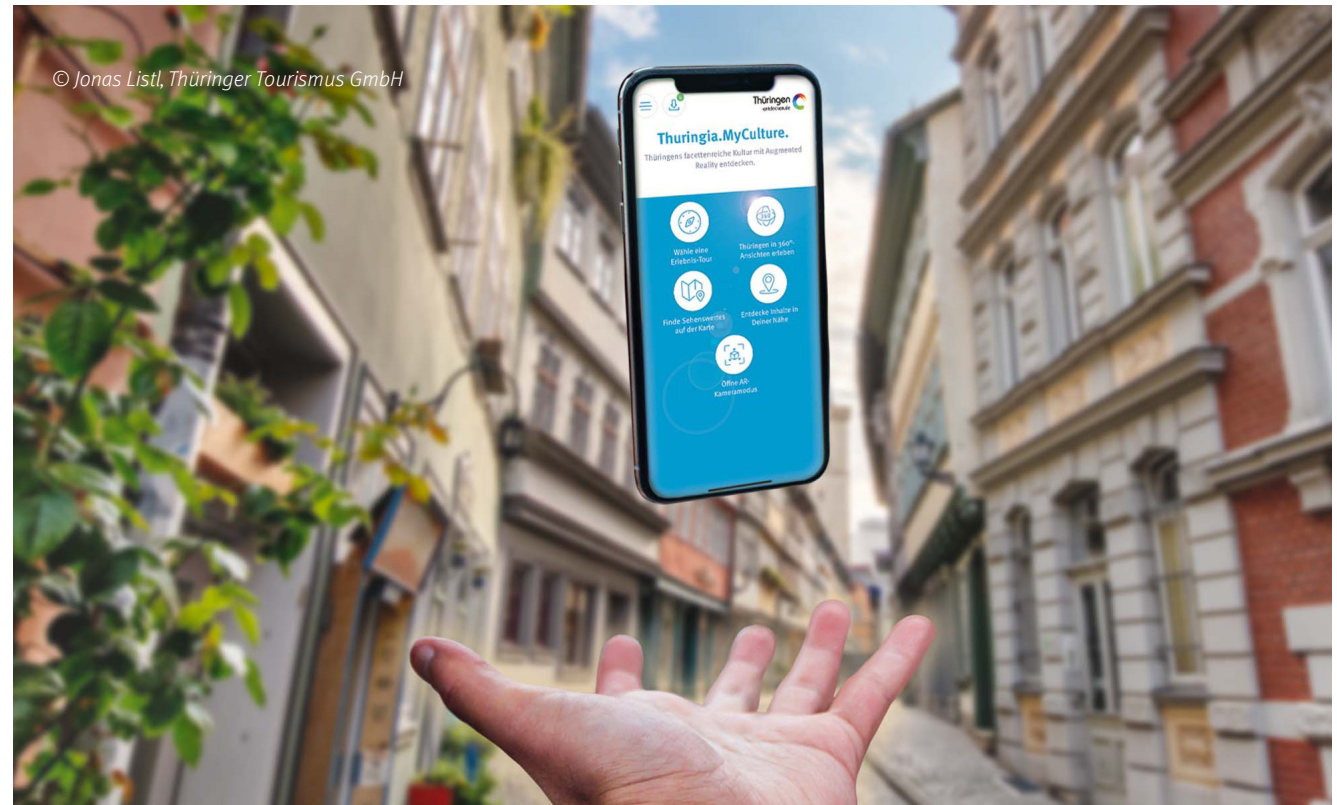
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On a digital tour of discovery
through Thuringia

with the Thuringia. MyCulture. app

The Thuringia.MyCulture app is a digital cultural tour guide provided by the State Chancellery of Thuringia and Thüringer Tourismus GmbH. The app takes visitors on entertaining multimedia tours of discovery to places related to Johann Sebastian Bach, the Bauhaus, the “flower city” Erfurt and many other exciting worlds.

It is a kind of pocket-sized mobile travel guide who knows the region inside out and leads its users through Thuringia in a completely personalised way that matches their individual ideas and requirements, and on an informative and playful adventure trip through



Thuringia with exciting interactive elements. Augmented reality provides additional highlights along the way. The discovery tours are as multifaceted as Thuringia’s culture. Even if you are unable to travel to Thuringia in person, you can still experience its culture from the safety and comfort of your own living room.

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