

Martin Luther (der 10. November 1483—der 2. Februar 1546)

MARTIN LUTHERS HOCHZEITFEST
(der 13. Juni 1525)

A number of children’s rides are stationed throughout the festival area, but unlike the super-fast motorized attractions of today, these all are driven by human-power. A ferris wheel in the town square, made of wood, takes small children about 12 feet off the ground, while a swing ride where children sit in bucket seats spins around with someone pushing from the middle. A large wheel with seats that goes in a circle, like a merry-go-round, is also powered by two men running alongside.

Should visitors get hungry or thirsty, there’s no need to worry: numerous tents sell wursts, ice cream, roasted pig on a spit, fried potatoes, large hot pretzels, roasted almonds, beer, wine, schnapps and much more.

In the courtyards of the two Cranach houses, visitors can enjoy the antics of costumed street performers such as jugglers and wandering minstrels. In front of the city church St. Marien, where Luther preached, Wittenberg’s civic clubs and societies set up their historical camps and invite visitors to listen to music, dance and sit down to a hearty meal. In one area, the lively Männerchor Borussia, a local men’s glee club choir which has been singing for 140 years, performs for the crowd under the trees during the festival. Günter Ganzert, chairman of the club, says the Luther Festival is the highlight of the year for the club.

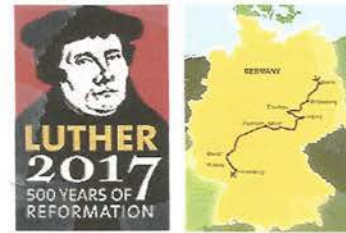
And in front of the large four-gabled red-tiled-roof Renaissance Rathaus built between 1524-40, stands the tall bronze statues of Luther and his friend Phillip Melancthon. The statues overlook the marketplace, where the festival’s opening ceremony takes place on Friday afternoon. The ornately-dressed master of ceremonies delivers his welcome from an oversized scroll, as the crowd alternately cheers and applauds as he reads.

And at any given moment, one of the colorful guard regiments that participate in the festival is likely to hoist their colors, pound their drums and march through the streets of the town, attracting young and old to watch as the unit proudly marches by. The Luther event is all for fun, and Jürgen Donde, first chairman of the *Wittenberger Stadtwache*, smiles as his troupe parades through the streets, and occasionally imparts something to the crowd which makes them erupt in laughter.

The festival has helped put Wittenberg on the map again, centuries after Luther did the same. After Luther’s death in 1546, Katharina wrote: “He gave so much of himself in service not only to one town or to one country, but to the whole world. Yes, my sorrow is so deep that no words can express my heartbreak, and it is humanly impossible to understand what state of mind and spirit I am in . . . I can neither eat nor drink, not even sleep . . . God knows

that when I think of having lost him, I can neither talk nor write in all my suffering.”

Six years later, when fleeing from the plague in Wittenberg in 1552, she died in Torgau after an accident with her wagon and horses. She was 53 years old.



What to See While You’re There

The town itself is a colorful collection of 16th century houses and has a striking market square.

The Town Church—A beautiful Medieval church where Luther preached many sermons.

The Castle Church—It was on the doors of this impressive church that Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses. Luther’s grave is inside.

Luther House—Originally an Augustinian monastery in 1504, it later became the home of the reformer Martin Luther. Today the Luther House is the largest Reformation museum in the world and is on the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Lucas Cranach’s Home and Art Studio. This artist documented much of the Reformation with his portraits and woodcuts.

Phillip Melancthon’s House, on Collegienstrasse. Luther’s friend and fellow theologian, Melancthon greatly contributed to Lutheran doctrine.

If You Go...

Air Berlin flies to Berlin from five U.S. cities; Wittenberg is about 40 minutes by ICE train from Berlin and 30 minutes by ICE from Leipzig.

While there are about 15 hotels in Wittenberg, with the huge crowds that attend this festival, it’s wise to book a room well in advance. Or, you could also stay in nearby Dessau-Wörlitz and travel by train or car. Special trains bring visitors from nearby towns such as Annaburg, Eilenburg, Bitterfeld and Dessau. Extra buses are put in service to ferry people around Wittenberg. For a delightful and fanciful ice cream treat in Wittenberg, stop by Eis Cafe Dolce Vita on Collegienstrasse. For a delicious meal or coffee and Kuchen in the afternoon, try the cozy Tante Emma Cafe right off the market square.

For more information, go to www.lutherstadt-wittenberg.de or www.germany.travel