

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

LUTHERSTADT WITTENBERG: In the footsteps of Martin Luther

Luther translated his German New Testament some 1,300 feet above Eisenach, at the imposing Wartburg Castle, billed as the most visited Luther site in the world. This medieval castle, whose oldest portions date to 1067, was Luther's refuge after being declared a heretic and an outlaw for refusing to recant Protestant beliefs at the Diet of Worms, a meeting of Holy Roman Empire bigwigs in the German town of Worms in 1521. Within the castle, Luther found not only safety, but peace and quiet. The solitude suited him. After nearly a year in hiding, he left the castle, newly translated New Testament in hand.

The castle's Luther Room, where the reformer undertook his translation effort, has always held a certain sanctity for Protestants. It's outfitted simply with rough wood paneling, a desk and chair, and curiously, a whale vertebra used by Luther as a footstool. It's said that Luther's original desk disappeared sliver by sliver, secreted away by Protestant devotees. It's also said that while Luther worked on his translation, he was pestered continuously by the devil until finally, in a fit of rage, Luther flung an ink bottle at him. We'll never know if either story is true. But after 500 years, the legend seems likely to remain.

