

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

Finding Luther: On the Reformer's Trail

IN THE DAYS OF MARTIN LUTHER

- A number of iron objects such as knives were found, but only the handles made from bone survived. Twenty-one of the knives were high-quality table tools, and one of them could have been used as a weapon. Decoration on the handles was like that of more valuable knives used by nobles of Luther's time period. "It appears that these knives were not commonly used for the daily meals," says Mirko Gutjahr of the Museum, "but was cutlery reserved for feasts."
- The bulk of the non-ferrous metal objects found consists of items belonging to the festive garb of a woman, and it appears perhaps of a single dress. "The find of so many applications in a single pit is quite unusual," says Gutjahr, "and the conclusion is that a complete dress was disposed of." The applications are mainly that of stylized roses (sometimes interpreted as symbols of the Virgin Mary). Some of the applications still show traces of rivets with which they were affixed to textiles or leather belts, and some of the designs reveal small crosses, faces, and floral motifs. Other pieces found include small pipe-like objects used to cover the ends of straps, similar to the ends of shoelaces that are covered by small bits of plastic. About seventy-five complete and seventy-two fragments of these were found.
- Also uncovered were a few small belt buckles worn with narrow belts, used to attach small purses, knives, or other light objects, and small beads made from bone and glass. Pots, jewelry, an ivory comb, numerous animal bones (which shed light on Luther's diet), plant seeds, toys, weapons, and more were found. Even a metal spigot from a beer barrel from the house was discovered.

With these new discoveries, a clearer picture of medieval life during Luther's time can be visualized. The findings offer a deeper look into the personal life of Luther and his family, and help tell a great deal more about the Reformer's day-to-day living habits.

The archaeological finds mentioned along with some additional undisclosed surprise artifacts will be part of "The Private Life of Martin Luther Exhibition: Archaeologists on the Trail of the Reformer" which will run from October 31, 2008, to April 26, 2009, at the State Museum of Pre-History, Richard-Wagner Strasse 9, Halle (Saale). The exhibition will be open Tuesday to Sunday and holidays, 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday, by advance reservation and there will be an admission charge. For more information on the exhibition, visit www.fundsache-luther.de.

Wittenberg is a central location between the several "Luther towns" in the area. In Wittenberg you will want to visit the Town Church and the Castle Church, both of which loom over the Wittenberg skyline. Other important buildings/museums include the Lutherhaus at Collegienstrasse 54 where Luther lived, and where an interesting memorial to Katharina von Bora graces the lawn; and Melanchthonhaus which contains three floors with more than four hundred historical books and paintings documenting the life, work, and legacy of Philipp Melanchthon, humanist and reformer. See the Lucas Cranach house at Schloßstrasse 1, father-and-son artist team with paintings in many local museums and churches. And check out the large Luther statue in the Wittenberg town square in front of the Renaissance Rathaus where Mayor Eckhard Naumann has his office, as did Lucas Cranach, one of his predecessors.

At the tourist information office in Wittenberg, across from the Castle Church, you can pick up brochures and also rent a bike there. For individual guided tours in English or German of Wittenberg or the area, contact Bettina Brett at (Bettina.Brett@arcor.de) or Astrid Muehlmann (astrid.muehlmann@web.de), two enthusiastic and knowledgeable tour guides who also dress in costume for historic city festivals and events.

For lodging, there are about five hundred rooms available in the hotels and pensions in Wittenberg. The Brückenkopf Hotel, across the Elbe River, is family-owned, newly renovated, and offers a view of the town from across the river. The Kaiser's Army, Napoleon's Army's, the German Army, and the Russian Army all were quartered in the brick barracks, which have been superbly refurbished into an historic hotel. Contact the Schult family at www.marina-camp-elbe.de or info@brueckenkopf-hotel.de.

Luther's birth house and museum is in Eisleben, and Luther grew up in Mansfeld where his father worked in the mining industry. Mansfeld Castle, where Luther preached, overlooks the town, and is worth a visit. Other area towns also offer lodging and Luther sights of note.



A part of an Aachenhorn (middle portion in white), used on pilgrimages to the sanctuaries of Aachen and Cornelimünster in the Rhineland, was found among the Luther diggings. The remainder of the horn has been reconstructed from comparable finds.