

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

Martin Luther came this way.

the Church of Saints Peter and Paul (Petri-Pauli Kirche) the day after his birth – the font is still in use – and named Martin for his patron saint.

He spent his childhood in nearby Mansfeld, a copper mining town, where he was a choirboy in the Church of St. George. Mansfeld Castle is said to have inspired his hymn “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.”

In Eisenach, where teenage Luther went to Latin School and sang door-to-door to earn his supper, his boarding house (Lutherhaus, Lutherplatz 8) has become the Bible Museum. Overlooking the town is the Wartburg castle where he later came in disguise hiding from papal inquisitors. Here he is said to have thrown his inkpot at the devil, and visitors are still shown the stain on the wall.

He was, at the time, translating the New Testament into German. The Latin Bible he used, missing for two hundred years, was discovered in Stuttgart’s Württemberg State Library only a decade ago. His notes are in the margins.

Erfurt, the city of towers and flowers where he first studied law and received his masters degree in philosophy before joining the Augustinians, is a major center of Luther memorials. His cell in the monastery has been reproduced in all its starkness. Here you will find the cathedral where he was ordained and the simple church where he preached.

It was on the Erfurt-Stottenheim road that Luther, then a twenty-one-year-old university student, was struck by lightning. In a blaze of revelation, he promised St. Anne to become a monk. His parents, who had hoped this most promising son would grow rich and provide for them in their old age, were furious.

Yet it was not his first thought of entering the church. In medieval Magdeburg, fourteen-year-old Luther was stunned to recognize an emaciated begging friar as the noble Prince William of Anhalt. It is said the memory stayed with him all his life.

In 1525, he married Katharina von Bora (1499 to 1552), a former nun from Torgau. She bore him six children and raised four orphans as well. In Torgau, even the architecture of the Palace Church at Schloss Hartenfels, which Luther consecrated in 1544, is said to be “Protestant Style.” A street is named for his wife who is buried there and the house where she died is marked.

Luther sites include Augsburg where, in 1518, he met the papal legate who demanded his submission to the pope; Worms where he again challenged the Church in 1521 by refusing to recant the doctrines of Protestantism; the fortress of Coburg where he was imprisoned in 1530; Leipzig’s St. Thomas Church where he preached and where Johann Sebastian Bach, who is buried there, served as cantor and choirmaster for twenty-five years.

In Naumburg Cathedral, he installed the first Lutheran bishop. In Marburg, he and Ulrich Zwingli negotiated fifteen articles of faith at the Marburg Colloquy convened by his patron Phillip, Landgrave of Hesse. He preached in Seeburg, Stolberg, Wallhausen, and inscribed, “Dear eternal God, have mercy on your Christian world” on the Romanesque Double Chapel in Landsberg. The Gutenberg Museum in Mainz has daily demonstrations that show how the first German language Bible was printed.

Beyond touring certified Bible Lands, Protestants have not been prone to pilgrimages. Now there are guided tours that follow Luther’s footsteps and include other Reformation sites as well. However, those who wish to see the places associated with him can easily do so on their own.

Travel in Germany is easy whether by bus, train, riverboat, or rental car, and distances are relatively short. Throughout Saxony and Thuringia – from village to city, from Arnstadt to Worms – the names of the churches have been short-handed. You are directed simply to “Luther’s Church.”



Eisleben, the “town of Luther,” and the house where Martin Luther was born.



Martin Luther married Katharina von Bora in 1525. The event has been re-enacted since 1985 and serves as the center point of Wittenberg’s Stadtfest (Town Festival).