

Luther Trail (Lutherweg) -- A Spiritual Route Like No Other

On October 31, 1517 a man by the name of Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to a church door in Germany. This one event was the catalyst for one of the greatest religious revolts that Germany, Europe, and the world had ever seen.

But, who was this Martin Luther?

First off, he's been called many things throughout the last 500 years since he kicked off what is now known as the [Protestant Reformation](#) — namely we've known him as a theologian, a professor, and even an ardent anti-Semite. But, he was also a monk, a husband, a father, and friend to some of the biggest names in the Reformation Movement of the early 16th century.

If you're interested in religious history, or just [German history](#) for history's sake itself, the Luther Trail, or *Lutherweg*, in [Saxony-Anhalt](#) is one of the most fantastic [scenic routes in Germany](#).

It's along this route that travels for 410km (255 miles) that will take you along to some of the most amazing sites in this complicated and complex man's life and work; and possibly send you to find some of your own spiritual awareness.

This route is a bit different from a post on [The Germany Blog](#) about the [Protestant Reformation and a Luther Trail](#) (sort of) which follows a bit of a more different route (also to a couple other cities related to Luther).

Start of the Luther Trail (Lutherweg)

This Luther Trail, or *Lutherweg*, starts in the town of [Wittenberg](#). It's here that you can see this former Augustinian Monastery where Luther lived as a monk. The Kloster was shut down after the Reformation and Luther lived here with his family after that.

This UNESCO site now houses the Reformation History Museum with period furniture, portraits of his parents (painted by Lucas Cranach the Elder), and even a prayer book written by the man himself. It's worth every Euro of the entrance fee.

Also in Wittenberg is the *Melanchthon-Haus*. It's a 3-storey Renaissance style building (built 1536) that was the home of Martin's friend Philipp Melanchthon; and houses a permanent exhibition on the man. Melanchthon was more than just Luther's friend and defender of his movement. He is considered to be one of the first theologians of the Protestant Reformation and one of the founders of the Lutheranism.

Wittenberg's *Stadtkirche* (City Church) is not only the oldest building in town. Luther preached in this church and the first Mass ever given in German happened right here. OK, you might ask — why

is that significant? Well, because prior to Luther's teachings, masses were performed in Latin.

There's still a bit more to see here in Wittenberg, including the *Cranachhöfe*. This is a preserved Renaissance farm with lots of art from the days of the Reformation.

Lastly is the *Schlosskirche*, another UNESCO site because this is where you'll find Luther's final resting place. It's also the church that had his 95 theses nailed to it just about 30 years prior. In case you don't speak German, services in English are held on Saturdays at 6pm.

It'll be hard to leave Wittenberg, but it's onwards to [Coswig \(Anhalt\)](#) and its St. Nicolai Church (located at Schloßstrasse 58). You might only get to enjoy the church's musical concerts on the last Sunday of the month (at 5pm), but you're able to see more of Lucas Cranach's artwork just about any time.

In the town of [Oranienbaum-Wörlitz](#) you'll find the St. Petri Church, where Luther preached on November 24, 1532. The church has a Biblical Center and special programs for Pilgrims of the *Lutherweg* on Saturdays at 4:30pm.

Traveling onwards to [Dessau-Roßlau](#) make sure you see the *Wörlitzer Gartenreich*, where you'll find more Cranach paintings at this UNESCO World Site.

That's not all there is in Dessau-Roßlau. In the Renaissance wing of the *Johannbau*, you'll find an exhibit of Culture & History of the Reformation; and portraits of Luther, Melanchthon, and friend and Reformer contributor Prince George III.

There's also the 300 year old St. Johannis Church and the *Georgium* which is a museum with some of the most fantastic works of German (and Dutch) masters. There's even an entire exhibit with art dating from the 18th century to the 20th.

At the Palais Dietrich you'll find the private library of Luther's friend Prince George III, including a manuscript of the Bible's Old Testament that Luther himself translated.

Last stop before leaving Dessau-Roßlau is the church of St. Marien. This church houses a 1000 year old baptismal bell AND a wonderful painting of Luther. You can see both if you come to services on Sunday at 9:30am.

Once you arrive in [Zerbst \(Anhalt\)](#), you'll want to see the Franciscum where Luther preached in 1522. Then on to the Kirchen St. Nicolai and Trinitatius, which are two different churches — they're just really close to each other. St. Nicolai is the largest church in Anhalt and became Evangelical after the Reformation. St. Trinitatius is the newcomer on the block, built in 1696.

Then there's the 12th century St. Bartholomäi Church that was once a basilica. After 1522, a

Franciscan monk at the church became one of the first Lutheran pastors. The frescoes in this Romanesque church are nothing short of stunning!

If you decided to follow the Luther Trail by bicycle, it's the next stop on the route in Steckby that's right up your alley. The *Radfahrerkerche St. Nicolai* offers special exhibitions and special prayers for cyclists. Climb this early 13th century tower for a view of the Saxony-Anhalt countryside. You're just going to have to do it from April to October (8am-6pm) because that's the only time the church is open to visitors.

Reppichau (part of [Osternienburger Land](#)) might not have too much Reformation history, but in its Museum Sachsenspiegel is thought to be one of the oldest (and important) law books in German. It's an outdoor museum and a plethora of legal history of Germany and Europe.

[Köthen \(Anhalt\)](#) is the next town on the Luther Trail. Its St. Jacobs Kirche was built in 1518, yet in a little more than 20 years it was Lutheran. Check out its Royal Crypt where the German Prince Leopold is buried.

This town also celebrates another, Johann Sebastian Bach who's thought to be one of the greatest composers of all time. Look for a bust of the man, called the *Bachgedenkstätte*.

Why not play some of Bach's music on your MP3 player or iPod while you travel over to the village of Wohlsdorf. While its church was originally Romanesque in design, it has many Baroque elements that were added a few centuries later. Look for the Knights Cross from the Knights Templar at the church's entrance.

[Bernburg \(Saale\)](#) with its Renaissance Castle is the next stop. The museum housed in this Burg has one of the oldest editions (printed 1569) of Luther's work. It's also considered one of the most valuable. But, how do you put a price on this kind of history?

Also in Bernburg is the church of St. Marien, which was built in 1228. With the help of Prince Wolfgang in 1526, he helped to make this church Evangelical which it remains to this day.

Over at the St. Nikolai Church in [Wettin-Löbejün](#), you'll see a 13th century altar that was changed in accordance with the change to Protestantism. Not only is the artwork of this church more than magnificent, musical concerts are frequently held here.

Last stop before you arrive in downtown Eisleben is the *Kalte Stelle Dorfkirche* in Unterrißdorf, found at Lutherweg 17, which was reformed under the ideas of Luther in his day.

Welcome to [Lutherstadt Eisleben](#), which was just known simply as Eisleben when Luther was born here November 10, 1483. Martin was baptized the following day at the Church of Sts. Petri & Pauli. The church sanctuary still preserves the memory of his baptism; and also makes the best place to

start your tour of this remarkable city.

Oh, wait. Maybe the house in which Luther was born in would make the best place to start? Inside the *Geburtshaus* is a permanent exhibit on the man himself, his family, and what life was like here in late 15th/early 16th century Germany. It's also yet another UNESCO site associated to Luther.

Next up would be the Church of St. Andrew, built in the 15th century (and subsequently rebuilt after a fire), Luther gave one of his last sermons in this church. Make sure you don't miss the Luther pulpit and the busts of both Luther and Melanchthon.

Eisleben's St. Annen Church is another must-see. You'll find it right next to the Augustinian Monastery where Martin was vicar in 1516.

Your last place in Eisleben is the last residence of Luther. He died here at the *Sterbehaus* on February 18, 1546. In the 19th century, this house was reconditioned to the time period in which Luther lived, filled with period furniture; pretty much looking like it would have in the mid-16th century.

It'll be hard to follow up a trip to Eisleben, but it's onwards to [Mansfeld](#). The town's castle (built 1229 — but dates back to the 11th century) is now a Christian Youth Education Center.

Nearby is the *Elternhaus*, where Martin's family moved here when he was just a baby. He lived here until 1497 when he moved to [Magdeburg](#) to attend school. Sorry to say, this house can only be seen from the outside.

Our next town on the Luther Trail is [Kemberg](#) and its St. Marien Church. Luther's friend was one of the 1st Protestant priests; and his coffin was carried here on its way back to Wittenberg.

Another church where Luther's casket was carried to was the 12th century Romanesque *Feldsteinkirche* in the town of Mühlbeck (nowadays part of Muldestausee). Prior to arriving in Mühlbeck, Luther's body was at the Evangelical *Stadtkirche* in Bitterfeld. This grand church was much smaller originally, having to be rebuilt in the 16th century.

The town of [Sandersdorf-Brehna](#) isn't so much about Martin Luther as it is about Katharina von Bora. Katie, as she was lovingly called by her husband Martin, was a nun at the town's monastery when they met. He helped her escape the convent (along with a few other nuns in fish barrels) — and went on to marry her when she was 26; he was 41.

With this marriage, came a precedent to clergy being able to marry; and she bore him six children (one of their descendants was Paul von Hindenburg, the German President). Mrs. Luther must have been some amazing lady, because behind every great man is an even better woman. ;-)

Come worship at Brehna's St. Jakobus Kirche on Sundays at 10:30 or Saturday evenings at 6pm, in the town where their love affair started.

You'll also be welcomed at the Petersberg Kloster in Petersberg by the Lutheran Brotherhood who will give you guided tours of this 12th century monastery and its gardens. For pious pilgrims on this route, prayer hours are at 8am, noon, and 6pm during the week and 10:30am on Sundays.

[Halle \(Saale\)](#) is the last city on the Luther Trail. Not all of its sightseeing revolves around the Reformation, though. The Prehistoric Museum is an archaeological museum which houses the Sky Disc of Nebra — although in 2009 it had a special exhibition on the Reformation, which is why we're giving this museum an honorable mention.

To see the longest half-timbered house in Europe, this is where you'll want to do it. Once an orphanage, it's now a totally amazing Art & Natural History Museum, with an 18th century library exhibit.

Last, and by no means the least, is *Marktkirche Unsere Lieben Frauen* where one of the first Protestant sermons was given on Good Friday 1541. Its twin towers of this medieval church soar over the town; while inside the church holds the death mask & hands of Luther.

I hope you enjoyed our journey along the historical and spiritual route of the Luther Trail, or *Lutherweg* in German and on plates along this route (and the other cities where he preached and worked).

Whatever word you use to describe this revolutionary man, you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who single-handedly changed the face of Germany (and the world) like he did.

More Luther Trips After The Luther Trail

In 2008, Germany (which LOVES its scenic routes) started the Luther Decade in preparation of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 (any time is a great time to come to Germany, but the Luther Decade years would be even more PERFECT!). Over the coming years, towns associated with his movement will be having all sorts of festivals, parties, symposiums, and other historical events in his honor.

If you have time at the end of your journey on the *Lutherweg*, it would be a good idea to stop in the medieval city of [Erfurt](#) (about 100km from Eisleben), where Luther received his university education and prayed as a monk at the Augustinian Monastery from 1505 to 1511 (you can stay here too, since there's a guesthouse that welcomes visitors — although there are no TV's or telephones in your accommodation — ahh, peace & quiet)!

Erfurt also has a Martin Luther Memorial; and you'll find another one in the town of [Eisenach](#) (at the

Karlplatz) where Luther was held at [Wartburg Castle](#). While he was here, he translated the New Testament from Greek to German — and you can see the room where he did it AND the original 1st edition!

You'll also be able to see the *Luther-Haus*, one of the oldest timber-framed houses in town. It was said he lived here when he went to school. It's now housing a multimedia museum with many exhibits relating to the 16th century and his life & teachings.

Luther Trail Web Site

Here's the Web site dedicated to the [Luther Trail](#).