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# Exploring untouched nature & culture

Bach and Goethe were here, as was Luther, who made Wartburg Castle in Eisenach a world-famous destination. The Thuringian Forest Nature Park is all about untouched nature and there are so many cultural highlights to discover along the way.

For example, there's the 170-kilometre-long "Rennsteig" historic border trail, lined by

1,300 boundary stones. And the 20-kilometre-long "Goetheweg" trail, combining places linked to Goethe's life and works with impressive natural experiences.

Hikers can simply hop on a bus or train to get to the starting points and back to their accommodation at the end.

Wartburg Castle near Eisenach  
© QNTB/ Florian Trykowski



Bach House in Eisenach  
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## Brimming with history: Wartburg Castle in Eisenach.

Eisenach is strongly associated with Luther and Wartburg Castle. Not to mention that it is also the birthplace of Johann Sebastian Bach. He may have only lived here for ten years, but the Bach House in Eisenach, one of the largest music museums in Germany, presents a collection spanning his entire life. The over 500-year-old half-timbered house alone is well worth a visit.

*"I always enjoyed coming here  
and I still do; I think it comes  
from the harmony that surrounds  
everything here," wrote Goethe to  
Schiller from Ilmenau*

1,000 years of history in Late Romanesque architecture. A fortress, residence, site for fine arts, home of Saint Elisabeth and place of exile for Martin Luther: Wartburg Castle became a UNESCO "World Heritage Site" in 1999. Visitors can immerse themselves in this historic atmosphere, including in the Lutherstube (Luther Room) and the Museum, where valuable paintings by the artist Lucas Cranach the Elder are on display.

## Pure nature: the Drachenschlucht gorge and Rennsteig trail.

After all that history, what could be better than getting close to nature? Just prepare to be astonished by the three-kilometre "Drachenschlucht" gorge near Eisenach, as its narrowest part only measures 68 centimetres. In this ravine forest, rare crustaceans, snails, toads and small rodents can still be found between moss cushions and small ferns. And, with a little luck, you might even spot the exotic-sounding fire salamander.

## Destination nature

Visitors can travel to the Thuringian Forest by train from the stations of Erfurt, Würzburg, Gotha or Eisenach. The local "Rennsteig-Ticket" then offers free travel by bus and train to numerous tourist attractions and hiking trails along the Rennsteig. Visitors receive the ticket free of charge at accommodation in eleven resort towns.

[www.fahrtziel-natur.de](http://www.fahrtziel-natur.de)

The "Rennsteig" over the ridge of the Thuringian Forest is Germany's long-distance hiking trail. The first stage of around 14 kilometres from Hörschel, the district of Eisenach and the starting point of the "Rennsteig", to the "Hohe Sonne" is a good introduction to the long trail. Simply hop on the bus when you are ready to head back to Eisenach.

## By Shank's pony to Goethe's favourite places.

"You have only really been somewhere if you visited on foot," said Goethe. You should take these words on board and walk along the 20-kilometre "Goetheweg" trail from Ilmenau to Stützenbach, with 17 stations commemorating the great poet along the way. The trail starts at the GoetheStadtMuseum in Ilmenau. The highlight is the Goethehäuschen cabin at 861 metres. Here, the Wanderer's Nightsong "Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh" (Above all summits is peace) is inscribed on the inside wall. If you can't manage on foot, you can also take the "Rennsteigshuttle".



Drachenschlucht gorge near Eisenach  
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