

Whenever someone speaks of Martin Luther, everyone thinks of Wittenberg, still many others think of Wartburg Castle, but only seldom of Worms. Even Eisleben and Mansfeld, where the great Reformer was born and where he died, are sometimes almost forgotten. And what about Torgau? Few people today realize that this town on the Elbe was once the political centre of Luther's Reformation.

Torgau, once the preferred residential city of the Saxon Electors, has preserved much of the splendour of the former Saxon metropolis.



Hartenfels Castle and Grand Spiral Staircase

The buildings in Torgau are more beautiful than any from ancient times, even King Solomon's temple was only built of wood.

Martin Luther

Torgau was first mentioned in an imperial document over 1,000 years ago. The word 'Torgowe' is of Slavonic origin, meaning 'market'. Important old trade routes passed here where a ford had made it possible for merchants to cross the Elbe River before bridges were built. Trade helped to strengthen the economy, and the middle class developed in the city. Martin Luther's new ideas fell on fertile ground.



Old Nikolai Church

By 1519, Torgau's Nikolai Church was the scene of the first baptism in the German language. One year later, German was first used in a Protestant sermon.

The Saxon Elector Frederick the Wise, who was born in Torgau, did not profess to the Lutheran doctrine, but saved the Reformer, who had been banned, by secretly taking him to Wartburg Castle. The

council and citizens of Torgau hailed Luther for his brave appearance at the Reichstag in Worms after he had returned to Wittenberg.

In 1526, the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse formed the Torgau Alliance in order to defend their territories against followers of the established Catholic faith.

Luther also formulated visitation guidelines, published as "Lessons for visitations in parishes of Electoral Saxony". Later he appointed Gabriel Zwilling, called Didymus, as the first superintendent for the Torgau district.

In 1530, Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas, and Bugenhagen wrote the Torgau Articles, the basis of the Confessio Augustana. The Elector John the Steadfast, accompanied by Melanchthon, then travelled to the Reichstag in Augsburg, while Martin Luther - still banned - had to stay behind at the fortress of Coburg, where he was safe.

Four years later, the new Elector John Frederick the Magnanimous, who had succeeded his father John in 1532, passed an edict to protect the printing of the complete Bible in Wittenberg. He then gave orders to enlarge Torgau Castle and to build a splendid and imposing Residential Palace.

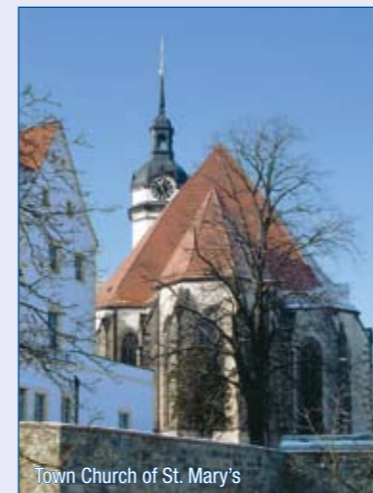
On October 5th, 1544, Martin Luther himself consecrated the Palace Chapel in Torgau, the first Protestant church building. Its architecture illustrates the new theories of Protestantism still incorporated to this day. The pulpit has the central position in the room, God's own word is the centre. The relief motifs on the pulpit and the colouring of the room date back to Lucas Cranach the Elder. Above the altar, which resembles the table for Holy Supper, the organ is placed most prominently, showing clearly the great importance of church music.



Castle Church

I sleep extremely well, about 6 or 7 hours in a row, and later again 2 or 3 hours. I think it is because of the beer, but I am as sober as in Wittenberg.

M. Luther in Torgau on February 27th, 1532



Town Church of St. Mary's

Torgau's school, under its headmaster Marcus Crodell, had a very good reputation. Even Luther and Melanchthon sent their eldest sons here.

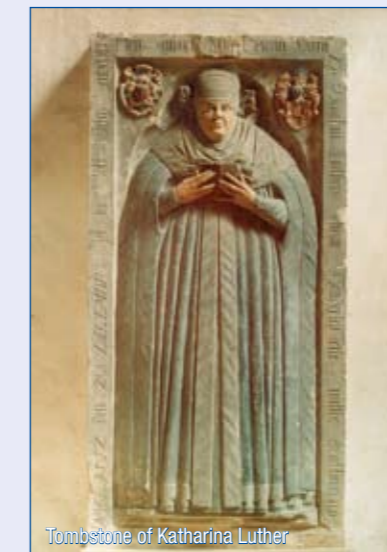
The tradition of Protestant church music is being maintained by the Johann Walter Choir in Torgau. The many high-quality concerts throughout the year, as well as the annual Week of Church Music, held in June, are attractive events for the citizens of the town and its visitors.

For Luther's wife Katharina, Torgau did not only mean the last phase of her life, it was also the first step on her way to secular life. At Easter 1523, the Torgau councillor Leonhard Koppe, Luther's friend, helped twelve nuns to escape from the convent in Nimbschen near Grimma. Two years later, when Koppe was invited to the wedding ceremony in Wittenberg, he brought a barrel of the renowned Torgau beer. Martin Luther liked this brew very much, as can be seen in many of his letters.

Johann Walter composed a motet for seven voices for the consecration. As a close friend of Luther's, he had already edited the first new song book in 1524. Walter was a member of the Electoral Music Group of Frederick the Wise. Later he became a teacher at the school in Torgau and began to build up the Torgau Church Choir.

Martin Luther often preached in the town church of St. Mary's, and altogether more than forty times of a stay in Torgau can be verified. Thus the saying that "Wittenberg was the Mother of Reformation and Torgau was its wet-nurse" seems to be correct.

In 1552 - Martin Luther had died six years before - the plague broke out in Wittenberg. Katharina fled with her youngest children to Torgau where the University had already been relocated. On the way, near Torgau, there was a thunderstorm, the horses shied and Katharina had a severe accident. She eventually found shelter in Torgau but never fully recovered from her sickness. However, in the following three months she still lived to see the engagement of her son Paul to Anna von Warbeck, daughter of a wealthy Torgau citizen, and then, on December 17th, the eighteenth birthday of her youngest daughter, Margarethe.



Tombstone of Katharina Luther

Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree today.

Martin Luther

On December 20th, 1552, she died and was buried in St. Mary's Church. On the impressive

tombstone we can see the image of a self-confident, strong woman. It is also worth visiting the house Katharinenstrasse 11, where you find a museum, which is commemorating the wife of the great Reformer.

The historic town centre with its churches, the castle, the 16th century town hall in the large market square and many beautiful old affluent houses may still give tourists the illusion of strolling through a Renaissance town.

Today, there are numerous options for tourists to imagine history in an interesting and quite enjoyable way. On sightseeing tours, in lectures and music, or with meals and drinks, you can appreciate the best of the 'good old times'.



View of Torgau from the eastern bank of the Elbe

Making a sad and despondent man happy again, this is more than to conquer a kingdom.

Martin Luther

Chapel in Torgau, the first new Protestant church building.
1546 Martin Luther dies in Eisleben on February 18th. The following years are hard for his widow.
1552 Katharina Luther escapes from the plague in Wittenberg and finds shelter in Torgau. She dies on December 20th and is buried in St. Mary's Church.

1483 On November 10th, Martin Luther is born in Eisleben.
1491 In March, Martin Luther starts school.
1499 On January 29th, Katharina von Bora is born.
1505 On June 17th, Luther enters the Augustine Convent in Erfurt.
1509 Katharina lives in the Convent in Nimbschen.
1515 On October 8th, Katharina becomes a nun.
1517 On October 31st, Martin Luther nails 95 theses concerning indulgence on the portal of Castle Church in Wittenberg.

1519 The first baptism in the German language takes place in Torgau's Nikolai Church.
1520 A Protestant sermon is held in German at Nikolai Church in Torgau.
1521 Martin Luther preaches for the first time in Torgau.
1521 At the Imperial Diet of Worms Luther withstands and does not recant.
1523 Luther is hailed for his brave appearance in Worms. He is supported by the citizens of our region.
1523 Supported by the Torgau councillor Leonhard Koppe,

twelve nuns - among them Katharina von Bora - escape from their convent at Easter.
Via Torgau, nine of them arrive at Wittenberg and find shelter there.
1523 Gabriel Zwilling, called Didymus, works as a preacher in Torgau.
After the visitation of 1529 he becomes the first Church Superintendent.
1524 Johann Walter, choir leader in Torgau, has composed Protestant songs and hymns together with Martin Luther.

The book is printed in Wittenberg.
1525 Martin Luther marries Katharina von Bora.
1526 Protestant Dukes form the Torgau Alliance in order to defend their faith.
1527 Under Martin Luther's leadership, Protestant visitation guidelines are worked out in the parish building opposite St. Mary's Church. They are signed by Elector John the Steadfast on May 16th.
1528 The Torgau visitation guidelines are published as "Lessons for visitations in parishes of Electoral Saxony".

1529 Martin Luther comes to Torgau for the first school and church visitation.
1530 Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas and Bugenhagen write the Torgau Articles as the basis of the Confessio Augustana in the house of the superintendent.
1534 Elector John Frederick the Magnanimous signs an edict to protect the printing of the Holy Bible in Wittenberg.
1542 Luther's son Johannes is sent to the Latin School in Torgau.
1544 On October 5th, Martin Luther consecrates the Castle



Martin Luther, his wife Katharina and the Reformation in Torgau



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Map of Germany

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Torgau can also be the place of a very special musical experience if you attend one of the many public concerts here or book a private organ performance for yourself and your guests.

Music is one of the most beautiful and glorious gifts of God, with it you can drive out any temptation and bad thoughts.
Martin Luther

Experience and knowledge of a very different kind can be found in the old Church Superintendent's building, just next to the town church. "Roots & Wings - Perspectives of Life" is the title of a multimedia exhibition for young people and also adults looking at values in our own time. This motto refers to a word by the great German poet J. W. Goethe, who said that children should receive two things from their parents – roots and wings. On your Luther Journey you can leave your own traces by copying a part of the Holy Bible. This handwritten copy is expected to be finished by 2017.



Johann Walter Choir in St. Mary's Church

The town has three historic chimes from the Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque times. The bells can be heard every day at noon and at six p.m.

The Torgau Museum Trail offers the opportunity to enter some of the old buildings and come into close contact with history.



Town Museum in the former Electoral Chancellery

In these houses, which have been beautifully restored, you will see unique treasures preserved over centuries.

The Museum of Local Culture and History in the former Electoral Chancellery shows precious objects like the altar plate of St. Nicholas of Bari, painted by the famous Cranach Workshop in 1515 and only recently rediscovered.

In Mayor Ringenhain's House, you will find impressive evidence of how wealthy citizens lived here around 1600. The Angels' Room, the original portals and the painted coffered ceilings in the two hallways as well as the furnishings are of the highest quality. Renaissance and Reformation have greatly shaped Torgau; they marked the brilliant era in Torgau's one-thousand year-old history. But time never stops.

Here Tsar Peter the Great met the German philosopher Leibniz. Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, wrote his principle work. Napoleon ordered to convert our town to a fortress in 1811. After the Congress of Vienna, both the town and the whole territory was annexed to Prussia. During World War II, the town was not destroyed by air raids. In 1943 however, when the German Supreme War Court was moved to Torgau, a growing number of people were imprisoned and executed here.

Kathy, why do you always have to take the last word, even if it is my own?
Martin Luther

On April 25th, 1945, the name of the town appeared in many news headlines worldwide, as it was here where US Americans and their Soviet Allies had linked up. The Spirit of the Elbe, as it was later called, marked the approaching end of the war. But the Cold War followed soon, and this part of Germany became part of the Eastern bloc. In 1989/90, after the Wall had come down, people began to celebrate the anniversary of the famous handshake with the annual Elbe Day Festival.

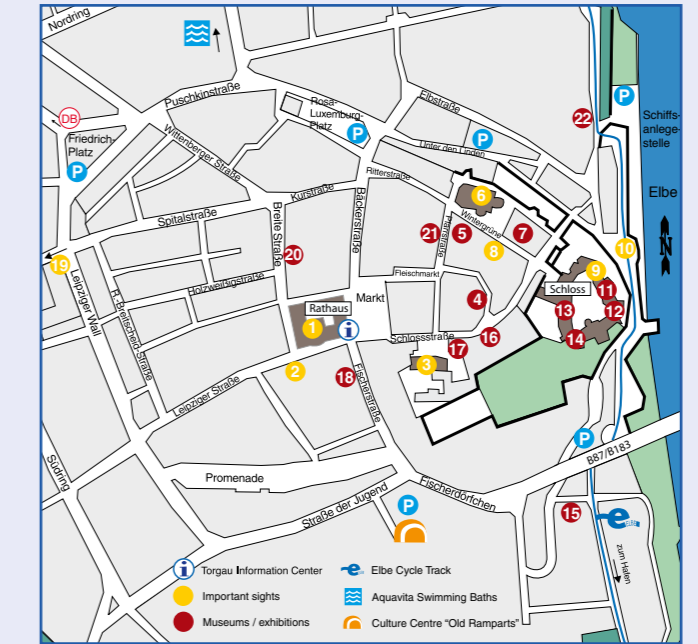


Sightseeing in Torgau

This little town on the Elbe has often experienced good and bad times. Positive high-

lights alternated with darker, even shameful events. During GDR times, Torgau was the site of an infamous youth prison. Yet, the town was also one of the rare examples of careful restoration of a town centre, the preservation of historical monuments started here as early as in 1973.

Torgau offers various guided tours for tourists; museums, churches, exhibitions etc. are open for visits by individuals or groups. The interested visitor can find a lot of material at our Information Centre in the town hall. Come here and discover all this for yourself!



- 1 former Nikolai Church
- 2 former house of L. Koppe
- 3 former Franciscan Monastery
- 4 Katharina Luther Museum
- 5 "Roots & Wings", house of the superintendent
- 6 Protestant Town Church of St. Mary's
- 7 Museum of the town (Old Electoral Chancellery)
- 8 former Latin School
- 9 Protestant Castle Church
- 10 Monument of the Link-up on the Elbe
- 11 DIZ (Traces of Injustice)
- 12 Lapidary Museum
- 13 Exhibition "Torgau – a Renaissance court"
- 14 Castle Tower with observation platform
- 15 former youth prison (exhibition)
- 16 Soldiers on the Elbe (exhibition)
- 17 Little gallery
- 18 Museum: Brewery Wolff Giersing
- 19 Catholic Church Mater Dolorosa
- 20 Museum: Mayor Ringenhain House
- 21 Hahnemann House (Homeopathy lectures)
- 22 Museum: (Spirit of GDR times)

During the Luther-Decade
up to the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in 2017 there will be various events, especially concerts and exhibitions. One more reason for a visit here, seemingly in Martin Luther's footsteps.

Protestant Church Service:
Sundays at 10 a.m., Town Church of St. Mary's (from end of October till May in the Castle Church)

Roman Catholic Mass:
Sundays at 10 a.m., Catholic Church Mater Dolorosa

Festival Week of Protestant Church Music in June
Organ Summer in Torgau
An individual little organ concert

Guided tours daily! Stroll through the town centre.
In German: Monday – Friday from 2 to 3 p.m., but in the summer season (May – September) from 6 to 7 p.m.
Saturday, Sunday or on a public Holiday from 4 to 5 p.m.
In English: by appointment (Please, phone our office).

Programmes for tourist groups (in English):
Package tour (5 days):
A journey to Martin Luther - Torgau – the political centre of the Reformation

Guided walks (1 to 3 hours):
- Martin Luther, Katharina von Bora, and the Reformation in Torgau
- Katharina von Bora and the role of women in the Renaissance
- The beer, which Martin Luther liked
- Good food and beverages, just as in Martin Luther's time