

Thuringia



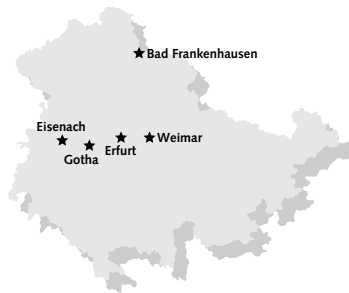
Few German regions can match the rolling green hills and bucolic forest trails found in Thuringia (Thüringen), once part of the GDR. This picturesque state is quite aptly called the 'green heart' of Germany, but Thuringia's moniker does not account for its fascinating and exciting cities – places like the capital, Erfurt; Weimar, a cultural icon in itself; and Eisenach, remarkable for being both a centre of historic German Lutheranism, and of car manufacturing. Beyond these cities are hundreds of smaller towns that invite exploration.

But Thuringia has also felt the cold double-edge of German history. In 1930 it became the first German state to be governed by the Nazis, and it quickly stocked its police and other public services with obedient followers of the NDSAP. The former Buchenwald concentration camp is a grim reminder of the period, standing in bleak contrast to the cultural legacy left by Goethe and Schiller 150 years earlier, and the radical Bauhaus movement which was born in the city in 1919.

Today Thuringia is one of the most popular tourist destinations for hiking and cultural tourism; it also offers many opportunities to combine both. Although its roads and trails are well-trodden, and its cities were long ago sketched on the world cultural map, Thuringia brings many unexpected rewards for visitors who put aside the map for a moment and immerse themselves in the gentle momentum of slow travel.

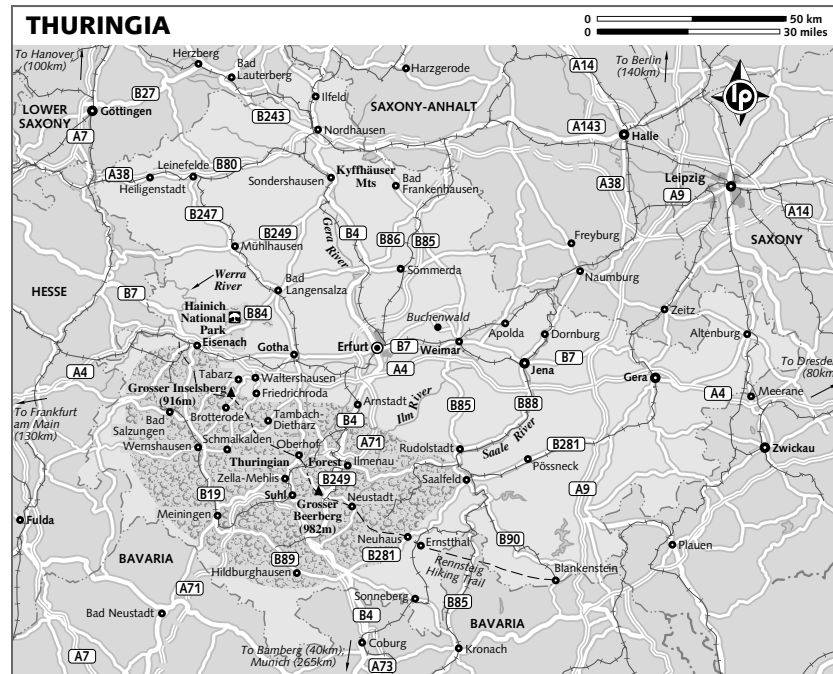
HIGHLIGHTS

- **Culture** Experience the finest of both classic and cutting-edge culture in Weimar (p258)
- **Escapism** Tour Wartburg Castle, Martin Luther's hideout in Eisenach (p270)
- **Bizarre Beds** Sleep in a former police lock-up, or a 13th-century monastery, in Erfurt (p256)
- **Views** Take in the Kyffhäuser Monument and Panorama Museum in Bad Frankenhausen (p269)
- **Hiking & Cycling** Tackle a leg or two of the Rennsteig (p273), Germany's oldest and most famous trail, by foot or on your bike from Eisenach
- **Slow Travel** Roll across meadows and through forest on a country tram (p268) from Gotha to beautiful Friedrichroda and beyond



■ POPULATION: 2.58 MILLION

■ AREA:



Getting There & Away

Thuringia's main cities, Erfurt and Weimar, are serviced by daily trains from Berlin, Frankfurt, Dresden and Hanover; contact **Deutsche Bahn** (☎ 118 61 for reservations, ☎ 0800-150 7090 for automated timetable information; www.bahn.de) for full details.

If you're driving, the area's main arteries are the east–west A4, which runs just south of Erfurt and Weimar (linking Frankfurt and Dresden), and the north–south B4, which skirts Erfurt before heading into the heart of the Thuringian Forest on its way south to Munich. The Berlin–Munich A9 cuts through the eastern part of Thuringia.

Getting Around

Trains are supplemented by comprehensive local bus networks and an efficient road system. There are two good-value DB discount tickets available in Thuringia. The Thüringen-Ticket (€26) gives up to five people (or a family) unlimited travel on regional trains for a day; the Hopper-Ticket (€4.50) is valid for a day return to any town within 50km of your starting point, including places in Saxony-Anhalt.

A weekly pass for the 'Verbandsgebiet' is also available for all transport covering city zones and the regions between Erfurt, Weimar and Jena (€50).

CENTRAL THURINGIA

ERFURT

☎ 0361 / pop 199,000

The capital of Thuringia is a charming and lively town that lies just 45km south of the geographical centre of reunified Germany. Although WWII bombing took its toll on this university town, its numerous architectural gems include a spectacular cathedral and monastery, some lovely winding streets in the restored Altstadt (Old Town) and one of Europe's most interesting bridges.

Erfurt was founded by St Boniface as a bishopric in 742, and was catapulted to prominence and prosperity in the Middle Ages when it began producing a precious blue pigment from the woad plant. However, due to a fire that raged through the city in 1472, none of its surviving buildings date from before the 15th

a **guided tour** (adult/concession €6/3; ☎ 11.30am-5.30pm hourly Apr-Dec) from the tourist office. The nearby Romanesque **Peterskirche** (☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun) can be visited separately without a tour.

AUGUSTINERKLOSTER

Nestled in the heart of the Andreasviertel, the **Augustinerkloster** (☎ 576 600; adult/concession €5/3; ☎ tours hourly 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am & 2pm Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Sat, from 11am Sun Nov-Mar) is where Luther was a monk from 1505 to 1511, and where he read his first mass after being ordained as a priest. There are exhibits on the Reformation and Luther's cell, and the tour includes the magnificent cloister. The grounds and church are free of charge throughout the day; enter from Kirchgasse or Comthurgasse. An order of Protestant nuns resides in the monastery; public prayer services are held four times daily.

KRÄMERBRÜCKE

The 18m-wide and 120m-long medieval **Krämerbrücke** (merchant bridge) is Europe's longest bridge with houses. It was originally constructed from wood but rebuilt in stone in 1325 and adorned with churches at each end. Today the only church building remaining is the deconsecrated Aegideuskirche remains, now part of the Sorat Hotel (see p257).

CHURCHES

Erfurt's churches give an interesting insight into the city's history. The most haunting is the partially destroyed **Barfüsserkirche** (☎ 554 560; Barfüsserstrasse 20; adult/concession €1/0.50; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Apr-Oct), now part of the Angermuseum, with a small collection of medieval religious art. Bombed in WWII, the west wall is still connected by an exposed aisle with Gothic arches. The **Predigerkirche** (☎ 5504 8484; Predigerstrasse 4; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, noon-4pm Sun) was completed in 1400, and has regular organ recitals in summer on its reconstructed baroque organ. The **Michaeliskirche** (☎ 346 7212; nr Michaelisstrasse & Allerheiligenstrasse; ☎ 10am-5pm) was where Martin Luther preached in 1522; it boasts a magnificent **organ** (1652) by Erfurt master Ludvig Compenius.

MUSEUMS

Inside the Haus zum Stockfisch, the **Stadtmuseum** (☎ 655 5650; www.stadtmuseum-erfurt.de; Johannesstrasse 169; adult/concession €1.50/0.75; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) has among its exhibits a medieval

bone-carver's workshop and displays on Erfurt in the 20th century, including the GDR era. The **Angermuseum** (☎ 562 3311; www.angermuseum.de; Anger 18) has been undergoing restoration and is expected to reopen in late 2007. Visitors will once again find collections of medieval art and crafts, 19th- and 20th-century landscape paintings and 18th-century Thuringian *faience* (glazed earthenware).

For an insight into Thuringian folk art, visit the **Museum für Thüringer Volkskunde** (☎ 655 5607; www.volkskundemuseum-erfurt.de; Juri-Gagarin-Ring 140a; adult/concession €1.50/0.75; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). West of the city centre is the **ega** (Erfurter Gartenausstellung; ☎ 564 3700; www.ega-erfurt.com; adult/concession €5/4; ☎ 9am-8pm), a huge garden show-ground centred on **Cyriaksburg castle** (Gothaer Strasse 38). Take tram 2 from Anger.

GALLERIES

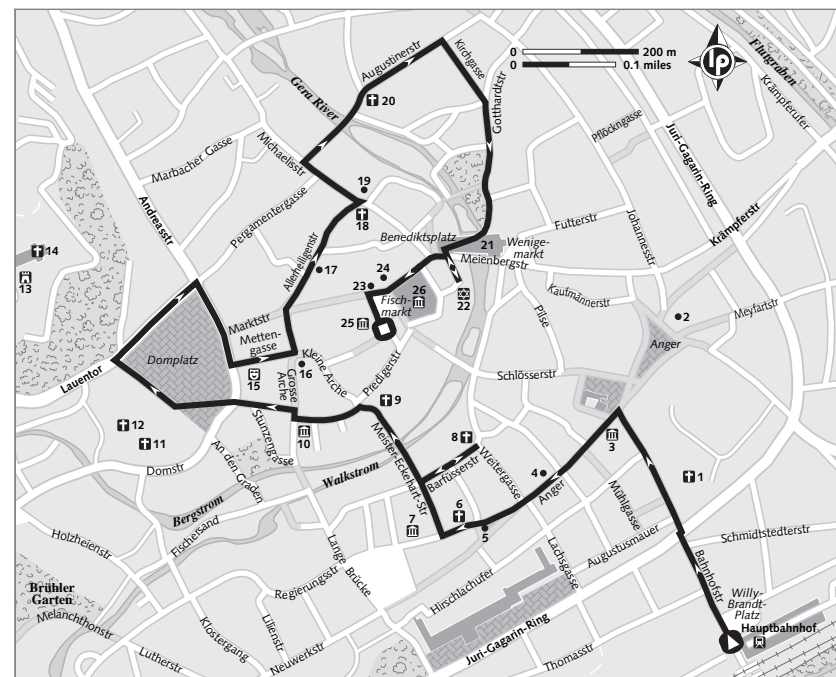
The **Kunsthalle Erfurt** (☎ 655 5660; www.kunsthalle-erfurt.de; Fischmarkt 7; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 11am-10pm Thu) is located in Haus Zum Roten Ochsen on Fischmarkt, and is Erfurt's largest gallery; others with changing exhibitions of contemporary art are **Galerie Haus Dacheröden** (☎ 654 8420; Anger 37-38; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) and **Galerie Waidspeicher** (☎ 655 1960; www.kroenbacken.de; Michaelisstrasse 10; ☎ noon-6pm Wed-Sun), inside the Kulturhof Krönbacken cultural centre (see p258).

Walking Tour

This walking tour takes you to all the major attractions starting from the heart of the city. You'll find so much to entrance that you may spend hours completing it.

From the Hauptbahnhof head north on Bahnhofstrasse. Just after crossing Juri-Gagarin-Ring, you'll come upon the 14th-century **Reglerkirche** (1). The portal and the southern tower of this former monastery church are Romanesque, and the large carved altar dates back to 1460.

Bahnhofstrasse intersects with Anger, which is flanked by houses from seemingly different historical periods (most of them are actually only 100 years old). Off to your right you'll see the enormous **Anger 1 shopping complex** (2), while immediately to your left is the yellow, stuccoed **Angermuseum** (3; see opposite). As you head west on Anger, look for the pretty façades at No 23 and No 37-38. You'll also pass the **Bartholomäusturm** (4), a tower with a 60-bell *Glockenspiel* (there are



WALK FACTS

Start Hauptbahnhof
Finish Fischmarkt
Distance 3.2km
Duration Two hours

live concerts at 11am on Saturday, and automatic melodies several times daily).

When you get to the **Angerbrunnen** (5) fountain, keep to the right and follow Regierungsstrasse past **Wigbertkirche** (6) to the Renaissance and baroque **Stadthalterpalais** (7), the office of Thuringia's chancellor. Turn north on Meister-Eckehart-Strasse, then right on Barfüsserstrasse, where haunting **Barfüsserkirche** (8; opposite) awaits. Backtrack to Meister-Eckehart-Strasse and turn right to get to the 13th-century **Predigerkirche** (9; see opposite). From here head west on Paulstrasse and Kettenstrasse, past the GDR-themed **Thüringer Produkte Museum** (10; Paulstrasse 26) to the giant Domplatz, presided over by the **Dom St Marien** (11; p253) and stunning **Severikirche** (12; p253).

North of the Dom complex, on another hill, are the **Zitadelle Petersberg** (13; p253) and Romanesque **Peterskirche** (14; opposite).

Back on the Domplatz, explore the ornate façades of the houses on its eastern side, then duck into the tiny Mettengasse, an alley. Immediately to your right is the **Waidspeicher** (15; p258), now a puppet theatre and cabaret but formerly a storage house for *Waid* (woad) crops. A few metres further is the **Haus zum Sonneborn** (16), built in 1536 with a spectacular portal; it's now the city's marriage office.

At the end of Mettengasse, turn north into Grosse Arche, cross Marktstrasse and head northeast on Allerheiligenstrasse to the Andreasviertel, the former university quarter. At Allerheiligenstrasse 20 is the **Haus zur Engelsburg** (17), where a group of humanists met between 1510 and 1515 to compose at least two of the contentious *Dunkelmännerbriefe* (Obscurantists' Letters), satirical letters mocking contemporary theology, science and teaching practices.

Further along, on the corner of Michaelisstrasse and Allerheiligenstrasse, you'll find the Gothic **Michaeliskirche** (18; opposite), and

diagonally across the street is the **Collegium Majus (19)**, the site of the main building of Erfurt's venerable university. The university itself (founded in 1392, closed in 1816 and reopened in 1994) was so influential that even Luther referred to it as: 'my mother to which I owe everything'.

Go north along Michaelisstrasse, then turn right onto Augustinerstrasse to the **Augustinerkloster (20)**; p254). From the monastery, continue along Augustinerstrasse and turn right into Kirchgasse, which leads into Gotthardstrasse and runs south to the medieval **Krämerbrücke (21)**; see p254). A short detour takes you to the **Begegnungsstätte Kleine Synagoge (22)**; ☎ 655 1660; An der Stadtmünze 4/5; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun) a cultural and educational facility focusing on Jewish tradition and history. This classical building was Erfurt's synagogue from 1840 to 1884. The basement has an exhibit on Jews in Erfurt, as well as a small *mikve* (ritual bath).

Head back to the western end of Krämerbrücke and walk down Marktstrasse to **Fischmarkt**, the medieval market square with a gilded statue of a Roman warrior at its centre. It's flanked by several noteworthy buildings, including the **Haus zum Breiten Herd (23)** from 1584, with a rich Renaissance façade and a frieze depicting the five human senses; this theme continues with the four virtues on the adjacent **Gildehaus (24)** built in 1892. Look for the **Haus zum Roten Ochsen (25)**, a Renaissance gem from 1562, which now houses the art museum **Kunsthalle Erfurt** (see p254). The neo-Gothic **Rathaus (26)**; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon, Tue & Thu, to 4pm Wed, to 2pm Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun), built 1870-75, has a series of interior murals depicting scenes from Luther's life, as well as the Tannhäuser and Faust legends. On the 3rd floor is an extravagant festival hall. The walking tour ends here.

Tours

The tourist office offers two-hour **walking tours** (adult/concession €5.50/3; ☎ 1pm Mon-Fri Apr-Dec, 11am & 1pm Sat & Sun year-round) of the Altstadt and Petersberg, as well as other tours on themes such as architecture or Martin Luther in Erfurt.

Sleeping BUDGET

The tourist office can book **private rooms** (☎ 664 0110) from about €20 per person; there's lots of choice and some surprisingly central options.

Ferienpark Stausee Hohenfelden (☎ 036450-420 81; www.hohenfelden.de; Hohenfelden; adult/child €5.50/3.50, car/tent €2/2.50) You can swim in the lake in summer at this large, modern camp site about 15km south of Erfurt in the pretty Ilmtal. Take bus 155 to Hohenfelden Stausee.

DJH hostel (☎ 562 6705; jh-erfurt@djh-thueringen.de; Hochheimer Strasse 12; under 26/over 26 €17/20; ☎ ☎ ☎) Erfurt's comfortable DJH Jugendherberge is nestled among villas about 2km from the city centre (take tram 5 to Steigerstrasse).

Re_4Hostel (☎ 6000 110; www.re4hostel.de; Pushkinstrasse 21; dm €12-15, d €50; ☎ ☎ ☎) If you've ever spent a night in a police lock-up, maybe this isn't your thing; rooms in this former police station range from hotel-like twins to hostel-like dorms. Bedding and towels cost extra. Room 13 has a chilling surprise.

Pension Reuss (☎ 731 0344; www.pension-reuss.de; Spittelgartenstrasse 15; s €27, d €42-50; ☎) This *pension* north of the centre is good value, with comfy rooms – some with cooking facilities – and a back garden to sooth eyes and soul.

MIDRANGE

Augustinerkloster (☎ 576 600; www.augustinerkloster.de; Augustinerstrasse 10; s/d €45/76; ☎ ☎) The nicest twins and singles here are in the main monastery building (there's also a Renaissance-Hof section), with views over the wonderful cloister. All guests have access to this tranquil sanctuary.

Hotel Grenzenlos (☎ 6013 2600; www.behindertenverband-erfurt.de; Jonny-Schehr-Strasse 12; s €45, d €70; ☎ ☎) Close to the centre and catering especially for physically disabled (it's also deaf- and blind-friendly), this small hotel is comfortable and has easy wheelchair access.

Hotel Ibis (☎ 664 100; www.ibis.com; Barfüsserstrasse 9; r €59; ☎ ☎) This chain hotel opposite the Barfüsserkirche offers rooms that are small and no-frills, but they serve their purpose admirably.

Hotel & Gasthof Nikolai (☎ 5981 7119; www.hotel-nikolai-erfurt.com; Augustinerstrasse 30; s €69-75, d €84-110; ☎ ☎) The location alongside the river, the overall high standard of rooms, and the friendly owners make this a prime choice, even if some rooms are small.

Hotel am Kaisersaal (☎ 658 560; info@hotel-am-kaisersaal.de; Futterstrasse 8; s €74-98, d €101-117; ☎ ☎) Rooms are tip-top and appointed with all the necessities in this highly-rated hotel. Request a room to the yard, though, if street noise disturbs.

Sorat Hotel (☎ 674 00; erfurt@sorat-hotels.com; Gotthardstrasse 27; s €60-142, d €80-162; ☎ ☎ ☎) Sorat has two buildings, one an annex on the historic Krämerbrücke with cheaper rooms. All rooms have a designer edge, and it's a wonderful location on the willow-fringed arm of the Gera River.

Hotel Zumnorde (☎ 568 00; www.hotel-zumnorde.de; Anger 50/51; s €100-130, d €120-150, ste €180-250; ☎ ☎ ☎) The rooms and suites are modern, quite large and avoid decoration-overload in this fine hotel in the centre. There's a pretty garden, with a view to the neighbouring shoe shop, and a good restaurant here. Enter from Weitergasse.

TOP END

Grand Hotel am Dom (☎ 644 50; www.grand-hotel-am-dom.de; Theaterplatz 2; s €125-140, d €135-150, ste €230-560; ☎ ☎ ☎) Slick, central and sparkling with five stars, 'the Grand' is designed so rooms either have windows facing the foyers, or windows looking to the world, so it's best to state your preference when booking. All are tastefully appointed in subdued light-browns, and there's a whirlpool in the Zen-inspired wellness area.

Eating

TRADITIONAL

Zum Goldenen Schwann (☎ 2623 742; Michaelisstrasse 9; mains €5-12.50; ☎ 10am-midnight) It's not so much the unpretentious traditional food that makes this place popular locally, rather the highly-rated unfiltered boutique beer.

Zwiesel (☎ 7897 207; Michaelisstrasse 31; mains €5.50; ☎ 11am-1am Sun-Thu, 11am-2am Fri & Sat) If you've just been cut out of the family will, take heart, you can still afford to fill up here – virtually everything costs the same in this relaxed student classic.

Erfurter Brauhaus (☎ 562 5827; Anger 21; mains €7-12; 11.30am-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) As well as tasty square meals, we found the ubiquitous Three Wise Men of German boutique brewing here: one pilsner, one wheat beer and one dark beer. The fourth, the Märzbier (a blended pilsner and dark beer), must be popular because it had run out on the day.

Haus Zur Pfauen (☎ 211 5244; Marbacher Gasse 12-13; mains €7-10; ☎ 10am-1am) This jack-of-all-trades wears tradition on its sleeve – it's a restaurant, has its own microbrewery (a dark beer and a pilsner), its own *pension* (upstairs), and its own beer garden; it even does city tours.

INTERNATIONAL

Il Mulino (☎ 561 7069; Lange Brücke 37a; mains €7-17; ☎ 11am-midnight) On a warm day or night the riverside setting and garden seating are a treat in this Italian restaurant – the menu could do with an abridged edition, though.

Alboth's Restaurant (☎ 568 8207; Futterstrasse 15-16; 4- to 7-course set menus €33-79; ☎ from 6pm Tue-Sat) This restaurant is a French-inspired port of call for those seeking a serious gourmet plunge in the region. The **Lutherkeller** (☎ 568 8205; mains €7-15; ☎ from 6pm Tue-Sat) theme-eatery downstairs is a different kettle of fish – straw on the floor, chirpy personnel and prices in German Thaler (one-to-one exchange rate, they say). Each to their own, both are excellent.

Si Ju (☎ 6552 295; www.si-ju-erfurt.de; Fischmarkt 1; mains €7.50-20; ☎ 9am-late Mon-Sat, 10am-late Sun) The name is a shocking word play on 'see you', but this restaurant, café and lounge behind the Rathaus (actually part of the building) is a fashionable choice for diners and drinkers of all ages. The mood swings according to the time of day.

Vamos (☎ 654 6765; Domstrasse 15; tapas & mains €3-9.50; ☎ 10am-1am Sun-Thu, 10am-3am Fri & Sat) Vegetarians will find more than enough to fire the palate in this lively Spanish restaurant and bar.

Bombay (☎ 5400 535; Domplatz 35; mains €9-17; ☎ 11.30am-midnight) Although the curries aren't hot and it sets its sights resolutely on the tourist trade, this Indian eating house is very decent, with lots of vegetarian dishes.

Don Camillo (☎ 219 2366; Michaelisstrasse 29; €8-17; ☎ 11am-2pm & 6pm-midnight Tue-Sat, 11am-2pm Sun) Highly recommended for its creative Mediterranean cuisine, Don Camillo has many surprises up its sleeve – not least its interesting wine list.

CAFÉS

Altstadt Café (☎ 5626 473; www.erfurt-altstadtcfe.de; Fischersand 1; snacks €2.50-6; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat, 2-7pm Sun) Enjoy a coffee, tea, alcoholic drink or snack here, on an idyllic terrace alongside a canal.

Henner (☎ 654 6691; www.henner-sandwiches.de; Weitergasse 8; sandwiches from €2.50; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) This stylish sandwich bar has sleek orange colours and delicious food.

Drinking

Erfurt's former university quarter, the Andreasviertel, is a hub of nightspots, pubs

and bars, especially along Michaelisstrasse and Futterstrasse.

Dubliner (☎ 644 2072; Neuwerkstrasse 47a) Though not in the Andreasiertel, this is the main Irish pub in town and a highly convivial place for a drink or two. Whiskey is all the go here, especially downstairs.

Hemingway (☎ 551 9944; www.hemingwaybar-erfurt.de; Michaelisstrasse 26) Everything the macho scribe loved is here in abundance: cigar humidors with personal drawers, 148 types of rum, and 30 different Daiquiri cocktails. The Africa Lounge has a local Bambi, though, not an elephant bagged from under Kilimanjaro.

Studentenzentrum Engelsburg (☎ 244 770; www.eburg.de; Allerheiligenstrasse 20-21) Lots of venues rolled into one, this student haunt has a pub in the Steinhaus, a positively labyrinthine cellar for music (most nights), and the Café DuckDich cultural forum upstairs.

Presseklub (☎ 262 3369; www.presseklub.net; Dalbersweg 1) Set right on Karl-Marx-Platz, in a monolith, this club has lots of live music and DJs, usually from Tuesday till Saturday.

Centrum (☎ 789 7388; www.centrum-club.de; Anger 7) This club gets a young crowd for dance music, live bands and occasional film screenings.

Entertainment

Free magazines such as *Erfurt magazin*, *t.akt*, *Partysan* and the local editions of *Blitz* and *Frizz* provide nightlife and event listings for Erfurt and other major towns.

Studentenzentrum Engelburg, Presseklub and Centrum (above) are all good clubs and live music places.

JAZZ

Jazzkeller (☎ 6422 600; www.jazzclub-erfurt.de; Gildehaus, Fischmarkt 13/16) This is the best address in town for quality jazz.

Kulturhof Krönbacken (☎ 655 1960; Michaelisstrasse 10) In summer, music events, including occasional jazz, are held now and again in this courtyard near former woad warehouses.

THEATRE & CLASSICAL MUSIC

Theater Erfurt (☎ 223 30; tickets ☎ 223 3155; Theaterplatz) This new theatre building beyond the cathedral is a state-of-the-art venue for theatre, opera, ballet and concerts.

Theater Waidspeicher (☎ 598 2924; www.waidspeicher.de; Domplatz 18) This puppet theatre is on the ground floor of an attractive woad warehouse (reached via Mettengasse). Above

is the Die Arche cabaret, Erfurt's premier address for political cabaret.

DasDie (☎ 551 166; www.dasdielive.de; Marstallstrasse 12) Stages here host everything from cabaret through to operettas, transvestite shows and Simon and Garfunkel revival bands.

Throughout summer, from the end of May, classical concerts take place beneath linden trees in the romantic courtyard of Michaeliskirche (Friday). Organ concerts are held at the Predigerkirche and Michaeliskirche (Wednesday), and at the Dom (Saturday).

Getting There & Away

Erfurt has direct IC train links to Berlin-Hauptbahnhof (€47, 3¼ hours) and ICE connections with Dresden (€42, 2¼ hours) and Frankfurt-am-Main (€46, 2¼ hours). There are also direct services to Meiningen (€15, 1½ hours) and Mühlhausen (€10, 45 minutes). Trains to Weimar (€4.40, 15 minutes) and Eisenach (€9, 50 minutes) run several times hourly.

Erfurt is just north of the A4, and is crossed by the B4 (Hamburg to Bamberg) and the B7 (Kassel to Gera). The new A71 autobahn runs south to Ilmenau. Most major car rental agencies have offices at the airport. There's a Park & Ride on Europaplatz (B4), 6km north of town.

Getting Around

Tickets in the central (yellow) zone for trams and buses cost €1.50, or €5 for a day pass. For information, call ☎ 194 49. Tram 4 runs direct to the airport from Anger (€1.50, 20 minutes). A taxi should cost around €14. To order a taxi, ring ☎ 511 11 or ☎ 666 666.

WEIMAR

☎ 03643 / pop 64,000

Neither a monumental town nor a medieval one, Weimar draws visitors whose tastes run to cultural or intellectual pleasures. It is the epicentre of the German Enlightenment, having grown into a symbol for all that is good and great in German culture. Its parks and gardens bring tranquil colour to the city in summer and lend themselves to contemplation, whereas its many museums take the visitor into the epoch of the Enlightenment (and its characters) and beyond.

The pantheon of intellectual and creative giants who lived and worked here amounts to a virtual Germanic hall of fame: Cranach the Elder, Johann Sebastian Bach, Wieland,

Schiller, Herder, Goethe, Liszt, Nietzsche, Gropius, Feininger, Kandinsky, Klee...the list goes on (and on, and on).

The town is best known as the place where Germany's first republican constitution was drafted after WWI (see below), though there are few reminders of this historical moment. The ghostly ruins of the Buchenwald concentration camp, on the other hand, still provide haunting evidence of the terrors of the Nazi regime. The Bauhaus and classical Weimar sites are protected as Unesco World Heritage sites.

While the city can sometimes feel like a giant tourist-filled museum, it is one of Germany's most fascinating places and belongs on every itinerary.

Orientation

The town centre is a 20-minute walk south of the Hauptbahnhof (central train station). Several buses serve Goetheplatz, on the north-western edge of the Altstadt.

Information

Many of Weimar's museums and parks are administered by Stiftung Weimarer Klassik (right).

BOOKSHOPS

Thalia (☎ 828 10; Schillerstrasse 5a)

DISCOUNT CARDS

WeimarCard (per 72hr €10) Available from the tourist office; covers admission or gives discounts for museums, travel on city buses and other benefits.

INTERNET ACCESS

Die Eule (☎ 850 388; www.die-eule-buchhandlung.de; Frauentorstrasse 9-11; per 20min €1; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat)

roxanne (☎ 800 194; Markt 21; per 30min €1; ☎ 10am-late Mon-Sat, 1pm-late Sun)

EMERGENCY

Police station (☎ 908 106; Markt 13-4)

MONEY

Reisebank ATM Located at Hauptbahnhof.
Sparkasse (Graben 4) Bank services and ATM.

POST

Main post office (☎ 2310; Goetheplatz 7-8)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Buchenwald Information (☎ 430 200; Markt 10; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar)
DJH Service Centre (☎ 850 000; www.djh-thueringen.de; Carl-August-Allee 13; ☎ 1-4pm Mon, 9am-noon & 1-5pm Tue & Thu, 9am-noon Fri) Reservations and information for DJH hostels.

Stiftung Weimarer Klassik main office (Weimar Classics Foundation; ☎ 545 401; www.swkk.de; Frauentorstrasse 4; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Information stand (☎ 545 407; Markt 10; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) Museum tickets, literature and information.

Tourist Information (☎ 7450; www.weimar.de; Markt 10; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-2pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar)

Sights

GOETHE HAUS

No other individual is as closely associated with Weimar as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who lived here from 1775 until his death in 1832. In 1792, his sponsor and employer, Duke Carl August, gave him a house as a gift. **Goethe Haus** (☎ 545 401; Frauenplan 1;

HOW THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC GOT ITS NAME

Despite its name, the Weimar Republic (1919–33), Germany's first dalliance with democracy, was never actually governed from Weimar. The town on the river Ilm was merely the place where, in 1919, the National Assembly drafted and passed the country's first constitution.

Assembly delegates felt that the volatile and explosive political climate rocking post-WWI Berlin would threaten the democratic process if it took place there, and looked for an alternative location. Weimar had several factors in its favour: a central location, a suitable venue (the Deutsches Nationaltheater), and a humanist tradition entirely antithetical to the militaristic Prussian spirit that had led to war.

Weimar's spot in the democratic limelight lasted only briefly. With the situation in Berlin calming down, the delegates returned to the capital just one week after passing the constitution on 31 July.

looks a bit like a ship on its side and features natural stone, stylised chimneys, loggias and oversized windows. To reach it, take bus 1 or 12 to Papiergraben.

Van de Velde also designed the ground floor of the **Nietzsche Archiv** (☎ 545 401; Humboldtstrasse 36; adult/concession €2.50/2; ☹ 1-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct), where the philosopher spent his final years in illness, and the building that now houses the **Bauhaus Universität** (Geschwister-Scholl-Strasse).

Other splendidly restored Art Nouveau buildings cluster on Cranachstrasse, Gutenbergstrasse and Humboldtstrasse, just west of the Historischer Friedhof.

BAUHAUS IN WEIMAR

The **Bauhaus Museum** (☎ 545 401; Theaterplatz; adult/concession €4.50/3.50; ☹ 10am-6pm) gives a fascinating insight into this group of artists and artisans, who shaped our understanding of modern design (particularly in the city of Chicago) like no other. The Bauhaus School and movement was founded in Weimar in 1919 by Walter Gropius, who drew top artists including Kandinsky, Klee, Feininger and Schlemmer as teachers. In 1925 the Bauhaus moved to Dessau, and in 1932 to Berlin, where it was dissolved by the Nazis, scattering the key figures throughout the world. They of course took their ideas with them, laying the foundations for the success of the school worldwide.

In addition to its modest permanent collection, the museum chronicles the group and its protagonists, has excellent changing exhibitions, and shows documentary footage (in German) explaining their methods. Students were as much artisans as artists, making the products they designed.

Only one Bauhaus building was ever constructed in Weimar. Called the **Haus am Horn** (☎ 904 056; Am Horn 61; ☹ 11am-5pm Wed, Sat & Sun), today it's used for exhibitions and events.

For more on the movement, see Modern Design (p56), our coverage of Dessau (p212) and the Bauhaus Archiv/Museum für Design in Berlin (p112).

NEUES MUSEUM

The **Neues Museum** (New Museum; ☎ 545 963; Carl-August-Allee; adult/concession €3.50/2.50; ☹ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) houses works of contemporary art in Weimar. The complex was built in 1863, as a gallery exclusively for works relating to Homer's *Odyssey*,

but another odyssey occurred after it was used as a *Halle der Volksgemeinschaft* (literally 'people's solidarity hall') by the Nazis, and was then renamed Karl-Marx-Platz under the GDR.

BELVEDERE & TIEFURT PARKS

Outside Weimar, the lovely **Belvedere Park** harbours Carl August's former hunting palace. **Schloss Belvedere** (☎ 545 401; adult/concession €4/3; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep), displays glass, porcelain, faïence and weapons from the late 17th and 18th centuries. Bus 12 runs hourly from Goetheplatz.

A few kilometres east of the Hauptbahnhof, **Tiefurt Park** is an English-style garden that envelops Anna Amalia's **Schloss Tiefurt** (☎ 545 401; Hauptstrasse 14, Weimar-Tiefurt; adult/concession €3.50/2.50; ☹ closed Mon), her own 'temple of the muses'. The rooms are furnished to give visitors an impression of the age and her round-table gatherings, which often included Goethe; take bus 3.

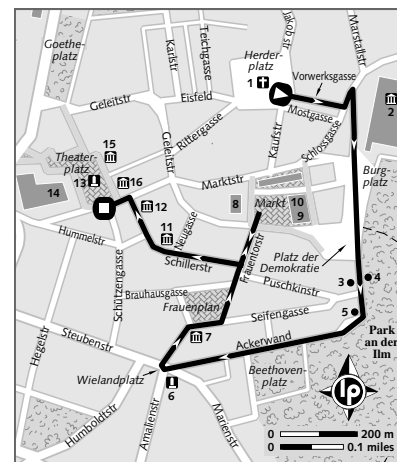
WEIMAR HAUS

Near Schiller House, **Weimar Haus** (☎ 901 890; www.weimarhaus.de; Schillerstrasse 16-18; adult/concession €6.50/5.50; ☹ 10am-7pm Apr-Oct, 10am-6pm Nov-Mar) offers a half-hour Disneyland-style multimedia history of Weimar, from prehistory to classicism. The guide – purists hold your breath – has an animatronic Goethe (it's also available in English).

Walking Tour

Our tour begins on Herderplatz, dominated by the **Stadtkirche St Peter und Paul** (1; ☎ 851 518; Herderplatz; ☹ 10am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Sat, 11am-noon & 2-3pm Sun Apr-Oct, 11am-noon & 2-4pm daily Nov-Mar). Built in 1500, this is popularly known as the Herderkirche after Johann Gottfried Herder, whom Goethe brought to Weimar as court preacher in 1776. His statue stands on the church square, and he's buried inside. The church itself has a famous altarpiece (1555), begun by Lucas Cranach the Elder and completed by his son. In the left aisle is an interesting triptych showing Martin Luther as a knight, professor and monk.

Walk east on Vorwerksgasse to Burgplatz, anchored by the **Stadtschloss** (2), former residence of the ducal family of Saxe-Weimar. Inside is the **Schlossmuseum** (☎ 545 960; Burgplatz; adult/concession €5.50/3.50; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), with a good collection



WALK FACTS

Start Herderplatz

Finish Theaterplatz

Distance 2km

Duration 1½ hours

of painting and sculpture; the Cranach Gallery has several portraits by Albrecht Dürer, and collections of Dutch masters and German romanticists. Several restored palace residence rooms can also be viewed.

To the south of here, on Platz der Demokratie, is the **Fürstenhaus** (3), a former palace that is now home of a renowned music academy founded by Franz Liszt in 1872. The statue in front represents Duke Carl August. On the eastern side of the square is the **Anna Amalia Library** (4), once managed by Goethe. In 2004 a fire raged through the library, home to some 900,000 books, and badly damaged the top two floors of the building, including parts of the magnificent **Rokokosaal** (Rococo Room; ☎ 545 401; Platz der Demokratie 1). The damaged works and the room are being restored, and visitors are expected to be able to visit from 2008.

The pink building behind the Fürstenhaus is the **Haus der Frau von Stein** (5). She was a married woman who was Goethe's long-time muse and, if author Ettore Ghibellino is to be believed, a decoy to cover up the great author's socially unacceptable affair with Duchess Anna Amalia. The house is now

home to the Goethe Institut, a language school and culture centre.

Head west on Ackerwand to Wielandplatz, with the **Wieland statue** (6). It was Wieland (1733-1813) who first translated Shakespeare's works into German. Then turn north onto Frauenplan, where you'll find the **Goethe Haus** and **Goethe Nationalmuseum** (7; see p259).

A short walk further north leads to the Markt, with its neo-Gothic **Rathaus** (8; 1841) facing two Renaissance jewels: the **Cranachhaus** (9), where painter Lucas Cranach the Elder lived for two years before his death in 1553, and the **Stadthaus** (10), which now houses the tourist information office.

Backtrack a few steps, then turn right onto the pedestrianised Schillerstrasse, which leads past the **Schiller Haus** (11; see p261) and the new **Weimar Haus** (12; see opposite) to Theaterplatz. Here, the famous statue of **Goethe and Schiller** (13; 1857) fronts the **Deutsches Nationaltheater** (14; German National Theatre), best known as the place where the National Assembly drafted the constitution of the Weimar Republic in 1919. The theatre has several artistic claims to fame: Goethe was director here from 1791 to 1817, and Liszt and Strauss were its music directors in the late 19th century.

Across from here is the **Bauhaus Museum** (15; see opposite), adjacent to the baroque **Wittumspalais** (16; ☎ 545 401; adult/concession €4/3; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Nov, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), once a residence of Anna Amalia, the premier patron of the arts in late-18th-century Weimar. The walking tour ends here.

Festivals & Events

The **Weimar Kunstfest** (☎ 811 40; www.kunstfest-weimar.de) is an innovative festival of classical music supplemented by theatre, dance, literature and performance, held in late August each year.

Sleeping

Visitors to Weimar pay a supplement of between €0.50 and €2 per room per stay for the upkeep of cultural sites.

BUDGET

The tourist office can arrange private rooms starting from €22 per person.

Hostels

Weimar has four DJH hostels. The **DJH Service Centre** (☎ 850 000; Carl-August-Allee 13) can book accommodation.

DJH Am Poseckschen Garten (☎ 850 792; www.jh-posgarten.de; Humboldtstrasse 17; under 26/over 26 €17/20; ☒ ☒) Near the Historischer Friedhof.

DJH Jugendherberge Germania (☎ 850 490; jh-germania@djh-thueringen.de; Carl-August-Allee 13; under 26/over 26 €17/20; ☒) Just north of the centre.

DJH Jugendgästehaus Maxim Gorki (☎ 850 750; Zum Wilden Graben 12; under 26/over 26 €18/21; ☒ ☒ ☒) On the hilly southern side of town.

DJH Jugendgästehaus am Ettersberg (☎ 421 111; Ettersbergsiedlung; under 26/over 26 €18/21; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) In a nature reserve north of town.

Hotels

Pension Savina (☎ 866 90; www.pension-savina.de; Meyerstrasse 60; s/d €38/60; ☒) This *pension*, near Hauptbahnhof, is difficult to beat for value and extras – which include a small sauna, a solarium, and a pick-up service if you call ahead.

Zur Sonne (☎ 862 90; hotelzursonne@web.de; Rollplatz 2; s/d €51/77; ☒) Although rooms are small and nondescript in this traditional hotel, it's clean, reliable and right in town.

MIDRANGE

Villa Hentzel (☎ 865 80; info@hotel-villa-hentzel.de; Bauhausstrasse 12; s €54-67, d €75-95; ☒) This hotel in a classical villa has comfortable modern rooms just out of the centre, in a residential wedge between the Ilmpark and the Historischer Friedhof.

Hotel Anna Amalia (☎ 495 60; www.hotel-anna-amalia.de; Geleitstrasse 8-12; s €55-70, d €75-140; ☒ ☒) Rooms are very spacious and quiet in this hotel near Goetheplatz. The feel-good factor is high here – even the breakfast room is fine at peak hour.

Hotel Am Frauenplan (☎ 494 40; www.hotel-am-frauenplan.de; Brauhausgasse 10; s/d €51/77; ☒ ☒) A sister-hotel of Zur Sonne, rooms here have a tad more style and are a cat's whisker larger. Somehow they still seem plain, but the rustic staircase and location offset this.

Wolff's Art Hotel (☎ 540 60; www.art-hotel-weimar.net; Freiherr-vom-Stein-Allee 3a/b; s €75, d €95; ☒ ☒) An art-hotel favoured by tourists and business visitors alike, Wolff's is a very classy and contemporary place with a spa/fitness area and gourmet restaurant.

Hotel Amalienhof (☎ 5490; amalienhofweimar@t-online.de; Amalienstrasse 2; s €65-80, d €80-100; ☒ ☒) The charms of this Church-affiliated hotel are manifold: lots of neoclassical furnishings, richly styled rooms that point to history with-

out burying you in it, and for allergy sufferers there are a couple of low-allergy rooms. It's a splendid choice.

TOP END

Dorint Sofitel am Goethepark (☎ 8720; www.sofitel.com; h5359@accor.com; Beethovenplatz 1-2; s €95-150, d €121-177; ☒ ☒) This well-designed hotel has rooms in three buildings connected by walkways (Dingelstedt Villa is top of the range). For highly noise-sensitive guests there are several extra-quiet rooms. A masterful touch is the Italianate spa designed by Munich artist Christoph Hodgson.

Hotel Elephant (☎ 8020; elephant.weimar@arabella.sheraton.com; Markt 19; s €99-162, d €125-186, ste €343-585; ☒ ☒) This plush classic has seen the best arrive through its hallowed portals. Everything you pay for is here in abundance. The three-roomed Thomas Mann suite is large enough for a decent game of hide and seek with your bodyguards; after that, visit the highly-rated Elefantenkeller restaurant.

Eating

Although much of the fare is traditional in Weimar, vegetarians will find choices in most places.

Residenz-Café (☎ 594 08; www.residenz-cafe.de; Grüner Markt 4; mains €5-15) The 'Resi' is one of Weimar's enduring favourites, and for good reason: everyone finds something for their taste here. The Lovers' Breakfast is €18 for two, but for the un-in-love – or the less well-off – the regular meat and vegetarian dishes will do the trick.

Brasserie Central (☎ 852 724; Rollplatz 8a; breakfast €2-10, mains €8.50-10.50; ☒ 10am-1am) This popular bistro-bar starts the day with breakfast and becomes a relaxed eatery, or a place to indulge in coffee and a wine or beer, as the clock loops the hours.

Zum Weissen Schwan (☎ 908 751; Frauentorstrasse 23; mains €10-18; ☒ noon-midnight Wed-Sun) Goethe's favourite dish is served here (broiled beef with Frankfurt green sauce, red beet salad and potatoes). Schiller and lots of others have apparently graced the tables of this traditional classic, too.

Anno 1900 (☎ 903 571; www.anno1900-weimar.de; Geleitstrasse 12a; mains €8-14; ☒ 11am-1am Mon-Fri, 10am-1am Sat & Sun) On the scene since 1920, this attractive café in an Art Nouveau-style conservatory is a lovely stopover; it has some vegetarian offerings and killer desserts.

Jo Hanns (☎ 493 617; Scherfgasse 1; mains €5-14; 11am-1am) The food is satisfying but it's the 130 wines from the Saale-Unstrut region that make Jo Hanns different. Keeping 130 local bottles open and fresh is of course impossible, so Jo also sells them to quaff in your room, or wherever, for half the listed restaurant price – 'Jo-to-go', so to speak.

Da Cono (☎ 514 285; Hummelstrasse 5; mains €8-19; ☒ 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30-11.30pm Mon-Thu, 11.30am-11.30pm Fri & Sat) Not just the decor is from another age here, the food is too – it's unpretentious, Italian and full of ingredients. Even the simple *penne Arabiatta* gets complex when you think about it. Like the rest of Da Cono, the service has character.

Drinking

Though not renowned for high-kicking nightlife, Weimar nevertheless has a few nice ports of call for the visitor.

Planbar (☎ 502 785; Jakobspan 6) Students and the young-at-heart flock to this trendy bar that's hooked right into club events locally.

Studentenclub Kasseturm (☎ 851 670; www.kasseturm.de; Goetheplatz 10) This clunky stone tower has DJs, an assorted bag of live music and other events over three floors, for young and old.

ACC (☎ 851 161; www.acc-weimar.de; Burgplatz 1) Eat here from 11am, just hang out and take drinks, or wander upstairs to visit the art space (changing exhibitions). It's a doorway to the contemporary arts scene.

Studentenclub Schützengasse (☎ 904 323; www.schuetzengasse.de; Schützengasse 2) We watched *The Big Lebowski* here – on one of its Monday night film screenings (9pm start). Other antidotes to highbrow burn-out are beer from €1 and lots of club and live music – be warned, the grunge factor is high.

Entertainment

Deutsches Nationaltheater (German National Theatre; ☎ 755 334; www.nationaltheater-weimar.de; Theaterplatz; ☒ closed Jul-Aug). Expect a grab-bag of classic and contemporary theatre, opera and concerts here.

Theater im Gewölbe (☎ 777 377; Markt 11/12) Anything goes here – from Goethe to cult barfly Charles Bukowski.

E-Werk (www.strassenbahndepot.info; Am Kirschberg 4) This former tram depot is the sharp edge of contemporary culture in Weimar. The people at ACC were involved in bringing it to life, the

National Theatre has a stage here now, and there's cinema, live music and cultural events at various times (try to visit the Rebecca Horn exhibit). Check the website for events.

Getting There & Away

Regular ICE services go to Frankfurt (€59, 2½ hours), Leipzig (€22, 50 minutes), Dresden (€39, two hours) and Berlin-Hauptbahnhof (€47, 2¾ hours). Erfurt (€4.40, 15 minutes) and Eisenach (€12, 1¼ hours) are served several times hourly, plus there's frequent services to Jena West (€4.60, 15 minutes).

Getting Around

For trips outside the centre, there's a good bus system (single €1.60, day pass €3.80). For a taxi, call ☎ 903 600.

Grüne Liga (☎ 492 796; Goetheplatz 9b) rents city bikes from €6 per day (enter from Rollplatz). Unless staying in an Altstadt hotel, drivers must leave their car in one of the paid parking lots outside the centre. Look for the signs saying 'P+R'.

BUCHENWALD

The Buchenwald concentration camp **museum and memorial** (☎ 03643-4300; Ettersberg Hill; www.buchenwald.de; admission free; ☒ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) are 10km northwest of Weimar. You first pass the memorial erected above the mass graves of some of the 56,500 victims from 18 nations that died here – including German antifascists, Soviet and Polish prisoners of war, and Jews. The concentration camp and museum are 1km beyond the memorial. Many prominent German communists and social democrats, Ernst Thälmann and Rudolf Breitscheid among them, were murdered here. After 1943, prisoners were exploited in the production of weapons. Many died during medical experimentation. Shortly before the end of the war, some 28,000 prisoners were sent on death marches. Between 1937 and 1945, more than one-fifth of the 250,000 people incarcerated here died. On 11 April 1945, as US troops approached and the SS guards fled, the prisoners rebelled (at 3.15pm – the clock tower above the entrance still shows that time), overwhelmed the remaining guards and liberated themselves.

After the war, the Soviet victors turned the tables by establishing Special Camp No 2, in which 7000 so-called anticommunists and ex-Nazis were literally worked to death.

Their bodies were found after the Wende in mass graves north of the camp and near the Hauptbahnhof.

Pamphlets and books in English are sold at the bookshop. Last admission is 30 minutes before closing.

To get here take bus 6 from Weimer; by car, head north on Ettersburger Strasse from Weimar station and turn left onto Blutstrasse.

GOtha

☎ 03621 / pop 47,000

Situated between Eisenach and Erfurt, Gotha was once described in historic documents as Thuringia's wealthiest and most beautiful city. This century it can no longer lay claim to either, but it remains a pleasant town with a handful of interesting attractions.

Gotha grew and rose to prominence in the 17th century, when Duke Ernst I made it his residence and built the enormous yet gracious Schloss Friedenstein and gardens. Duke Ernst I was founder of the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, the dynasty that reinvented itself after WWI as Windsor and now occupies the British royal throne. The royal court warmly embraced the Enlightenment of the 18th century. In fact, Gräfin Louise Dorothea regularly corresponded with Voltaire, who passed through Gotha in his

years of wandering Europe and fanning the embers of the Enlightenment.

Although the Schloss is Gotha's main attraction, highly enjoyable is a ride on the Thüringerwaldbahn, a small city tram that rattles, squeaks and winds through the countryside to Tabarz in the Thuringian Forest.

Orientation

Perched up a hill, Schloss Friedenstein and its gardens take up about half of Gotha's city centre, with the Altstadt to the north, and to the south, the Hauptbahnhof (central train station). It's only a brisk 15-minute walk from the Hauptbahnhof to the central squares – the long Hauptmarkt and the busier Neumarkt. The central bus station is on Mühlgrabenweg, northeast of the centre.

Information

Gothaer Netcafé (☎ 211 411; Gutenbergstrasse 11; per 30min €1.30; ☎ 10am-11pm) Internet and phone access.

Gotha-Information (☎ 222 138; www.gotha.de; Hauptmarkt 2; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat year-round, 10am-2pm Sun May-Sep) Tourist information.

Main post office & bank (Ekhofplatz 1) With an ATM; a Reisebank ATM is also at the train station.

Tourist information (☎ 363 111; Margarethenstrasse 2-4; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri)

GOETHE – THE LITERARY COLOSSUS

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe bestrides German culture like a colossus. He's often called the 'German Shakespeare', but not even Shakespeare lived to be 82, having written novels, fairy tales, essays, literary criticism, philosophical treatises, scientific articles and travelogues, as well as plays and poetry. Goethe also dabbled in politics, town planning, architecture, landscaping and social reform, and collaborated with the likes of Christopher Marlowe. In short, he was the last Renaissance man – the last man to be able to do everything.

Born in Frankfurt-am-Main and trained as a lawyer, Goethe quickly overcame the disadvantages of a wealthy background and a happy childhood to become the driving force of the Gothic-influenced 1770's *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) literary movement. Though he worked and experimented in various styles throughout his life, his work with Friedrich Schiller fostered the theatrical style known as Weimar classicism. Goethe himself once described his work as 'fragments of a great confession'. Small fragments they were not – the Weimar Edition of his complete works numbers 133 volumes!

Goethe was revered across Europe even in his own lifetime. Napoleon invited him to France to be the Imperial Laureate. Though fascinated by Napoleon, Goethe was no blind admirer; he didn't go to Paris. Goethe was probably the first author ever to have a celebrity stalker – the talented but tormented JMR Lenz (1751-92), part of the *Sturm und Drang* circle, was so obsessed with his mentor that he imitated his writing, followed him around and even slept with his old lovers!

Goethe's defining work was *Faust*, a lyrical but highly charged retelling of the classic legend of a man selling his soul for knowledge. It took Goethe almost his entire life to complete it to his own satisfaction, and it's still probably the most-performed piece of theatre in Germany today; a fitting legacy for a genuine giant.

Sights

SCHLOSS FRIEDENSTEIN

Built between 1643 and 1654, this horseshoe-shaped palace is the largest surviving early baroque palace in Germany. It was never bombed – supposedly because of the link with the British royal family – and survived WWII thanks to one Josef Ritter von Gadolla, who surrendered the town to the Allies in 1945, and was executed by his own side. The exterior remains largely unchanged, with two distinctive towers – one round and the other square. Among the museums it contains, the **Schlossmuseum** (☎ 823 414; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) has top billing, with lavish baroque and neoclassical royal apartments and eclectic collections. Expect to spend at least two hours here.

In addition to works by Rubens, Tischbein, Lucas Cranach the Younger and his father Lucas Cranach the Elder, don't miss the (pre-Dürer period) medieval delight, *Gothaer Liebespaar*, painted by an unknown artist around 1480. This depicts two lovers and is believed to be the first German double portrait.

On the 2nd floor you'll find the **Festsaal**, an exuberant hall of stuccoed ceilings, walls and doors. The less flashy neoclassical wing contains a collection of sculptures, of which the Renaissance work by Conrad Meit called *Adam und Eva* deserves special mention. The **Kunstkammer** is jammed with miniature curiosities and treasures, including exotica like engraved ostrich eggs and a cherry pit sporting a carved portrait of Ernst the Pious. The palace also houses one of Europe's oldest Egyptian collections.

In the west tower is the **Museum für Regionalgeschichte und Volkskunde** (☎ 823 451; adult/concession €5/2; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun); the real gem, though, is the refurbished **Ekhof-Theater**, one of the oldest baroque theatres in Europe. The stage tradition at Schloss Friedenstein goes back to 1683, and a mechanised set-changing device survives from that period in working order.

The **Schlosskirche** occupies the northeastern corner, while the east wing contains a **research library** with more than half a million books spanning 12 centuries. You can also take a tour of the atmospheric **Kasematten** (underground passages; €3.50; ☎ 1pm & 2pm Tue-Sun).

HAUPTMARKT

The **Rathaus**, with its colourful Renaissance façade and 40m-tall **tower** (€0.50; ☎ 11am-6pm Apr-

Oct, 11am-4pm Nov-Mar) commands Hauptmarkt. It was built as a store in 1567, was later inhabited by Duke Ernst I until Schloss Friedenstein was completed, and was then turned into the town hall in 1665. The **Wasserkunst** (cascading fountain) was created in the 14th century, as a canal to supply the city with water; it's now purely decorative, and the pump is deep inside the baroque Lucas-Cranach-Haus at No 17. Other houses on Hauptmarkt also reward exploration, or if the legs are tired, a picnic lunch in the 18th-century **Orangerie** of the Schloss is a nice way to enjoy these luscious surroundings.

Festivals & Events

The cultural highlight each year in Gotha is the **Ekhof-Festival** (☎ 222 138; www.ekhof-festival.de) in July and August, when there are theatre and concert performances on a baroque note in this famous theatre. Various other smaller events are held throughout the year, which should be listed in *Kulturkalender*, a booklet available from the tourist office.

Sleeping

The tourist office makes free reservations for hotels and has a good brochure listing private rooms from around €17 per person.

Pension am Schloss (☎ 853 206; Bergallee 3; s/d €21.50/48; ☎) Most rooms have showers and toilets, and some have antiques, in this comfortable *pension* situated near the palace in a 1920s building.

Café Suzette (☎ 856 755; www.cafe-suzette.com; Bebelstrasse 8; s €31.50-36, d €54; ☎) This is a small but well-equipped *pension* with no-frills rooms above a cake shop, five minutes from Hauptbahnhof. Bike hire is available here.

Pension Regina (☎ 408 020; www.pension-regina.de; Schwabhäuser Strasse 4; s €29-36, d €50-60; ☎) Rooms are plain but functional in this *pension* in the town centre.

Toscana (☎ 295 93; www.toscana-gotha.de; Pfortenwallstrasse 1; s/d €45/65; ☎) An excellent Italian-run hotel and restaurant (see p268). Although opposite a few architectural nightmares on the ring road, it has lovely and well-appointed rooms.

Hotel Am Schlosspark (☎ 4420; www.hotel-am-schlosspark.de; Lindenallee 20; s €90-110, d €115-136; ☎ ☎) Rooms in the only central top-end choice in Gotha are modern and fully equipped. It is the best option for wheelchair users, and kids will like the adjacent playground.

Eating & Drinking

Most eating options are centred on the area around the Hauptmarkt and Neumarkt.

Café Loesche (☎ 240 25; Buttermarkt 6; cakes €0.80-1.50; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) Watch the world go by from this charming café near Hauptmarkt.

Toscana (☎ 295 93; www.toscana-gotha.de; Pfortenwallstrasse 1; mains €6-20; ☎ 11.30am-2.30pm & 6-10.30pm) For a delicious taste of Italy, this is the place to be. There's a small cocktail bar at the entrance for Toscana barflies, and it's part of the hotel of the same name.

König Sahl (☎ 852 506; Brühl 7; mains €7-14, ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 5pm-midnight, 11.30am-midnight Sun) The good king is worthy for two reasons: he does monster Tex-Mex lava grills and some vegetarian dishes, and he brews his own beer. The astounding 'metre of beer' consists of 13 glasses lined up on a wooden rack exactly one metre long. Service is earthy and charming.

Carnaby (☎ 706 834; 18.-März-Strasse 24) This long-standing Gotha favourite does a few snacks, attracts a crowd of all ages and sizes, and sometimes has live music. It's still open after the good König Sahl has put away his rack.

Getting There & Away

Gotha is easily reached by regional train from Eisenach (€4, 25 minutes), Erfurt (€5, 20 minutes) and Weimar (€8, 35 minutes). It's also a regular stop for IC trains going to Berlin-Hauptbahnhof (€44.60, 3½ hours) and for ICE ones going to Frankfurt-am-Main (€43, 2¼ hours). Gotha is just north of the A4 and is crossed by the B247 and B7.

For the Thüringerwaldbahn see the boxed text (right).

NORTHERN THURINGIA

MÜHLHAUSEN

☎ 03601 / pop 37,000

Mühlhausen, situated in the pretty Unstrut River valley about 40km north of Gotha, has picture-book architecture from the Middle Ages. Cobble alleyways wind through a historic centre that is surrounded by one of Germany's most attractive and intact city walls. The city is also famous for being a centre of revolt during the 16th-century Peasants' War, and the place where Thomas Münzer preached (against Luther) in favour of rebellion. The reminders of this and other historical events

are never far from the surface of this interesting city today.

The **tourist office** (☎ 404 770; www.muehlhausen.de; Ratsstrasse 20; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun) is about 1km west of Hauptbahnhof, between Obermarkt in the north and Untermarkt in the south. Steinweg (near Obermarkt) is the main shopping street.

Sights

The most important sights are located in the centre, which is best taken in with a leisurely stroll. The **Divi-Blasii-Kirche** (☎ 887 9950; Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Platz 4; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 1-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun) on **Untermarkt** is a good starting point if you've entered town on the continuation of Karl-Marx-Strasse from the Hauptbahnhof. The church was built by the Teutonic Knights in the 13th century, and Johann Sebastian Bach worked as organist here, inaugurating a new organ in 1709.

From here, walk north along Linsenstrasse to **Kornmarkt** and the **Kornmarktkirche** (☎ 404 684; Ratsstrasse; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun), where a museum is dedicated to the history of the Peasants' War and the Reformation. The building itself was deconsecrated in 1802, and was later used as a grain warehouse. The tourist office is just north of here on Ratsstrasse, in the **Rathaus** (☎ 4520; Ratsstrasse 19; adult/concession €1/0.50). This building is a sprawling concoction of Gothic, Renaissance and baroque influences, put together over several centuries from 1300.

Continuing north you reach **Obermarkt** and the **Marienkirche**, another of the 13 churches in

A WEIRD RIDE

Thuringia has some nice rides on the rails. Much of the regional network off the main Eisenach-Erfurt line is regularly serviced by single carriage drive cars. When you see one, hop on, buy a ticket from the machine and explore the countryside at will. It's slow travel at its finest.

The **Thüringerwaldbahn** (☎ 4310; www.waldbahn-gotha.de), however, is a weird one. This ordinary city tram (the No 4) starts at Gotha's Hauptbahnhof, curves around the city ring road, crawls through some unlovely suburbs and then just keeps going, right into the beautiful forest to Tabarz (€3.60, 22km, one hour).

Mühlhausen. With five naves, it is the second-largest church in Thuringia – after the Dom in Erfurt. In 1525, the priest and reformer Thomas Müntzer preached here to his rebel followers before the disastrous final battle of the Peasants' War on the Schlachtberg. There is a **memorial** (☎ 870 023; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) to him, along with exhibitions on his life and work.

Go west along Herrenstrasse to the **Inneres Frauentor**, the entrance for a 200m stretch of the 12th-century **town wall** (☎ 816 020; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 11am-5pm Apr-Oct). The wall is just under 3km long, and has two gates and three towers still standing. You can walk as far as the lookout platform on **Rabenturm**.

Finally, pocket your guidebook, let the town wall and spires be your landmarks, and explore Mühlhausen's fascinating back streets.

Sleeping & Eating

DJH hostel (☎ 813 318; jh-muehlhausen@djh-thueringen.de; Auf dem Tonberg 1; under 26/over 26 €13/16; ☎ ☎) This hostel is about 2km northwest of town (bus 5 or 6 to Blobach).

An der Stadtmauer (☎ 465 00; www.hotel-an-der-stadtmauer.de; Britenstrasse 15; s €49-55, d €69-75; ☎ ☎) The tasteful fittings, comfort and old-town location make this a very good choice. Some rooms open onto a courtyard, and there's a small bar and beer garden.

Brauhaus zum Löwen (☎ 4710; www.brauhaus-zum-loewen.de; Kornmarkt 3; s €55-63, d €80-95; ☎ ☎) This hotel-restaurant has three different buildings that cater for any taste. It also brews its own beer and even has an impressive pub for kicking up your heels – don't try this after eating the restaurant's 1m Bratwurst, though. Mains are €7 to €13.

Zum Nachbarn (☎ 812 513; Steinweg 65; mains €10-17; ☎ 11.30am-10pm) One of the top restaurants in town, in an old red house with beamed ceilings and windows galore, this place has Thuringian and international cuisine on the menu.

Postkeller (☎ 440 091; Steinweg 6; mains €7-17; ☎ 11am-2.30pm Tue-Sun & 6pm-1am Thu-Sat) In a town short on entertainment options, this might be your place: local food from the kitchen is served in a lovely room with Art Nouveau tiles, and there's a pub-club upstairs for getting down and dancing.

Getting There & Away

Hourly trains run from Erfurt (€10, 45 minutes). Coming from Eisenach (€10, 50 minutes)

requires a change in Gotha. Mühlhausen is at the crossroads of the B249 from Sonderhausen, and the B247 from Gotha.

THE KYFFHÄUSER

This low forested mountain range, wedged between the Harz Mountains to the north and the Thuringian Forest to the south, harbours several unique and intriguing sights. It is best explored from **Bad Frankenhausen**, a quiet spa town at the forest's southern edge. The **Tourismusverband Kyffhäuser** (☎ 034671-717 16; www.kyffhaeuser-tourismus.de; Anger 14; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) sells the **Kyffhäuser Card** (card €14) for admission to the main attractions here.

Kyffhäuser Monument

Above the dense forests and steep ravines of the 457m-high Kyffhäuser mountain, looms the bombastic **Kyffhäuser Monument** (☎ 034651-2780; adult/concession €5/4; ☎ 9am-7pm) to Emperor Wilhelm I, built in 1896. A statue showing Wilhelm on horseback stands below a 60m-high tower, and above the stone throne of Emperor Friedrich I (1125-90; better known as Barbarossa) whom he considered his spiritual predecessor.

The monument stands on the foundations of the Oberburg (Upper Castle) of the medieval Burg Kyffhäuser, Germany's largest castle complex (608m long, 60m wide) before its destruction in 1118. Today, the only ruins remaining are those of the Unterburg (Lower Castle), as well as a gate and a 172m-deep well.

The remote monument is best reached by car, but there's also a sporadic bus service from Bad Frankenhausen.

Panorama Museum

On the Schlachtberg, 3km north of Bad Frankenhausen's centre, stands a giant concrete cylinder that harbours a painting which is truly epic – in both proportion and content. **Frühbürgerliche Revolution in Deutschland** (Early Civil Revolution in Germany; ☎ 034671-6190; www.panorama-museum.de; adult/concession/child €5/4/1; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) is an oil painting measuring 14m by 123m (!) and representing a style called 'fantastical realism', reminiscent of such classical artists as Bruegel and Hieronymus Bosch. More than 3000 figures, assembled in numerous scenes, metaphorically depict the tumultuous transition from the Middle Ages in 15th- and 16th-century Europe to the modern era.

It took artist Werner Tübke and his assistants five years to complete this complex allegorical work, which was opened in 1989 as one of the last official acts of the GDR government. Its artistic merit and political context have been questioned, but its size and ambitious themes impress.

Barbarossahöhle

A highlight of the impressive plaster caves at **Barbarossahöhle** (☎ 034671-5450; www.hoehle.de; Mühlen 6, Rottleben; adult/child €6/4; 🕒 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar, hourly tours), some 5km from Bad Frankenhausen, are the slabs described by legend as Barbarossa's table and chair.

Sleeping & Eating

Alte Hämmelei (☎ 034671-5120; www.alte-haemmelei.de; Bornstrasse 33; dm €24, s €40, d €60-80; 📍) Tradition is worn on the sleeve of this historic half-timbered house with wooden interiors. The restaurant has a nice beer garden and a good wine list.

Hotel Residenz (☎ 034671-750; www.residenz-frankenhausen.de; Am Schlachtberg 3; s €69, d €99-119, ste €150; 📍 🍷 🍷) This large hotel close to the Panorama Museum is a good midrange choice for overnight stays, and even better for last minute deals and wellness packages that include use of a huge spa section. The restaurant is one of the best options in town (mains €8 to €20).

Weinlokal Zum Schwan (☎ 034671-624 32; Erfurter Strasse 9; mains €8.50-13) This restaurant, in one of the oldest half-timbered buildings in town, serves local Sauerbraten and various steaks, and has about 30 bottled wines on its list.

Getting There & Around

Train connections to Bad Frankenhausen usually require a change in Bretleben or Sömmerda. Erfurt has the best connections (€9, 1½ hours). By car or motorcycle, take the B4, B86 and then the B85.

To get to outlying sights, it's best to go under your own steam. **FAU Radwanderzentrum** (☎ 034671-777 71; Hauptbahnhof) rents bikes (€3 to €5 per day).

THURINGIAN FOREST

The Thuringian Forest (Thüringer Wald), a mountainous region about 35km wide and 160km long, stretches between Eisenach in the northwest and Saalfeld in the southeast. This

central upland, which is studded with crags and peaks rising to about 1000m, is crossed by Germany's most popular trail, the Rennsteig, which runs for 168km along spectacular ridges. The Thuringian Forest also incorporates the 76-sq-km **Hainich National Park** (☎ 3603-390728; www.nationalpark-hainich.de).

Despite the impact of acid rain and thoughtless development in patches (especially near Suhl), the climate, dense woodlands and rural paths make the region a wonderful place to explore by foot, bike or in modern single-carriage railcars on the regional railway network.

EISENACH

☎ 03691 / pop 44,000

Situated on the western edge of the Thuringian Forest, the modest and pretty town of Eisenach is famous for being the birthplace of Johann Sebastian Bach, and as the place where Martin Luther went into hiding on the eve of the Reformation. Luther's refuge, the Wartburg, is now a Unesco World Heritage site. Beyond the castle itself, Eisenach offers the visitor plenty of culture and is a convenient gateway to the picturesque Rennsteig, Germany's most popular hiking trail.

Orientation

Except for the Wartburg, which is 2km southwest of town, most sights are concentrated around the Markt, a 15-minute walk from the Hauptbahnhof. Local buses stop right outside the Hauptbahnhof, while overland buses go to Müllerstrasse one block northwest.

Information

Eisenach Classic Card (per 72hr €16) Covers public transport and gives you free or reduced admission to important sights.

Main post office (Markt 6)

Sparkasse (☎ 685 854; Markt 2) Bank with ATM.

Surf Planet (Alexanderstrasse 63; per 30min €1.50; 🕒 6am-3am) Internet café.

Tourist-Information (☎ 792 30; www.eisenach.de; Markt 9; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat year-round, 11am-1pm Sun Apr-Oct)

Wartburg Information (☎ 2500; Auf der Wartburg; 🕒 8.30am-8pm Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Apr) In the Wartburg.

Sights

WARTBURG

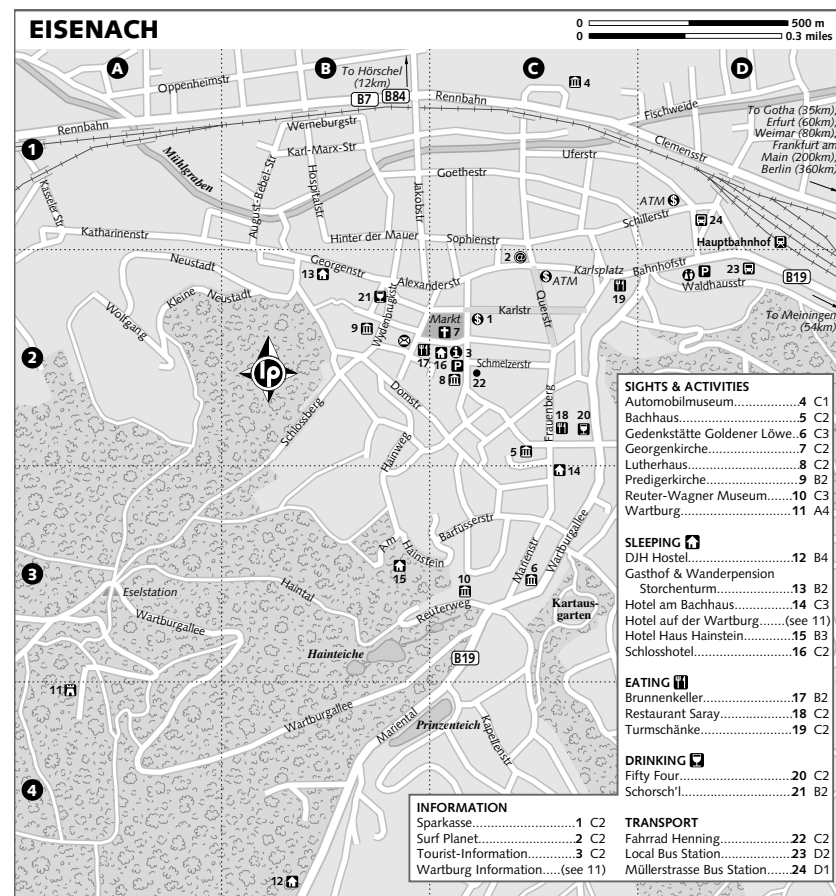
Caught in turbulence like no other, the medieval **Wartburg** (☎ 2500; www.wartburg-eisenach

.de; tour adult/concession €6.50/5.50, museum & Luther room only €3.50/2; 🕒 tours 8.30am-5pm) is thought to have been created in 1067 by Count Ludwig der Springer (the Jumper; see p273). Sections of the castle are monuments to the late-Romanesque style, while other rooms are more recent and date from restoration work at Goethe's behest to save Wartburg from becoming historic rubble. The result is a delightful blend of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Revivalism.

Richard Wagner based his opera *Tannhäuser* on a famous minstrels' contest that took place at the castle between 1206 and 1207. It was also notably the residence of the much-revered Elisabeth, wife of the Landgrave of Thuringia. She was canonised shortly after

her death in 1235 for abandoning a pompous court lifestyle in favour of helping the poor.

From 1521 to 1522, Martin Luther went into hiding here under the assumed name of Junker Jörg, after being excommunicated and put under papal ban. During this time he translated the entire New Testament from Greek into German, contributing enormously to the development of the written German language. His modest wood-panelled **study** is part of the guided tour (available in English), which is the only way to view the interior. Many of the rooms you'll see contain extravagant 19th-century impressions of medieval life rather than the original fittings. The Romanesque **Great Hall** is one highlight.



The **museum** houses famous paintings of Luther by Lucas Cranach the Elder, and important Christian artefacts from all over Germany. Between Easter and October, crowds can be horrendous, so arrive before 11am.

To get to the Wartburg from the Markt, walk one block west to Wydenbrugkstrasse, then head southwest along Schlossberg through the forest via Eselstation (this takes about 40 minutes, and parts are rather steep). A more scenic return route is via the Haintal (50 minutes). From April to October, buses 10 and 13 run roughly hourly to the Eselstation, just below the castle (€1.10).

CITY CENTRE

The Markt is dominated by the galleried **Georgkirche** (☎ 213 126; ☞ 10am-noon & 2-4pm), where members of the Bach family, including Johann Sebastian himself, were organists between 1665 and 1797. Luther preached here while under the papal ban, and the tombstone of the ubiquitous Ludwig der Springer is also here.

The half-timbered **Lutherhaus** (☎ 298 30; www.lutherhaus-eisenach.de; Lutherplatz 8; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☞ 10am-5pm), where Martin Luther lived as a schoolboy between 1498 and 1501, traces his life through paintings, manuscripts and illustrated works, complemented by interactive multimedia terminals (German and English).

South of here is the **Bachhaus** (☎ 793 40; www.bachhaus.de; Frauenplan 21; adult/concession €4/3; ☞ 10am-6pm), a memorial to the composer who was born in 1685 in a now-demolished house nearby. Visits conclude with a 25-minute concert played on antique instruments.

Fans of the more controversial composer Richard Wagner should check out the exhibition on his life and works at the **Reuter-Wagner Museum** (☎ 743 293; Reuterweg 2; adult/concession €3/2; ☞ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) in writer Fritz Reuter's former villa.

The first nationwide proletarian movement, the Social Democratic Workers Party, was founded in Eisenach by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht in 1869. The **Gedenkstätte Goldener Löwe** (Golden Lion Memorial; ☎ 754 34; Marienstrasse 57; admission free; ☞ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) has an interesting exhibit covering the 19th-century workers' movement in Germany.

In the **Predigerkirche** (☎ 784 678; Predigerplatz 2; adult/concession €2.60/1.60; ☞ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun) you'll find a collection of medieval art from

Thuringia, including sculpture, paintings and liturgical objects.

Though now a shadow of its former self, car manufacturing revved up in Eisenach in 1896 when a factory was built to manufacture Wartburgs, which were based on a French car called the Decauville. The **Automobilmuseum** (☎ 772 12; Friedrich-Naumann-Strasse 10; adult/concession €3/2; ☞ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun), with its Wartburg Dixi dating from 1899, a legendary BMW 328 sports car and other exhibits, celebrates this history.

Sleeping

The tourist office has a free room-finding service – private rooms start at €15 a single and €25 for a double.

DJH hostel (☎ 743 259; jh-eisenach@djh-thueringen.de; Mariental 24; under 26/over 26 €15/18; ☞ ☒ ☓) This hostel is housed in a stylish Art Nouveau villa at the foot of Wartburg (catch bus 3 or 10).

Gasthof & Wanderspension Storchenturm (☎ 07-00-4040 4050; www.gasthof-am-storchenturm.de; Georgenstrasse 43; dm €18, s €23, d €36) Lots of long-socked hikers pad down the trails for simple but comfortable rooms here in a hostel-type guest house – with a fun restaurant in a former barn.

Hotel am Bachhaus (☎ 204 70; www.hotel-am-bachhaus.de; Marienstrasse 7; s €50, d €70-75; ☞ ☒) This well-priced hotel is plain and gets little street noise, but you might hear guests' movements in other rooms.

Hotel Haus Hainstein (☎ 2420; www.hainstein.de; Am Hainstein 16; s €45-60, d €70-80; ☞ ☒) Located in an Art Nouveau villa in the leafy and hilly south of town, this hotel has bright, stylish rooms, its own chapel, a restaurant and views of the Wartburg.

Schlosshotel (☎ 214 260; www.schlosshotel-eisenach.de; Marktplatz 10; s €78, d €105-115, ste €124-180; ☞ ☒) Most rooms face the quiet interior courtyard in this big complex in the centre of town. It's a favourite among business travellers.

Hotel auf der Wartburg (☎ 797 223; www.wartburg-hotel.de; Auf der Wartburg; s €135-155, d €200-320; ☞ ☒ ☓) Built in 1914, this hotel has subdued colours and furnishings to match the historic site. The singles at this luxury address in town are called 'Luther' rooms, but the real opulence begins in the 'Prince' category (similar to junior suites). Free parking is below the hotel.

Eating & Drinking

Brunnenkeller (☎ 212 358; Markt 10; mains €8-12; ☞ ☒ 11am-11pm Apr-Oct, 11am-3pm & 5.30-11.30pm Thu-

Mon, 5.30-11pm Tue & Wed Nov-Mar) Here you might hear James Blunt's voice echoing as if from a distant sewer, followed by a low-volume Jackson Five – the waiter's favourites on a quiet night, it seems. But all is well in this former monastery cellar, which serves local culinary favourites.

Turmschänke (☎ 213 533; Wartburgallee 2; mains €22-25; ☞ ☒ 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat) A Jackson Five free zone – just class and good food in a thoroughly atmospheric wine restaurant that is part of the Hotel Kaiserhof.

Restaurant Saray (☎ 720 851; Frauenberg 13; mains €8-13; ☞ ☒ 5.30pm-midnight Mon-Fri, 11.30am-2.30pm & 5.30pm-midnight Sat & Sun) Dishes in this tasty Turkish restaurant will delight vegetarians especially.

Schorsch'l (☎ 213 049; www.schorschl.de; Georgenstrasse 19) This relaxed pub draws an upbeat alternative crowd for drinks, light eats and live music.

Fifty Four (☎ 888 830; Wartburgallee 54; ☞ ☒) Chill out in this café-bar that offers snacks, good cocktails and lots more (like internet access) till late.

Getting There & Around

Direct regional trains run frequently to Erfurt (€9, 50 minutes), Gotha (€5, 25 minutes) and Weimar (€12, 1¼ hours) from Eisenach. ICE trains are faster and also run to Frankfurt-am-Main (€39, 1¼ hours) from here; direct IC trains to Berlin-Hauptbahnhof (€54, 3¼ hours) stop in Eisenach. Bus services are sporadic at best; two useful connections include the 280b to Friedrichroda, and the 30 to Mühlhausen (all from the Müllerstrasse bus station).

If you're driving, Eisenach is right on the A4 (exits Eisenach Ost or Eisenach West) and is crossed by the B7, B19 and B84.

Fahrrad Henning (☎ 784 738; Schmelzerstrasse 4-6) rents bikes for €8 per day. Pick up a cycling map from the tourist office.

RENNSTEIG

Famous, perhaps even notorious, as Germany's most popular long-distance trail, the 168km Rennsteig winds and winds southwest from Hirschel (just outside Eisenach) along forested mountain ridges to Blankenstein on the Saale River. The trail is marked by signposts reading 'R', and is best hiked in May/June and September/October. You should be moderately fit, but otherwise no special skills or equipment are needed – just good shoes and a set of strong thighs to carry you for five days. Day hikes, such as between Hirschel and Oberhof, offer a taste of the trail, and if you do want to stay overnight, villages and towns below the trail have plenty of *pen-sions* and hotels.

A Rennsteig bike trail also begins in Hirschel, but it is mostly parallel to the hiking trail. The tourist office in Eisenach has cycling and hiking brochures and maps. You can also pick up information and professional maps – Kompass Wanderkarte No 118 (€7) is a good one – from the **Rennsteigwanderhaus** (☎ 036928-91194; Rennsteigstrasse 9, Hirschel; ☞ ☒ 8.30-10.30am & 2-4pm Mon-Fri, 9-11am & 2-4pm Sat, 9-11am Sun).

There's a local tradition of dipping your walking stick into the Werra and picking up a pebble from its waters before starting out. Upon leaving the Rennsteig, the pebble is given back to the forest.

Hirschel is regularly serviced by regional trains and buses from Eisenach's Hauptbahnhof and Müllerstrasse bus station respectively (in the direction of Oberellen). Blankenstein has good connections with Saalfeld, Jena and beyond.

LUDWIG DER SPRINGER – TAKING THE JUMP

German gentry is rife with monikers. Henry the Fowler was supposedly out catching birds one day when someone told him he'd just become king. The unfortunate 13th-century Thuringian landgrave, Henry the Illustrious, squabbled for years over Thuringia and other territories, and had a son called Albert the Degenerate. Karl the Bald got his by-name for obvious reasons. Ludwig the Rich probably didn't even earn his. But what about Ludwig der Springer (Ludwig the Jumper)? Ludwig supposedly got his jumping-Jack-moniker when he sprang out of a window into the Saale River in Halle. The great leap occurred after he was jailed for fatally stabbing the margrave Friedrich III in a squabble over Saxony. To make good his foul deed against Friedrich, he founded the Benedictine monastery that lies under the foundations of Schloss Reinhardsbrunn in what is now – you guessed it – Friedrichroda (see p274).

FRIEDRICHRODA

☎ 03623 / pop 5500

Dangling down into a valley from wooded slopes about 20km south of Gotha, Friedrichroda was the second-busiest resort town in GDR days. When the freshly liberated proletariat collectively set its sights on Majorca and other beach destinations in the 1990s, even picturesque resorts like this couldn't compete. However, its popularity has since grown again, especially with improved infrastructure and the development of health and spa tourism. The town now has a state-of-the-art therapeutic bath centre and it is also establishing itself as a location for winter sports.

Orientation & Information

Friedrichroda has two train stations: Bahnhof Friedrichroda in the east and Bahnhof Reinhardsbrunn north of the centre – both stops for the Thüringerwaldbahn (which is actually a tram, see the boxed text p268). The **tourist office** (☎ 332 00; www.friedrichroda.de; Marktstrasse 13-15; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-6pm Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is in the centre of town. A bank with an international ATM is in the centre, at Hauptstrasse 35-37.

Sights & Activities

Friedrichroda's prime attraction is the **Marienglashöhle** (☎ 304 953; tour adult/concession €4/2; ☎ tours 9am-5pm, 9am-4pm Nov-Mar), a large gypsum cave featuring an underwater lake and a crystal grotto. You enter the latter in the dark, then – just to give you that otherworldly feel – the theme from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* plays in the background as the light gradually brightens, unveiling a sparkling universe. Most of the crystallised gypsum here has been harvested and used to decorate statues of the Virgin Mary and altars in the region and beyond.

The cave is about a 40-minute walk through the woods from the city centre, and is also a stop on the Thüringerwaldbahn (see box, p268).

In the northern part of town, in the midst of a lavish English park with ancient trees, stands the neo-Gothic **Schloss Reinhardsbrunn** (1828), built on the foundations of a medieval Benedictine monastery founded by Wartburg builder Ludwig the Springer; see the box p273. Queen Victoria of England first met her cousin, Duke Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, here; they married in 1840.

An English buyer has since bought it and plans to reopen its hotel.

Just south of the Schloss is the lovely landscaped **Kurpark**, home to the Ludowinger spring, where excellent mineral water bubbles up from a depth of 58m. Much of it is bottled, but you can also go to one of the glass pavilions in the park and fill up from the taps.

For an easy day excursion into the forest, you can take the Thüringer Wald-Express bus (€4.50) to the **Heuberghaus** on the mountain ridge, hike along the ridge to the **Inselsberg** peak (90 minutes), then take the Inselsberg Express bus (€4.50) down to Tabarz and catch the Thüringerwaldbahn back to Friedrichroda (€1.20).

Sleeping & Eating

Friedrichroda has no shortage of hotels and pensions, but nor is there a shortage of visitors in mid-summer. **Private rooms** (from €14) are one option. There's a compulsory *Kurtaxe* of €1.20 on all accommodation giving discounts for many sights.

Pension Feierabend (☎ 304 386; Büchig 1; s/d €25/40; ☎) This remarkable three-storey timbered house is surely impossible to beat for value, comfort and character. It's opposite the Kurpark and set back from the main road leading from Friedrichroda Bahnhof to the information office. Rooms 8 and 9 are especially spacious.

Pension Villa Phönix (☎ 200 880; www.villa-phoenix.de; Tabarzer Strasse 3; s €30, d €45) Although this Phönix rises up right alongside the road (with weird little balconies), double glazing or double doors keep out the street noise. It's bright and friendly, and a cut above the rest. The midrange restaurant serves meat and vegetarian dishes.

Berghotel (☎ 354 4440; reservierung.berghotel@t-online.de; Bergstrasse 1; s €50-57, d €77-91; ☎) This 1000-bed GDR block is an absolute beast. The rooms are variable; some still have GDR furnishings, while others have been completely overhauled. But the hill-top location is great and you can't beat the views from the terrace restaurant (mains €8 to €20).

In addition to the eating options mentioned here, Hauptstrasse has many places to satisfy a country hunger – walk along, sniff and take your pick. Virtually all have a traditional ambience.

Getting There & Around

The Thüringerwaldbahn (No 4), a historic tram, serves Gotha (€3.60) and Tabarz (€0.90) several times hourly. The most scenic stretch begins right after Friedrichroda, running through the forest to Tabarz. Bus 451 runs to Schmalkalden twice on weekdays.

If you're driving, take the Waltershausen/Friedrichroda exit off the A4. The town is also on the B88 to Ilmenau.

Berghotel rents out mountain bikes for €8 per day.

ILMENAU

☎ 03677 / pop 27,000

Goethe visited Ilmenau, a sleepy little town on the northern slopes of the Thuringian Forest, no fewer than 28 times in his lifetime. It's therefore little wonder that it is also the gateway to the famous Goethewanderweg hiking trail (see p276). Even Goethe, however, could not halt the decline of Ilmenau's once prosperous mining industry, which was active in the Middle Ages. Today, as well as Goethe's free and wandering spirit (look out for a statue of him reposing on a bench at the Markt), visitors will find a small student population from the technical university.

The **tourist office** (☎ 202 358; www.ilmenau.de; Lindenstrasse 12; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) reserves hotels and private rooms from €25.

The **DJH hostel** (☎ 884 681; jh-ilmenau@djh-thueringen.de; Am Stollen 49; under 26/over 26 €15/18; ☎) is 2km east of the train station off Langewiesener Strasse.

Hotel Tanne (☎ 6590; www.hotel-tanne-thueringen.de; Lindenstrasse 38; s €55-60, d €75-85, ste €100; ☎) has comforts such as sauna, solarium and massage facilities to rejuvenate the body after a tough day on the Goetheweg.

Direct trains to Erfurt leave about once an hour (€9.10, 1 hour); change in Neudietendorf for Eisenach (€13.40, 1½ hours). Ilmenau is easily reached via the B88 from Eisenach, the B4 from Erfurt and the B87 from Weimar.

SCHMALKALDEN

☎ 03683 / pop 18,000

Stretching along a broad river valley and up the southwestern slopes of the Thuringian Forest, Schmalkalden is at first sight not as picture-book pretty as some of its neighbours. It's only once you explore the centre that you discover the real charms of this medieval town, located some 17km south of

Friedrichroda. Schmalkalden will forever be tied to the Reformation, for it was here that the Protestant princes met in 1530 and formed the Schmalkaldic League, to counter the central powers of Catholic Emperor Charles V, paving the way for the Peace of Augsburg and freedom of religion for the German states in 1546.

The Altstadt sighs under the sheer weight of its half-timbered houses, which are said to make up about 90% of buildings in the historic heart. All this is crowned by a handsome hill-top castle, Schloss Wilhelmsburg.

Orientation & Information

It's about a 10-minute walk from the train and bus stations to the Altmarkt, the town's central square, and another seven minutes to Schloss Wilhelmsburg. There's an ATM booth on Weidebrunner Gasse, near Lutherplatz, and the post office is at the southern end of Altmarkt.

The **tourist office** (☎ 403 182; www.schmalkalden.de; Mohregasse 1a; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Apr-Oct, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat Nov-Mar) is just off Altmarkt.

Sights & Activities

Towering above the city centre is the well-preserved late-Renaissance-style **Schloss Wilhelmsburg** (☎ 403 186; Schlossberg 9; adult/concession €3.50/2; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar). It was built between 1585 and 1590 by Landgrave Wilhelm IV of Hessen, as a hunting lodge and summer residence. The Schloss has kept its original design from the Renaissance period, with lavish murals and stucco decorating most rooms, of which the **Riesensaal**, with its coffered and painted ceiling, is the most impressive. The playfully decorated **Schlosskirche**, the palace chapel, has a rare wood organ that is thought to be the oldest working organ of its type in Europe. Concerts are held from May to September on this Renaissance gem (contact the tourist office).

The **Rathaus** (1419) on Altmarkt functioned as the meeting place of the Schmalkaldic League; nearby the incongruous towers of the late-Gothic **St Georgenkirche**, another place where Luther once preached, also look out over the square.

Schmalkalden is the western terminus of the **Martin-Luther-Weg**, a 17km easy-to-moderate hiking trail that ends at Tambach-Dietharz,

GOETHEWANDERWEG

This lovely, and at times challenging, 18.5km day hike follows in the footsteps of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who spent much time around Ilmenau in the employ of Carl August, Duke of Saxe-Weimar. The hike encompasses level forest terrain, steep climbs and everything in between; it's marked with the letter 'G' in Goethe's own handwriting. An excellent 1:30,000 hiking map by Grünes Herz is available at the tourist office (€4).

The starting point is the Amtshaus, a subdued baroque structure on the Markt that was Goethe's Ilmenau home, where five rooms have been turned into a **memorial exhibit** (☎ 03677-202 667; adult/concession €1/0.50; 🕒 9am-noon, 1-4.30pm).

From here the trail heads west via the Schwalbenstein and Emmasteinfelsen peaks to the village of Manebach, where the steep climb up the Kichelhahn (861m) begins. Near the top, you'll pass the replica of the little forest cabin, Goethehäuschen, where Goethe wrote the famous poem *Wayfarer's Night Song*. At the top is a restaurant, **Berggasthaus Kichelhahn** (☎ 03677-202 034; Kichelhahn 1), and a lookout tower with views over the great green blanket of the Thuringian Forest.

The trail descends to **Jagdhaus Gabelbach** (☎ 202 626; adult/concession €2/1.50; 🕒 10am-5pm Sat & sun Apr-Oct, 11am-3pm Nov-Mar), a hunting lodge and former guesthouse with exhibits on Goethe's scientific research. From here, it meanders south to the village of Stützerbach, where the **Goethe-Museum Stützerbach** (☎ 036784-502 77) features the rooms (still originally furnished) where Goethe used to stay and work.

Check with the tourist office (or online at www.rennsteig-bus.de) about the No 300 bus service back to Ilmenau. You can also walk directly to the Kichelhahn from Ilmenau, bypassing Manebach, in about 1½ hours. Or you can drive up Waldstrasse to the parking lot at Herzogröder Wiesen, from where it's a 25-minute uphill walk to the Kichelhahn peak.



from where there are bus services back to town (weekdays only; the tourist office can help with times).

About 6km north of town, **Neue Hütte** (☎ 403 018; Gothaer Strasse; adult/concession €2/1; 🕒 10am-5pm Apr-Oct only) will thrill both kids and the technically minded. One of the few surviving 19th-century smelting plants in Europe, it has a waterwheel, turbines and other industrial knick-knacks.

Sleeping & Eating

Stadthotel Patrizier (☎ 604 514; www.stadthotel-patrizier.de; Weidebrunner Gasse 9; s €41-52, d €72-98) This hotel is very comfortable and well run, and provides a nice place to stay. The restaurant, one of the best options around, is in a vaulted cellar and opens for dinner on weekdays, and lunch and dinner on weekends (mains €9 to €32).

Teichhotel (☎ 402 661; teichhotel@t-online.de; Teichstrasse 21; s/d €42/70; 📍 ☒) Just outside the Altstadt, this hotel has plain but comfortable rooms. The restaurant serves well-priced hearty fare to keep the hikers and bikers happy.

Maykel's (☎ 608 970; Lutherplatz 1; mains €6-10; 🕒 10am-midnight Sun-Thu, 10am-1am Fri & Sat) This relaxed café-bar and restaurant does tasty dishes, including some for vegetarians.

Drinking & Entertainment

The Castle (☎ 466 703; www.thecastle-schmalkalden.de; Schlossberg 1b; 🕒 7pm-midnight Mon-Thu, 7pm-2am Fri & Sat, also Sun May-Oct) This is the scene of most night-time happenings in town. A young-ish crowd gathers indoors in winter, and in summer spills outdoors into the yard.

Getting There & Around

Trains to Erfurt (€25, 1¾ hours) require changes in Wernshausen and Eisenach. Schmalkalden is about 5km east of the B19, which connects Eisenach and Meiningen.

Fahrrad Anschutz (☎ 403 909; Stiller Gasse 17; bikes per day €5-10) rents city, touring and mountain bikes. The 23km Mommelstein bike trail follows a former railway line and some forest trails through a tunnel and viaduct, and past the big sights (the tourist office can help).

MEININGEN

☎ 03693 / pop 22,000

Tranquil, idyllic and blessed with vast expanses of parkland, Meiningen is one the nicest towns in a region glistening with rural gems. It is situated on the Werra River about 30km south of Schmalkalden, between the Thuringian Forest and the Rhön mountain range, and is the former residence of the dukes of Saxe-Meiningen. It owes its reputation as a regional cultural centre to the vision of Duke Georg II (1826-1914), who in 1866 founded a resident theatre troupe that staged productions in far-flung Moscow and London, and is said to be the forerunner of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Georg II also catapulsed the court orchestra (the Meiningen Hofkapelle) to international fame by appointing pianist-conductor Hans von Bülow as musical director; the baton later passed to Richard Strauss and Max Reger. The annual theatre festival in spring has an excellent reputation at home and abroad.

Orientation & Information

The Schlosspark to the west and the English Garden to the north fringe Meiningen's town centre. The train and bus stations are on the eastern side of the English Garden, which also contains the Meiningen Theatre. Signs near the train station point across the English Garden towards the tourist office on Markt, with a post office and banks.

The **tourist office** (☎ 446 50; www.meiningen.de; Markt 14; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) is behind the Stadtkirche. **Das Waschcafé** (☎ 885 571; www.das-waschcafe.de; Anton-Ulrich-Strasse 49; 🕒 9am-noon & 2-10pm Mon-Fri, 2-10pm Sat) has a finger in many pies – being both a café and a travel agency, and with internet access.

Sights

The lavish late-17th-century **Schloss Elisabethenburg** (☎ 503 641; www.meiningermuseen.de; adult/concession €3/2; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) serves as the ducal residence until 1918, and in addition to the pure-baroque central floors of the main wing it has neo-Renaissance and other revivalist features. Inside is a medieval and Renaissance **art collection**, a **Music Museum** (a series of rooms that are dedicated to the musical directors of the Meiningen Hofkapelle), and just down the road is the **Baumbachhaus** (☎ 502 848; Burggasse 2), a small literature museum (included in admission to the Schloss).

The nearby **Theatermuseum** (☎ 471 290; tour adult/concession €2.50/1.50; 🕒 10am, noon, 2pm & 4pm Tue-Sun) displays some of the 275 original stage backdrops from the early days of the Meiningen Theater, sketches of set designs and costumes drawn by Georg II, and historic photographs of well-known actors.

A combined ticket for the Schloss and the museums costs €5/3.

Sleeping & Eating

Gasthof Schlundhaus (☎ 813 838; www.meiningen-hotels-mit-flair.de; Schlundgasse 4; s €55, d €80, ste €100; 📍) Rustic-style rooms with new furnishings in a historic hotel make this a comfortable place to repose. The restaurant is worthy, well-priced and is apparently where someone had the brainwave of inventing Thuringian potato dumplings.

Schloss Landsberg (☎ 440 90; Landsberger Strasse 150; s €95, d €120-150; 📍) The same people run this place. It is a genuine castle converted into a fabulous luxury hotel on the northern edge of town.

Sächsischer Hof (☎ 4570; www.saechsischerhof.com; Georgstrasse 1; s €78-102, d €110-140; P ☒) This 200-year-old full-service inn is a destination in itself. The standard rooms are spacious, others are palatial (most have ante-rooms), even if the bathrooms are a trifle small. The hotel has two dynamite restaurants: the Kutscherstube (mains €8 to €15, open 11am to 2pm and 5pm-midnight) serves local specialities and a couple of vegetarian dishes, whereas the Posthaltereier (mains €15 to €21, 3- to 6-course menus €29 to €51, open 5pm to midnight Tuesday to Saturday, 11am to 2pm Sunday), housed in what was once the building for keeping postal coaches, is upmarket and Mediterranean in flavour. Dip into one or more of the 280 different wines in the cellar – they're served in both restaurants.

Turmcfé (☎ 881 036; Schloss Elisabethenburg; food €2-5) Over-the-top in all ways, this baroque café in the Hesse Room high in the Schloss has lovely coffee and cake, or soup and salad.

Entertainment

Apart from reaching too deeply into the Sächsischer Hof's wine cellar, low-life options are not all that forthcoming in Meiningen.

Clubs worth the short trot on the right night include **Studio2** (☎ 470 444; www.studio2.de; Steinweg 28; ☎ from 10pm Wed, Fri & Sat) and the more serious **Elandclub** (www.elandclub.de; Bernhardstrasse 1); see their websites for events.

The **Das Meininger Theater** (☎ 4510; www.das-meininger-theater.de; Bernhardsstrasse 5), with a very strong classical focus on Goethe, Schiller and European names, is always worth a trot among the greenery of the English Garden.

Getting There & Away

Direct trains travel to Erfurt every two hours (€15, 1¾ hours). Regular buses and trains link Meiningen with Schmalkalden, Zella-Mehlis and other towns in the Thuringian Forest. Meiningen is on the B19 from Eisenach to Schweinfurt in Bavaria, and is also on the B89 to Sonneberg in southern Thuringia.

THE SAALE VALLEY

JENA

☎ 03641 / pop 100,000

Located about 23km east of Weimar, the university town of Jena is a landmark of culture

and science in the region. The architecture here can be patchy, but work is continuing on the restoration of its historic buildings, and even the large and once-ugly Intershops tower rising up from the Altstadt has been transformed from an eye-sore into something of an attraction.

Culturally, Jena can be a beguiling town, with the students (some 20,000 of them) creating a lively atmosphere. Science buffs will know Jena in connection with the development of optical precision technology and names like Carl Zeiss, Ernst Abbe and Otto Schott. There are several interesting museums relating to this tradition, which continues today through corporations like Carl Zeiss Jena, Schott Jenaer Glaswerk and Jenoptik.

Orientation

Jena's main attractions are all within walking distance of each other. There are two main train stations: Jena West (Westbahnhof), in the southwest, and Jena Paradies next to the Saale River, near the centre and the main bus station. The Saalbahnhof station north of town is rarely used.

Information

C-Net (☎ 357 352; www.café-c.net; Teutonengasse 2; per 30min €2; ☎ 1pm-midnight Mon-Thu, 1pm-1am Fri, 11am-1am Sat, 11am-midnight Sun) Internet access. Entrance on Grietgasse.

JeNah Service Centre (☎ 414 330; www.jenah.de; Holzmarktpassage) Transport information and local information.

Main post office (Engelplatz 8)

Police (☎ 810; Anger 30)

Sparkasse Jena (☎ 01801-679 679; Ludwig-Weimar-Gasse) Bank with ATM.

Tourist information (☎ 806 400; www.jena.de; Johannisstrasse 23; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat, 11am-3pm Sun Apr-Oct, 9.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-3pm Sat Nov-Mar)

Sights

AROUND THE MARKET

Despite the forces of time and developers' bulldozers, Jena's **Markt** still reflects a measure of the city's medieval heritage. At its southern end stands the **Rathaus** (1380), with an astronomical clock in its baroque tower. Every hour, on the hour, a little door opens and a devil/fool called Schnapphans appears, trying to catch a golden ball (representing the human soul) that dangles in front of him.

The square is anchored by a **statue** of Prince-Elector Johann Friedrich I, founder of Jena's university and popularly known as 'Hanfried'. The handsome building with the half-timbered upper section at the western end contains the **Stadtmuseum & Kunstsammlung der Stadt Jena** (☎ 359 80; www.stadtmuseum.jena.de; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue, Wed & Fri, 2-10pm Thu, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun). Here you will find an interesting regional history collection on themes as diverse as wine-making, the Reformation and student fraternities.

A walkway beneath the museum leads to the Gothic **Stadtkirche St Michael** (10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, also 10am-1pm Sat May-Sep) which contains the original engraved tombstone of Martin Luther and has a subterranean passage right under the altar.

Visible from almost everywhere in Jena, the 128m-tall cylindrical **Intershops tower** (€3; ☎ 11am-midnight) is the city's most conspicuous building. In the early 1970s, the medieval Eichplatz was razed to make room for this concrete behemoth, built as a Zeiss research facility. It proved unsuitable, and the building languished for some time before receiving a complete facelift and reopening with an observation platform and a good restaurant (see p280).

UNIVERSITÄT JENA

Jena's university was founded as Collegium Jenense in 1558, in a former monastery in Kollegiengasse. Still part of the campus today, it features a nice courtyard festooned with the coat of arms of Johann Friedrich I. North of here, in an excellent example of urban re-engineering, is the former **Zeiss optics factory**, now part of the university. Several buildings wrap around Ernst-Abbe-Platz, dotted with abstract sculptures by Frank Stella; the copies of antique sculptures in the lobby of the main building are a little more aesthetically pleasing. The campus borders the **Goethe Galerie**, a high-tech split-level glass shopping mall.

The university **headquarters** (Füstengraben 1) are in a century-old complex on the northeastern edge of the Altstadt. Inside are a Minerva bust by Rodin and a wall-sized painting showing Jena students going off to fight against Napoleon.

GOETHE & SCHILLER

As minister for the elector of Saxe-Weimar, Goethe spent five years in Jena. When not

busy regulating the flow of the Saale, building streets, designing the botanical garden or cataloguing the university library, he crafted *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meister*. He also discovered the obscure central jawbone while researching anatomy in the **Anatomieturm** (cnr Teichgraben & Leutragraben), a former fortification tower. Most of the time he lived in what is now the **Goethe Gedenkstätte** (☎ 949 009; Füstengraben 26; adult/concession €1/0.50; ☎ 11am-3pm Wed-Sun Apr-Oct), which focuses on his accomplishments as a natural scientist, poet and politician. Goethe himself planted the ginkgo tree just east of here, which is part of the **Botanical Garden** (☎ 949 274; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 9am-6pm).

Goethe is also credited with bringing Schiller to Jena University. A plaque near the headquarters marks where Schiller gave his inaugural lecture. He liked Jena and stayed for 10 years – longer than anywhere else – mostly in the **Gartenhaus** (☎ 931 188; Schillergässchen 2; adult/concession €2.50/1.30; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct). Schiller wrote *Wallenstein* in the little wooden shack in the garden, where he also liked to wax philosophical with Goethe.

CARL ZEISS & ERNST ABBE

These scientists are two more notables who helped put Jena on the map. Zeiss opened his mechanical workshop here in 1846 and began building rudimentary microscopes. With Abbe's help from 1866, he developed the first scientific microscope. In cooperation with Otto Schott, the founder of Jenaer Glaswerke, they pioneered the production of optical precision instruments, propelling Jena to global prominence in the early 20th century.

Their life stories and the evolution of optical technology are the themes of the **Optisches Museum** (☎ 443 165; Carl-Zeiss-Platz 12; adult/concession €5/4; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat). There's an interesting collection of microscopes, cameras (including a chunky Polaroid from 1948), spectacles and various other optical instruments. Don't miss the peep shows (originally magnified painted landscapes and the like) and the magic lantern images painted on glass as a forerunner to film projection. An English-language pamphlet is available, and there are tours of the reconstructed Zeiss workshop (1866) next door. The octagonal **pavilion** outside the museum, designed by Belgian Art Nouveau artist Henry van de Velde, dates from 1911 and contains a marble bust of Abbe.

The **Zeiss Planetarium** (☎ 885 488; www.planetarium-jena.de; Am Planetarium 5; adult/concession €6/5) houses the world's oldest public planetarium (1926). Today it boasts a huge state-of-the-art telescope and does cosmic shows, such as one based on Pink Floyd's album *Wish You Were Here*. Its opening hours follow a varying event schedule. A combined ticket for the Optical Museum and planetarium is €9 for adults or €7 with concession.

Festivals & Events

Not to be missed is the **Kulturarena Jena** (☎ 498 060; www.jenaonline.de/kulturarena) music festival from July to August each year; it's jam-packed with all kinds of music from blues and rock to classic and jazz.

Sleeping

The tourist office runs a free reservation service for hotels and **private rooms** (from €20).

Campingplatz Unter dem Jenzig (☎ 666 688; www.jenacamping.de; Am Erbkönig 3; adult/child €4/2, car €3, tent €2-3) This convenient and pretty camp site is 3km north of town.

IB Jugendgästehaus (☎ 687 230; jugendgaestehaus.jena@internationaler-bund.de; Am Herrenberge 9; s/d €26/38; ☎) The mortal shell is the original GDR 1970s exterior, and is not the most aesthetic, but this hostel is outside the centre and near forest. Take bus 10, 11, 33 or 40 to Mühlenstrasse.

Hotel Thüringer Hof (☎ 292 90; www.thueringerhof-jena.de; Westbahnhofstrasse 8; s/d €45/62; ☎) The main advantage of this hotel – where the rooms are otherwise fairly standard for the price – is that it's just a short crawl for the weary from Jena West station.

Gasthof Zur Schweiz (☎ 520 50; www.zur-schweiz.de; Quergasse 15; s/d €48/68; ☎) This hotel is unassuming but well managed and comfortable. Room furnishings vary from period to more modern. It's situated just off the main nightlife mile.

Ibis Hotel City am Holzmarkt (☎ 8130; www.ibishotel.com; Teichgraben 1; s/d €62/71; ☎) Purpose-built and still relatively new, this chain hotel is right among the major sights. The bathrooms are interesting works of functional art – moulded plastic with pseudo-decking.

Gasthaus zur Noll (☎ 597 710; www.zur-noll.de; Oberlauengasse 19; s €60-70, d €70-90; ☎) In a historic building, but thoroughly modern inside, this hotel has elegant furnishings and fine character. It's a good choice (see right).

Steigenberger Hotel Esplanade (☎ 8000; www.jena.steigenberger.de; Carl-Zeiss-Platz 4; s €88-112, d €101-162, ste €127-600; ☎) Psychologists have been known to bring vertigo sufferers up to the 7th floor here for exposure therapy (it has a glass lift and – parents of toddlers note – low walkway railings). It's got lots of class, especially as rooms have a light and breezy feel.

Eating

Literaten-Café (☎ 443 154; Unterm Markt 3; cakes €3-4; ☎ 8am-6pm) If you can find the book you want, it will cost €1 in this remarkable café-cum-bookstore with upstairs seating.

Roter Hirsch (☎ 443 221; www.jembo.de; Holzmarkt 10; mains €5-14; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat) With wooden panelling, a warren of rooms with secluded corners, and the heady atmosphere of another age (like 500 years ago) the interior here is an attraction in itself. The menu will satisfy, with hearty local culinary delights.

Rotonda (☎ 8000; Goethe Galerie; mains €5-22; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) Vegetarians will love the lunchtime salad or evening antipasto buffet in this stylish place, part of the Hotel Esplanade. There's a €22 three-course menu in the evening and other lunch dishes to make it a highly worthwhile stop-over. A brunch is served every Sunday, with piano backing.

Zur Noll (☎ 441 566; Oberlauengasse 19; mains €9-17; ☎ from 10.30am) This historic restaurant-pub serves some of the best and most varied German food in town. Its garlic soup is a delicious culinary interlude and offerings such as a suckling-pig buffet soar to unexpected heights. The patio out the back is another reason to come here.

Scala (☎ 356 666; www.scala-jena.de; Intershop-Tower; mains €15-25; ☎ 11am-midnight) Gaze over the panoramic landscape around Jena, while sipping wine and downing very decent international cuisine in this tower restaurant. Other tower restaurants may be higher, maybe others are even better, but this has character – you can even drink coffee outside if the weather's fine. Book ahead.

Drinking & Entertainment

Jena's 'pub mile' is along Wagnergasse, on the northwestern edge of the city centre. Stroll along and take your pick.

Café Stilbruch (☎ 827 171; Wagnergasse 2; 8.30am-1am Mon-Fri, 9am-late Sat & Sun) This is the best address for a tippie or for delicious bistro fare and salads.

There's even a table-for-four up among the plants at the top of the iron spiral staircase.

Rosenkeller (☎ 931 190; Johannisstrasse 13) Steps away, this historic student club with a network of cellars offers live concerts and party nights.

F-Haus (☎ 558 10; www.f-haus.de; Johannisplatz 14) Linked to the university, serious student clubbers get a full programme of events (and bowling) here. Enter from Krautgasse.

Getting There & Away

ICE trains go to Berlin-Hauptbahnhof from Jena-Paradies (€47, 2½ hours) and Hamburg-Altona either from Jena-Paradies or Jena-West (€87, 1½ hours). Half-hourly regional services from Jena-Paradies go to Rudolstadt (€6.20, 45 minutes) and Saalfeld (€7.60, 50 minutes). To get to Weimar (€4.60, 15 minutes) and Erfurt (€7.50, 30 minutes), you must go to Jena West. The Hopper-Ticket (see p251) can work out cheaper.

Jena is just north of the A4 from Dresden to Frankfurt, and just west of the A9 from Berlin to Munich. It's also crossed by the B7 (east–west) and B88 (north–south).

Getting Around

Individual tickets on buses and trams cost €1.50 and are valid for one hour. Day passes cost €3.80. For a taxi, call ☎ 458 888. **Fahrrad Kirscht** (☎ 441 539; Löbdegraben 8) rents bikes for €15 for the first day and €5 thereafter.

AROUND JENA

Dornburger Schlösser

Perched on a plateau above the Saale River about 15km north of Jena, these palaces make a pleasant excursion in summer. The southernmost is the **Renaissance Palace** (☎ 036427-222 91; adult/concession €2/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct only), where Goethe sought solitude after the death of his patron, Duke Carl August. The rooms he stayed in have been restored more or less to their 1828 state.

After restoration, the attractive **Rococo Palace** is scheduled to open its doors to visitors in late 2006. The third in this triumvirate, the **Altes Schloss**, blends Romanesque, late-Gothic, Renaissance and baroque elements, and can only be viewed from the outside. The **gardens** (☎ 8am-dusk) are open year-round.

Trains go hourly from Jena Paradies to Dornburg (€2.80, 15 minutes), from where it's a steep 20- to 30-minute climb uphill.

RUDOLSTADT

☎ 03672 / pop 26,000

With its crumbling station, Rudolstadt at first glance looks like it is still catching up with its own history. No less endearing for this, until 1918 it was the main residence of the princes of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, and had its heyday during the 18th-century Enlightenment. In 1788 Goethe and Schiller met here for the first time. The Rudolstadt theatre, founded in 1793 and where Liszt, Wagner and Paganini all worked, is still putting on performances today. The prime attraction, however, is a baroque castle high above town.

Rudolstadt's **tourist office** (☎ 414 743; www.rudolstadt.de; Marktstrasse 57; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) is just west of the Markt.

The baroque **Schloss Heidecksburg** (☎ 429 00; www.heidecksburg.de; adult/concession €4.50/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar) is a hulking edifice on a lofty bluff. Besides lavishly decorated and furnished rooms, the complex also harbours regional history exhibits and collections of paintings, weapons and minerals. Perhaps the palace's best features, though, are free: a terrific view over the valley, the local decorative porcelain (usually with figurines) in the ticket office hall and, especially, the fantastic wooden sleighs by the entrance. It's a 10-minute uphill walk from the central Markt.

The tourist office publishes *Rudolstadt und seine Ecken*, a small German-language brochure map with 16 sights to help visitors explore the town on their own. The second port of call is the **Stadtkirche St Andreas** on Kirchgasse, a Gothic hall-church rich in treasure. The final one (which kids will obviously want to do first!) is the **Spielhaus Richtersche Villa** (☎ 411 451; Schwarzburger Chaussee 74; adult/child €2.50/1.50; ☎ 1-6pm Wed-Sat), where you can fashion miniature buildings in turn-of-the-19th-century style using stone bricks called *Anker* (meaning 'Anchor'), a classic German plaything.

Sleeping & Eating

Rudolstadt has only a couple of hotels located in or near the centre. The tourist office books hotel and private rooms (from about €18).

Jugendgästehaus Rudolstadt (☎ 313 610; www.froebelhaus.org; Schillerstrasse 50; dm under 26/over 26 €15.50/19.50; ☎) This DJH-affiliated guest house is located in the Altstadt and rents bikes for €5 per day to guests.

Hotel Adler (☎ 4403; www.hotel-adler-rudolstadt.de; Markt 17; s €50, d €80-90) Situated right on Markt, this hotel has light rooms in a stone building dating from 1512. The restaurant (mains €6.50 to €11, open 11am to 10pm Tuesday to Saturday, to 4pm Sunday) serves good traditional dishes, as well as a couple of vegetarian choices.

Getting There & Away

There is an hourly train service to Jena (€6.20, 30 minutes). Long-distance trains require a change in Saalfeld, which is served twice hourly (€1.80, eight minutes). Rudolstadt is on the B88 between Ilmenau and Jena, and the B85 to Weimar.

SAALFELD

☎ 03671 / pop 28,000

Saalfeld has nestled quietly alongside the Saale River, about 15km south of Rudolstadt, for over a millennium. It has an attractive historic centre and is home to one of Thuringia's most popular natural attractions, the Feengrotten (Fairy Grottoes).

The Hauptbahnhof is east of the Saale River, about a 10-minute walk from the Markt and the **tourist office** (☎ 522 181; www.saalfeld-info.de; Markt 6; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat).

Sights

The Altstadt can easily be covered on a brief stroll. If you enter town from the Hauptbahnhof, you pass through (and can climb) the 15th-century **Saaltor** (town gate). Just west of here on Markt, is the striking Renaissance **Rathaus**, with its spiked turrets and ornate gables. Opposite is the partly Romanesque **Marktapotheke**, the former town hall and a pharmacy since 1681.

Behind Markt, the twin towers of the Gothic **Johanniskirche** (☎ 2784; Kirchplatz 2; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun) rise into view. This enormous hall-church features dramatic cross-and-net vaulting, plus a life-size carved figure of John the Baptist.

Brudergasse, west of the Markt, leads uphill to the former Franciscan monastery, now home to the **Stadtmuseum** (☎ 598 471; www.museumimkloster.de; Münzplatz 5; adult/concession €4/2.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). Its major allure is the celestial building itself, and the collection of local late-Gothic carved altarpieces.

Feengrotten

These underground **grottoes** (☎ 550 40; www.feengrotten.de; tour adult/concession €6.50/4; ☎ 9am-

5pm Mar-Oct, 10am-3.30pm Dec-Feb, 10am-3.30pm Sat & Sun Nov only) are Saalfeld's prime attraction. Formerly alum slate mines (from 1530 to 1850) these were opened for tours in 1914. In 1993 they entered the Guinness Book of Records as the world's most colourful grottoes, but 'colour' here refers mostly to different shades of brown, ochre and sienna, with an occasional sprinkling of green and blue. Small stalactite and stalagmite formations add to a bizarre and subtly impressive series of grottoes, with names like Butter Cellar and Blue-Green Grotto. The highlight is the Fairytale Cathedral and its Holy Grail Castle.

The cave air is said to help people overcome allergies – some people sit around on deck chairs (in a sleeping bag) in stints here over 10 days at 10°C and 98% humidity.

Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation is comparatively inexpensive, and the **tourist office** (☎ 339 50) can book rooms of all kinds.

Jugendwanderheim (☎ 517 320; wanderheim@drk-saalfeld.de; Am Schieferhof 4; dm €15) This hostel is operated by the German Red Cross. Guests without reservations should report between 6pm and 8pm.

Hotel Anker (☎ 5990; www.hotel-anker-saalfeld.de; Am Markt 25/26; s €47-60, d €74-90; ☎) This gracious hotel-restaurant has almost everything you need. It has some very pleasant rooms (especially in the older building, where each room has a small table) and two restaurants that serve traditional dishes, including game (€8 to €16).

Sächsische Kaffeestube (☎ 2944; Saalstrasse 62; ☎ 10am-7pm) This is the place for delicious ice cream and coffee on a back terrace overlooking the leafy Saale River.

Zum Pappenheimer (☎ 330 89; www.zum-pappenheimer.de; Fleischgasse 5; mains €6.80-11; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Fri, 9am-2.30pm & 6pm-midnight Sat, 9am-2.30pm Sun) Explore the centre for a couple of other options too, but this cosy, ceramic-tiled bistro-pub is a good place to start or end an evening.

Getting There & Away

Regional trains run twice hourly to Rudolstadt (€1.80, eight minutes) and hourly to Jena (€7.60, 50 minutes). There's also an ICE connection to Berlin-Hauptbahnhof (€54, three hours). Saalfeld lies at the intersection of routes B281 and B85 from Weimar or Jena.

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