Thuringia: 100 stories.
100 surprises.
100 stories. 100 surprises. The 7th edition of a classic.
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Famous Exports
An idea conquers the world

Walter Gropius wanted no less than to redefine the way we coexist when he founded the Bauhaus Art and Architectural School in Weimar on the 6th of April 1919. And despite the strong opposition from conservative and reactionary circles, the Thuringian ideas about design, art and education prevailed in many parts of the world.

Today Bauhaus stands for much more than just an art school that existed for only 14 years at the beginning of the 20th century. The ideas, designs and architecture live on in our day. Whether in Rio de Janeiro, Chicago or Tel Aviv – the Bauhaus has left a trace everywhere. But to really understand what makes the Bauhaus so fascinating and timeless, you have to travel to Thuringia.

The history of this art school began in Weimar. A functional building designed by Henry van de Velde, now the Bauhaus University, magically attracts students from all over the world. At that time, too, numerous national and international artists and architects came to Weimar as teachers – called Meisters – including Wassily Kandinsky, Oskar Schlemmer and Lyonel Feininger. Together with their students – almost half of whom were women – they experimented, celebrated and provoked. And they achieved great things.

Meanwhile, their works have found a new home at the Bauhaus Museum Weimar, which opened in 2019. The impressive cube is not merely a place of remembrance, hosting the oldest collection of Bauhaus exhibits worldwide, from the Wagenfeld lamp to Peter Keler’s cradle. It’s also the place where contemporary answers on Gropius’ programmatic question, „How do we want to live?” are sought.

One such answer is provided by three spectacular apartment buildings from the 1920s: the ‘Haus am Horn’ in Weimar and the ‘Zuckerkandl’ and ‘Auerbach’ buildings in Jena. With their clear expression of form, all three are jewels of modernism that serve as models for new structures to this day. Numerous examples of the innovative power of modernism in Thuringia can be found in Gera, the city with the largest number of building monuments from the Bauhaus era. Many of these originate from the work of architect Thilo Schoder, one of the most significant proponents of modernism.

You can even stay overnight in the Bauhaus in Thuringia. After extensive renovation, the hotel ‘Haus des Volkes’ opened its doors in Probstzella in 2005. Although from outside only the lettering is typical Bauhaus, inside the signature of the Bauhaus style is obvious. From the furniture to the colour schemes of the walls: in the ‘Haus des Volkes’ guests can immerse themselves for a few hours in the illusion of living back in the 1920s.
Do you know what the greatest risk of flying is? It’s the trip to the airport. Because the aeroplane itself is the absolute safest means of transport. And Thuringia contributes to this too. To be precise, N3 Engine Overhaul Services, a joint venture between Lufthansa Technik AG and Rolls-Royce plc, which is based in Arnstadt. The Rolls-Royce Trent engines in the Lufthansa fleet and those of around 50 other international airlines are serviced here. A job that carries a high level of responsibility, when you think about the fact that an engine has to operate reliably for about twelve million kilometres until its next service. And a very complex task, as you can see from the fact that such an engine consists of over 15,000 individual parts. Accordingly, the 735 technicians at N3, who have serviced more than 1,000 engines, are highly qualified and able to ensure a secure flying experience.

Performance in motion

03 | Daimler has Thuringia ‘under the hood’

Daimler Stuttgart produces more than three million vehicles every year, and many of them are powered by an engine from Köleda. MDC Power GmbH is based in the Thuringian town. Since 2003, this subsidiary of Daimler has produced more than seven million petrol and diesel engines, used in many Mercedes-Benz models.

Thanks to Köledaer Motorenwerke, not only are the vehicles making headway, but so is the region: The more than 1,400 employees regularly give up one day of their salary, and the company doubles the amount generated. In 2018 alone, more than 200,000 Euro were raised and donated for the benefit of children and youth in the region. Which organisations or institutions receive money, and how much, is decided by an employee jury.

Another subsidiary of the Daimler Corporation has its base in Thuringia – MDC Technology GmbH in Arnstadt. Around 80 employees refine engine parts with a special coating that reduces wear and fuel consumption.
FAMOUS EXPORTS

Therese's wedding
04 | The story of the Oktoberfest

It wasn’t an easy life for this lady from Thuringia in Munich. Her husband was a devout Catholic and tried repeatedly to convert her away from her Protestant faith. The persons involved: the Thuringian Princess Therese of Sachsen-Hildburghausen and Crown Prince Ludwig of Bavaria, who had married in 1810.

Although she remained a Protestant, Queen Therese became quite popular among the Bavarian people. To this day, she is fondly remembered as a virtuous and charitable “mother” to her subjects. Theresienstrasse, the shopping boulevard named in her honor, is one of modern Munich’s poshest addresses. And each year, millions of people, tourists and natives alike, converge on Munich’s Theresienwiese (Therese’s Meadow) for the Oktoberfest – a festival marking that famous royal marriage back in 1810. While the modern Oktoberfest is notorious for its raucous revelry, the royal couple would probably not mind the ‘lèse majesté’. After all, the original feast on the ‘Wies’n’ some two hundred years ago was rather exuberant as well. It all started when a noncommissioned officer had the idea of organizing a horse race outside the city gates. Not to be outdone, the local marksmen’s club announced a festive shooting competition. These combined events drew a crowd of some 30,000 people. Such huge crowds had to be supplied with food and drink – the rest is history!

The town of Hildburghausen, Therese’s home before she became Queen of Bavaria, has begun holding its own annual festival in her honor. Launched in 1990, the year of German reunification, the Theresienfest has since become one of the most popular events in Southern Thuringia.

Master proofing of Harry Potter
05 | Books from Poessneck

Formerly, it was Russian textbooks and most of the books for East Germany. Today, best-sellers by the likes of Hape Kerkeling and Ken Follett are produced by this offset printing company – now one of the largest in Europe. But GGP Media GmbH became famous mainly thanks to a young wizard: The Poessneck company produced parts of the German ‘Harry Potter’ series as well as the seventh volume of the British original. Not a single line was leaked to the eagerly awaiting fans before sales began. And GGP Media GmbH is just as reliable when it comes to taking care of the environment. The printer was the first European book manufacturer to be certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Globally, the FSC seal of approval stands for the fair and environmentally-friendly production and treatment of paper.

Freedom of movement for the people’s representatives
06 | Microphones from Gefell

A good public speaker knows that strong messages and emotive body language are key ways to keep an audience’s attention. Sound technicians, by contrast, are frustrated when a speaker starts to move around too much, since this reduces the sound quality. Microtech Gefell, a company from the Vogtland region in Thuringia, has reconciled these opposing needs. Its specially developed microphone continues to transmit a voice’s volume and timbre with brilliant sound quality even when the device’s distance to the speaker’s mouth fluctuates frequently. The ‘KEM 975’ cardioid plane microphone has, among other things, broadcast debates from the German Bundestag since 1998.

Microphones from Gefell are used in the German Bundestag.
A Thuringian native creates a New York landmark

07 | The Brooklyn Bridge

Anyone looking at an image of the Brooklyn Bridge will automatically think of New York. Yet only a few people know that it was designed by a Thuringian: Johann August Röbling from Mühlhausen. As a young man, this engineer had emigrated to America. 'John August Roebling' initially worked for a railway company, among other employers, and then went on to found the first steel-cable manufacturing company in the US. In the early 1850s, he oversaw the construction of a suspension bridge near Niagara Falls. Relying on his expertise in steel-cable construction, Röbling proposed building a similar bridge across New York's East River. Selling this ambitious project to the politicians and bureaucrats proved to be a project demanding more patience than anything else.

It was not until 1869 that construction could finally begin. Röbling did not live to see the inauguration of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883: The engineer suffered a crushed foot during surveying work and died of blood poisoning after it was amputated. But the genius from Mühlhausen is not forgotten: The John A. Roebling park in New York still bears his name, as does the Johann-August-Röbling school in his home town of Mühlhausen. The Brooklyn Bridge was actually completed by Röbling’s daughter-in-law, Emily Warren Roebling. Entirely self-taught, Emily became one of the first female civil engineers ever. The memory of this determined pioneer lives on in Germany’s Emily Roebling Prize, which is awarded each year to female entrepreneurs in Central Germany.

Next stop: Weimaraners

08 | The popular dog breed decorates a New York subway station

When stepping out of the subway at 23rd Street in New York, you stare into the faithful dog eyes of a Weimaraner – a typical Thuringian dog breed. The artist William Wegman portrayed his dogs Flo and Topper in human clothes. Both had previously posed for Vogue and now their likenesses look down as mosaics from the tiled walls of the platform, as though they are waiting for the next train.

The ‘grey ghost’, as it is sometimes called in the USA, has long been one of the most sought-after dogs there. Frank Sinatra and Grace Kelly were among prominent owners, as was Dwight Eisenhower, whose dog Heidi welcomed the US president into the White House.

The Weimaraner is more than just a good looker: In fact, the four-legged Thuringian with its gleaming silver-grey fur, floppy ears and amber eyes is a hunting dog. As the oldest representative of the so-called pointers, it reliably tracks down game. The first well-known owner was Grand Duke Karl August of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, who kept these dogs at the court of Weimar, from which they have their name. Just as the Grand Duke took his Weimaraners with him on the hunt at the beginning of the 19th century, hunters and rangers to this day value this loyal companion for its sensitivity, its agility and its noble appearance.
When children’s dreams come true

Hans Beck develops PLAYMOBIL

Most retailers were in agreement: the figures that the geobra Brandstätter company introduced at the Nuremberg International Toy Fair in 1974 would be a flop. “You can get that sort of thing cheaper from China,” was the verdict. But the retailers made this calculation without taking into account their target group. PLAYMOBIL was a huge hit with children from the start.

The creator of the world-famous plastic knights, Indians and construction workers came from Greiz. Even as a teenager, Hans Beck, born in 1929, used to craft toys for his siblings. At 19, he left the Soviet zone and settled in Franconia where Horst Brandstätter, the owner of geobra, became aware of the inventor. Beck advanced to development manager at the firm and in the early 1970s he made children’s dreams come true with PLAYMOBIL. Hans Beck achieved this by assuming the perspective of young people: PLAYMOBIL figures look like children’s drawings and place no limits on the imagination. A damsel who puts on a hard hat and helps the fire department, on the back of a unicorn, to extinguish a prairie fire? PLAYMOBIL makes it possible.

In 2000 Hans Beck received a special honour. At the EXPO in Hanover, the developer from Greiz was among the 100 Germans whose busts were displayed in the German Pavilion. Hans Beck died in 2009.

The PLAYMOBIL special figures are not shown in their original size.
equal rights. Every citizen over the age of 20 has the right to vote. The state remains neutral in questions of religion. Freedom of assembly prevails. Labour laws are unified and the middle class strengthened. National conservatives and religious fundamentalists did prevent certain advances toward modernity, such as the abolition of the death penalty. Nevertheless, Weimar became an example to Europe and far beyond. For example, German immigrants translated the work of the Weimar Assembly for their fellow citizens in South America. From Chile in 1925, to Brazil in 1934, to Argentina in 1949, numerous Latin American constitutions reflect the wording of the Constitution of the Weimar Republic.

FAMOUS EXPORTS

Humboldt, Reuter, Willy Brandt – many German schools are named after these personalities. But not all of these are situated in the Federal Republic. A school in Canada bears the name Alexander von Humboldt, Ernst Reuter has been honoured in Turkey and Willy Brandt in Poland. In total, there are 140 German foreign schools worldwide where girls and boys can acquire German or international qualifications. Many of these educational institutions base themselves on curricula from Thuringia. For example, students at the Warsaw Willy Brandt School learn according to the same curriculum as their counterparts in Thuringia. Even at the German International School of Silicon Valley, the offspring of start-up founders and IT experts are swotting up on the same materials as students in far-away Thuringia. Some graduates then move to Jena, Weimar or Ilmenau at the end of their schooling. In fact, qualifications obtained at German schools abroad are recognised by all German universities.

Revolution of values

The roots of German democracy lie in Weimar. To commemorate this, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Chancellor Angela Merkel and numerous other senior politicians visited the Thuringian city on the 6th of February 2019. Exactly 100 years earlier, the National Assembly had met for the first time in the Weimar National Theatre: 421 women and men who were to advise on the first democratic constitution of Germany. They were emissaries of the people, freely elected by secret ballot in all parts of the Reich. What they developed became one of the most progressive constitutions of its time. For the first time on German soil, they wrote down fundamental rights that today seem self-evident: Men and women have equal rights. Every citizen over the age of 20 has the right to vote. The state remains neutral in questions of religion. Freedom of assembly prevails. Labour laws are unified and the middle class strengthened. National conservatives and religious fundamentalists did prevent certain advances toward modernity, such as the abolition of the death penalty. Nevertheless, Weimar became an example to Europe and far beyond. For example, German immigrants translated the work of the Weimar Assembly for their fellow citizens in South America. From Chile in 1925, to Brazil in 1934, to Argentina in 1949, numerous Latin American constitutions reflect the wording of the Constitution of the Weimar Republic.

Thuringia schools set standards

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Basketball star Dirk Nowitzki and the Bauerfeind AG – a true dream team

Dirk Nowitzki is an ambassador for his sport, basketball, which he helped popularise in Germany. But also for Bauerfeind AG and their products, produced exclusively in Germany. The company in Zeulenroda, Thuringia, makes state-of-the-art bandages, orthoses, compression stockings and insoles that are used by both amateur and professional athletes. Dirk Nowitzki also wears Bauerfeind, for example, to return to peak performance more quickly after injuries.

Dirk Nowitzki represents products that are also used in sports promotion and international sporting competitions. As a partner of the Deutsche Sporthilfe foundation, Bauerfeind AG supplies around 3,800 sponsored athletes in cases of injury, as well as preventatively with targeted measures. What’s more, the Thuringians have been at the Summer and Winter Olympics since 2002 with an on-site service team that takes optimum care of the athletes.

Totally adrift from the Earth

The astronaut Ulf Merbold and his legitimate successor

On the 28th of November 1983, the first ESA astronaut Ulf Merbold, born in Greiz, was launched into space as part of the Spacelab I mission. That made him the second German in space and the first non-American on board the US Space Shuttle.

That Merbold, today an honorary citizen of his home town, was able to follow in the footsteps of the first German in space, cosmonaut Sigmund Jähn, had a lot to do with the fact that he himself had left East Germany. Merbold actually wanted to study physics at Jena, but was not allowed. He was not a member of the FDJ (Free German Youth).

So, at 19 he went to the West where he began a career at the Max Planck Institute for Metals Research, before replying to a mundane job advertisement in 1977. The European Space Agency, and what is now the German Aerospace Centre (DLR), were looking for a ‘scientist in the space laboratory’. Merbold distinguished himself among the 2000 applicants and took part in a total of three space flights.

And so he paved the way, so to speak, for another famous ESA astronaut: Alexander Gerst, the first German commander of the ISS Space Station. On 31.08.2018, 1,400 Thuringian students sent a message to Gerst from the DLR Space Show in Erfurt. Did he see them from the window of the ISS? In any case, the ‘thank you’ followed only a short time later in the form of a nice tweet (small photo) to the young Thuringians.
White gold re-imagined

14 | A Thuringian invented Meissen porcelain

The originator of Meissen porcelain was a Thuringian. The apothecary and alchemist Johann Friedrich Böttger, born in 1682 in Schleiz, came up with the recipe almost accidentally. Augustus the Strong had demanded he manufacture gold. Of course, Böttger was unable to produce this miracle, but instead manufactured snow-white porcelain. And with that, in 1700, not only was Böttger off the hook, but the Chinese monopoly on ‘white gold’ was also broken.

The secret of the porcelain remained guarded for a long time. It wasn’t until at least 50 years after Böttger that three other Thuringians almost simultaneously discovered ways of making porcelain: the theologian Georg Heinrich Macheleid, the factory inspector Johann Wolfgang Hammann, and glass maker Johann Gotttheil Greiner. They laid the foundations, as competitors, for the Thuringian porcelain tradition, which reached its peak in 1900. At that time, there were around 400 manufacturers in Thuringia. Today, there are still more than a dozen operations producing porcelain in the state. Among them are the Eschenbach Porzellan Group, the Porzellanmanufaktur Reichenbach and the Porzellanfabrik Hermsdorf, which primarily produces ceramics for industrial use. Many traditional businesses open their doors at the beginning of each year to demonstrate their craftmanship on Thuringian Porcelain Day.

And one of the largest porcelain producers in Europe is based in Thuringia: the company KAHLA from the town of the same name, founded in 1844. It places equal emphasis on craftmanship traditions and design innovation and regularly wins international prizes. KAHLA received the Red Dot Design Award ten times between 1997 and 2014. One of its newest awarded innovations is a takeaway coffee cup made of porcelain – a contemporary reinterpretation of the white gold.

Clean idea

15 | The toothbrush comes from Bad Tennstedt

Sawdust, sponges, quills: for a long time these kinds of rather ineffective items were used by local people here to clean their teeth. But, thanks to Thuringian Christoph von Hellwig, about 320 years ago, a revolution began to fight tooth decay. The priest’s son, born in 1663 in Kölleda, had studied medicine in Erfurt and Jena and had been the city physician since 1696 – something like an early public health officer – in Tennstedt, known today as Bad Tennstedt.

In this position, he developed a new kind of tooth brush. Its handle was made of wood or metal and its bristles were of horse hair. In 1700, the innovative doctor presented his invention and its ease of use in the newspaper ‘Frauenzimmer-Apotheke’. That was the beginning of a centuries-long success story.

Although modern toothbrushes have bristles made of nylon rather than horse hair, they are still very similar to Hellwig’s invention. Meanwhile, in Bad Tennstedt, a memorial was erected to the most famous invention in the history of the city: two giant toothbrushes in a huge tumbler.

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Necessity is the mother of invention

16 | Christmas tree ornaments from Lauscha

A small town near the southern end of Thuringia's Rennsteig ridge, Lauscha is best known as the birthplace of the Christmas tree ornament. According to local legend, the glassblowers of Lauscha were too poor to decorate their Christmas trees with apples or nuts, so they made glass copies of these fruits to use instead. The historical record first mentions these Christmas tree ornaments in the year 1847, but it took another 20 years before the technical preconditions were in place to mass produce such large, thin-walled glass ornaments. As it happened, the industry received a big boost from the US: around 1880, F. W. Woolworth became aware of these beautiful baubles and began importing them for sale at his flagship department store in Pennsylvania. The price: a hefty 25 dollars. By 1900, Woolworth's had expanded into a chain of stores, and the glittering globes, angels, Santas, stars, and 5,000 other glass shapes had conquered the world! The museum for glass arts (Museum für Glaskunst) in Lauscha documents this period of Thuringia's history, while also educating visitors about how the art of glass-blowing has evolved in the region since early modern times. The first glass-smelting workshop in Lauscha was founded more than four centuries ago, in 1597.

Good cheer in the face of grief

17 | A classic Christmas carol and its story

Patrons of German Christmas markets will hear the carol ‘O du fröhliche’ played over and over again. But who would suspect that this ditty has a very serious history? The text of the first verse was written by Johannes Daniel Falk, a Weimar-based author and educator. Falk had lost four of his seven children in a matter of months while the Napoleonic Wars were raging through Germany. This moved him to found the ‘Society of Friends in Need’, a charity that took in children and youngsters orphaned and homeless due to the war. In 1816, Falk composed the text for ‘O du fröhliche, o du selige, gnadenbringende Weihnachtszeit’ (‘O you merry, o you blessed, merciful Christmastide’) for his young charges to sing, setting it to a Sicilian fisherman's song. One of his associates later added another two verses. Falk's was no ordinary orphanage by the way; its educational program became a model for today's youth-oriented social work.
Heartiness from the grill

The Thuringian bratwurst

At least 15 centimetres long, medium ground, raw or parboiled – which all sounds a bit mundane describes a real delicacy. We’re talking about the Thuringian bratwurst, which has to fulfil these requirements according to EU guidelines. Since 2004, the geographical identification has also been protected. This means at least 51 percent of the raw ingredients must come from Thuringia. Which exact ingredients they are remains the secret of every butcher. However, it is well known that the speciality, first mentioned in 1404, also inspires innumerable connoisseurs far beyond Thuringia. It goes without saying that the first German bratwurst museum was dedicated to this truly historic delicacy in Thuringia.

Thuringia’s highlands

High proof from the Free State

The beer-drinking Germans? A cliché of yesterday! In fact, the per-head consumption of beer in Germany has been dropping for years. On the other hand, the demand for quality and regional spirits is continually increasing. One of the first Thuringians to recognise this trend was, of all things, a beer brewer: Bernd Ehbrecht, owner of the traditional brewery Nine Springs in Leinefelde-Worbis. He came up with the idea of producing whisky on the brewery’s premises after a holiday in Scotland. At first, Ehbrecht experimented with distillation, mixing ratios and different aromas. Then, in 2013, his first whisky distillate was poured into oak barrels in which bourbon, sherry or French red wine had previously been aged. The high-percentage liquid was allowed to mature there for three years until it became the Thuringian Single Malt Whisky. In future, the Number Nine spirit manufacturer wants to offer whiskies that have been aged for six and twelve years, in addition to the three-year. Patience is one of the most important virtues in a whisky distiller.

Meanwhile, whisky is also produced in the centre of Erfurt. In the Zughafen Kulturbahnhof, cultural distillery NICOLAI & SOHN, founded in 2017, is also producing a fine drop – regionally, sustainably and with a lot of patience. This Erfurt whisky will be on sale for the first time just in time for the 2021 national horticultural show in the state capital. Connoisseurs of spirits can use the time until then to explore the diversity of gins from the state. Whether Brick Gin from Erfurt, Lyonel Gin from Weimar or ‘Der Luchs’ from Nordhausen – this selection might well convince some whisky fans to savour the juice of the juniper.
An ancient cloister gets a modern makeover

Not for everybody

Volkenroda Abbey: the new buildings, together with the renovated abbey, create an exciting ensemble.

Volkenroda 20 | Volkenroda and the Christ Pavilion

Though the village of Volkenroda near Mühlhausen has less than 200 inhabitants, it is still visited by tens of thousands each year. What they come to see is a spectacular synergy of medieval and contemporary architecture, of past and present: Germany’s oldest surviving Cistercian monastery church. Lovingly restored, the compound’s half-timbered houses now serve as a guest house, a youth training center, and a conference building, respectively. This quaint ensemble is juxtaposed with a decidedly modern structure: a church in the shape of a giant, light-flooded cube. Known as the ‘Christ Pavilion’, this eye-catching structure was designed by star architect Meinhard von Gerkan for the international EXPO 2000 trade fair in Hanover and has since been given a permanent home in Volkenroda.

In 1764, Gotha book seller Johann Christian Dieterich published the first ‘Almanach de Gotha’ – a reference book that was to become world famous. The yearbook included, in the French language, a calendar, the family histories of the European monarchs and a list of German Kaisers. The Almanach also reported on science, trade and art. A year later, a German version also appeared, the ‘Gothaischer Hofkalender’. New French and German editions were issued every year until 1944, supplemented over time by statistics on foreign countries. However, the core of it remained the pedigrees of the noble houses. The families themselves made sure they were up to date by reporting christenings, weddings and deaths to the editors. A follow-up series now continues the tradition of the Almanach: the ‘Gothaisches Genealogisches Handbuch’ first appeared in Marburg in 2015.

The aristocratic yearbook ‘Almanach de Gotha’

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A collection of books including the ‘Almanach de Gotha’, the ‘Gothaischer Hofkalender’ and the ‘Genealogische Taschenbücher’
Many places in Thuringia are firmly in the hands of the revellers during carnival time – and that’s how it’s been for hundreds of years. In Erfurt, there is evidence that the first carnival celebrations reach back as far as 1342. In those days, people met in the town hall for a banquet. Today, around 100 floats wind through the centre of Erfurt every year on Carnival Sunday, attracting tens of thousands of onlookers and festive folk.

The inhabitants of Wasungen can also look back on a long carnival tradition. As early as 1524, the mayor of the small town donated a bucket of beer to the players in the carnival games, as evidenced by a bill. The southern Thuringian town subsequently developed into a real carnival stronghold. In GDR times, there were regularly 30,000 visitors to the ‘city of the people’s carnival’, coming to celebrate and at least to gently mock the higher-ups.

In many other places all over Thuringia, there are carnival parades or events. And just as varied as their traditions are the party calls of the Thuringian carnival-goers: For example, in Erfurt they say “Erfordia helau!” and in Wasungen it’s “Woesinge ahoi!”.

They can’t be seen with the naked eye: The protein structures that scientists have linked to the development of Alzheimer’s are only a few nanometres thick – equivalent to a few millionths of a millimetre. Researchers at the Leibniz Institute of Photonic Technology (Leibniz IPHT) and the Institute for Physical Chemistry of the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena have developed a process to make them visible. Using tip-enhanced Raman spectroscopy, they reveal the structure of these amyloid fibrils. They want to understand how they form. Because that could be the key to tracking down the causes of Alzheimer’s.
A huge success

LIVING TRADITIONS

Garden gnome lovers against garden gnome haters – this petty bourgeois dispute plays a role even in Goethe’s ‘Her mann and Dorothea’. The dwarves made it big about nine decades later. At the Leipzig trade fair in 1884, a terracotta company from Gräfenroda presented a new product: the gnome, a depiction of a miner marked from the hard work of his trade, which soon became a popular symbol of industriousness in advertising.

Statues of small people had still only decorated the gardens of the rich in the Baroque period, but August Heissner and Philipp Griebel mass-produced the gnomes out of clay. Their factory at the edge of the Thuringian forest is considered the ‘birthplace of the garden gnome’. By the end of the 19th century, 15 terracotta factories in Gräfenroda supplied the growing worldwide demand for the figures, which were referred to as garden gnomes after the Second World War. To this day, the manufacturing company Philipp Griebel finishes off the little men – beloved in both gardens and advertising – with those colourful pointed hats, and has also constructed a garden gnome museum displaying the finest specimens.

Carbon fiber or wood? It’s a question that prompts lively online debate among hiking enthusiasts. True, modern telescopic walking poles have nearly crowded traditional oak or chestnut varieties from the market. But artfully crafted, hand-turned canes still have their aficionados. And what better place to buy them than in Lindewerra, a town in the Eichsfeld region that boasts a long tradition as a ‘cane-makers’ village’. This niche handicraft was introduced by Wilhelm Ludwig Wagner in 1836, and by 1900 practically every family in town was turning out walking sticks for a living. Today, two workshops are left, whose products are purchased by customers around the world. Take Dr. House of the eponymous TV series: some of the canes he can be seen carrying come from the workshop of Michael Geyer, who carries on the family tradition in the fifth generation.

Good choice, Dr. House!

Walking sticks from Lindewerra
The dark Middle Ages – that’s too simplistic. The 13th century, for example, was a time of cultural awakening, of economic and social progress. Just take the legal codes which local potentates established in their fiefdoms during this period: they were in the German vernacular, rather than in scholarly Latin, and binding for all, regardless of station. But the increasingly prosperous, self-governing free towns of the Holy Roman Empire also codified their laws to benefit their citizens. It was Mühlhausen on the river Unstrut, one of the Empire’s centers, that spearheaded this development. The first town charter in the German language was promulgated in Mühlhausen between 1220 and 1250. Its 49 chapters govern many aspects of communal life in the town.

How was a murderer to be punished? What should a woman do to bring charges against a rapist? How long was the probation period for newcomers before they could acquire citizenship? Even the crime of trespassing was covered: “Every man here in Mühlhausen shall be entitled to enjoy peace and quiet in his home. If anyone should attack him there with unjust violence, by day or by night, he shall answer for it with his neck.”

Over 3,800 historical documents and files are stored in the Mühlhausen city archives. Among them is one of only two surviving original copies of the Mühlhäuser Rechtsbuch, the first case law committed to paper in the German language.

The historical Dixi is housed in the vehicle museum in Suhl. After Gottlieb Daimler and Carl Benz, but before Opel, Heinrich Ehrhardt was the third automobile producer in Germany. Fans of vintage cars rave about one Eisenach car in particular: the Dixi. This marque existed from 1904 to 1929, the year BMW took over the Eisenach factory. After the Second World War, the Wartburg was produced in Eisenach along with many other vehicles that remain in the memory of East German citizens. Together with the “Trabi”, it formed part of the typical street scene in the former GDR.

Daimler, Benz and Opel – these are the names that many Germans associate with the early history of the automobile. A fourth important name is known only to specialists: Heinrich Ehrhardt. This major industrialist founded the vehicle factory Eisenach AG in 1896. It produced bicycles and military vehicles, and introduced the Wartburg-Motorwagen to the market as early as 1898.

Cars ‘made in Eisenach’

Adam Opel AG began production shortly after Heinrich Erhardt as the fourth German automobile company, and has also been manufacturing in Eisenach since 1990. And in a factory that was named the most productive automobile production facility in Europe by British economic analysts in 1996. The Adam model is currently produced by Opel in Eisenach. From summer 2019, the Opel Grandland X will be manufactured there.
LIVING TRADITIONS

Classic designs for the nursery

29 | Toys from Thuringia

For Renate Müller, the late fame came as a surprise. The designer from Sonneberg has been making animal toys out of natural materials since the 1960s. Out of hessian (‘Rupfen’), for example, which also gave the animals their name ‘Rupfentiere’. Müller’s hessian animals were initially used primarily for therapeutic purposes before they also became popular in the nursery.

One day, two gallery owners from the USA visited her workshop. It wasn’t long until they asked her if she would like to see her rhinos, horses and turtles on offer in New York. Müller agreed, with the result that, in 2012, even the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) included the design classics from Thuringia in an exhibition. Some of her creations, influenced by the maxims of the Weimar Bauhaus, now attract four figure bids at auction.

It’s no accident that Renate Müller comes from Sonneberg. This town in the south of Thuringia developed into a leading centre of toy production in the 18th and 19th centuries. At the beginning of the 20th century, producers in the ‘world toy-making city’ dominated the global market together with those from the ‘doll city’ Waltershausen, from Lauscha, Suhl, Großbreitenbach and other places in Thuringia.

And even if this industry has seen its heyday, numerous companies continue the tradition, thanks to the ideas, processing techniques and the quality of the products.

For example, the famous ‘anker Steinbaukasten’ play system is being revived today, and firms such as Plüti and Steiner produce soft toys in every conceivable variation.

The region’s toy-making tradition is honoured in the German Toy Museum in Sonneberg. This magnificent building houses the oldest special toy collection in Germany. Among them are Thuringian wooden toys, teddy bears and dolls from the 18th and 19th centuries, but also exhibits from ancient Egypt, classic antiques and toys from East Asia and Africa.

Originally invented by aviation pioneer Otto Lilienthal and his brother, the Anker Steinbaukasten was produced by the entrepreneur Friedrich Adolf Richter in Rudolstadt from 1880. Today, AWO Rudolstadt produces the classic toy, which Albert Einstein, Erich Kästner and Walter Gropius used to train their creativity.
LIVING TRADITIONS

A sweet first day of school
30 | Sugar cones for little sweethearts

It’s the typical first-day-of-school photo treasured by generations of German parents: a gap-toothed smile, a proud gaze somewhere behind a paper cone full of sweets almost as tall as the child carrying it. The tradition of easing a child’s transition to school life with sweets goes back a long way.

It was not until the 20th century that this tradition became popular throughout Germany. At first, it was just the wealthier classes. But soon even less well-heeled parents were sweetening the start of school for their little ones.

Blossoming legacy
31 | The rose town Bad Langensalza

If you follow your nose in Bad Langensalza, you’ll be on the right track. From May to September, the northeast of the Old City smells as if the houses are wearing perfume. The enticing aroma comes from an 18,000 square metre garden in which around 450 species and varieties of the Rosaceae plant family flourish – roses in all colours and sizes.

The rose garden is the living expression of a tradition that dates back to 1870. At that time, gardeners in the village Ufhoven, now part of Bad Langensalza, began to grow roses to sell. Some families later took up the challenge of not only multiplying the ‘queen of flowers’, but also of breeding their own varieties, resulting in 92 new specimens – the last one in 2017. Its name: ‘Rosenstadt Bad Langensalza®’; a ‘thank you’ from rose breeder Volker Rönigk to all those who earned a living from the rose in Bad Langensalza. The ‘Rosenstadt Bad Langensalza®’ is characterised by its resistance to disease and frost and its ability to flower.

The rose-breeding success of Bad Langensalza, which earned the right to officially call itself the ‘rose city’ in 2002, can be admired in the rose museum at the entrance to the garden. And Volker Rönigk and his colleagues will certainly be coming up with new creations.
Worthwhile Destinations
You enter the exhibition and suddenly feel quite small, as you find yourself surrounded by a monumental panoramic painting stretching over 123 meters of canvas. This is Werner Tübke’s panorama of the Peasants’ War, a fascinating, like-life glimpse into Germany’s Age of Reformation, an epoch marked by Humanist scholarship as well as the bloody conflict of the Peasants’ War. Each of the roughly 3,000 figures populating the panorama, including Martin Luther and peasant leader Thomas Müntzer, has been given an unmistakable personality and a colorful, historically accurate costume. The government of the German Democratic Republic had a special building complex built to house Tübke’s work: the Panorama Museum in Bad Frankenhausen. This location was chosen for having been the site of the decisive battle of the hard-fought Peasants’ War (on May 25th, 1525).
Jena’s 8th wonder of the world
33 | The Zeiss Planetarium

The city of Jena can lay claim to the world’s oldest planetarium still in operation. With a dome 23 meters in diameter, the building was touted as “Jena’s latest wonder” during its inauguration in 1926. (This was an allusion to the “seven wonders of Jena” celebrated in a Latin rhyme from the early modern period.) The Zeiss Planetarium has since been designated a listed historical monument and has retained its original exterior. The interior, meanwhile, has been upgraded with high-tech planetarium equipment made in Jena and Ilmenau. Here, visitors are given a stunning visual tour of outer space, in which the heavenly bodies are projected against the 800 m² inner surface of the planetarium dome. Carl Zeiss AG’s top-of-the-line “Universarium” projector boasts glass-fiber lenses that recreate the stars’ particularly bright glow. The ZEISS powdery system, with eight specially developed ZEISS Velvet projectors, makes it possible to embed astonishingly realistic astronomical objects such as gas nebulae and galaxies into the star projection and to play modern full-dome films. Thanks to a 3D sound system from the Ilmenau Fraunhofer Institute, the Jena Zeiss Planetarium promises a spatial sound experience that is second to none in the world. Incidentally: the Jena Planetarium’s system is also a small wonder of energy. The projectors use only a third of the energy of the previous system.

Poking fun at the powers that be
34 | The Satiricum in Greiz

In the former German Democratic Republic, the town of Greiz got away with something the ruling Communist Party (SED) would never have allowed in the country’s urban centers of East Berlin, Leipzig, or Dresden: a permanent exhibit of domestic political cartoons and caricatures, whose levels of satire range from sly to brazen. Opened in 1975 in the town’s baroque Summer Palace, the so-called “Satiricum” also boasts caricatures by famous artists such Hogarth, Chodowiecki, Gillray, or Daumier, many of which were compiled by the Princes of Reuss. Also represented are works from the Weimar period and from the reunified Federal Republic of Germany.
Practically no other castle is so closely linked to German history. First mentioned in 1080, the hilltop fortress had become a center of high medieval court culture by the year 1200. This is where Wolfram von Eschenbach, Walther von der Vogelweide and other celebrated minstrels of the day (Minnesänger) are said to have held their legendary singing contest. Another famous chapter in the Wartburg’s history involves the legendary Elizabeth of Hungary. In fulfillment of a prophecy that a Hungarian princess would marry the son of the local landgrave, Elizabeth was brought to the Wartburg as a child and, in 1221, was married off to Ludwig IV at the age of fourteen. Elizabeth eventually became famous for her virtuous life and charitable deeds. According to legend, Landgrave Ludwig once caught his wife in the act of distributing supplies from the castle storehouse to the poor. Elizabeth tried to assuage him by claiming that her basket contained only roses. As Ludwig opened the basket to check, the bread inside had turned into roses! Just four years after her death, Elizabeth of Hungary was beatified as a saint by the Catholic Church. The Wartburg, meanwhile, continued to be a backdrop for historic events. From 1521 to 1522, Martin Luther hid there from his enemies under the protection of the local duke. During his stay, he accomplished the monumental task of translating the New Testament into German.

Cliffs and caves, marshes and fallow grasslands, forests and meadows with scattered fruit trees—these are the characteristic features of Kyffhäuser National Park. Thirty different varieties of orchids bloom along this ridge of hills, a paradise for hikers and bikers. In the fall, thousands of cranes stop here on their way to southern climes. To the non-locals, the Kyffhäuser ridge is best known for Barbarossa’s Cave near Rottleben. The bizarre rock formations in this giant grotto, which never fail to amaze visitors, have inspired a famous legend: this is supposedly where medieval Emperor Friedrich I, aka ‘Barbarossa’, sits on his rock-hewn throne, sunk in immortal sleep. One day, when the German lands are in danger, he will wake and come to the rescue, ushering in a glorious new age and defeating the forces of evil in a climactic battle. This hoary legend has been retold many times in literature. Thus, the poet Heinrich Heine imagined himself face-to-face with the yearned-for Barbarossa in his verse narrative ‘Germany, A Winter’s Tale’. Other rulers to leave their mark on the region besides Barbarossa were Kaiser Wilhelm I and the Princes of Schwarzburg-Sondershausen, whose family seat, the Reichsburg castle, is perched atop the Kyffhäuser ridge. This is also the site of the imposing, 81-meter-high Kyffhäuser Monument, with two giant statues: Kaiser Wilhelm I astride his charger and Barbarossa on his throne.
Do you know Niederdorla? This village in the Unstrut-Hainich-Kreis district of Thuringia has something unique to offer. It forms the geographical centre of Germany, and therefore also lies in the centre of Europe. As does the whole state. This special location proved to be a great advantage as early as the Middle Ages. The oldest east-west connection in Europe, the Via Regia, ran from Kiev to Santiago de Compostela and straight through the middle of today’s Thuringia. It was a busy trade route and one which enabled contact between peoples. Cities such as Gotha, Eisenach and Erfurt were founded on this important route and became important trade centres. In Erfurt, the Via Regia also crossed Nürnberger Strasse and Bömische Strasse, giving today’s state capital additional significance. It was not by accident that the famous Krämerbrücke was built near this important trade intersection, where craftspeople offered their wares for sale.

Today, the central location of Thuringia also attracts many freight and logistics companies, including big players such as Zalando and DHL. Around 280 million people live within a radius of only 800 kilometres. And, therefore, 280 million potential customers who can be reached within a day. Add to that the good connection to the trans-European road and rail networks, with the present-day A4 running approximately along the route where the Via Regia used to be.

Even though the Via Regia is no longer continuously passable today, it symbolises the unification of Europe. An international network that preserves this heritage and wants to revitalise the old road, has borne the honorary title of ‘Great Cultural Route of the European Council’ since 2006.
In the 17th century, Italy and France vied for primacy in the realm of theater. But anyone wishing to experience the artistic heights that musical comedy, opera, and drama attained in the Baroque era can do so right here in Germany, by visiting the Friedenstein Palace in Gotha. Its West Tower houses a beautiful Baroque theater whose manually operated, wooden set machinery is the oldest, still working system of its kind in the world. Duke Friedrich I of Sachsen-Gotha-Altenburg had this little jewel built between 1681 and 1687, and went to great expense to install a series of elaborate background sets in the Italian style – with all the fancy detail and decor in vogue at the time. Thus, 18 carts located under the stage were used to roll entire landscapes in and out, while an ingenious system of main shafts and pulleys allowed several backdrops to be moved at once with minimal noise. The theater reached its apogee during the second half of the 18th century, when Duke Ernst II hired a permanent acting ensemble – a first for any German court. In 1775, the artistic direction was entrusted to one of the best known actors of the day, Conrad Ekhof, after whom the baroque theater is still named. Each summer, the theater’s Ekhof Festival features a program of opera performances, readings, and concerts.

It’s lucky that Erfurt was short of cash at the end of the 19th century. Otherwise, the city would have torn down the Krämerbrücke, which today is the only built-up bridge north of the Alps. First documented in 1156 as the ‘pons rerum venalium’ (bridge market), the ensemble of timber-framed houses is now one of the landmarks of Thuringia. But the bridge is not only a much-visited attraction. It has remained a location for shopkeepers and artisans. It is important to the tenants that no chain stores are established here. Instead, they include a book seller, a doll maker, a wood sculptor and a creative chocolatier: Alex Kühn has set himself up independently on the Krämerbrücke with his Goldhelm chocolate factory. The native Erfurter presents chocolate lovers only with unique items for which Goldhelm has become renowned in Thuringia and beyond. The handmade ethos has remained – true to the tradition of the Krämerbrücke.
The brightest and the darkest chapters of German history – in scarcely any other place do they clash as visibly as in Weimar. The centre of German classicism was here, where the great poets Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Friedrich Schiller and the philosophers Johann Gottfried Herder and Christoph Martin Wieland were active around the turn of the 19th century. And the birthplace of German democracy was here, where the first democratic constitution of Germany came into force in 1919. But not far from Weimar, in 1937, the Buchenwald concentration camp was also constructed.

National Socialism also found many willing helpers here: merchants, freight-forwarders and tradesmen offered their services to the camp, and the city profited from forced labour. By the end of the war and the liberation of the camp, 56,000 people had been murdered in Buchenwald, most of them Jews, Sinti and Romani, homosexuals and political dissidents.

Light and shadow
40 Weimar and the Buchenwald memorial

The memorial vividly conveys to visitors the horrors of Buchenwald, the brutality and the suffering in the camp. The permanent exhibition newly opened in 2016, ‘Buchenwald. Exclusion and violence 1937 to 1945’, manages this impressively. Historians, museologists and history educators devised it together with survivors. In addition to presenting the crimes, it thematically addresses the political and moral state of Nazi society.

The exhibition makes it clear how state and society can lose all sense of humanity. Oppressive memories are brought to life on interactive screens, audio stations and numerous contemporary documents and exhibits covering 2000 square metres.
Gold, silver, and the ‘Black Death’

A triumph of wit and love of detail

When the plague broke out in Erfurt in 1349, the citizens sought a scapegoat. They found one in the Jewish community. "The Jews have brought the plague," was their fatally false judgement. Their pent-up rage broke out in a pogrom, to which almost the entire Jewish population fell victim. In 1998, almost 650 years later, construction workers digging near Erfurt’s Old Synagogue discovered a treasure hidden under an old cellar stairway: 3,000 French silver coins, a number of silver ingots, and more than 700 pieces of jewelry made by goldsmiths of the Gothic era, including an exquisite gold wedding band from the early 14th century. Historians surmise that well-to-do Jewish citizens must have hidden these valuables before the pogrom. The find was sensational, for while Gothic treasures have been preserved in churches and monasteries, very little jewelry or artwork from wealthy private households survives, so that most of what scholars know about these artifacts comes from historical accounts. Given its art-historical significance, the 'treasure of Erfurt' has been exhibited in Paris, London and New York. Today, it is housed permanently in the museum of the Old Synagogue.

WORTHWHILE DESTINATIONS

The Erfurt treasure

When things get boring, kids like to escape into a fantasy world of their own making. That's exactly what Gerhard Bätz and Manfred Kiedorf did in the 1950s – except they're still indulging in their world of make-believe to this day. Welcome to the rococo-era kingdoms of Dyonia and Pelaria, separated by the River Dempa – an imaginary world made entirely of paper maché, plaster, and wood, inhabited by thousands of hand-made figurines with model buildings on a 1:50 scale. Every staircase is historically accurate, every drawer can be opened, every painted face expresses a clear emotion. Take the character 'Bombastus of Igelshieb', for example, an imaginary court poet known for doggerel such as: "Behold the wig-maker, with his pigeon's nest/artfully conceal the balding crest." In this virtual world, the human creators Kiedorf and Bätz are worshipped by their miniature creations as the gods 'Manfred' and 'Gerhard'. In an added touch of humor, the character 'Princess Talophé' has a doll house of her own – i.e. a miniature world within a world: "Absolute perfection" was the effusive praise from Süddeutsche Zeitung when the doll's house was exhibited at Rudolstadt’s Heidecksburg palace.

A riot of color deep beneath the earth

"If these caves were located in the United States, and not in Germany, they would be an international tourist mecca by now." This quote does not stem from a current travel guide, but from naturalist Ernst Haeckel, who visited the caves in 1914, when they were first opened to the public. From 1530 to 1850, the caves had been used as an alum-shale mine. Today, more than 105 years after its opening, it can be said that the fairy grotto has become a place of pilgrimage for tourists. By now, over 19 million visitors have been fascinated by the unique cave landscape.

Centuries of mining activity combined with natural processes have given the Saalfeld Caves their unique beauty. Even while miners were still at work in the subterranean shafts, the first stalactites and stalagmites were forming. Within a few centuries, they had become the most colorful dripstone formations anywhere in the world – a natural wonder recognized with a Guinness Book of World Records entry in 1993. The caves' roughly 100 color tones (including blues, greens, yellows, reds, and numerous shades of brown) are produced by the 45 minerals found in the rock. Many of the glittering dripstones seem almost as thin as long strands of women’s hair. This is what inspired a certain geologist to come up with the name ‘Feengrotten’. The same geologist named the most famous rock formations to be seen in the cave, the ‘Fairy Tale Cathedral’ and the ‘Castle of the Grail’. A riot of color deep beneath the earth

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WORTHWHILE DESTINATIONS

Pomp, piety and a grand staircase

As Erfurters say, "When you hear the 'Gloriosa' ringing, you know it’s a holiday!" This sentence is true both literally and figuratively: the largest free-swinging bell in the world to survive from the Middle Ages, the Gloriosa hanging in the middle tower of Erfurt Cathedral is rung only on special occasions. And the sound of its deep ‘E’ note is considered so unique that many people mark their calendars so as not to miss the eight times a year the famous bell resounds. Visitors approaching Erfurt’s cathedral are struck by the harmonious visual ensemble created by its various structures: St. Marien Cathedral, the parish church of St. Severi, and the imposing staircase with its 70 steps. Together, they form the city’s main landmark. The grandeur of St. Marien Cathedral, with its richly decorated façade, testifies to Erfurt’s status as a medieval trading center. Its treasures include the Wolframleuchter, a bronze, man-shaped candelabra from the 12th century; the stained glass in the 19m-high choir windows, made between 1370 and 1420; the choir stalls, among the finest and best-preserved from the 14th century; the magnificent high altar from 1697, a token of the enduring importance of Catholicism even in the region that gave birth to Luther’s Reformation.

No less impressive than the architecture is an event that has made a name for itself well beyond the borders of Thuringia and Germany, and which uses the Cathedral Hill as a backdrop: the DomStufen-Festspiele, which has taken place every summer since 1994. The cathedral staircase from which it takes its name serves as the stage for elaborate opera and musical productions that delight up to 2000 spectators night after night.
WORTHWHILE DESTINATIONS

Skywalk and medieval preservation
45 | Modernity on the Leuchtenburg

The sky is open at Seitenroda. Especially since the Leuchtenburg got its steel and glass skywalk in 2014. Here you float about 20 metres above the Saale valley and enjoy the view out towards Jena. The name of the skywalk is ‘Steg der Wünsche’ (footbridge of wishes). This is because, in keeping with the motto ‘shards bring good luck’, visitors to the Leuchtenburg world of porcelain can write their wishes on porcelain plates and throw them off the end of the walkway down onto the slope below. Who knows how many of these wishes have already come true?

The foundation that owns the Leuchtenburg has certainly set an example once again with this skywalk: the venerable stonework is not a preservation from medieval romance, but rather it’s alive. Just as did the eight previous centuries, the 21st century also leaves its traces.

The Leuchtenburg was the administrative seat of the Wettiner dynasty, the court, penitentiary and youth accommodation. Today, it serves as a venue for events and as a museum. The foundation protects the old and, at the same time, is creating something new. In addition to the skywalk, this includes the visitor centre. The floor plan of the modern building follows the historical defensive wall. Inside, panoramic windows permit views of the fascinating scenery.

Where wild cats prowl
46 | Hainich National Park: a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Located between Eisenach, Mühlhausen and Bad Langensalza is the biggest contiguous expanse of broad-leaved woodland in Germany, the Hainich forest, almost half of whose 16,000 hectares are located in the Hainich National Park. This is an area almost completely pristine; in other words, a primeval forest. Thanks to its huge stands of beeches, the Hainich National Park has been designated a World Natural Heritage Site by UNESCO, a distinction it shares with special places like Yellowstone National Park and the Galapagos Islands. Besides the beech, the Hainich National Park also features other broad-leaved trees such as the ash, the maple, the lime, and the service tree, a rarity. The Hainich’s fauna is just as diverse, comprising wild cats, pine martens, 15 species of forest bats, as well as beetles previously considered extinct. A special walkway has been installed at tree-top level, so that visitors can explore even the more hard-to-access areas of this primeval forest.
WORTHWHILE DESTINATIONS

Palatial neighbourhood

Thuringia has the highest density of castles in Europe

From the majestic Wartburg to the baroque Friedenstein Palace in Gotha to Heidecksburg Castle in Rudolstadt, which demonstrate power and aesthetic with their gardens and decorative interiors, nowhere in Europe are there so many fortresses, castles and parks in such a tight space as in Thuringia.

This is due to the proliferation of small states: from the Middle Ages until 1920, the present-day state consisted of many small dominions – and every ruler wanted a fitting residence, preferably a little more magnificent than their neighbour’s.

Being close together, there was real competition as to who had the most beautiful property. Artists and architects surpassed each other and created a dense network of magnificent buildings. The density in Greiz is particularly impressive. The town has three such locations, the Summer Palace of Count Heinrich XI, and the Upper and Lower Palaces.

The Thuringian Castles and Gardens Foundation endeavours above all to ensure that the historical buildings do not lose their splendour. With the help of donations, the association keeps 31 of the most culturally important Thuringian castles in good shape. Selected rooms such as the gallery and ancestral hall at Schwarzburg Castle are accessible again for the first time in 2019. In 1918, Günther Viktor von Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt was the last German monarch to renounce his claim to power, and his ancestral seat went to the state.

Also worth seeing are the Stadtschloss (city palace) Weimar, Friedenstein Palace in Gotha with its stately garden, and the Abbey of St. Peter and Paul in the Petersberg Citadel in Erfurt. Fans of walking among history will be spoiled for choice in Thuringia.
WORTHWHILE DESTINATIONS

Visiting Bilzi
48 | Traces of early humans in the Bilzingsleben Steinrinne

Bilzingsleben is one of the cradles of humanity. In 1818, at the excavation site with the nondescript name of ‘Steinrinne’, paleontologist Friedrich Ernst von Schlotheim found the (later lost) skull of Homo erectus Bilzingslebensis, ‘Bilzi’ for short. This early human made camp here at the Thuringian Basin 370,000 years ago. In the 1970s, researchers working with archaeologist Dietrich Mania found more stone artefacts and bone remains in the travertine stone. Thus, the finds from the former limestone quarry are some of the earliest humans discovered in central and north-western Europe and the first documented early human settlements. Visitors can look straight into Bilzi’s living room: the exhibition pavilion stands directly on the site of the discovery.

Out of plumb
49 | Bad Frankenhausen has a leaning landmark

You don’t need to hold a spirit level up to the tower of the Bad Frankenhausen Oberkirche in the Kyffhäuserkreis – it is obviously out of plumb. In fact, at an inclination of five degrees, that’s almost one degree more than its famous counterpart in Pisa. The 56 metre high tower became imbalanced due to subsidence of the earth beneath it. Even while the ‘Church of Our Dear Lady of the Mountain’ was being erected in 1382, the cavity-filled ground was evidently treacherous. In 1908, 500 metres from the tower, the ground actually collapsed. The tower gradually began to tilt, at a rate of up to six centimetres per year. In the end, it had to be closed, and even demolition was considered. But it didn’t come to that. Now, the foundations have been secured. Steel pipes and tension rods were used to prevent the dangerously increasing tilt just in time. And the community of Bad Frankenhausen cherish and maintain their landmark, having recently renovated its spire, the tower clock and the roof, among other things. If everything goes according to plan, it should be open again soon. At least, the signs are ‘leaning’ that way.

Art for all
50 | The Lindenau Museum in Altenburg

Those in the know mention the Lindenau Museum in the same breath as the most significant art collections in Germany. It possesses one of the most extensive special collections of Italian paintings, with works from Sandro Botticelli, Fra Angelico and Luca Signorelli, among others. Especially impressive are the 2500-year-old Greek and Etruscan ceramics, and the plaster collection is illuminating. It brings together in one place faithful copies of original sculptures and reliefs from antiquity through to the Renaissance. This collection exists mainly thanks to Bernhard August von Lindenau (1779–1854). The statesman and scholar acquired most of the work in 1843 during an extensive trip through Italy and France. And he wanted to make them accessible to everyone. In 1845, he had a museum built on his residence, the Pohlfuh in Altenburg, and in 1876 the collection was moved to a magnificent building purpose-built in the palace grounds, designed by Semper’s pupil Julius Robert Enger. In addition to varying exhibitions and a historical art library, the museum houses a range of sculptures and paintings from the 19th to 21st century. Among them is the world’s largest collection from the internationally renowned artist Gerhard Altenbourg, who died in 1989. The museum is committed to Lindenau’s education ideals. Since 1971, the youth art school that he founded has continued as the ‘Studio Bildende Kunst’ (art education studio) – unique in the German museum landscape.
Passionate about Life
PASSIONATE ABOUT LIFE

The Rennsteig breaks records
51 | Germany’s oldest long-distance trail

Over the ridge of the Thuringian Forest and the Thuringian Slate Mountains to the northern Franconian Forest. From the middle of the Werra to the upper reaches of the Saale. Through this picturesque landscape runs Germany’s most famous long distance hiking trail – the Rennsteig. At almost 170 kilometres, including 30 kilometres through the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of the Thuringian Forest, it offers everything that makes hiking attractive. No wonder that enthusiastic hikers from all over Germany and beyond go the extra mile to get to it. If you come by car, you’ll want to pass through the Rennsteig tunnel if possible. It passes underneath the famous hiking trail and, at 7,916 metres, is the longest road tunnel in Germany.

Originally, the Rennsteig linked important cities and towns and was mainly used by messengers. Nowadays, the ridge path should be experienced at leisure. Hikers are rewarded with picturesque views – into deep valleys, mountain meadows and villages, as well as historic castles and palaces. Anyone who wants to walk the entire Rennsteig needs to plan a few days. Leisure hikers are recommended to divide the route into eight stages – six for athletes and four for extremely ambitious people.

Various sporting events provide entertainment and activity in the Rennsteig region. In addition to the ‘RENNSThike World Championship’ hiking world championship, which has been held since 2016, and the Rennsteig racing hill for mountain bikers, the GutsMuths-Rennsteiglauf is a particular magnet for athletes and spectators: around 15,000 people of all ages are drawn to the Rennsteig every year in May, to participate in marathons, half marathons, children’s cross-country or Nordic walking. This makes the GutsMuths-Rennsteiglauf the largest cross-country run in Europe.

Every year in winter the region turns into a paradise for skiers: at that time of year, more than 1,800 kilometres of ski trails pass between snowy peaks and valleys. Among those, the 142-kilometre trail between Ruhla and Brennersgrün is the longest ski trail in Central Europe. Also famous is the winter sports resort in Oberhof, where World Cups are held in biathlon, luge, cross-country skiing and Nordic combined.

With such varied offerings for fans of nature and sport, it’s not surprising that in 2018 there were around 600,000 hikers, cyclists and cross-country skiers on the ridge trail in the Thuringian highlands.
A day of hope at the height of the Cold War

“...You are to receive West German Chancellor Willy Brandt!” The directive from Moscow could not have been clearer and the East German leadership had to comply. After arduous negotiations ironing out the details of this unprecedented visit, Chancellor Brandt was formally received by Willi Stoph, Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) on March 19th, 1970. The venue was Erfurt, ‘City of Flowers’. Brandt expressed thanks for the pleasant weather and walked down the brand-new red carpet alongside his host. The agenda had been pre-arranged down to the last detail, for this meeting between East and West was much too sensitive to be left to chance. But the morning would soon turn into a disaster for the East Germans, notwithstanding the careful scripting.

To Willi Stoph’s embarrassment, many citizens of the ‘Workers’ and Farmers’ State’ had cheered Willy Brandt’s train as it entered the GDR. By the time the West German chancellor reached Erfurt, roughly 2,000 East Germans crowded the square behind the main rail station to greet the representative of the supposed ‘class enemy’. The police and officials of the Ministry for State Security were unable to hold back the crowds. Time and again, people surged through the barriers cordoning off the ‘Erfurter Hof’ hotel and convention center, shouting “Willy Brandt! Willy Brandt!” The chancellor and Prime Minister Stoph had barely sat down in the hotel’s conference room when the crowd began chanting, “Willy Brandt, come to the window!” Brandt knew that the stakes were high: he couldn’t afford to cross Stoph by playing to the crowds, yet he couldn’t let the situation escalate by refusing to show himself. So Brandt went to the window, gave a tentative smile and raised his hand. It was a fleeting moment, but one captured in countless photographs that became part of Germany’s collective memory. For it was the only time between the workers’ uprising of 1953 and the mass demonstrations of 1989 that the people of the GDR could demonstrate for political change.

Safety in numbers

People stand up for one another. That was the founding principle on which the insurance industry is based to this day. It was devised by Ernst Wilhelm Arnoldi. This son of a Gotha merchant family experienced the burning of his father’s tobacco factory – a bitter loss that in 1818 led Arnoldi to ask how factories and companies could better insure themselves against fire. The solution: entrepreneurs jointly establish a bank and pay contributions as owners. In the case of a fire, the injured party is financially supported. 16 merchants promptly took part in Arnoldi’s first concept, and a short time later there were 118. In 1820, Arnoldi and his colleagues finally established the Fire Insurance Bank for the German merchant class – an institution that the Gotha Insurance Bank of today harks back to. Only seven years later, the visionary from Gotha translated the idea of mutual help from the economic to the private sphere. He founded the Gothaer Life Insurance Bank, in order to better protect widows and orphans from poverty. The ‘father of German insurance’ is commemorated in Gotha at the only company-independent insurance history museum in Germany.
Richard Strauss' passion for the game of skat was such that he even integrated it into his opera 'Intermezzo'. Incidentally, the composer's places of work in Meiningen and Weimar are not very far away from the city where the game of skat originated: Altenburg. Playing cards have been manufactured here since 1509. In 1813, keen players in pubs began to develop skat out of older card games. It wasn't long before it was known all over Germany. The skat fountain, the only memorial to skat in the world, commemorates the legendary 'skat brothers'.

Altenburg is the epicentre of the skat world. It was here that the German Skat Association was founded in 1899. And, after reunification, the Association returned here from Bielefeld, where it had been based since the Second World War. Since 2001, the International Skat Court in Altenburg has been presiding over disputed skat games. The playing card museum in the Residential Palace in Altenburg, the oldest of its kind in the world, is concerned with the history of skat and of card games in general.

The game of skat has significantly more competition these days. So, in addition to skat sets, other blockbuster game sets such as Star Wars, Marvel Avengers and Minions are also big sellers amongst the offerings of market-leader ASS Altenburger. Despite the temptations of the Internet, streaming services and game consoles, people still love to 'flip' cards. Completely analogue.

Whether Cromwell in England, Robespierre in France, or Che Guevara in Latin America – many of the great revolutionaries claiming to fight for freedom have been controversial figures. And so it was with Thuringia's most famous 'freedom-fighter', Thomas Müntzer. Much like his contemporary Martin Luther, Müntzer preached fire and brimstone against the papacy. But he went further, ridiculing the great reformer as “that stupid, soft-living bag of flesh of Wittenberg" and calling for a violent social revolution in which the common people would rise up and free themselves from the godless, greedy nobility with fire and sword. These inflammatory words soon turned into violent deeds as the followers of the firebrand preacher laid waste to churches and monasteries (e.g. in Volkenroda – see No. 33). In 1525, Müntzer led an army of commoners and peasants from the Mühlhausen region at the battle of Frankenberg, one of the decisive engagements of the so-called 'Peasants' War'. Defeated on the field by the nobles and their mercenaries, the rag-tag army was scattered and Müntzer beheaded.
PASSIONATE ABOUT LIFE

A simple invention, proven for a century and a half: the pedal drive. It goes back to the Thuringian locksmith Heinrich Mylius. In 1845, he optimised Baron von Drais’ running machine, on which you previously had to push off from the ground with your feet to get going. Mylius was probably the first mechanic in the world to build pedals onto the front wheel and with this foot-operated wheel he created a predecessor to the modern bicycle. The result can be admired in the local museum in Themar.

But why do some encyclopaedias name Pierre Michaux as the inventor of the pedal drive? The Frenchman built pedals at least ten years later. However, he stubbornly pursued the idea and founded a two-wheeler factory. Heinrich Mylius, on the other hand, had to suddenly leave his designs behind. The all-rounder was one of the spokesmen of the revolution of 1848-49. Wanted by the police of Saxe-Meiningen, Mylius fled to the USA. Once there, he must have lost interest in the invention. He became a watch maker and devoted himself to a new hobby: setting church hymns to music.

Today, a new two-wheeled revolution is coming out of Thuringia. The magic word is ‘cyfly’. The Mühlhausen bicycle manufacturer Möve Bikes launched a pedal drive that transmits up to 30 percent more torque to the chain via its patented planetary gearbox – with the same amount of effort. This is made possible by a more efficient use of the lever effect. An idea that would have appealed to the father of the pedal, Mylius.

The long end of the lever

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KiKA’s cult hero

57 | ‘Bernd the Talking Bread’

Appearing regularly on the KiKA children’s channel, Bernd is a grumpy, talking hunk of bread with overly short arms and a decidedly neurotic view of the world. Fun and amusement are two things guaranteed to drive him crazy, especially if things get a little noisy. Bernd the Talking Bread prefers to spend his time in a soundproof room, where he sits at the ingrained wallpaper or collects test patterns from the TV screen. His favorite word: “drats!” Hard to believe, but Bernd has become something of a cult personality. In 2004, Bernd was awarded the prestigious Adolf Grimme Prize, which recognizes excellence in television programming. As the jury jokingly put it, KiKA’s dyspeptic anti-hero was also being honored for standing up for “the right to be in a bad mood”. Owned by the German ARD and ZDF networks, the KiKA children’s channel has been based in Erfurt since 1997. With its broad range of children’s programming, KiKA helps to make Thuringia a player in this particular niche media known as Kindermedienland (children’s media land).

Brewed, not watered down

58 | The first ‘Purity Law’ for beer

In 1998, the little town of Weissensee near Sömmerda was the site of a minor sensation: an old legal guideline for taverns from the year 1434 was discovered in the city archives, one proving that the oldest ‘Purity Law’ for beer (Reinheitsgebot) actually originated in Thuringia. The regulations entitled ‘Statuta Thaberna’ in Latin prescribed that only “hops, malt, and water” could be used to brew beer, under threat of punishment. Before this unexpected discovery, it was Bavarian brewers who had always laid claim to the first Rheinheitsgebot, based on a document from 1516. At the historic Townhouse Brewery (Ratsbrauerei) in Weissensee, the master brewer takes time to regale visitors with personal explanations of the art of brewing – while also serving up his frothy ‘Weissenseer Ratsbräu’ in bottles stamped with the seal of ‘Original Thuringian Quality’.```
There are scenes that can only be written for sport. So close. So exciting. So dramatic. One of those goose bump moments: The Thuringian bobsleigh pilot Mariama Jamanka and her pusher Lisa Buckwitz rush down the ice channel in February 2018 in Pyeongchang, gaining fractions of a second on the Americans, and go on to win the Olympic gold medal.

Jamanka was not the only Thuringian athlete who came home from Pyeongchang with a medal. Tobogganist Johannes Ludwig won gold in the team relay and bronze in the individual. Other medals went to luge athletes Toni Eggert, Sascha Benecken and Dajana Eitberger, biathlete Erik Lesser and bobsleigh driver Alexander Rödiger. All 2018 medallists benefit from the excellent training possibilities to be found in Thuringia and are brand ambassadors for the Thuringian Forest and the Rennsteig.

Another historical Olympic moment made in Thuringia happened a year and a half before Pyeongchang, in August 2016: Thomas Röhler threw his javelin into the night sky in Rio de Janeiro. It flew 90.3 metres – the first gold medal in javelin throwing for Germany since 1972. The consummate athlete from Jena continued to perform well even after Rio, and won the European Championship in Berlin in August 2018, among other things. But Röhler is not resting on his successes. His next goal: to be the first person to throw the javelin past the magic 100 metre mark.

Above: Berlin-born Mariama Jamanka (right), who started for the Thuringia BRC, won her first World Cup together with pusher Annika Drazek, became a German champion, European champion, world champion, and won the overall World Cup. And all that within one season after her Olympic title.

Left: luger Johannes Ludwig celebrates winning the bronze at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang.

Olympic winner and European champion: javelin thrower Thomas Röhler from Jena.
Not yet as well-known as Röhrle is Alma Bestvater, who nevertheless achieves top performance in her discipline. Born in Weimar, she studied sport in Jena and is among the best rock climbers worldwide. Climbing four-and-a-half metre walls is gaining more and more followers, especially in the younger generation. From 2020, this trending sport will even be an Olympic discipline.

Like Röhrle and Bestvater, speed skater Patrick Beckert is also a sporting ambassador for Thuringia. Because he’s originally from here. And because he is able to take advantage of ideal training conditions in his home town of Erfurt, which, together with iron discipline, enabled the athlete to win the title of German champion a sensational 17 times.

The heart of Thuringian winter sports beats in Oberhof. Top athletes live or train here, such as bobsleigh Olympic winner Mariama Jamanka and biathlete Erik Lesser. Professionals and amateur sports people find the best conditions here. And you can train here year-round, thanks to the Skisporthalle with its nearly 1,200 metre-long course. Also noteworthy: the bobsleigh and toboggan run, added in 1971 as the second of its type in the world, and the two ski jumps.

One of the absolute highlights of the winter sports season has taken place in January in Oberhof almost every year since 1999 – the Biathlon World Cup, in which the international sporting elites meet in Thuringia to compete. In 2023, a very special event will come back to Oberhof: the Biathlon World Championships, which was last held here in 2004.

The two-time biathlon world champion Erik Lesser in his element

Two world championship medals and 17 times German champion: speed skater Patrick Beckert from Erfurt

Always lifting the mood: the Oberhof snowman mascot ‘Flocke’.
For some couples, visiting each other's in-laws is one of the annoying sides of married life. Not so for Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, who regularly accompanied her husband Albert on visits to his ancestral court of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. “I feel so at home here,” reads an entry from Victoria’s diary on the occasion of just such a visit in 1845. The young queen had particularly good things to say about Gotha’s Friedenstein Castle, where the royal couple were lodged. Even Albert’s untimely death did not put an end to Victoria’s visits. In September of 1862, she returned to see the places in Thuringia where she had so often stayed with her beloved husband. This included Reinhardtsbrunn Castle. To get there, Victoria had to detrain in Mechterstädt and switch to a horse-drawn carriage. This was no small feat for a stout lady 1.5 meters tall. So a special ramp with steps was built, paid for by Victoria’s brother-in-law Duke Ernst II.

A highlight for visitors to Friedenstein Palace: the Empire Bedchamber
Driving beats, booming bass, celebrating masses. That’s what SonneMondSterne is about, one of the biggest electronic music festivals in Europe. Since 1997, ravers have been meeting at the Thuringian Saalburg to have themselves completely swept away by the music. These days, more than 35,000 people make the pilgrimage to the Bleiloch river dam, year after year. You can also encounter electro beats in Rudolstadt. But in rather unusual combinations, such as with bagpipes. And it’s at the Rudolstadt Festival, Germany’s biggest festival of world music, that you can hear fado, reggae and other types of world music. Tens of thousands of people stream into this small town with a population of 23,000, and celebrate up to 1000 artists appearing on 30 stages.

Another big event with extra-regional appeal is the Kulturarena Jena. Two years after reunification, theatre practitioners and cultural promoters erected a tent in front of the Jena Theaterhaus and produced 22 concerts. The success of this experiment exceeded all expectations. Since then, the Kulturarena has developed into a festival of theatre, film and music. Pop and rock music stars such as Travis, 2raumwohnung and Patti Smith have appeared, as well as English violinist Nigel Kennedy and Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek.

With an old town like a film set and a landscape like a painting, Weimar is no less impressive than any other city that serves as a backdrop for cultural events, such as Salzburg or Baden-Baden. What could be more natural than bringing to life the “Weimar Summer”? Since 2012, events have been bundled under this name to serve very diverse tastes. These include, among other things, the Weimar Kunstfest, the cool “laut & draußen” (loud and outdoor) “Open Air”, exhibitions and open air cinema. The Open Air nights on the Seebühne are also among the highlights that attract more visitors every year.
There was certainly no shortage of kitchen aprons in Communist East Germany – but kimonos? Rolf Anschütz, a native of Suhl, was determined to get his hands on the traditional Japanese garments. He had a dream, after all: to turn the ‘Waffenschmied’ restaurant, which he managed, into the GDR’s first Japanese eatery. So Anschütz persuaded the Meiningen Theater to let him have the costumes left over from the opera ‘Madame Butterfly’, which is set in Japan. In fact, all sorts of creative workarounds had to be found in order to make the first Japanese restaurant of the GDR a reality in 1966: the chopsticks had to be hand-carved, while the ‘sake’ had to be improvised by blending Tokay wine and Nordhäuser rye schnapps. Anschütz also managed to build an authentic ceremonial bath, despite the scarcities endemic to the GDR’s planned economy. His Japanese restaurant in Suhl stayed in business until 1993 and was always booked up years in advance. Guests from all over the world had themselves put on the waiting list just to experience this one-of-a-kind phenomenon first hand. In 2012, the restaurant’s story was adapted for the screen in a feature film entitled ‘Sushi in Suhl’.

Putting an end to quackery

Requiring years of intense training and study, pharmacy is one of the most demanding professional fields that a young university student can embark upon. Nonetheless, thousands of students take on the challenge each year, since they know it’s the only way they can become licensed pharmacists. The fact that the training provided is so thorough is thanks to committed scholars like Johann Christian Wiegleb, an apothecary from Langensalza. One of the pioneers of modern chemistry, Wiegleb wrote a textbook for pharmacists in training. In 1779, he founded the first private pharmaceutical training institute – a model that soon became standard.
A priest’s son as visionary
Friedrich Fröbel’s kindergarten

The Friedrich Fröbel Museum and the Fröbel Trail in Bad Blankenburg commemorate a visionary that once influenced the city: Friedrich Fröbel recognised, as far back as 200 years ago, how important the first few years of life and an intact family were to the development of a human being. The priest’s son from the Thuringian Forest campaigned for the rights of young people to a holistic education and founded a ‘play and activity institute’ in which children were to playfully explore the world and discover their own abilities.

The institute was intended as a garden for children in which they could observe nature and live within it. But also a garden of children freely developing their creative potential. In 1840, Fröbel coined the term ‘kindergarten’. The concept established itself all over the world, and influenced the art of the 20th century. The colours and forms of the play materials developed by Fröbel are echoed in the paintings and sketches of Bauhaus adherents. Even famous architects such as Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright were influenced by the ideas of the Thuringian pedagogical pioneer.

Today, teachers worldwide refer back to Friedrich Fröbel – and his term ‘kindergarten’ has made its way into many languages.

The grandmother of all ladies’ magazines
Bertuch’s Journal of Luxury and Fashion

"A commode is an attractive piece of furniture for the living room of a lady, a place to store her toiletries." This definition, the introduction to an advertisement for a Weimar cabinet-maker, comes from the first issue, dated 1786, of the ‘Journal des Luxus und der Moden’. Published by Friedrich Justin Bertuch, the magazine appeared once a month for 40 years and essentially ranks as the grandmother of all women’s magazines. The editors kept track of all the latest unusual trends – such as wearing a nightcap on the street – while also reviewing theater plays and providing tips on gardening and good health. But no matter how diverse and colorful the subject matter of Bertuch’s magazine, it always had a consistent pedagogical through-line. The enterprising publisher, who at the time was as famous as his contemporaries Goethe or the Duke of Weimar, wanted to shape the taste and aesthetic sense of his mostly female audience. Historians credit Bertuch with making a significant contribution to improving the self-esteem of the middle class emerging in the 19th century and known as the bourgeois class.

Thuringia, the land of fashion today: Veronique Sophie Schröter from Erfurt is a successful influencer. She reaches 100,000 followers with her blog, far beyond the borders of the Free State.

Thuringia, the land of fashion back in the day: the ‘Journal des Luxus und der Moden’ from 1786 was Germany’s first women’s magazine.
Cultural Highlights
Weimar 67 | Jena 67

A historic poets’ alliance
67 | Goethe and Schiller

The bond between Goethe and Schiller: was it a true friendship or just an alliance of convenience? This was a question already being asked by the two poets’ own contemporaries. Often mentioned in the same breath, Goethe and Schiller influenced each other, corresponded, collaborated on the magazine Die ‘Horen’ (The Horae) and launched barbs at rival authors in their literary journal ‘Xenien’ (The Xenia). A government minister at the Weimar Court, Goethe paid frequent visits to Schiller, who was a professor in Jena. They seemed to enjoy these get-togethers immensely, at least Schiller’s wife Charlotte recounted that she could hardly sleep a wink, due to the convivial laughter of the two poets in the room next door. That the Hessian Goethe and the Swabian Schiller would cement their bond in Thuringia was no accident, since the region offered congenial conditions for the literary endeavors of both men. Thus, the Duchy of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach, to which the nearby university of Jena belonged, was home to a series of leading scientists, philosophers, and writers who appreciated its relatively liberal political climate. In fact, no other region of Germany could boast the same concentration of intellectual brilliance around the year 1800.

After Schiller’s death, the association between the two poets was idealized by Goethe himself — and even more so by later generations. A tangible example is the double memorial in front of the German National Theater in Weimar. Erected in 1857, the statue bears the lofty inscription: “To the Poet Pair Goethe and Schiller, from the Fatherland.”

A copy of the Weimar Goethe-Schiller memorial in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco
CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS

A synonym for pianistic perfection

68 | Pianos by Bechstein

You don’t have to be a music buff to recognize the name ‘Bechstein’. With a turnover of almost 5,000 instruments sold per year, Bechstein is Europe’s leading maker of pianos and grand pianos. Founded in 1853 by Gotha native Carl Bechstein, the workshop was originally a one-man operation. Bechstein applied highly durable materials and impeccable craftsmanship to build his pianos, which soon become popular exports. The buyers included concert impresarios, royal courts, and musical conservatories. The piano maker’s international fame went beyond just instrument-making: in London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, Bechstein’s company had concert halls built named after the founder himself. Great composers like Franz Liszt, Richard Wagner, and Claude Debussy all held their Bechsteins in high regard. Pianists, too, have long favored Bechsteins, both for concerts or studio recordings. As early as the 1930s, Artur Schnabel and Edwin Fischer made famous recordings on the instruments. After World War II, artists like Jorge Bolet and Dinu Lipatti recorded on Bechstein grand pianos. But Bechsteins were also popular with jazz musicians as well as with pop stars such as the Beatles, David Bowie, and Elton John.

Immortal keyboard wizards

69 | Bach and Liszt

During his lifetime, Johann Sebastian Bach was relatively unappreciated as a composer. The reputation of this brilliant musician, born in Eisenach, was based more on his virtuoso organ playing and on his skills as a choir master and church cantor. Not long after his death, Bach had been practically forgotten. Yet today, music lovers from all over the world travel to Eisenach, to hear Bach’s music played in the house of his birth; to Arnstadt, where Bach obtained his first post as court musician and where he was married; to Weimar, where he was employed by the local Duke for a number of years. Practically no other composer has influenced so many other musicians as Bach did. The list of his admirers is a long one, stretching from classical masters like Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Schönberg to contemporary artists like Nina Simone. One of the first to rescue Bach from obscurity was Franz Liszt, who transcribed several of the Baroque master’s works for the piano, and who used Bach’s organ works as inspiration for some of his own compositions. The legacy of this fruitful musical synergy is still carried on by the ‘International Bach | Liszt Organ Competition Erfurt-Weimar-Merseburg’. Liszt also followed in Bach’s footsteps by accepting an appointment to the Court of Weimar some 140 years after his famous predecessor, thereby ending a phase of his life in which he had toured restlessly across Europe as an acclaimed concert pianist. Like Bach, Liszt was best known in his day as a virtuoso performer. A native of Hungary, he settled down in Weimar from 1848 to 1861, and then again from 1869 until his death. During his stay, Liszt turned Weimar into a leading European music center, attracting admirers like Hector Berlioz and Johannes Brahms. Weimar’s Academy of Music still bears Liszt’s name, while his apartment in the city (Marienstrasse 17) has been turned into a museum where visitors can admire his original Bechstein grand piano.

Many prominent pop and classical artists love the sound of the Bechstein piano.
Straddling two disciplines as different as mathematics and philosophy is not easy, as Gottlob Frege found out the hard way. A professor at the University of Jena, Frege spent four decades lecturing on mathematics, yet devoted his scholarly writings almost exclusively to logic, a niche field of philosophy. As a result, Frege was never fully accepted by his academic peers as either a proper mathematician or a true philosopher.

By 1919, when he retired to Wismar in his native Mecklenburg, Frege had become quite embittered. Yet he was ultimately vindicated, albeit in a somewhat roundabout fashion: in the process of rebutting one of Frege's logical arguments, the British philosopher Bertrand Russell nevertheless became fascinated by the German's attempt to synthesize arithmetics and logic. Together with his famous student Ludwig Wittgenstein, Russell went on to expand upon Frege's ideas. Thus, after being dismissed as a crank, Frege ultimately received posthumous recognition as the founder of modern logic.

"According to Adam Riese, the result should be...". It's a stock phrase commonly used by Germans to emphasize the presumed correctness of a given calculation. Yet many of them probably don't even know that 'Adam Riese' was a real person, a mathematician who lived and worked in Erfurt from 1518 until 1522. (Over time, the name's spelling became corrupted to Riese or 'giant'). At Ries' old home in Erfurt (Michaelisstrasse 48), a bust, a bronze plaque, and an abacus commemorate the publication of his first arithmetic handbook. Though intended to teach children, it was to form the basis for more advanced treatises, including works on algebra. In his most famous book, ‘Calculation on the Lines and with the Quill’, Ries gave detailed explanations of how to divide and multiply using a calculating board or a pen and paper, and also proposed that the cumbersome Roman numerals then in use be replaced by the more practical Arabic numbering system. Ries also broke new ground by writing in every-day German rather than scholarly Latin. This allowed him to impart his arithmetic techniques even to common tradesmen or merchants. Reprinted all the way into the 17th century, Adam Ries' works reached a huge readership and thus also contributed to the development of standard, written German.
Great cinema!

Film teams in Weimar are almost an everyday occurrence. Because the city, with its many historical buildings, is an ideal location for films set in the past. Films such as 'Beloved Sisters' by Dominik Graf, which tells of the amorous entanglements of the poet Friedrich Schiller. Most recently, the TV movie 'Lotte am Bauhaus' and the ZDF series 'Die neue Zeit' were filmed here, both during the centenary of the Bauhaus art school, which was founded in Weimar.

The website of Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung lists 270 possible filming locations in Thuringia, from historical and modern buildings to parks, universities and sports centres, to churches, abbeys and synagogues. So it's no wonder that location scouts on the lookout for spectacular backdrops are so successful in Thuringia. And they come from far and wide: Parts of the thriller 'The Girl in the Spider's Web', an international co-production, were filmed in Lehesten, because scouts in the town in the Thuringian Slate Mountains hit the mark there in their search for a dramatic cliff backdrop. Michael 'Bully' Herbig also filmed many scenes of his escape drama 'Balloon' here.

Another international crew were in Thuringia in 2018. Scenes from the Danish-Swedish biopic 'Astrid', about the early life of 'Pippi Longstocking' author Astrid Lindgren, were filmed in Altenburg Castle.

As well as national and international film productions, numerous television series also come out of Thuringia. KiKA, the children and youth channel of ARD and ZDF is based in Erfurt, and the current, successful series 'In aller Freundschaft – Die jungen Ärzte' is also set in the capital city.
Lazy Ludwig

Bechstein's fairy tales

Once upon a time there was a lad named Ludwig who lived with his uncle in Meiningen. Ludwig was a sluggard at school, and his uncle often punished him by confining him to his room. There was only one thing that Lazy Ludwig worked hard at: writing stories and collecting fairy tales. In fact, Ludwig Bechstein was such a good storyteller that his fame soon spread throughout the German-speaking lands. His German fairy tales, first published in 1845, were reprinted dozens of times. In Germany today, entire schools are named after the indolent student of old, one of them being located in Meiningen.

Making sense of the babble

The Duden Dictionary from Schleiz

Due to its geographic location, the town of Schleiz has long been a place where one could hear any number of regional German dialects spoken, and primarily Thuringian, Franconian, and Saxon. When Konrad Duden, originally from the Rhineland, became principal of a local secondary school in 1869, he found it difficult to make sense of the essays written by his pupils, since each was used to writing in his own dialect. At that time, there were still no standard spelling rules for written German. Duden resolved to remedy this state of affairs. By 1872, he had compiled an erudite reference work with 6,000 keywords known as the 'Schleizer Duden'. This was the precursor of the authoritative Duden Dictionary currently found in practically every German home and office.

Knowledge for the masses

Meyer’s Lexicon

The population of Erfurt, the preferred habitat of the dwarf-bearded dragon, or the GDP of Argentina – anyone looking for information these days finds most of it in online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia. If this possibility had been available in Joseph Meyer’s time, the Gotha publisher would have lost a good business. From 1840 onwards, he published the ‘Große Meyersche Conversations-Lexicon für die gebildeten Stände’, which at the time was the largest repository of knowledge in the German language. The reference book comprised 52 volumes, 65,000 pages of text and more than 90 million words.

Like the modern Wikipedia, Meyer’s Encyclopaedia was written not only for scholars, but rather for a wide audience. The publisher wanted to “overthrow the oppressive monopoly of knowledge, which has weighed on the people for so long”. He wrote a large number of articles in the Lexicon himself. He encouraged his 120 co-authors to concern themselves with progress in all branches of knowledge. Meyer was also progressive in terms of sales and advertising. His Bibliographische Institut, founded in 1826, sold reference books, bibles and atlases at affordable prices, despite resistance from the book trade, and thanks to newspaper advertisements, leaflets and posters at post offices, he reached a whole new audience. The era of Meyer’s Lexicon lasted over a century. A good two decades before Wikipedia went online, the Bibliographisch Institut merged with the Brockhaus Verlag in the 1980s. As a result, Meyer’s Lexicon was discontinued in favour of the Brockhaus Encyclopaedia.
CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS

A northern luminary in the Eichsfeld region

For most Germans, the writer Theodor Storm is most closely associated with the northern province of Schleswig-Holstein. Few are aware that this great novelist and lyric poet spent eight years of his life in the Eichsfeld region of Thuringia. The political climate in his home had made it impossible for Storm to continue working as a lawyer. That is why he moved to Potsdam in 1853 and three years later to Heiligenstadt, where he made a modest living as a district magistrate.

While living quietly in the predominantly Catholic region of Eichsfeld, Storm developed the realistic narrative style that was to make him famous. He was impressed by the deep religiosity that he encountered in the Eichsfeld, and his writings would return time and again to a theme that already preoccupied him as a young man: the role of Christianity and the church. In 1888, to mark the centenary of the death of its famous district magistrate, Heiligenstadt inaugurated the Theodor Storm Literary Museum. The museum’s permanent exhibition, housed in a quaint half-timbered house dating back to 1436, was thoroughly revamped a few years ago. Currently on exhibit are documents and installations dealing with Storm’s relationship to the concept of the homeland and of foreign regions, as well as with his interest in folk tales and the Christmas tradition.

For example, the fact that Australia used to be called New Holland...
In 1691, the Duke of Saxony-Weimar opened the doors of his library to the general public. This event marks the birth of one of Germany’s most important research collections: the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek. The library had nothing special to recommend it at first, much like the small duchy of Saxony-Weimar where it was located. But as the city of Weimar, astride the River Ilm, began to bloom into a cultural powerhouse, the ducal library, too, grew by leaps and bounds. In 1766, Duchess Anna Amalia had the collection moved to its present location in the ‘Green Palace’. By 1800, the ducal library had joined the ranks of the most notable libraries in the German-speaking lands. A tragic landmark in its long history occurred in September of 2004, when a fire destroyed the upper floors and famous rococo reading room. Important works of art as well as 50,000 valuable volumes went up in flames, while another 62,000 were damaged. Intensive repair work began immediately, so that three years later, the completely restored building was inaugurated by the German Federal President.

The scholarly legacy of the duchess

79 | Doing research in the Anna Amalia Library

The famous rococo hall of the Duchess Anna Amalia Library in Weimar has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1998.
CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS

Luther’s passion
80 | The Schmalkald Articles

“Against Pope, devil and the world”. Martin Luther relentlessly railed against the clergy and nobility in his Schmalkald Articles. The evangelical confessional document is considered his spiritual testament. The Reformer introduced them in the Thuringian city of Schmalkalden in 1537.

The spokesmen of the Schmalkaldic League, the Protestant Alliance against the Catholic Emperor Karl V, met there at that time. Luther played a decisive role, because the Elector of Saxony, Johann Friedrich, had asked him to formulate the central positions of the Protestants. And Luther delivered. The theologian settled a score with the cult of relics, the purgatory and the selling of indulgences. “So we will remain separated and against each other forever;” was his harsh denunciation of the Pope.

Even the Protestants argued over the contents of the 15 Articles, which were radical for their time. Although the majority of the assembled theologians signed the document, they did not make it a formal confession of their covenant. Later, however, the text achieved the status of a confession-al document, which is valid to this day. Seven of the 20 member churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany still refer to the Schmalkald Articles.

Researcher, globetrotter, story-teller
81 | Alfred Brehm and his ‘Life of Animals’

Alfred Edmund Brehm, born in 1829 in Unterrenthendorf, was an animal enthusiast even as a child. Nevertheless, he first studied architecture. But when he was invited by ornithologist Johann Wilhelm von Müller to go on an expedition to Africa, Brehm discontinued his studies. For five years he observed and prepared animals that he came across in Egypt and the Sudan, among others places. In addition to that, the young traveller was also interested in the people of the region. He described their customs and was appalled by the slavery. At the same time, he advocated that the colonial rulers bring civilisation to the supposed savages.

After his return, Brehm studied natural sciences in Jena. He dealt with experiences on further expeditions in essays, but especially in his most extensive and best-known work, ‘Brehm’s Life of Animals’, which has shaped generations and is still known to many Germans to this day. This is also because new editions are continuously being released, the most recent in 2018, published by the Biographische Institut publishing house.

The enduring success of this Encyclopaedia is based above all on the vivid and captivating descriptions. Alfred Brehm did not see the animals as soulless eating machines, but rather as creatures with individual characteristics. He received recognition for this from the highest authority: Charles Darwin supported having the Thuringian’s writings translated into English.

The 240 pages of the new edition of ‘Brehm’s Life of Animals’ bring together many highlights from the significantly more comprehensive original.
A haven for creatives and lateral thinkers

82 | Zughafen Erfurt

An idea and two friends who wanted to create a movement: 17 years ago, a cultural flagship of the city – the ‘Zughafen’ – was built at the freight yard in Erfurt, east of the old town.

Andie Welskop and the musician Clueso created a place in 2002 where music projects, fresh business ideas and art could develop freely. Thousands of hours went into renovation work, before the first offices and music studios could be set up. From this point on, Clueso started his career with his own band, and the other spaces were let out to firms and artists.

Today, this scene, with its industrial charm, is an important cultural centre in Erfurt. Creative people come together here: On the compound, between rails, train platforms and brickwork, they use workshops, warehouses, and rehearsal and recording spaces. There are cafés and a beer garden for the visiting public. Performers can use up to five locations simultaneously, including an open-air stage. From indie concerts to Bach weeks, every imaginable genre is on offer. At night, the techno beats from the Kalif Storch club mix with the clattering of goods trains.

In addition to studios and galleries, start-ups have also established themselves here. Entrepreneurs have founded a craft brewery, a wood design workshop, an online wine merchant and even a whisky distillery.

Clueso has now become a national star and moved to Berlin, while the other creatives continue their work at the freight yard. Welskop founded the ‘Netzwerk Kulturbahnhof’ association and fought for a long time to extend the rental contract with Deutsche Bahn. He was successful – the Zughafen is here to stay. The city purchased the premises and so began the first lively trend in Erfurt’s ‘ICE City’, a newly planned district. It will be exciting to see what ideas the roughly 40 artists, musicians and small business owners have for the newly emerging district. Because that’s how the Zughafen began – with an idea.

Die laughing!

83 | Nora Tschirner and Christian Ulmen in successfull TV show ‘Tatort Weimar’

They are easily the most whimsical and lovely pair of detectives on German television: the Tatort Weimar Commissioners Kira Down and Lessing (no first name!) are not only a professional team but also live together. Nora Tschirner and Christian Ulmen play a police pair who often seem to be more concerned with themselves than with the actual murder, but who always snag the culprit in the end.

Their first case together, ‘Die fette Hoppe’ was supposed to be the only Tatort Weimar episode. But at Christmas 2013, it delighted an audience of millions and with almost two million views it was the most successful film to date in ARD’s Mediatek. This proves that a mixture of crime, comedy and classic appeals even to younger viewers. Thuringian traditions are made fun of just as much as German high culture. Whether it’s about a murder in a dumpling factory or someone being struck with a bust of Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, the screenwriters – among them best-selling, Thuringian-born author Andreas Pflüger – understand how to balance humour and suspense. Dorn and Lessing clown their way, so to speak, through solving their cases, but without the film becoming slapstick.

This mix is also well-received by the Weimarer. Every episode première before its TV broadcast in the German National Theatre in Weimar. If you’re in, you’re in! The 860 tickets sell out within minutes.
The workingman’s avant-garde

Otto Dix always stayed true to his working-class roots, even though he sometimes rubbed people the wrong way in the process. Born in 1891 to a blue-collar family in Gera, the painter was still proud of his humble origins at the age of 70: “I don’t paint for this one or that one. I’m just a proletarian who’s independent-minded, and if I say ‘This is what I’m going to do’, then I really don’t care what others have to say about it.” Even before the First World War, Dix had already become committed to the artistic avant-garde, experimenting with cubism and futurist formats. He is best known for his uncompromising realism, however. Dix’ birthplace on the banks of the White Elster river has been made into a museum housing one of the largest state-owned collections of his works.

“The Meiningers are coming!” Back in the 19th century, this was an announcement that could fill theaters from Stockholm to Trieste, from London to Moscow. When the curtain went up, the audience would marvel at the sets even before a single actor had stepped on stage. Elaborate historical backdrops, intricate mass choreography, and the artistic refinement infusing each production made the ‘Meiningers’ a famous and beloved theatrical company. The troupe’s artistic director was none other than Duke Georg II of Saxony-Meiningen, who was known for ground-breaking stage artistry that successfully translated Richard Wagner’s concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk (a total work of art unifying various media of art) from the opera to the theater. Carrying on this great theatrical tradition, Meiningen’s venerable theater offers modern audiences everything from musicals, dramas, musical concerts, ballets, and puppetry. Top-notch musical accompaniment is provided by the Meiningen Court Orchestra, founded in 1690. The theater itself, a neoclassical structure from 1831, was fully renovated for its 180th anniversary. Thanks to the installation of state-of-the-art theater equipment, audiences can now experience cutting-edge productions in a lush historic setting.
Ground-breaking Discoveries
High-tech glass
86 | Otto Schott in Jena

In 1879, the famous Jena physicist Ernst Abbe received mail from the Ruhr. A certain Otto Schott had sent a sample of a novel material along with his best recommendations. It was lithium glass, which the 28-year-old Schott had developed in the cellar of his family home. After an intensive exchange of letters, Abbe brought the young inventor to Jena. In 1884, the two founded a company together with Carl Zeiss, the Glass Technology Laboratory Schott & Partners, later Jena Glassworks Schott & Partners, later Jena Glassworks, and the kernel of today’s SCHOTT corporation, which now operates worldwide.

In his new workplace, Otto Schott developed a chemically resistant borosilicate glass that barely expands and can withstand high temperatures. This ‘Jena glass’ began a success story that endures to this day. Modern glass technology from Jena is used in fireproofing and optical devices as well as in the automotive and electronics industries. Numerous oven doors all over the world contain a glass pane from Jena. Biochips from Schott enrich medical technology.

Whether for stage spotlights, cinema projectors or diving robots – very few glass products are as versatile as the ‘Borofloat’ from Jena. Even in space, telescopes use special glass from SCHOTT.

Masters of innovation
87 | Carl Zeiss and Ernst Abbe

In 1846, master mechanic Carl Zeiss began building simple microscopes in his Jena workshop. But this native of Weimar soon realized that the methods of manufacturing such instruments had to be improved. He convinced Professor Ernst Abbe, a well-known mathematician and physicist, to research new solutions for him. This fruitful partnership eventually gave Zeiss the breakthrough he was looking for. By 1872, Carl Zeiss AG was producing microscopes calibrated on the basis of precise scientific calculations, ones that stood head and shoulders above the competition. This allowed the company to establish a reputation for quality that endures to this day. Starting in the late 1880s, Abbe and his engineers expanded the range of products on offer, e.g. with optical measuring devices and binoculars.

In 1890, the Jena-based company had introduced the first distortion-free imaging lens. The headquarters of Carl Zeiss AG is currently located in Oberkochen in the Land of Baden-Württemberg, but a number of the company’s operations are still in Jena: the medical technology, microscopy, and planetarium segments, as well as part of the semi-conductor segment. All four ZEISS divisions are represented at the Jena site. Jena produces powerful systems that shape technological progress, for example, the ZEISS Elyra 7 microscope system. With this, scientists can map dynamic processes in living cells, in three dimensions and high resolution, over long periods of time.
GROUND-BREAKING DISCOVERIES

Occasionally, not only the craziest ideas but also the most successful emerge from beer drinking sessions. The diet app Yazio, for example. Florian Weißenstein and Sebastian Weber had the idea for their ‘baby’ in a bar in Ilmenau. At that time, they were studying media management at the local technical university. Now they have both become successful entrepreneurs. They say that, thanks to their app, more than a million users worldwide have lost a total of nearly 500 tonnes of weight. Whereas Weißenstein and Weber have gained: the Thuringian Founder’s Prize in 2017 in the ‘Successful Young Companies’ category.

With the help of Yazio, app users have a constant overview of what they should consume to achieve their diet goal and what amount of carbohydrates, calories, egg whites and fat they are eating. They can also make use of specially devised recipes, completely according to taste and requirements. From low-carb to ketogenic, vegan or sugar-free diets, to the detox challenge – everything is available and can be easily maintained with concrete plans and suggestions. Tens of thousands of foods and their components are stored in the Yazio database.

Even after their apartment in Ilmenau became too small to house their offices, Weißenstein and Weber wanted to remain true to Thuringia, not least because of the affordable rents and short travel distances in the state. The founders set themselves up in 45 kilometres distant Erfurt. There, they are based in the tastefully renovated rooms of a former church, together with an increasing number of employees and freelancers. Not bad at all for a ‘crazy idea’.

New lightness

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Yazio: a diet app from Erfurt

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Practise sports and exercise regularly. Eat with awareness and reduce alcohol consumption. Avoid stress and make sure you get enough sleep. More and more people are living a healthy, modern lifestyle. But what does modern mean? In fact, a doctor from Bad Langensalza was already promoting this healthy way of living over 220 years ago.

We are talking about Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland, who first cured the intellectual greats from Weimar, then worked as a professor in Jena, and finally built himself a career in Prussia. In 1796-97, he published “Die Kunst, das menschliche Leben zu verlängern” (The art of extending human life), and became world-renowned. Many of his suggestions and ideas were ahead of their time. Hufeland advocated immunisation, discovered that war causes psychological illness, and founded the first outpatient clinic for poor people in Berlin. His principle: “A doctor must simply see the human being and not differentiate between the large and the small.”

The doctor who increased life-expectancy

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Fire at will!  
90 | Döbereiner and his catalytic lighter

Spark ignites gas. An exceptional practical household aid functions according to this simple principle – the lighter. The precursor to the commercial disposable lighter functioned without sparks and was significantly more complex.

In 1823, Johann Wolfgang Döbereiner, a native Franconian who worked as a chemistry professor in Jena, discovered that hydrogen would make platinum incandescent. This enabled him to create a new type of lighter known as ’Döbereiner’s Lamp’. In a small glass cylinder, zinc was mixed with sulphuric acid to create hydrogen gas; when the gas came in contact with a small piece of platinum sponge, it oxidized and – pow! a flame sprung up.

Although the Döbereiner lamp was generally safe and convenient, it could explode if left unvented for long periods. It remained in common use nonetheless for decades. Today, Döbereiner’s lamps have become a coveted collector’s item. But perhaps the real legacy of this talented chemist and personal friend of Goethe is his pioneering role in the field of industrial catalysis: Döbereiner’s idea to accelerate the reaction of two substances by adding a third has become a proven way to save energy, time, and precious resources.

Maggi? No, Scheller!  
91 | The real inventor of instant soup

Some misconceptions take a long time to die out. One of these is that Julius Maggi supposedly invented instant soup. In reality, Swiss entrepreneur Rudolf Scheller had already been making dried soups some 15 years earlier in the Thuringian town of Hildburghausen, and was selling them in large quantities to the Prussian Army. In the years 1870/71, Prussia was at war with France and was feeding its soldiers rations of Erbswurst: ground peas compressed into a sausage-shaped paste and diluted with water to make soup. Unfortunately, the paste proved to be too moist and would not keep for long. Scheller set about improving the recipe and pressed the ingredients onto dried bars. Although the military rejected Scheller’s innovation, the enterprising Thuringian refused to give up; in 1872, he began producing his own line of ‘condensed soups’ on a large scale. His soup bars came in four varieties (rice, flour, semolina, or peas), and were ready to be eaten in minutes. Scheller’s soups were a hit and made it all the way to the United States. There was no competition at first, but that changed when the Maggi and Knorr companies succeeded in bringing their own instant products to market. By 1947, the ’Erste Fabrik condensierter Suppen’ factory in Hildburghausen had to close its doors.

Keeping it short

92 | Friedrich Mosengeil’s stenography

Stenography may seem a bit old-fashioned, given that we now have handy dictation machines that produce hi-fi recordings of speeches and conservations. Yet shorthand is still practiced today, in the Bundestag, for example. One of the fathers of stenography in the German-speaking lands was Friedrich Mosengeil. The son of a parish pastor, Mosengeil developed a system during his studies that allowed the user “to write with maximum brevity and speed [...] using simple symbols.” This formed the basis of an instructional manual that Mosengeil published in 1796 in Zillbach, near Schmalkalden.
In 1800, the Jena-based natural scientist Johann Wilhelm Ritter received exciting news from England: William Herschel, the famous astronomer, had discovered a form of invisible light. Herschel had set up an experiment in which he allowed sun beams to pass through a prism, thereby producing a visible spectrum of colors. He had then measured the temperature of each color and found that it increased progressively from violet and blue to green and yellow and eventually to red. Surprisingly, the temperature was especially high to the right of the color spectrum, i.e. in a range where red light was no longer to be seen. What Herschel had accidentally discovered was infrared light.

Inspired by Herschel, Ritter decided to look for more types of invisible light. Influenced by the philosophical ideas of the ‘Jena Romanticism’ school, Ritter believed that infrared light had to have a counterpart – a violet light likewise invisible to the naked eye. Ritter knew that silver chloride turned black when exposed to the sun. He also knew that violet light was more intense than red light. Accordingly, he constructed an apparatus in 1801 that allowed him to expose silver chloride to the invisible light that he suspected to exist just beyond the visible spectrum. Lo and behold, the silver chloride turned pitch black. Ritter had discovered ultraviolet light (UV light).

Lost and found
93 | Ritter discovers UV light

From knick-knacks to measuring devices
94 | Thermometers in mass-production

Making a good idea available for everyday, practical use requires lots of business acumen. Franz Ferdinand Greiner, the first to bring mass-produced thermometers onto the market, certainly had it in spades. A miller from Stützerbach in the Ilm district, Greiner apprenticed as a glass-blower for lamps; in 1830, he set up his own glass foundry in the family water mill. At first, the workshop’s output consisted mainly of glass knick-knacks. One evening, Greiner was watching as one of his employees, Wilhelm Berkes, blew a left-over piece of glass into a pipette with a bulb at one end, which he then filled with a liquid that expanded when exposed to heat. Realizing that this was the rudimentary basis for a thermometer, Greiner decided to expand his product palette. Working together, Greiner and Berkes made a number of improvements to the design, using mercury as the filling liquid, for example. Thus, Greiner was able to bring the first serially produced thermometer to market. Greiner’s tradition of excellence is carried on by Geratherm Medical AG in Geschwenda. Today the company’s products inter alia include touch-free fever thermometers.
When the ‘InSight’ probe landed safely on Mars on the 26th of November 2018, after more than half a year’s flight through space, there was great celebration in the NASA control centre in Pasadena, California, as well as among several scientists from Thuringia. Because ‘InSight’ had six sensors on board that were manufactured by the Leibniz Institute for Photonic Technology (IPHT) in Jena.

The sensors are part of an infrared radiation thermometer. They record the ground temperature of the planet without contact and precisely to one tenth of a degree Celsius. Based on heat measurements, researchers want to find out, among other things, whether Mars is made of the same material as Earth and why it has developed differently from our planet in the last 4.5 billion years.

The mission is supposed to continue until at least November 2020 and to provide data to scientists on Earth. As part of the ‘InSight’ mission, Thuringian high technology was sent millions of kilometres from the Earth to Mars, for the second time. In 2012, the ‘Curiosity’ rover collected information on the red planet with the help of sensors from IPHT. The self-propelled robot also contains photodiodes that document UV radiation and were built by ifw optronics GmbH in Jena.
For seven years now, Professor Yong Lei has been developing new sodium-ion batteries at the Technical University in Ilmenau. In contrast to their conventional lithium-ion counterparts, they charge more quickly, store more energy and cost less. An invention that could, in particular, advance the electric car. The Chinese mathematician and scientist from the megapolis of Guangzhou found himself the perfect research location in Ilmenau. He and his team of 20 work in modern laboratories specially adapted for the project. “Research plays an important role here at the TU,” says Lei.

Also at the forefront of this sector is his colleague Prof. Dr. Ulrich Schubert. He heads the Jena Centre for Soft Matter at the Centre for Applied Research (ZAF) and the Centre for Energy and Environmental Chemistry (EEE) at the Friedrich-Schiller University Jena. Since 2007, the chemistry professor has also been working here on batteries that produce no pollutants and recharge themselves thanks to integrated solar cells. Instead of poisonous materials such as sulphuric acid and lead, he uses synthetic molecules dissolved in salt water. The clean batteries can provide energy for everything from tiny LEDs up to electric cars. More than ten patents have already been registered.

Both researchers value the good international network and the high level of scientific endeavour. Ilmenau and Jena are both home to Fraunhofer institutions. Their projects have long since passed the concept stage. Next stop: market maturity. In only a few years, the batteries should find their way into everyday use – the battery revolution from Thuringian laboratories.
Seniors requiring assistance have a new friend. He responds to the name Paul, remembers appointments and medications, provides entertainment and companionship and sometimes invites you to dance. The only thing is that Paul is a robot, a so-called ‘sympartner’. And Paul is a Thuringian. He was developed by students and technicians at the Ilmenau Technical University.

As part of a long-term study, seniors living alone shared their homes with Paul. The developers from the Institute of Computer Engineering, in the department of Neuroinformatics and Cognitive Robotics, investigated whether they could combat loneliness and increase well-being and independence with the help of robots. The Thuringian project was funded by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research.

"Interactive household robots are something new. Until now, there has been only laboratory testing of robots for use in the home," says Andreas Bley, managing director of the Ilmenau firm MetraLabs that also worked on Paul. The company has long been producing robots that guide visitors through the Berlin Museum of Technology or help with inventory.

And now home help. A challenge: the robot must appear human, and at the same time be recognizable as a technical device and be compact. The helper did well in the experiments. The majority of study participants would like to have a Paul in their home. A market-ready model is currently being tweaked.

Patent number 3044 signified the breakthrough for Hermann Eicke. The inventor, originally from the village of Weißenborn-Lüderode in north-western Thuringia, described the way his "tilting steam-pressure coffee machine" functioned in the document submitted to the Imperial Patent Office in Berlin in 1878. The main attraction of this device built similar to a traditional scale is that once the coffee is ready, the lid of the burner automatically snaps closed and extinguishes the flame, to avoid overheating. This precursor of modern coffee machines became a successful model and sold so well that Eicke earned a small fortune. When the childless entrepreneur died in 1897, he bequeathed his money among other things to an orphanage in Berlin-Moabit and to his local community in Thuringia. There, the money benefited poor people, according to Eicke’s last will.

In the fight against tropical diseases such as malaria, scientists are placing their hopes in the effect of a bacterium that carries the name of Thuringia. Bacillus thuringiensis and the subspecies Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis (BTI) produce proteins which are poisonous to certain insect species but harmless to plants and vertebrates. The bacterium is used as an environmentally friendly pesticide for plants and as a biological insecticide against mosquitoes. Thanks to a research project at the University of Heidelberg, BTI is even being sprayed in Burkina Faso to stem the spread of malaria there. Incidentally, the bacterium owes its name to researcher Ernst Berliner. He discovered it in 1911 in a flour moth from a Thuringian mill and dubbed it Bacillus thuringiensis.
The human genome consists of some three billion building blocks. In 2003, the announcement came that this complex structure had finally been fully mapped and sequenced. This may not sound spectacular to the layman, but as far as the scientific community was concerned, the International Human Genome Project was perhaps the most ambitious project ever attempted in the bio-sciences, with some 20 research institutes participating all over the world. One of these was located in Jena: The Leibniz Institute for Age Research – Fritz-Lipmann Institute (FLI). Here, researchers working in collaboration with colleagues elsewhere in Germany as well as in Japan achieved the first-ever, comprehensive analysis of the human Chromosome 21 in the year 2000. This momentous milestone will greatly increase the chances of developing successful therapies against trisomy 21, a gene mutation better known as ‘Down’s Syndrome’.

Five years later, the Jena-based research team helped the Human Genome Project to achieve a further breakthrough: the decoding of the X chromosome, the gender chromosome shared by both men and women. This is significant because the X chromosome is especially likely to carry abnormalities. Thus, many congenital diseases will now be better understood.

Jena researchers were involved in decoding the human genome.

Mankind decoded

100 | The genome project reveals our DNA

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Thuringia in Germany