



Veit Bach Mill

WECHMAR

Home of the Ancestors

Wechmar is regarded as the birthplace of the Bach family of musicians. Johann Sebastian Bach, who himself searched after his ancestors, got as far as Veit Bach, who probably settled in Wechmar around 1600 and is now regarded as the progenitor of the Bach family. As a Lutheran, Veit Bach had left his home—it has not been conclusively proven whether this was in Hungary or Bohemia—for religious reasons. It is undisputed, however, that he was a baker, died in 1619, and left five sons. He already inhabited the Bach ancestral home, also known as the upper bakehouse, which now houses a Bach memorial site. Veit Bach's second place of activity was the upper mill which has been restored in the state of construction of 1685. In the house of the mill there is an original Thuringian panelled parlour from 1585.

TIP
“Trail of the Forefathers” tour through the Bachs’ place of origin.

DORNHEIM

Matrimonial Church

On 17 October 1707, a wedding party from Arnstadt set off for Dornheim, three kilometres away. They ran over stubble fields, holding hands and singing merry songs. The bridal couple were Johann Sebastian Bach and his second cousin Maria Barbara Bach. The friendship of the young Bach with the Dornheim pastor Johann Lorenz Stauber may have been the reason why the couple chose the small village church of St. Bartholomew's for the happy event. In addition to the entry in the church book, a fragment of the wedding quodlibet has been preserved: cheerful, impromptu music, the lyrics of which are supposed to contain playful references to members and relatives of the Bach family.

TIP
Visit and guided tour of the matrimonial church (by prior appointment)

Bach's matrimonial church



EISENACH

Home Town

The parents of Johann Sebastian Bach, Johann Ambrosius Bach and the Erfurter Elisabeth Lämmerhirt, came from Erfurt to Eisenach in 1671, when the father received a position there as a town musician, under Johann Georg von Sachsen-Eisenach. It was a very musical environment that Johann Sebastian was born into on 21 March 1685. Two days later, he was baptised here in St. George's Church. As a boy, Bach attended the same Latin school to which Martin Luther had gone, and very probably sang there in the “chorus musicus”. But his sheltered childhood ended early: Bach's mother died in 1694, and nine months later his father. He thus became a complete orphan at the age of only ten.

TIP
Visit to the Bachhaus with its hourly concerts on baroque instruments (daily 10:00-18:00) and guided tour “in Bach's footsteps”.

Eisenach Bachhaus



Bach signed his “certificate of appointment” in the old town council office.

MÜHLHAUSEN

Early Masterpieces

It was a short guest performance: the 22-year-old Johann Sebastian Bach attempted to escape the restrictive conditions in Arnstadt and switched over to Mühlhausen 70 kilometres away for not more than twelve months. This medieval imperial city with eleven gothic churches and a town wall, which can now be walked upon places, is regarded as the centre of Protestant church music. After his organ prelude on Easter Sunday 1707, Bach reported for duty in the Divi Blasii Church. His cantata “Gott ist mein König” was played for the first time in 1708 in St. Mary's Church. In 1709 Bach asked to be released from his duties but always felt closely connected to the city.

TIP
Guided tour “in the footsteps of Johann Sebastian Bach”, Bach organ guided tour

Themed spaces in the Old Chancellory and Divi Blasii Church



Schloss Ehrenstein with a new Bach exhibition from summer 2020

OHRDRUF

Apprenticeship

Ohrdruf is the smallest of all the Bach towns—and yet it can look back on a tradition of more than 170 years, the “heart” of which is the five-year stay of the young Johann Sebastian. After the early death of his parents, the ten-year-old joined his brother, Johann Christoph, the founder of the Ohrdruf Bach family. Fourteen years older than Johann Sebastian, Johann Christoph not only became his guardian, but also his first teacher of piano, organ, and basso continuo. Johann Sebastian was already making musical appearances during his time in Ohrdruf, as a choirboy and choral singer. The first organ chorales from him that are known also originated during this period, and were discovered in 1984 in the “Neumeistersammlung”.

TIP
Visit to the church library of St. Michael's (only by prior appointment) and a guided tour on the trail of Johann Sebastian Bach.

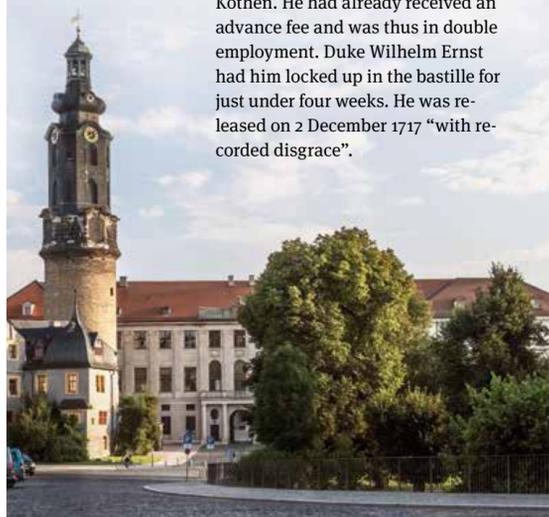
WEIMAR

Court Organist

Johann Sebastian Bach stayed in Weimar twice during his life. In 1703 he worked as a violinist and minion in the private chapel of Duke Johann Ernst III for six months. In 1708 he returned for almost ten years as a court organist. The Bachs purchased the house at Markt 16. Their first six children saw the light of day here, including Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philip Emanuel. The Weimar years were creative. He composed more than 30 cantatas, early versions of the “Brandenburg Concertos”, the majority of his organ works and the “Little Organ Book” here. In 1717 he offered his resignation to take on the vacant position of court conductor in the residence town of Köthen. He had already received an advance fee and was thus in double employment. Duke Wilhelm Ernst had him locked up in the bastille for just under four weeks. He was released on 2 December 1717 “with recorded disgrace”.

TIPS
Guided tour “Bach—A Baroque Genius”

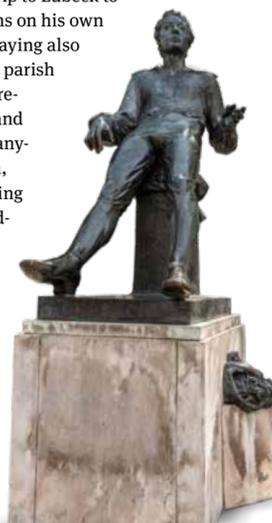
Experience site in the bastille at Stadtschloss Weimar



ARNSTADT

Wild Years

Arnstadt enjoys a special status among the Bach sites in Thuringia. There is no other place with as many original venues that tell about the lives of this family of musicians—sometimes long before Johann Sebastian Bach. He began his career as a professional organist in the New Church in 1703. In Arnstadt the young man not only fell in love with his first wife, he also had a few escapades. For example, he extended a four-week study trip to Lübeck to more than three months on his own initiative. His organ playing also met with criticism: the parish took exception to the frequent changes in key and the dissonant accompanying chords. In addition, he was accused of having led an “unknown maiden” onto the gallery. Even stories of scuffles with his pupil Geversbach have been handed down.



Bach Monument on the Market Square

TIP
Costumed guided tours with Johann Sebastian Bach and his first wife Maria Barbara

Bach exhibition in the Palace Museum

ERFURT

Main Seat of the Family

For seven generations, the Bach family dominated musical life in Erfurt—so much so that in 1793 all town musicians were called “Bachs”. Over time, more than 70 descendants of the Wechmar Bach patriarch practiced musical professions here. Nowhere else did so many family members live as in the cathedral city, from which they gradually spread out all over central Germany. Traces of their activity can be found in various churches in Erfurt.

TIP
Guided tour and organ concert “On Bach Trails through the City”

ALTENBURG

Organ Inspector

Johann Sebastian Bach was not only famous as a harpsicord and organ virtuoso, he also had an excellent reputation as an organ expert. He was therefore invited to Altenburg in 1739 to test the organs of the castle church. These had been completed by the court organ-builder Heinrich Gottfried Trost in a four-year construction period. Thanks to its beautiful timbre and its splendid positive, the instrument is regarded as an outstanding example of the art of baroque organ construction in central Germany.

TIP
Summer organ concerts



DISCOVER Bach in Thuringia

Thüringen
-entdecken.de



Young Genius

DISCOVER
Bach in Thuringia

WWW.BACH-THUERINGEN.DE

Authentic Places

Charming Festivals

Bach-Festival-Arnstadt

In honour of the Bach family, Arnstadt invites people to a very special "birthday celebration" around the birthday of Johann Sebastian Bach on 21 March. The multi-faceted programme comprises concerts, guided tours, culinary attractions, children's programmes, a coach tour to Thuringian church organs, and a handicrafts market, and attracts many people interested in culture to the town every year.

WWW.BACH-FESTIVAL.DE



Bachtage Ohrdruf

The festival impresses visitors every two years with its family atmosphere at the sites of Johann Sebastian Bach's early youth. In keeping with this, children and young people from the area are included in the programme. Choral concerts, cantata church services and appearances by well-known artists and ensembles from the region present performances of high artistic quality.

WWW.BACHTAGE-OHRDRUF.DE

Bach Biennale Weimar

The aim of the festival is to make Bach's music accessible to listeners at the highest quality and in unique spaces. Renowned international artists and ensembles play the instruments of the baroque period and perform the music at authentic Bach venues. Unconventional formats and accents offer a unique encounter with the composer's life and work.

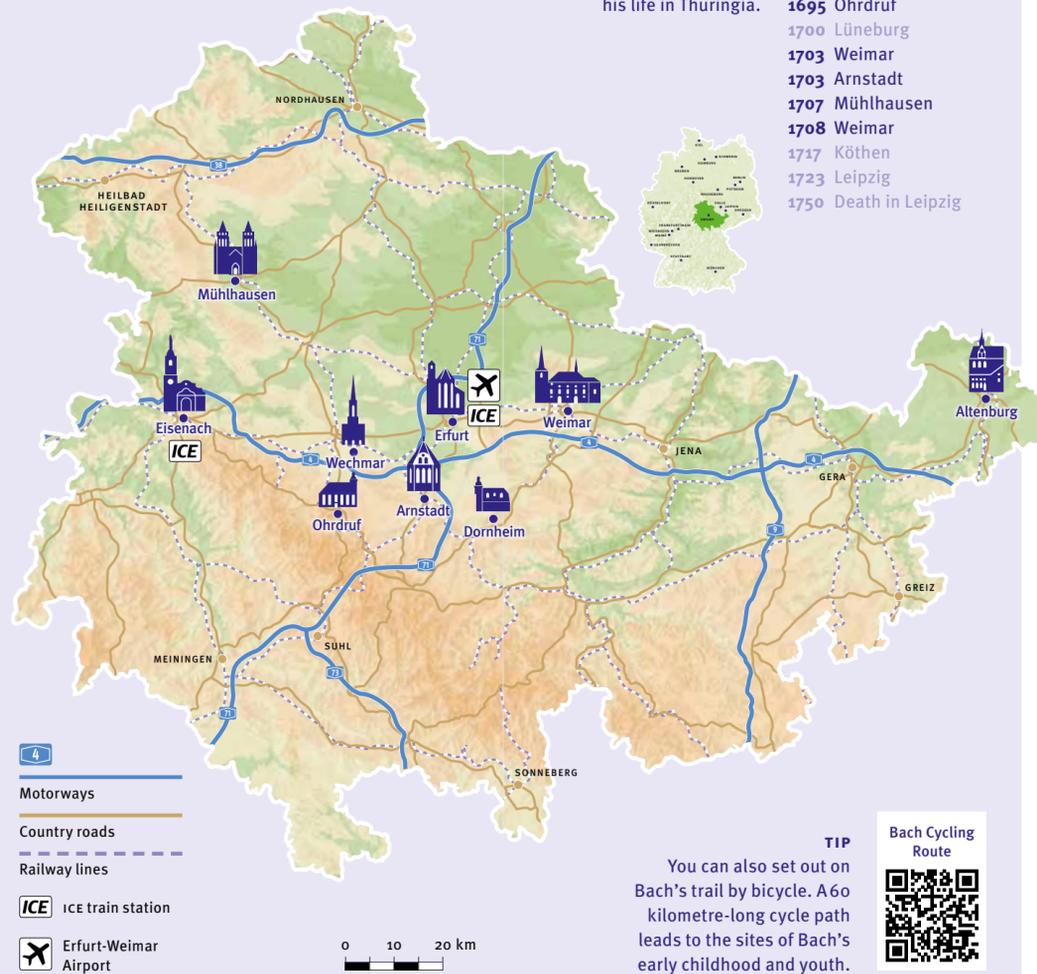
WWW.BACHBIENNALEWEIMAR.DE



Bach's Thuringia

Johann Sebastian Bach spent half of his life in Thuringia.

PLACES
 1685 Birth in Eisenach
 1695 Ohrdruf
 1700 Lüneburg
 1703 Weimar
 1703 Arnstadt
 1707 Mühlhausen
 1708 Weimar
 1717 Köthen
 1723 Leipzig
 1750 Death in Leipzig



TIP
 You can also set out on Bach's trail by bicycle. A 60 kilometre-long cycle path leads to the sites of Bach's early childhood and youth.



JANUARY

APRIL/MAY
 Thuringia Bach Festival

JUNE/JULY
 Thüringer Orgelsommer

DECEMBER

MARCH
 Bach-Festival-Arnstadt

JUNE
 Bachtage Ohrdruf

JULY
 Bach Biennale Weimar

OCTOBER
 Eisenach Bach Festival

Thüringer Orgelsommer

With around 2,000 instruments, Thuringia possesses a wealth of extraordinary organs. Renowned musicians make them come to life—and surprise their audiences with special orchestration and programmes. The festival is a journey of discovery through the fascinating sound-world of the "queen of instruments" in which Bach of course occupies a place of honour.

WWW.ORGELSOMMER.DE

Thuringia Bach Festival

Thuringia's biggest music festival attracts around 20,000 Bach-lovers from all over the world to the authentic sites of Bach's life and work. The festival features internationally renowned soloists and ensembles as well as young artists. Cross-genre events in clubs, galleries and factory halls show that Bach continues to inspire artists today.

WWW.THUERINGER-BACHWOCHEN.DE



Eisenach Bach Festival

The visitors to the Eisenach Bach Festival experience cantata services, orchestra, chamber music, and organ concerts surrounding Reformation Day on 31 October. Lectures, guided tours of the town, and guided coach trips are also included in the programme.

WWW.BACHFEST-EISENACH.DE

Discover Bach in Thuringia

Thuringia is the home of one of the greatest geniuses in European music history, Johann Sebastian Bach. Many regard his music as heavenly, but his life was in fact quite difficult. At the age of ten, he became a complete orphan, as a young conductor he was truculent, obstinate and capricious, as a husband and father he was loving and full of zest for life—and yet in the course of his life he had to bury not only his beloved first wife, but also nine of his children. Bach spent 32 years, almost half of his life, in Thuringia, the state in which almost all of his relatives lived. Here you can discover the places where he lived and worked, authentic sites and numerous, sometimes highly renowned festivals. *When are you coming?*

EXPERIENCE SPACES
 This symbol denotes a place with a multimedia experience

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