

Title: Eisleben

Eisleben is a town in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany. It is famous as the hometown of Martin Luther, hence its official name is Lutherstadt Eisleben.

Eisleben was first mentioned in 994 as a market called Islebia and in 1180 as a town. It belonged to the counts of Mansfeld until it passed to Saxony in 1780. It was assigned to Prussia in 1815. Eisleben is divided into old and new towns (Altstadt and Neustadt); the latter of which was created for Eisleben's miners in the 14th century.

As of 2005, Eisleben has a population of 24,552. It lies midway along the rail line from Berga-Kelbra to Halle.

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben on November 10, 1483. His father, Hans, was a miner like many of Eisleben's citizens. Luther's family moved to Mansfeld when he was only a year old and he lived in Wittenberg most of his life, but by chance he was in Eisleben when he preached his last sermons and died (1546).

Eisleben was a pioneer of "heritage tourism" - it took steps to preserve its Luther memorials as far back as 1689.

Together with the Luther sites in Wittenberg, the "Birth House" and "Death House" of Martin Luther in Eisleben were designated a World Heritage Site in 1997. Also in Eisleben is the St. Peter and Paul Church, where Luther was baptized (the original font survives) and St. Andreas Church, where he preached his last sermons.

Eisleben was the capital of the district Mansfelder Land and is the seat of the Verwaltungsgemeinschaft ("collective municipality") Lutherstadt Eisleben.

Title: Wittenberg

Wittenberg, officially Lutherstadt Wittenberg, is a town in Germany in the Bundesland Saxony-Anhalt, at the Elbe River.

The importance of Wittenberg historically was due to its seat as the Elector of Saxony, a dignity held by the dukes of Saxe-Wittenberg and also to its close connection with Martin Luther and the dawn of the Reformation; several of its buildings are associated with the events of this time. Part of the Augustinian monastery in which Luther dwelt, first as a monk and later as owner with his wife and family, is preserved and considered to be the world's premier museum dedicated to Luther. A settlement is mentioned first in 1180 as a small village founded by Flemish colonists. In 1293 the settlement was granted a town charter. Wittenberg soon developed into an important trade center during the following centuries due to its location. The city became an important regional political and cultural center at the end of the 15th century, when Friedrich III the Wise, Elector of Saxony took up residence in Wittenberg. Several parts of the city were extended in those days: the second bridge over the Elbe river was built from 1486 to 1490 and the Castle Church was built from 1490 to 1499. The palace was rebuilt the same time.

It was the capital of the little duchy of Saxe-Wittenberg, the rulers of which afterwards became electors of Saxony, and it continued to be a Saxon residence under the Ernestine electors. In 1502 the University of Wittenberg was founded and gave a home to many important thinkers, among them Martin Luther (Professor of Theology from 1508) and Philipp Melanchthon (Professor of Greek from 1518). Shakespeare's character, Prince Hamlet, was a student at University of Wittenberg. On October 31, 1517, Luther nailed his 95 theses against the selling of indulgences at the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, marking the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in Germany. The Anabaptist movement had one of its earliest homes in Wittenberg, when the Zwickau prophets moved there in late 1521, only to be suppressed by Luther when he returned from the Wartburg in spring 1522. The Capitulation of Wittenberg (1547) is the name given to the treaty by which John Frederick the Magnanimous was compelled to resign the electoral dignity and most of his territory to the Albertine branch of the Saxon family.

Wittenberg is home to numerous important historical artifacts, as well as portraits and other paintings by the Cranachs. All Saints' Church, the Schlosskirche ("castle church"), to the doors of which Luther is said to have nailed his famous 95 theses in 1517, dates from 1439–1499. It was seriously damaged by fire in 1760 during a bombardment by the French during the Seven Years' War, was practically rebuilt, and was later (1885–1892) restored. The wooden doors, burnt in 1760, were replaced in 1858 by bronze doors, bearing the Latin text of the theses. Inside the church are the tombs of Luther and Philipp Melanchthon, and of the electors Frederick the Wise (by Peter Vischer, 1527) and John the Constant (by Hans Vischer), and portraits of the reformers by Lucas Cranach the Younger. St. Mary's Church, the parish church in which Luther often preached, was built in the 14th century, but has been much altered since Luther's time. It contains a magnificent painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder, representing the Lord's Supper (with the faces of Luther and other reformers), Baptism and Confession, also a font by Hermann Vischer the Elder (1457). In addition, there are numerous historic paintings in the church. The ancient electoral palace is another of the buildings that suffered severely in 1760; it now contains archives. There are also Melanchthon's house and the house of Lucas Cranach the elder (1472–1553), who was mayor of Wittenberg. Statues of Luther (by Schadow), Melanchthon and Bugenhagen embellish the town. The spot outside the Elster Gate where Luther publicly burned the papal bull in 1520 is marked by an oak tree.

Source: -- Wikipedia [<http://www.wikipedia.org>]