



Almost 100 years since Thuringian's last monarchs abdicated, a cultural historic state exhibition will present that glorious and fascinating dynasty of rulers who shaped and influenced the history of Thuringia, Germany and Europe for over 400 years – the Ernestines.

The exhibition "The Ernestines. A Dynasty Shapes Europe" will take place from 24 April to 28 August 2016 on a total of 4,000 m² of exhibition space at the former residences of Weimar and Gotha. It will present the Ernestines as a Protestant dynasty which presided over the fate of its lands between the Reformation and the Revolution and influenced their destiny for years to come. Members of the Ernestine line are still to be found in several royal dynasties in Europe, for example in Belgium and Great Britain. The Thuringian state exhibition wishes to generate appreciation of this practically forgotten dynasty which had once been so powerful. Staged at the original sites of Ernestine activity, the exhibition will vividly portray political, courtly and cultural life, displays of splendour from the late Middle Ages to the Baroque era, and the cultural and scientific achievements of the 18th and 19th century under the houses of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg and Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, and other lines such as Saxe-Meiningen and Saxe-Hildburghausen. Renowned works from over 400 years of Thuringian and European cultural history await you at the Neues Museum and City Castle in Weimar and the Ducal Museum and Friedenstein Castle in Gotha.



City Castle Weimar



Friedenstein Castle Gotha



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WEIMAR

The exhibition in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of "Classical Weimar" will highlight the thematic areas of "Empire and Nation", "Faith" and "Science". The century-long rivalry between the Ernestines and Habsburgers and the often tense relationship between the Ernestine princes and the Catholic emperor were rooted in a conflict which began in the 16th century between Prince Elector John Frederick I and Charles V. Tireless in their pursuit to expand their influence in the "Empire and Nation", the Ernestines regarded themselves as defenders of "German liberty", safeguarding the sovereignty of the imperial princes from centralised imperial rule. During the Thirty Years' War, the Ernestine dukes led the fight for the Protestant cause. Precariously situated between the Great Powers of Prussia and Austria, they oversaw the political fortune of their lands within the Empire and Europe well into the 19th century.

The City Castle plays a central role in the section titled "Faith"; the castle chapel is closely associated with Martin Luther's sermons. Luther was a frequent and avid visitor of the town on the Ilm River. The Saxon prince electors often resided at the castle and did much to disseminate the new principles of Protestantism. While residing in Weimar, the Ernestines rebuilt the Wartburg as a German national monument and symbol of their role as guardians of Protestantism.

The third section presented in Weimar will portray the Ernestines as patrons of "Science". Starting in the early 16th century, the Ernestine rulers promoted the study of theology and nature, advanced the development of their lands, established universities and continually expanded the existing knowledge resources, including the "Bibliotheca Electoralis" in Jena and the world-famous library in Weimar, now named after Duchess Anna Amalia.

- 1 Lucas Cranach the Elder (Painter's shop), Frederick III elector of Saxony, called the Wise, 1532
- 2 Johann Georg Ziesenis, Carl August, Hereditary Prince of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, 1769
- 3 Hans W. Schmidt, Grand Duke Carl Alexander in the iron foundry, 1889
- 4 Lucas Cranach the Elder, Martin Luther as "Junker Jörg", around 1521/1522
- 5 Unknown Artist, Nautilus, 17th century
- 6 Erhard Weigel, Celestial Globe, 1699



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THE ERNESTINES A DYNASTY SHAPES EUROPE

Thuringian
State Exhibition
Gotha | Weimar
24. Apr – 28. Aug 2016

www.ernestiner2016.de



VISITORS INFORMATION

EXHIBITIONS & LOCATIONS

City Castle Weimar

Burgplatz 4
D-99423 Weimar
Admission: Adults € 7,50 |
Concession € 6 | Pupils* € 2,50

Neues Museum Weimar

Weimarplatz 5
D-99423 Weimar
Admission: Adults € 5,50 € |
Concession 3,50 € |
Pupils* € 1,50

Friedenstein Castle Gotha

Parkallee 15
D-99867 Gotha
Admission: Adults € 10 |
Concession* € 3,50

Ducal Museum Gotha

Parkallee 15
D-99867 Gotha
Admission: Adults € 5 |
Concession* € 3,50

COMBINED TICKET

Adults € 16 | Concession* € 12 |
Pupils* € 5

*Free Admission to children under 16.

OPENING HOURS OF THE EXHIBITIONS

Tue – Sun | 10 am – 6 pm

MORE INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS

Tourist Information Office
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- 1 Family Reunion at the princely wedding in Coburg, 1894
 - 2 J. F. Löber, Theater scene with Frederick III and Luise Dorothea of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg, around 1751
 - 3 Alexander Melville, Queen Victoria of Great Britain and Ireland, around 1845
 - 4 Flemish painter, John Frederick I of Saxony, called the Magnanimous, playing chess, 16th century
 - 5 Wenzel Jamnitzer, Ernestine Welcome Cup, around 1541
- © Foundation Frieden-stein Castle Gotha



GOTHA

As with any powerful and noble dynasty, the concerns of "Territory", "Family" and the "Arts" were enormously important to the Ernestines. These thematic areas are the focus of the state exhibition in Gotha. In the section "The Ernestines and the Territory" the exhibition examines the conflict that territorial divisions presented to national unity, the consequences of which are still evident in central Germany and present-day Thuringia. After the loss of electoral dignity in 1547 the Ernestine duchies were reduced to the central German-speaking region. To make matters worse, the dynasty had splintered into ten side lines at one point. However, this offered fertile ground for diversity. Each line attempted to underpin their sovereignty by establishing new residences. Throughout the land, the dukes built magnificent castles surrounded by spacious gardens and parks. Many of them still exist and hint at the incredible wealth of their former rulers. Friedenstein Castle in Gotha, one of the most significant artistic and cultural historic sites in Thuringia, is the largest early Baroque castle in Germany. Built following the establishment of the

Saxe-Gotha duchy in the mid-17th century, its architecture, extensive art collections and original furnishings and opulent interior design of the rooms and halls continue to impress today's visitors.

"The Ernestines and the Family" focuses on the meticulously conducted matrimonial policies of the dynasty which had established relations to royal houses throughout Europe in the 19th century. Their descendants continue to rule in Europe till nowadays, such as Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain.

The Ernestines were ardent supporters of art and culture. The individual courts were in close contact with one another and intensively consulted on artistic matters far beyond state borders. The section "The Ernestines and the Arts" focuses on the cultural development in the country under the influence of this dynasty. The exhibition will extensively highlight the rich theatre culture, the establishment of important museum collections and the contacts the Ernestines established with painters, composers and sculptors. One the most prominent examples of the Ernestines' close relationship with the

arts is the Ekhof Theatre at Friedenstein Castle, the oldest Baroque-period castle theatre in the world with original, functioning stage machinery dating back to the 17th century.

GOTHA AND WEIMAR AS A PERFECT BACKDROP

Gotha and Weimar provide a perfect backdrop for the Thuringian state exhibition. There is no better place than these two historic sites to present the history of this dynasty and its political and cultural impact which continues to be felt today. Featuring multimedia presentation concepts, renowned artworks and extraordinary objects from all areas of aristocratic life, the Thuringian state exhibition 2016 will cast new light on an almost forgotten chapter of history at authentic, original locations.