Leipzig

A World-Class City of Music

Experience the fascinating power of music
Leipzig – where music calls the tune

In Leipzig you can feel the fascinating power of music everywhere – in the streets and squares, in churches, concert halls and in the many authentic places where famous composers and musicians lived and worked. A long-standing tradition: over 500 composers have lived here over the centuries including the greatest names in music history – Johann Sebastian Bach, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and the married couple Clara and Robert Schumann, as well as Richard Wagner, Edvard Grieg, Albert Lortzing, Gustav Mahler and Hanns Eisler.

Music comes to life
The rich musical heritage also includes the Gewandhausorchester and the world-renowned St. Thomas Boys Choir, which can look back on over 800 years of history. Leipzig Opera, which has always sought to preserve Wagner’s heritage, is the third oldest civic venue for musical theatre in Europe. In the capital of music, outstanding ensembles and soloists delight audiences at concerts, ballets, the Summer Organ Festival and the world-famous Leipzig Bach Festival.

Music festivals that hit a high note
Under the headline “BACH – We Are Family”, Leipzig will invite the large, sprawling family of Bach societies and choirs from all over the world to celebrate the life and work of Johann Sebastian Bach during the Bachfest in 2020. From that year onwards, the man responsible for rediscovering Bach, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, will himself be honoured with a festival dedicated to his legacy. And, of course, there are numerous other musical highlights to mark on your calendar, too: the Mahler Festival hosted by the Gewandhausorchester in May 2021 and the WAGNER 22 Opera Festival in June/July 2022.

World-famous historic organs
Music lovers will also find a host of delights to discover on a trip to the Leipzig Region, where many of the little towns are home to prime examples of the art of organ building. Natural scenery and castles transform into impressive stages for the musical highlights of the BurgenLandKlänge festival. Visit Leipzig and experience for yourself the musical variety of the city and the region.

Further information about Leipzig, City of Music, is available online at: www.leipzig.travel/music
The Gewandhausorchester – a world-renowned ensemble

Founded by a group of sixteen merchants in 1743 as the “Großes Concert”, the Gewandhausorchester set the stage for Leipzig to become one of the world’s most important centres for music. The name “Gewandhaus” refers to the trade fair building used by the fabric merchants where its first concert was held. Today, the orchestra is based at the New Gewandhaus on Augustus-platz. It is home to two concert halls with excellent acoustics.

A world-class orchestra
The Gewandhausorchester is one of Leipzig’s most famous cultural institutions, astounding around half a million visitors each year. Artists including Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Arthur Nikisch, Kurt Masur and Riccardo Chailly have all held the position of “Gewandhauskapellmeister”, adding their own personal touches to its distinct culture. Andris Nelsons took over as music director of the Gewandhausorchester in 2018. He and his orchestra have something special planned for the Mahler Festival in 2021: together with nine leading international orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic and the London Symphony Orchestra, they will put a spotlight on Gustav Mahler’s symphonies for twelve days, from 13 to 24 May. The Gewandhausorchester has accompanied the Leipzig Opera for over 200 years. It also supports the St. Thomas Boys Choir during the motets at St. Thomas Church every week. It is one of the key institutions behind Leipzig’s international reputation as a city of music.
Leipzig Opera –
* a superlative artistic experience

Leipzig’s opera tradition dates back to 1693. The Opera House is the third-oldest civic music theatre stage in Europe. Its history is closely linked to the life and work of famous composers including Leipzig-born Richard Wagner, Georg Philipp Telemann, Heinrich Marschner, Albert Lortzing and Gustav Mahler.

The Leipzig Opera House on Augustusplatz opened in 1960 and is home to the opera and Leipzig ballet company. An international ensemble of soloists, the award-winning Opera Choir and the Gewandhausorchester, which traditionally accompanies the operas and ballets, guarantee musical performances of the highest quality. Led by intendant and general music director Professor Ulf Schirmer, it places a special focus on the works of Leipzig-born composer Richard Wagner. The annual Wagner Festival performed by Leipzig Opera in May is a Mecca for Wagner fans, who flock to the city to hear the complete Ring cycle. From 20 June to 14 July 2022, the next sensational event follows: all 13 Wagner operas will be staged at the WAGNER 22 Opera Festival – accompanied by the Gewandhausorchester and some remarkable singers.

Mario Schröder, ballet director and head choreographer of the young company with dancers from 23 countries, focuses on his dancers’ strong personalities and looks to create a direct dialogue with the audience. The Musical Comedy Theatre is the place to go for musicals, operettas and light opera in the Lindenau district of Leipzig.
Johann Sebastian Bach — his heirs, his followers

After stops in Arnstadt, Weimar and Köthen, in 1723 the great composer and organist of the baroque era assumed the position as choirmaster of St. Thomas Church in Leipzig, a post which he held until his death in 1750. As cantor and director of music, one of Bach’s roles was to arrange the music for services at St. Thomas Church and St. Nicholas Church. During his time in Leipzig he also composed outstanding works such as the Christmas Oratorio, the St. John Passion, the St. Matthew Passion and the Mass in B minor. Until today these compositions have not lost any of their charisma and are naturally included in the yearly repertoire of many Leipzig choirs. Bach’s legacy lives on like in no other city!

The Leipzig Bach Museum and Leipzig Bachfest

Visitors can learn all about the life and work of the great composer at the Bach Museum in Leipzig, where sound experiments and interactive features are to be found alongside precious original artefacts. Concerts in the baroque Summer Hall are always a very special experience. The highlight of every year is the renowned Leipzig Bachfest in June, hosting some 100 events in historical venues such as St. Thomas Church and the Old Town Hall. The festival’s theme for 2020 is “BACH — We Are Family” in a tribute to the global Bach family: around 40 choirs and Bach societies from six continents will gather in Leipzig from 11 to 21 June — in the spirit of a Bach family reunion.
St. Thomas Boys Choir
(Thomanerchor)

Dating back over 800 years, St. Thomas Boys Choir is Leipzig’s oldest cultural asset. The boys choir has been in existence since 1212, when the Margrave of Meissen founded the St. Thomas Augustinian Canons (Augustiner-Chorherrenstift zu St. Thomas). Although much has changed over the centuries, the choirboys of St. Thomas still live in the boarding school and attend St. Thomas School. With the choirmaster of St. Thomas, Gotthold Schwarz, the young choristers are dedicated to preserving the heritage of sacred music and, of course, of Bach’s legacy. They are not only to be heard here in Leipzig; they also carry the sound of the city all over the world on their regular concert tours.

St. Thomas Church

The St. Thomas Boys Choir can be heard three times a week in Bach’s former workplace, mainly performing motets and Bach cantatas. And where else, indeed, could one experience the great composer so intimately? His final resting place is in the sanctuary of the 800-year-old late Gothic church. In front of the church, in the St. Thomas Churchyard (Thomaskirchhof), stands the Bach Monument, erected in his honour by Leipzig sculptor Carl Seffner in 1908, and a popular snapshot for music lovers from all over the world.

St. Nicholas Church

Bach began his tenure in Leipzig with a cantata performed during a service at the oldest church in the city on 30 May 1723. Nowadays, the Leipzig Bach Choir celebrates the composer with performances of his works in church services and concerts. The 19th-century Ladegast organ in St. Nicholas Church is the biggest church organ in Saxony, and can be heard in the regular “Orgelmusiken” organ music concerts hosted by the church every Saturday.
Schumann House
Robert Schumann and Clara Wieck may be Leipzig’s most famous lovers from the 19th century. After their wedding on 12 September 1840 in Schönfeld near Leipzig, the celebrated female pianist and the still unknown composer moved to Inselstraße. Among other things, the *Spring Symphony* and the first movement of the Piano Concerto in A Minor were created during this period. The permanent exhibition at the Schumann House has been redesigned to commemorate Clara Schumann’s 200th birthday (open from 14 September 2019): entitled “Experiment in an artists’ marriage”, it is the first exhibition to explore the life of an artist couple – a life together between concert tours, intense work and family duties. The Schumann House is also a venue for concerts and readings as well as the annual Schumann Festival Weeks.

Mendelssohn House
Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy was a major influence on European musical history – and he in turn was influenced by his experience of Leipzig. Under his musical direction, the Gewandhausorchester became a first-class orchestra. Moreover, Mendelssohn is renowned for his rediscovery of Bach. The performance of the St. Matthew Passion under his musical direction in 1829 initiated the “Bach Renaissance”. He is also credited for the foundation of the “ Conservatory of Music” in 1843, Germany’s oldest music academy. Famous contemporaries such as Schumann and Wagner were frequent visitors to his home on Goldschmidtstraße. Today, it is home to the world’s only Mendelssohn museum. As well as taking a look around the rooms in the Mendelssohn House, visitors can also explore interactive exhibits about the composer’s life and works. And if you’ve always wanted to conduct a symphony orchestra, you can now make your dream a reality in the world’s only “Effektorium”. It’s almost like being in the Gewandhaus! And, don’t forget to pencil it in: as of 2020, the Mendelssohn House and the Gewandhaus will be hosting a series of annual events, called the Mendelssohn Days, taking place around 4 November, the day of the composer’s death.
Richard Wagner, Leipzig born and bred
Richard Wagner was born here on 22 May 1813. As a youth he attended St. Nicholas School, and later St. Thomas School. At the age of 16, in his home town, he decided to devote his life to music. In 1831 he enrolled as a music student at the University of Leipzig, and also took instruction in composition with the St. Thomas choirmaster, Christian Theodor Weinlig. His first works were performed in the Gewandhaus, such as his Symphony in C Major in 1833. To celebrate the 200th anniversary of his birth in May 2013, Leipzig finally unveiled its Wagner Memorial, created by sculptor Stephan Balkenhol. The Old St. Nicholas School has also opened a permanent exhibition entitled “The Young Richard Wagner, 1813 to 1834”, which highlights Wagner’s early life and musical education.

Edvard Grieg Memorial Place
Throughout his life, Edvard Grieg retained close ties to Leipzig’s music academy, the “Konservatorium”, first enrolling there in 1858. His encounters with Brahms and Tchaikovsky in Leipzig inspired him for decades, and it was here that Grieg wrote his first compositions. His publisher, C. F. Peters, lived in Talstraße 10, where Grieg stayed regularly and where today an exhibition commemorates the composer’s work.

GRASSI Museum of Musical Instruments
It holds one of the biggest collections of its kind – the Museum of Musical Instruments of the University of Leipzig. Its exhibitions offer insights into the magic of musical instruments and instrument making since the 16th century. Its 5,000 or so precious exhibits include the oldest known clavichord (1543) and the world’s oldest surviving original pianoforte (1726). In the museum’s sound lab you can try out some of the instruments yourself.
Leipzig has a concentration of authentic famous composers’ homes and workplaces that is unique in the world – a sparkling musical past that laid the foundations for a vibrant musical present. The aim of Leipzig’s Music Trail initiative is to make this treasure visible and tangible. The Leipzig Music Trail (Notenspur) is a signposted route connecting the most important original sites of relevance to musical history in the city centre. Curved stainless-steel shapes set
in the ground mark the “ribbon” that winds its way through the city centre and highlights the musical tradition within the cityscape.

The innovative audio guide system explores Leipzig’s musical history on a five-kilometre route and features numerous musical extracts from pieces by the great composers who lived and worked here. In addition to the information points, there are also mini audio plays along the way – designed especially for younger visitors at 13 stations – that offer fascinating insights into the everyday lives of Bach, Wagner and many others. The Notenspur app is an informative companion as you make your way along the Leipzig Music Trail. In 2018, nine of Leipzig’s musical heritage sites and the Music Trail were awarded the European Heritage label.
UNESCO has listed Germany’s organ music and organ building as intangible cultural heritage. There are approximately 2,500 organs in Saxony alone, including 150 historic instruments. Great organ builders such as Silbermann, Hildebrandt, Kreutzbach and Ladegast have left behind instruments that still set the standards today and inspire organ lovers the world over. The little town of Rötha to the south of Leipzig is home to two famous Silbermann organs from the baroque period. The two-manual organ at the St. George Church was made by Gottfried Silbermann and his apprentice Zacharias Hildebrandt in 1721. Just one year later, the Marienkirche in Rötha also received one of these precious instruments. None other than Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy sang the praises of the two organs when he visited Rötha in 1840.

Restoring former glory
Thanks to extensive restoration, the majority of organs in the Leipzig Region has been brought back to their original state. Music lovers can once again experience their unique, beautiful sound. A number of excursions and church tours show the history and tradition of organ building in the Leipzig Region.

www.leipzig.travel/organs
BurgenLandKlänge festival

BurgenLandKlänge festival is an events series that combines medieval music, classical concerts and modern pop, jazz & blues at spellbinding locations across the Saxon Land of Castles. From imposing castles to magnificent palaces, from venerable churches to old monastery ruins – the venues’ historic walls make for a truly spectacular backdrop for inspiring musical performances. Unique stages like the “Butterfly” in Bad Lausick’s spa gardens or Saxony’s only floating stage on the Kriebstein reservoir offer an equally beautiful natural setting. In the Leipzig Region monumental venues such as the Kreuzfelsen fairground in Waldheim and the former quarry on the Rochlitzer Berg mountain turn performances with fire and light shows into unforgettable experiences.

www.leipzig.travel/burgenlandklaenge
Event highlights (Selected)

Leipzig

31 August – 1 September 2019
1 Grand Concert: Opening of the 239th Gewandhaus Season
Leipzig Gewandhaus
www.gewandhausorchester.de

12 – 29 September 2019
1 Schumann Festival Weeks to celebrate Clara Schumann’s 200th birthday
Schumann House, Leipzig
www.schumann-haus.de

5 October 2019
1 Opera premiere: Tristan and Isolde – Richard Wagner
Leipzig Opera
www.oper-leipzig.de

10 – 19 October 2019
1 Leipzig Jazz Days
Various locations
www.leipziger-jazztage.de

31 October – 3 November 2019
1 Reformation Organ Festival
Leipzig Gewandhaus
www.gewandhausorchester.de

4 November 2019
1 Concert marking the 172nd anniversary of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy’s death
Paulinum/University Church St. Pauli
www.uni-leipzig.de/+universitaetsmusik

13 – 15 December 2019
1 The Christmas Oratorio (BWV 248) – J. S. Bach, with the St. Thomas Boys Choir and the Gewandhausorchester
St. Thomas Church
www.gewandhausorchester.de

21 – 22 December 2019
1 The Christmas Oratorio (BWV 248) – J. S. Bach, with the Bach Choir and the Leipzig Festival Orchestra
St. Nicholas Church
www.nikolaikirche.de

29 – 31 December 2019
1 Grand Concert for the New Year
Leipzig Gewandhaus
www.gewandhausorchester.de

31 December 2019
1 New Year’s Eve Gala
Leipzig Opera
www.oper-leipzig.de

9 – 10 April 2020
1 St. Matthew Passion (BWV 244) – J. S. Bach, with the St. Thomas Boys Choir and the Gewandhausorchester
St. Thomas Church
www.gewandhausorchester.de

28 April – 1 May 2020
1 Boston Week
Leipzig Gewandhaus
www.gewandhausorchester.de

30 April – 3 May 2020
1 German Choir Festival
Various locations
www.deutscher-chorverband.de

1 – 9 May 2020
1 a cappella – International Festival of Vocal Music
Various locations
www.a-cappella-festival.de
Andris Nelsons at the Klassik airleben open-air concert in Rosental Park

11 – 21 June 2020

Leipzig Bachfest 2020
“BACH – We Are Family”
Bach Museum, Leipzig and Leipzig Region
www.bachfestleipzig.de

10 – 12 July 2020

Richard Strauss Weekend
Leipzig Opera
www.oper-leipzig.de

26 – 27 June 2020

Grand Concert: Klassik airleben
Open-air stage in Rosental Park
www.gewandhausorchester.de

Regular music events in Leipzig

Fridays 6 pm
Motets with St. Thomas Boys Choir*
St. Thomas Church
www.thomaskirche.org

Saturdays 3 pm
Motet and Cantata by J. S. Bach with St. Thomas Boys Choir and the Gewandhausorchester*
St. Thomas Church
www.thomaskirche.org

July – August, Mondays 7 pm
Monday Concert at the Bach Monument
in front of St. Thomas Church
www.bachkonzerte.eu

Leipzig Region

29 March 2020
Anklang Concert, The Fascinating Sounds of the Organ
St. Hubertus Castle Church, Wermsdorf
www.faszination-orgel.de

25 June – 28 June 2020
New Lakeland Music Festival
Zwenkau harbour
www.neuseenlandmusikfest.de

28 June – 5 July 2020
Church Music Festival
Torgau
www.tic-torgau.de

June – September 2020
Culture festival on the Biedermeier beach
Hayna/Lake Schladitz
www.biedermeierstrand.de

From January 2020: Fridays 12:30 pm
Lunchtime concert
Museum of City History
www.stadtgeschichtliches-museum-leipzig.de

Sundays 11 am
Matinée concert
Mendelssohn House
www.mendelssohn-stiftung.de

* except during school holidays and concert tours

Further information at
www.leipzig.travel/events
Travel Offer

Leipzig – City of Music

- Three nights with breakfast in one of our partner hotels (www.leipzig.travel/partnerhotels)
- Public guided sightseeing tour (1 hour on foot and 1.5 hours by bus)
- Entrance ticket to the Bach Museum, Mendelssohn House and the GRASSI Museum of Musical Instruments
- A musical surprise (CD) for each room
- Tourist street map in each room

Offer valid: year round, subject to availability
Museums are closed on Mondays
Registration deadline: four weeks prior to arrival
2020 prices are subject to change

We are happy to offer group rates and can arrange tickets for a visit to the Gewandhaus or to the Opera.
Other offers are available at www.leipzig.travel/packages

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from €199

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