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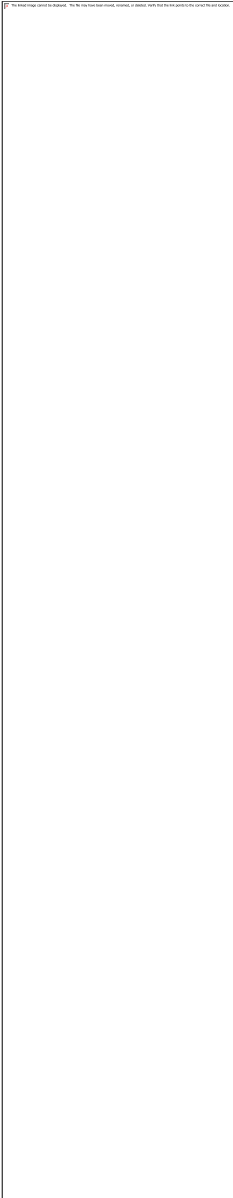
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| **Weimar: A city of two poets**



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Features - October 09, 2005

**Wahyuni Kamah**, Contributor, Weimar, Germany

"It's beautiful!" Jintana, my journalist friend from Thailand, exclaimed joyfully after taking a brisk walk around the Old City of Weimar one clear morning. I had no doubt what she said was true. Weimar's cobblestone narrow streets with small shops, restaurants in half-timbered houses and sidewalk cafes had attracted me as soon as I arrived in Thuringia, a state geographically situated in the heart of Germany.

From Hotel Anna Amalia, where we stayed, the Old City is walking distance away. In the morning, restaurants and sidewalk cafes were open for breakfast while shop attendants were just starting to unlock their doors and windows. It was a working day, but there was no sense of urgency in its beginning.

Weimar's roads are clean and everywhere looks neat. The two to three-floor buildings that I passed had been restored. They had been painted in bright colors making the Old City look lovely. I soon forgot that Weimar used to be under the rule of the communist German Democratic Republic since there was barely a gray concrete building - familiar architecture in the 1950s and the 1960s. Indeed, after the reunification, many buildings in the former East German cities were restored and reconstructed, including in Weimar.

On Theaterplatz, in front of the German National Theater building, there is a famous monument of Goethe and Schiller, two great German poets. This is the place where tourists like to pose for pictures. For a newcomer, Weimar seems to be about Goethe and Schiller, especially in 2005 as the 200th anniversary of Schiller's death is commemorated.

Goethe and Schiller were distinguished citizens of Weimar. Schiller moved to the city in 1799 with his family and his house in Schillerstrasse has become the Schiller Museum. Goethe had two houses in Weimar, the one in Frauenplan and the other a garden house on a 150-acre landscaped park by the Ilm River. Weimar is the city where the two poets spent much of their lifetimes.

In 1999, UNESCO honored this city of 62,000 people as the European City of Culture. This came as no surprise as Weimar has been a hub of European culture and art since the 17th century. Composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) worked for 10 years in Weimar. The city was also frequented by pianist and composer Franz Liszt, though he had homes in Budapest and Rome. Liszt was invited by Duke Carl August to make Weimar "the Athens of the North". German philosopher Nietzsche moved to Weimar in old age. His collected manuscripts can now be seen in the Nietzsche Archives. This is the

city where reformist Martin Luther preached, a place where Goethe, Schiller and German philosopher Herder became good friends and debated. And most importantly, it is the birthplace of German democracy. In 1919, the first democratic and republican parliament assembled in Weimar. The democratic government that lasted until 1933 was known as the Weimar Republic. However, Weimar also faced the dark side of German history when Hitler governed Germany and a concentration camp, Buchenwald, was built over the hill from Weimar.

Today, the cultural life and art of Weimar are celebrated in various events attracting millions of tourists to come to the town every year. In summer time, there is a guided tour at night led by a man wearing traditional German dress. Visitors can also take part in a romantic city tour by open horse cart where the coach is the guide. Every October, there is the Zwiebelmarkt (onion market), which dates back to 1653. It is not just onions that are sold at the three-day fair but fresh vegetables, fruits and spices. It is said that Goethe decorated his house with a string of garlic in the belief that it was good for the health. Some tourists visiting Weimar bring garlic home as a souvenir.

Since Weimar is small exploring it on foot provides more possibilities to experience its Old City and sense its cultural life. Its citizens are familiar with tourists. Although they prefer to speak German, they can also speak English.

The shopping district offers products typical to Weimar or Germany such as Weimar porcelain, ginkgo leaf jewelry, handmade wooden souvenirs for Christmas from Seiffen as well as souvenirs bearing the picture of Goethe or Schiller.

For art lovers, the list of places to visit in Weimar will surely include the Schlossmuseum that houses collections of Russian icons, medieval altarpieces and German paintings, or Castle Belvedere, Castle Ettersburg, and Castle Tiefurt, the ducal residences that are situated on the edge of Weimar

-Weimar is accessible by road and rail. It is 300 km from Frankfurt am Main and about 2.5 hours by train from Berlin.

-There are a number of city tours and sightseeing tours conducted by the Tourism Office though exploring the Old City alone is possible.

-There are many options for accommodation, just contact the Tourism Office on Markplatz or e-mail [tourist-info@weimar.de](mailto:tourist-info@weimar.de)

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