



For Immediate Release

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### **Saxony Sings with Culture, History and Tradition!**

Saxony, Germany's easternmost state bordering Poland, sings with music, culture, tradition and history! As if the consecration of the Frauenkirche, the Church of Our Lady, on October 30<sup>th</sup> this year were not enough, Dresden is also preparing for its 800<sup>th</sup> birthday next year with festivals and events. And Goerlitz is in line to be named a Cultural Capital of Europe in 2010. Over 5.4 million visitors went to Saxony in 2004, and the state takes pride in preserving and keeping alive its history, culture and traditions for visitors seeking unusual festivals, traditions, craftwork and excellent music. From the famous State Art Galleries at **the Royal Castle and Zwinger Palais** in Dresden to the hundreds of museums focused on crafts and history, Saxony's history comes alive.

One year ahead of schedule, the Frauenkirche, a baroque masterpiece and a jewel of the famous Dresden skyline, has been reopened after 15 years of reconstruction. After the war, its ruins served as a memorial. As one of the most important Protestant churches in the world, the building is open once again to church-goers and visitors alike. For the magnificent view from the domed roof, known as the 'stone bell', visitors can climb the 263 stairs to witness the miraculous recovery of Dresden. Around the church, the rebuilding of the city center is in full swing, with historic facades and modern interiors.

Musically, Saxony is a center of world class music with the Gewandhaus **Orchestra and St Thomas Boys Choir** in Leipzig, the Semper Opera as well as with the **Dresden Music Festival** and Moritzburg Festival. Home once to Robert Schumann, Richard Wagner, Felix Mendelssohn, **Johann Sebastian Bach and Kurt Masur** among many other famous musicians, Saxony is a music lover's destination. Two places in the Vogtland Elster Mountains are famous for their musical instruments: Klingenthal is home to harmonicas and accordions while Markneukirchen specializes in string instruments and has a comprehensive museum with musical instruments from around the world.

Saxony's regional identities are components of the entire Saxon culture. The easternmost region of Upper Lusatia offers a variety of beautiful landscapes. The area south of Goerlitz **is** dominated by the so-called 'umgebände' houses. Their unique architecture combines a Slavonic wooden block room on the lower floor with the typical German half-timbered style on the upper floor, supported by wooden arches. Goerlitz is also famous for its 4000 treasures from the late gothic, renaissance, baroque and art nouveau periods.

The renaissance city of Torgau **near Leipzig is** the second most important Reformation site after Wittenberg. **The** medieval Bautzen **is the cultural focal point** for the small Slavonic minority of the Sorbs, well-known for their Easter celebrations. Traditions are also upheld

elsewhere in Saxony, such as in the Ore Mountains, a region well-known for its Christmas customs rooted in the mining tradition, and for its wood-carving craft, with such inventions as the nutcracker and the incense man.

This year, parts of Dresden along the Elbe River were elected as a UNESCO World heritage site. The harmonious landscape of a winding river with green pastures and vineyards and masterful architecture on the river banks and the adjoining hills can be best discovered on a ride with the oldest paddle steamer fleet in the world. Count Pückler Park in Bad Muskau was **also** declared a UNESCO World Heritage site. The park was designed by Count Hermann von Pückler, famous in his day as a Don Juan, a travel writer as well as a landscape architect. In 1945, the park was divided between Germany and Poland by the new border on the Neisse River. Now both sides have been reunited by a double bridge. So today, the visitor can once again enjoy the landscaping genius of the enigmatic Count.

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