

DRESDEN MARKETING GMBH/PHOTOWEB BY ANAJA UPMIEER



The Dresden skyline at dusk. The state capital of Saxony is one of Europe's most beautiful baroque cities with glorious palaces, parks, cathedrals, museums, and galleries.

CHRISTOPH MÜNCH

Dresden Reborn

BY BEVERLY MANN

Almost completely destroyed after World War II, Dresden's stunning landscape was transformed into a rubble, charred city accented by a heavy hue of grey. This grim picture remained this way for many years after.

However, this was not the vision that I encountered on my recent visit to Germany's treasured city. As I stood on the expansive Carola Bridge and peered across the picturesque Elbe River, Dresden's dramatic skyline appeared as an untouched painting. A poetic mélange of architectural shapes and designs decorated the river landscape with golden domes, rolling greenery, and flourishing facades.

Sometimes coined the Jewel or Florence of the Elbe River, Dresden has risen like a phoenix from the ashes. For more than 20 years, Germany's most spectacular city and state capital of Saxony has gone through a major renovation since its devastation during WWII, with many new changes and celebrations coming in 2013.

Surprisingly, this innovative city was known for many firsts: manufacturing the first porcelain in Europe, Germany's first steam engine, the invention of the single lens reflex (SLR) camera, the development of memory chips, coffee filters,

and most uplifting—the bra. Considered one of Europe's most beautiful baroque cities, Dresden appears like a peacock proudly showcasing its glorious palaces, parks, cathedrals, 44 museums, 56 galleries, all easily accessible by foot or bus. With comfortable walking shoes being a must, I visited some of the key



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historic sites via foot in the city center and beyond.

The baroque-style Zwinger Palace is just one the city's many architectural treasures. The Crown Gate (Kronentor) with its glistening dome has become a famous Dresden landmark. This venue was once used for court festivities. Its buildings house the Old Masters Gallery, an armory, a fine porcelain collection, and a

zoology museum. The Zwinger's Royal Cabinet of Mathematical and Physical Instruments, showcasing the world's finest collection of historic globes, will re-open in April after lengthy construction.

I was overwhelmed by the breadth of offerings and chose to rest my feet and enjoy the immense courtyard with its flowing fountains. I just needed to soak up the architectural grandeur of my surroundings.

Dresden is an outdoor museum. I was in awe of its reconstruction, which so brilliantly captures its past. The newly renovated Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) with its magnificent dome, the centerpiece of Dresden, is surely an eye-stopper. I felt minuscule against its immensity. This 250-year-old church, created by the city's master carpenter and architect George Bähr, represents the pinnacle of Protestant ecclesiastic architecture and is a prime example of the European baroque style. Built between 1726 and 1743, the badly damaged church became a war memorial after 1945 and now stands as a symbol of reconciliation.

While meandering amid the cobblestoned streets, I observed some of the 60 time capsules embedded into the ground that keep documents to maintain the memory of the Holocaust. This was a reminder how bold beauty and horrific hatred can exist side by side.

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The Zwinger Palace.

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