

Saxony



Saxony has everything you could want in a German state: storybook castles peering down from craggy mountaintops, cobbled marketplaces serenaded by Gothic churches, exuberantly baroque palaces, nostalgic steam trains, indigenous Sorb folk traditions, great wine and food, and friendly locals who are justifiably proud of their riches. And through it all zigzags the broad-shouldered Elbe River, in a steady eternal flow, its banks lined by a gently dramatic landscape of neatly arrayed vineyards, sun-dappled parks, villa-studded hillsides, precipitous sandstone cliffs sculpted by time and the elements, and shaggy meadows where sheep graze amid sprouting wildflowers.

It's a natural mosaic that for centuries has tugged mightily at the hearts of visionaries, artists and wanderers. Canaletto and Caspar David Friedrich captured the baroque brilliance of Dresden and the mystical beauty of Saxon Switzerland on canvas; JS Bach penned some of his most famous works in Leipzig; and the 19th-century 'musical poet' Robert Schumann grew up in Zwickau. Saxony's musical legacy is kept alive everywhere, but nowhere more so than at Dresden's Semperoper and the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, two of the world's most famous halls.

Dresden and Leipzig are the most high-profile cities, and each has its own personality. While the capital is playful, pretty and historic, bustling Leipzig has a more progressive, contemporary spirit. The latter sparked the 'peaceful revolution' of 1989, bringing down the Berlin Wall.

Reunification has brought enormous change to Saxony, which was heavily industrialised. Cities that once crouched under the weight of neglect and pollution are again sparkling and proud, their centres alive with cafés and shops, and people walking with a spring in their step. Now is a good time to immerse yourself in this multifaceted and endlessly fascinating state.

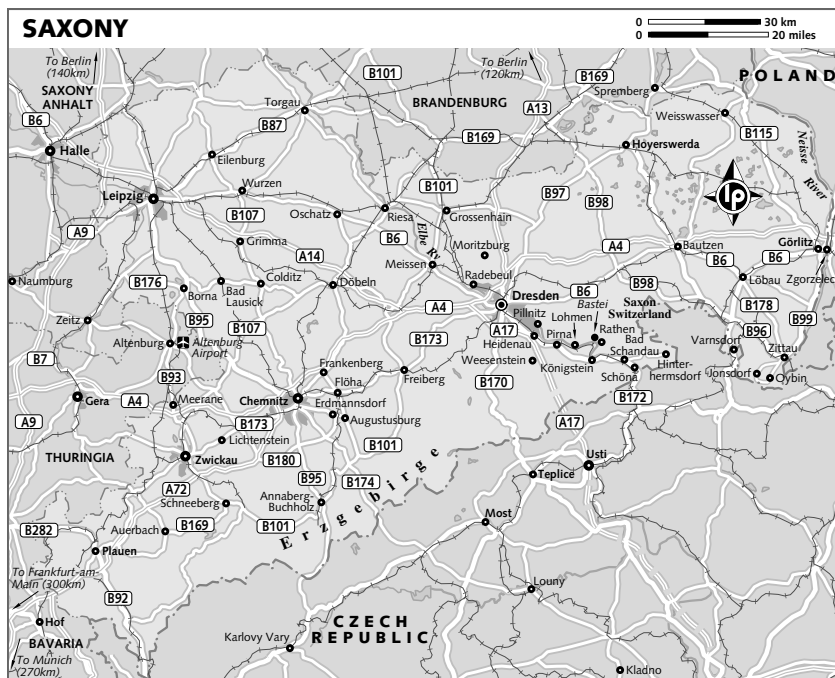
HIGHLIGHTS

- **Time-Warp** Gain an insight into the bizarre world of the GDR at museums in Leipzig (p185) and Radebeul (p179)
- **Fine Wining** Savour sparkling wine at Radebeul's Schloss Wackerbarth winery (p179)
- **Views** Stand atop the Bastei (p180) for breathtaking panoramas of Saxon Switzerland and the Elbe
- **Castles** Ramble around the massive Festung Königstein (p181) with its glorious views
- **Treasure Trove** Be dazzled by the artistry of objects at Dresden's Grünes Gewölbe (p170)



■ POPULATION: 2.58 MILLION

■ AREA: 18,413 SQ KM



Information

If you need to book a room, or just want more information about Saxony, turn to www.visit-saxony.com.

Getting Around

A serious entitlement to use public transport is the good-value **Saxony-Ticket** (€24), giving you and up to four accompanying passengers (or one or both parents or grandparents, plus all their children or grandchildren up to 14 years) unlimited train travel during the period of its validity (9am to 3am the next day). Tickets are good for 2nd-class travel throughout Saxony, as well as in Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt. As well as any regional Deutsche Bahn trains (IRE, RE, RB and S-Bahn), you can also use some private trains, including the LausitzBahn.

CENTRAL SAXONY

DRESDEN

☎ 0351 / pop 478,001

There are few city silhouettes more striking than Dresden's. The classic view from the

Elbe's northern bank takes in a playful phalanx of delicate spires, soaring towers and dominant domes belonging to palaces, churches and stately buildings. Numerous artists, most notably the Italian Canaletto, have set up their easels to capture this breathtaking panorama.

'Florence of the north', the Saxon capital was called in the 18th century, when it was a centre of artistic activity presided over by the cosmopolitan Augustus the Strong (August der Starke) and his son Augustus III. Their vision produced many of Dresden's iconic buildings, including the Zwinger, the Frauenkirche and the Hofkirche.

But the fact that these monumental edifices are even here today is really a bit of a miracle. On the night of 13 February 1945, in the waning days of WWII, an Allied firebombing campaign reduced the baroque city to a heap of flaming, toxic rubble. Exact numbers are blurred by politics and the presence of thousands of untraceable refugees, but somewhere between 25,000 and 100,000 civilians were killed as a direct result of these attacks, the strategic justification of which remains extremely debatable.

But Dresden is a survivor and there is no more potent symbol of its people's determination than the resurrected Frauenkirche. Although the city celebrated its 800th anniversary in 2006, it is also forward-looking and solidly rooted in the here and now. There's some great new architecture, a constantly evolving arts and cultural scene, and zinging pub and nightlife quarters.

Take a few days and allow yourself to be caught up in this visual and cultural feast. We promise that Dresden's world-class museums will mesmerise you, its riverside beer gardens relax you and its light-hearted, almost Mediterranean, disposition, charm you.

Orientation

The meandering Elbe River separates the Altstadt (Old Town) to the south from the Neustadt (New Town) to the north. From the Hauptbahnhof (central train station) it's just a 10-minute walk north on pedestrianised Prager Strasse, the main shopping street, to the Frauenkirche and other blockbuster sights.

The main walking bridge to the Neustadt is the Augustusbrücke, just west of the famous riverside promenade called Brühlsche Terrasse, with the Terrassenufer boat landing docks below.

Augustusbrücke segues into pedestrianised Hauptstrasse, the main commercial strip in the so-called Innere Neustadt (Inner New Town), which culminates at Albertplatz. Beyond this lies the Äussere Neustadt (Outer New Town), Dresden's main pub and bar quarter.

About half a kilometre west of Albertplatz is Dresden-Neustadt, the city's second train station (most trains stop at both). A third

station, Dresden-Mitte, is little more than a forlorn platform between the two main ones. Dresden's central bus station is next to the Hauptbahnhof.

Dresden airport is 9km north of the city centre.

Information BOOKSHOPS

Das Internationale Buch (☎ 656 460; Altmarkt 24)

Excellent selection of English books.

Der Reisebuchladen (☎ 899 6560; Louisestrasse 70b)

Travel books and maps galore.

Haus Des Buches (☎ 497 360; Dr-Külz-Ring 12; ☎)

Lots of Lonely Planet titles, plus internet access.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Dresden City-Card (per 48/72hr €19/29) Provides admission to 12 museums, discounted city tours and boats, and free public transport. Buy it at the tourist office.

State Museums Day Card (adult/concession/family €10/6/20) Good at all museums administered by the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, including the Zwinger museum and Neues Grünes Gewölbe. All State Museums sell this card.

EMERGENCY

Ambulance (☎ 112/19222)

Police (☎ 110)

INTERNET ACCESS

Joker Spielothek (☎ 288 0034; Wallstrasse 11; per hr €3; ☎ 6am-2am Mon-Sat, 8am-2am Sun)

K&E Callshop (Wiener Passage; per hr €2; ☎ 10am-10pm) In the subterranean passageway outside the Hauptbahnhof.

Spiel-In (Königsbrücker Strasse 54; per hr €2; ☎ 7am-midnight Mon-Fri, 10am-midnight Sat & Sun).

SAXON SPEAK

The Saxons speak a dialect as incomprehensible to non-Saxons as Bavarian is to outsiders. Many visitors find themselves saying 'Huh?' more often than usual. It's as if the Saxons learned German from the Scots, with their very soft pronunciation of consonants. For example, when a Saxon says 'lahip-tsch', he means Leipzig, and they pronounce 'ü' like an English short 'i' – 'bit-nershtrazze' for Büttnerstrasse.

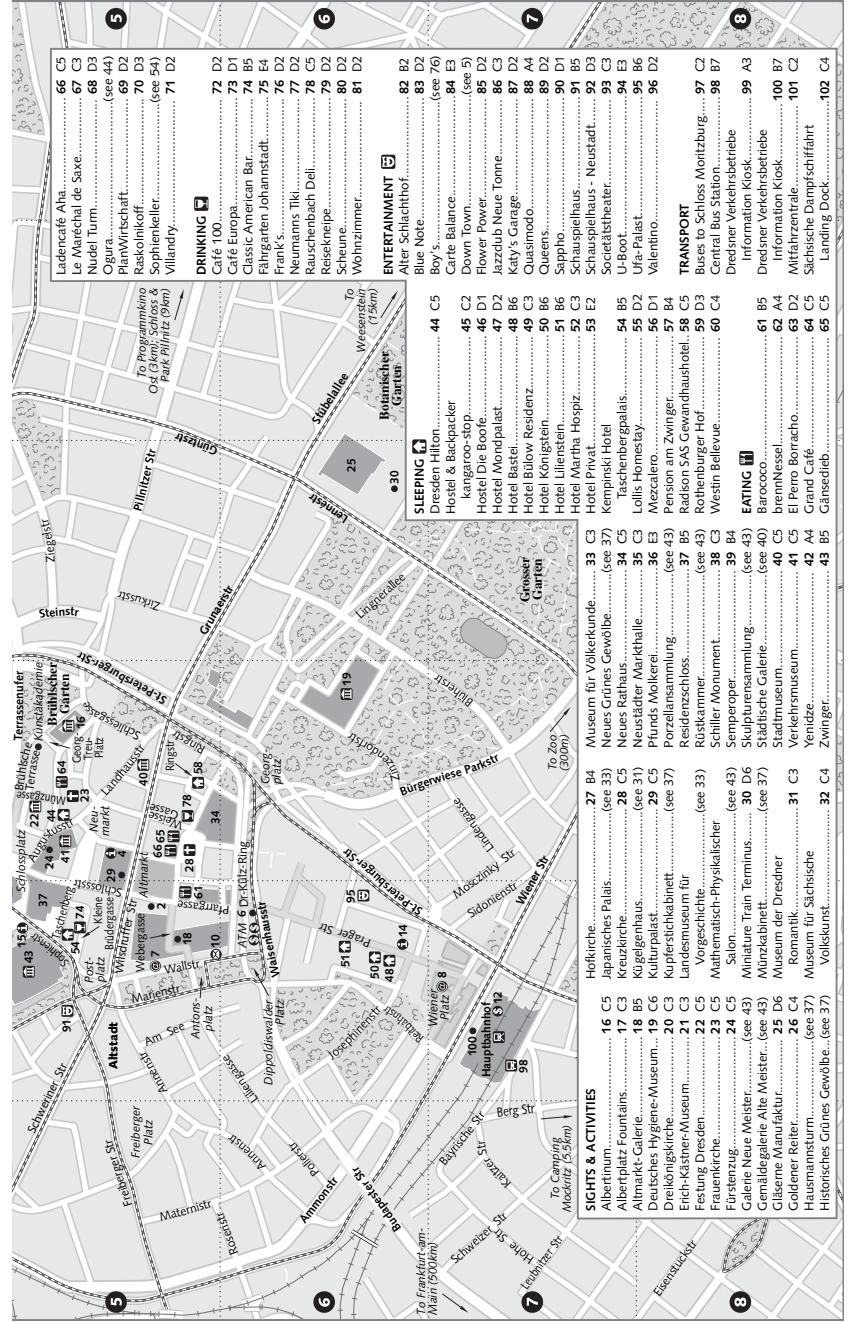
But Saxon-speak is far from an odd off-shoot of German; on the contrary, it was from Saxony that the German language developed. Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into the Saxon language laid the foundation for a standard German language, and Saxons can also hark back to a 1717 Dutch reference to the Saxon dialect as 'the purest, most comprehensible, charming and delightful to the ear of all German dialects'.

In general, though, no outside praise is needed to reinforce Saxon pride in their dialect; 'sächsln' is the norm, and the worst thing a native can do here is 'berlinern' – start talking with a Berlin accent!



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LAUNDRY**Crazy Waschsalon** (Louisenstrasse 6)**Eco-Express** (Königsbrücker Strasse 2 & Rudolf-Leonard-Strasse 16; wash/dry €2/0.50; ☎ 6am-11pm)**Groove Station** (Katharinenstrasse 11-13; wash/dry €2/0.50; ☎) Popular multipurpose lounge, with pool tables and music.**MEDICAL SERVICES****Krankenhaus Dresden-Friedrichstadt** (☎ 4800; Friedrichstrasse 41)**Krankenhaus Dresden-Neustadt** (☎ 8560; Industrie-strasse 40) Tram 4 to Am Trachauer Bahnhof.**MONEY**

Banks and ATMs abound throughout the Altstadt, especially along Prager Strasse.

Reisebank (☎ 471 2177; Hauptbahnhof; ☎ 8am-7.30pm, 9am-4pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun)**POST****Post Office Altmarkt-Galerie** (Altmarkt-Galerie;

☎ 9.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) Enter from Wallstrasse.

Post Office Neustadt (Königsbrücker Strasse 21;

☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION**Besucherdienst Semperoper** (☎ 491 1705; Schinkel-wache, Theaterplatz 2; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) Opera tickets and tours.**Tourist Information Prager Strasse** (☎ 4919 2104; www.dresden-tourist.de; Prager Strasse 21; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat)**Tourist Information Schinkelwache** (☎ 4919 2104; Theaterplatz 2; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun)**Sights****FRAUENKIRCHE**

The domed **Frauenkirche** (information ☎ 6560 6100, tickets 6560 6701; www.frauenkirche-dresden.de; admission free; ☎ 10am-noon & 1-6pm Mon-Fri, limited hours on weekends), which is one of Dresden's most beloved symbols, has literally risen from the ruins of the city. The original, designed by Georg Bähr, graced Dresden's skyline for two centuries before collapsing two days after the February 1945 bombing. The GDR left the rubble there as a war memorial, but after reunification a grass-roots movement to rebuild the landmark gained momentum. It was consecrated in November 2005, a year ahead of schedule.

A spitting image of the original, it may not bear the gravitas of age but that only slightly

detracts from its festive beauty inside and out. The altar, reassembled from nearly 2000 fragments, is especially striking. The lofty interior, galleried like a theatre, is a wonderful place for concerts, meditations and services. Check the website for the current schedule or stop by the **Frauenkirche Visitors Centre** (☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat) in the Kulturpalast.

The great **dome** (adult/concession/family €8/6/20; ☎ daily Mar-Oct), known as the 'stone bell', can be climbed for sweeping views (weather permitting).

RESIDENZSCHLOSS

The neo-Renaissance **Residenzschloss** was the home of Saxon kings until 1918. With post-war reconstruction nearly completed, the must-see **Grünes Gewölbe** (Green Vault) has returned to the palace. Picture it as the real-life equivalent of Aladdin's Cave, a mind-boggling collection of precious objects wrought from gold, ivory, silver, diamonds and other materials. There's so much of it, it's shown in two separate 'treasure chambers', both in the palace west wing (enter from Sophienstrasse).

The **Neues Grünes Gewölbe** (New Green Vault; ☎ 4914 2000; adult/concession incl audio-guide €8/5.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon) presents some 1000 objects in 10 modern rooms on the upper floor. Among the most prized items are a frigate fashioned from ivory with wafer-thin sails, a cherry pit with 185 faces carved into it, and an exotic ensemble of 132 gem-studded figurines representing a royal court in India. The artistry of each item is simply dazzling. To avoid the worst crush of people, visit during lunchtime.

Since September 2006, an additional 3000 items have been exhibited below in the **Historisches Grünes Gewölbe** (Historical Green Vault; tickets & information ☎ 4919 2285; www.skd-dresden.de; admission incl audio-guide €10; ☎ 10am-7pm Wed-Mon), displayed on shelves and tables in a series of increasingly lavish rooms, just as they were during the time of August der Starke. To protect the artworks, which are not behind glass, visitors must pass through a 'dust lock'; numbers are limited to 100 an hour. Admission is by timed ticket only. Advance tickets are available online and by phone. About a quarter are sold at the palace box office from 2pm the day before.

In the same wing, on the top floor, is the **Kupferstich-Kabinett** (Collection of Prints & Drawings;

☎ 4914 2000; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon).

For fine views, head up the **Hausmannsturm** (palace tower; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon Mar-Nov). Numismatists might like to pop into the **Münzkabinett** (Coin Collection; ☎ 4914 2000; adult/concession/family incl tower access €3/2/7; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon), also in the tower.

SEMPEROPER

The original Semperoper (Opera House; ☎ 491 1496; www.semperoper.de; tours adult/concession €6/3) burned down a mere three decades after its 1841 inauguration. When it reopened in 1878, the neo-Renaissance jewel entered its most dazzling period, which saw the premieres of works by Richard Strauss, Carl Maria von Weber and Richard Wagner. Alas, WWII put an end to the fun, and it wasn't until 1985 before music again filled the grand hall.

ZWINGER

Next to the opera house is the sprawling **Zwinger** (☎ 4914 2000; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), which is among the most ravishing baroque buildings in all of Germany. A collaboration between the architect Matthäus Pöppelmann and the sculptor Balthasar Permoser, it was primarily a party palace for royals, despite the odd name (which means dungeon). Several charming portals lead into the vast fountain-studded courtyard, which is framed by buildings lavishly festooned with baroque sculpture. Atop the western pavilion stands a tense-looking Atlas with the world on his shoulders; opposite him is a cutesy carillon of 40 Meissen porcelain bells, which chime on the hour.

The Zwinger houses six museums. The most important one is the **Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister** (Old Masters Gallery; combined ticket with Rüstammer adult/concession/family €6/3.50/10), which features masterpieces including Raphael's Sistine Madonna. The ticket also includes admission to selections from the **Galerie Neue Meister**, where works by leading Impressionists and other modern masters are in exile while the collection's usual home, the Albertinum, is undergoing renovation until at least 2009.

Another Albertinum collection, the **Skulpturensammlung** (adult/concession/family €2.50/1.50/6), has also found a temporary home in the Zwinger. All epochs are represented, from

ancient Egypt, Rome and Greece to the Renaissance, the baroque period and the 20th century. Medieval sculpture, meanwhile, is shown in the Albrechtsburg (p183) in Meissen.

The following are the other three Zwinger museums:

Rüstammer (Armory; adult/concession/family €3/2/5) A grand collection of ceremonial weapons.**Porzellensammlung** (Porcelain Collection; adult/concession/family €5/3/10) A dazzling assortment of Meissen classics and East Asian treasures in the new Ostasien-Galerie.**Mathematisch-Physikalischer Salon** (adult/concession/family €3/2/5) Old scientific instruments, globes and timepieces, including a 13th-century Arabian celestial globe and a calculator from 1650.**NEUSTADT**

Despite its name, Neustadt is actually an older part of Dresden that was considerably less smashed up in WWII than the Altstadt. After reunification it was taken over by the alternative scene, which today still dominates the so-called Äussere (Outer) Neustadt north of Albertplatz. South of here, the Innere (Inner) Neustadt, with Hauptstrasse as its main artery, is now solidly gentrified – especially along Königstrasse, which again sparkles in baroque splendour.

The first thing you see when crossing Augustusbrücke is the blindingly gleaming **Goldener Reiter** (1736) statue of Augustus the Strong. East of here, the **Museum für Sächsische Volkskunst** (Museum of Saxon Folk Art; ☎ 4914 2000; Köpckestrasse 1; adult/concession/family €3/2/5; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) has such quaint things as antique furniture, traditional garments and puppet theatres.

North of the statue, Hauptstrasse is a pleasant pedestrian mall where the **Museum der Dresdner Romantik** (Museum of Dresden Romanticism; ☎ 804 4760; Hauptstrasse 13; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun) documents the city's artistic and intellectual movements during the early 19th century.

Beyond is the renovated **Dreikönigskirche** (☎ 812 4102; tower adult/concession €1.50/1; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun May-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar, to 5pm Apr) designed by Zwinger-architect Pöppelmann. Eye-catching features include a baroque altar ruined in 1945 and left as a memorial, and the *Dance of Death* frieze, a rare Renaissance artwork. The tower can be climbed.

A great spot to satisfy your shopping cravings is the **Neustädter Markthalle**, a gorgeously restored old market hall (enter on Metzger Strasse).

Hauptstrasse culminates at **Albertplatz** with its two striking fountains representing turbulent and still waters. Also found here are an evocative marble **Schiller monument** and the interactive **Erich-Kästner-Museum** (☎ 804 5086; Antonstrasse 1; adult/concession €3/2; 🕒 10am-6pm Sun-Tue, 10am-8pm Wed), dedicated to the beloved children's book author and outspoken Nazi critic.

Königstrasse runs southwest of Albertplatz, all the way to the not-very-Japanese **Japanisches Palais** (1737). Inside is Dresden's famous **Museum für Völkerkunde** (Museum of Ethnology; ☎ 814 4814; Palaisplatz 11; adult/concession €4/2; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), which boasts well over 70,000 anthropological items from far-flung corners of the world, as well as the **Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte** (State Museum of Prehistory; ☎ 892 6603; adult/concession €3/2; 🕒 10am-6pm).

North of Albertplatz, the Äussere Neustadt is a spidery web of narrow streets, late-19th-century patrician houses and hidden courtyards, all chock full of pubs, clubs, galleries and one-of-a-kind shops. A highlight here is the **Kunsthofpassage** (enter from Alaunstrasse 70 or Görlitzer Strasse 21), a series of five whimsically designed courtyards each reflecting the vision of a different Dresden artist. Our favourites are the Hof der Tiere (Court of Animals), presided over by a giant giraffe, and the Hof der Elemente (Court of Elements) with its neat sculpture of steel pipes and funnels.

Also not to be missed is **Pfunds Molkerei** (☎ 816 20; Bautzner Strasse 79; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) in the eastern Äussere Neustadt. Billed as 'the world's most beautiful dairy shop', it's a riot of hand-painted tiles and enamelled sculpture, all hand-made by Villeroy & Boch. The shop sells replica tiles, wines, cheeses and milk. Not surprisingly, the upstairs café-restaurant has a strong lactose theme. To avoid the steady stream of coach tourists, visit the shop around lunchtime.

GROSSER GARTEN & AROUND

Southeast of the Altstadt, occupying the former royal hunting grounds, is the aptly named Grosse Garten (Large Garden), an enchanting refuge during the warmer

months. A visitor magnet here is the excellent **zoo** (☎ 478 060; Tiergartenstrasse 1; adult/child/concession €7/4/5; 🕒 8.30am-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-4.30pm Nov-Mar), where crowds gravitate towards the Africa Hall and the new Tundra exhibit with arctic foxes and snowy owls. At the garden's northwestern corner is the **Botanischer Garten** (botanical garden; admission free). From April to October, a fun way to get around the park is aboard a **miniature train** (adult/concession €3.10/1.55).

Nearby, the striking Volkswagen **Gläserne Manufaktur** (Transparent Factory; ☎ 0180-589 6268; www.glaesernemanufaktur.de; cnr Grunaerstrasse & Lennéstrasse; admission €4; 🕒 8am-8pm) is a working factory producing Bentleys and the prestige Phaeton line, with much of the process visible through the glass windows. Tours in German are offered by prior appointment only.

The name may be odd, but don't let that deter you from visiting the unique **Deutsches Hygiene-Museum** (German Hygiene Museum; ☎ 484 6670; www.dhmd.de; Lingerplatz 1; adult/concession €6/3; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), which is really all about you, the human being. The revamped permanent exhibit is a virtual journey through the body, drawing from anatomy, cultural studies, social science, history and scientific research. You'll learn about various aspects of the human experience – from eating, drinking and thinking to remembering, moving, grooming and dying. Oddly, people seem to linger just a tad longer in the room dealing with sexuality... must be all those nude pictures. A highlight is the *Gläserne Mensch* in room 1, the first transparent human model complete with bones, muscles and arteries.

If you've got tots in tow, they're likely to have more fun in the Hygiene Museum's integrated Children's Museum. Located in the basement, it's a highly interactive romp through the mysteries of the five senses.

YENIDZE

West of the Altstadt, you can't miss what looks like a gaudy mosque with a great stained-glass onion dome. The **Yenidze** (☎ 486 5300, 490 5990; Weisseritzstrasse 3), the world's first reinforced concrete-framed building, actually started out life as a tobacco factory in 1907, manufacturing an unsuccessful pseudo-exotic cigarette named Salaam Alakhem. Today it houses a restaurant with a beer garden, and hosts concerts and other cultural events in its dome.

Walking Tour

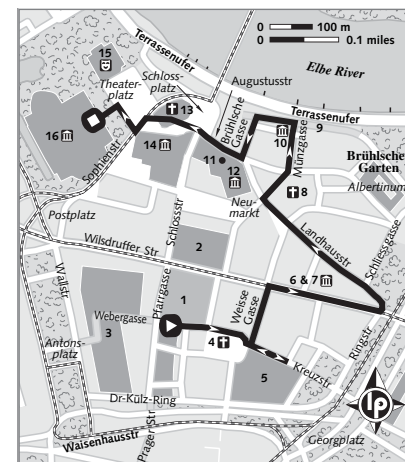
Our Altstadt circuit begins at Altmarkt and makes an arc northwest along the Elbe, taking in the main churches, the Semperoper, the Residenzschloss and the Zwinger palace. It's a 1½-hour stroll, but with stops you could easily stretch the tour to a day.

The **Altmarkt (1)** was once the historic heart of Dresden. Postwar reconstruction here was heavily influenced by a socialist aesthetic, which meant lots of stark granite, an impractically wide square and the obnoxiously squat **Kulturpalast (2)**; ☎ 486 60; www.kulturpalast-dresden.de; Schlosstrasse 2), home to the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra. The starkness is tempered by street-side cafés, the spanning new **Altmarkt-Galerie (3)** shopping mall and the late baroque **Kreuzkirche (4)**; tower €1.50/1; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar). Rebuilt after the war, the church's interior was left deliberately plain and is best enjoyed during a concert, or at 6pm evening prayers (5pm December to March), which are accompanied by the church's world-famous boys' choir, the 700-year-old Kreuzchor.

Following Kreuzstrasse east, you'll soon spot the neo-Renaissance **Neues Rathaus (5)**; New Town Hall; ☎ 1905-10; tower adult/concession/family €2.50/1.24/6; 🕒 10am-6pm Apr-Oct) with its 100m-high climbable tower. Cut north through pedestrianised Weisse Gasse, the Altstadt's most delightful eat street, to Wilsdruffer Strasse, where the **Stadtmuseum (6)**; ☎ 6564 8613; www.museen-dresden.de; Wilsdruffer Strasse 2; adult/concession €3/2; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, noon-8pm Fri) presents exhibits on general city history as well as on the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche. Also here is the **Städtische Galerie (7)**; ☎ 6564 8638; adult/concession €3/2; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, noon-8pm Fri), where the baroque city presents its modern side with a respectable collection of 20th-century art. Enter from Landhausstrasse.

Follow Landhausstrasse northwest to Neumarkt, which is again dominated by the landmark **Frauenkirche (8)**, p170), whose reconstruction was completed in 2005. On Neumarkt, all around the church, construction is progressing at a steady clip, with new hotels and shopping complexes called 'quartiers' springing up. For a preview, check www.neumarkt-dresden.de.

From the north side of Neumarkt, narrow Münzgasse leads straight to the **Brühlsche Terrasse (9)**, a spectacular promenade that's



WALK FACTS

Start Altmarkt
Finish Zwinger
Distance 3.5km
Duration 1½ hours

been called the 'balcony of Europe', with a pavement nearly 15m above the southern embankment of the Elbe. It's a must for strolling, with expansive views of the river and the Neustadt on the opposite bank.

Beneath the promenade is the Renaissance brick bastion known as the **Festung Dresden (10)**; Dresden Fortress; ☎ 491 4786; adult/child incl audio-guide €3.10/2; 🕒 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar), now a museum. The free audio-guide helps bring the place to life. Enter from Georg-Treu-Platz.

Otherwise, take the staircase down to Brühlsche Gasse, which leads back to the Neumarkt. From here, turn right onto Augustusstrasse, with its 102m-long **Fürstenzug (11)**; Procession of Princes) mural depicted on the façade of the former Stallhof (royal stables). The scene, a long row of royalty on horses, was first painted in 1876 by Wulhelm Walther and then transferred to some 24,000 Meissen porcelain tiles in 1904.

Also on Augustusstrasse, you'll find a superb collection of vehicles, including penny-farthings, trams, dirigibles and carriages, at the **Verkehrsmuseum (12)**; Transport Museum; ☎ 864 40; www.verkehrsmuseum.sachsen.de; Augustusstrasse 1; adult/concession €3/1.50; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun).

A BRIDGE TOO FAR?

The Saxon heartland, with Dresden at its centre, represents one of the richest cultural tapestries in all of Germany. This fact obviously didn't escape the Unesco officers in charge of designating new World Heritage sites, who in 2004 welcomed a 20km section of the river valley, the Dresdner Elbtal, into their prestigious club. This stretch follows the Elbe downstream from Schloss Pillnitz to Schloss Übigau, passing by Dresden's matchless baroque magnificence along the way.

But only two years later, in July 2006, the Elbtal ended up on a far less honourable list: the one identifying endangered World Heritage sites. The reason? The planned construction of a controversial four-lane bridge across the river near the scenic spot where Canaletto once immortalised Dresden's fabulous silhouette. Unless the city gives up – or seriously modifies – its plans, Unesco has threatened to revoke the area's World Heritage status. At the time of writing, city leaders remained stubborn, insisting that the organisation had known about the bridge plans at the time it approved their application. Dresden was given until the summer of 2007 to come up with a new approach. Stay tuned.

Augustusstrasse leads directly to Schlossplatz and the baroque **Hofkirche (13)**; ☎ 484 4712; Schlossplatz; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Thu, 1–5pm Fri, 10.30am–4pm Sat, noon–4pm Sun May–Oct; 10.30am–5pm Sat Nov–Apr). Completed in 1755, its crypt contains the heart of Augustus the Strong; his body is in Cracow. Note the parade of fabulous sculptures peering down from the church's exterior balustrade.

Just south of the church is the neo-Renaissance **Residenzschloss (14)**, p170), which now houses several museums. These include the must-see Historisches Grünes Gewölbe and Neues Grünes Gewölbe. On the western side of the Hofkirche is Theaterplatz, with Dresden's dramatic and long-suffering **Semperoper (15)**, p171). Next to the opera house is the sprawling **Zwinger (16)**, p171), a former palace recycled into a major museum complex that includes Dresden's foremost collection of painting, the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister.

Tours

The tourist offices can help you book the following tours:

Barokkokko (☎ 479 8184; www.erlebnisrundgang.de; adult/concession €14/9) The Dresden of the 18th century comes alive during these interactive 1½-hour tongue-in-cheek tours, led by costumed actor-guides who'll even teach you the proper way to curtsy and bow. Ask about English-language tours, usually held at 6pm Fridays from April to October.

NightWalk Dresden (☎ 801 3361; www.nightwalk-dresden.de; tours incl three drinks €12; ☎ 9pm) Learn all about the intriguing culture and history of the happening Neustadt, one pub at a time,

during this fun walk led by clued-in locals. It's organised by Hostel Die Boofe (opposite); just show up at Albertplatz.

Sächsische Dampfschiffahrt (☎ 866 090; www.saechsische-dampfschiffahrt.de; adult/child €11/5.50; ☎ Apr–Oct) Ninety-minute river tours on rebuilt paddle-wheel steam boats leave from the Terrassenufer dock at 11am, 1pm, 3pm and 5pm daily. There's also regular service up the Elbe to Schloss and Park Pillnitz (p178) and the Sächsische Schweiz (p180) and down-river to Meissen (p182).

Stadtrundfahrt Dresden (☎ 899 5650; www.stadtrundfahrt.com; tour €18) This narrated hop-on, hop-off tour has 22 stops in the centre and the elegant outer villa districts along the Elbe. It includes short tours of the Zwinger, Fürstenzug, Frauenkirche and Pfunds Molkerei.

Trabi Safari (☎ 899 0060; www.trabi-safari.de; per person from €20) Get behind the wheel of the ultimate GDR-mobile for this 1½-hour guided drive.

Festivals & Events

Major annual events include the following: **Internationales Dixieland Festival** (www.dixieland.de) Early each May, with bands from around the world.

Dresdener Musikfestspiele (Music Festival; www.musikfestspiele.de) Held mid-May to June, with mostly classical music.

Bunte Republik Neustadt (www.bunte-republik-neustadt.net) In mid-June, with lots of free alternative concerts.

Dresdener Stadtfest (City Festival) Mid-July, with something for everyone.

Striezelmarkt (www.striezel-markt.de) In December, one of Germany's oldest Christmas markets and a great place to sample the famous Dresdener Stollen (a fruitcake).

Sleeping

Dresden accommodation can be horrendously expensive, with rates among the highest in the Germany. The **tourist offices** (☎ 4919 2222) can find private rooms from €20 per person.

BUDGET

A crop of excellent indie hostels has sprung up in the hip Neustadt.

Hostel Die Boofe (☎ 801 3361; www.boofe.de; Hechtstrasse 10; q per person €17, s €31, d €46, studio €69, breakfast €5; ☎ ☎) A big thumbs up for this friendly place with above-average rooms, a leafy courtyard and – drum roll please! – a sauna. Gregarious types gravitate to the lively bar and communal kitchen, while privacy-seekers can retire to spacious studios with individual kitchens in the garden house.

Mezcalero (☎ 810 770; www.mezcalero.de; Königsbrücker Strasse 64; dm €17–23, linen €2.30, s/d €50/64, breakfast €6; ☎ ☎) Definitely one for the 'odddities' basket: how often do you get to stay in a Mexican-Aztec B&B, complete with sombreros, festive colours, tiles and tequila bar? Very random, very cool.

Hostel Mondpalast (☎ 563 4050; www.mondpalast.de; Louisenstrasse 77; dm €13.50–16, s €39, d €50, linen €2, breakfast €5; ☎ ☎) Check in at the outta-this-world bar-café (with cheap drinks) before being 'beamed up' to your room in the Moon Palace – each one dedicated to a sign of the zodiac or some other spacey theme. Bike rentals and large kitchen are also available.

Also recommended:

Lollis Homestay (☎ 810 8458; www.lollishome.de; Görlitzer Strasse 34; dm €13–19, s €27–38, d €36–42; ☎ ☎) Small, chirpy, artsy.

Hostel & Backpacker kangaroo-stop (☎ 314 3455; www.kangaroo-stop.de; Erna-Berger-Strasse 8–10; dm €12.50–14.50, s/d/tr/q €27/34/48/60, apt €70–80; breakfast €4.50; ☎ ☎ ☎) Welcoming and low-key, with rooms spread over two buildings; one for backies, the other for families.

MIDRANGE

Pension am Zwinger (☎ 8990 0100; www.pension-zwinger.de; Ostra-Allee 27; s €60, each extra person €20; ☎ ☎) Self-caterers, families and space-cravers will appreciate these modern, subtly stylish studios with full kitchens. Ring the bell and wait for someone to check you in (check-in times are 9am to 8pm).

Hotel Privat (☎ 811 770; www.das-nichtraucher-hotel.de; Forststrasse 22; s €51–66, d €67–91; ☎ ☎) This small, family-run hotel has Saxon charm

galore and 30 good-sized rooms, some with alcoves and balconies. It's entirely nonsmoking, and that includes the garden.

Hotel Martha Hospiz (☎ 817 60; www.vch.de/martha-hospiz.dresden; Nieritzstrasse 11; s €77–84, d €107–118; ☎) Hospitality is taken very seriously at this lovely, quiet inn, with a quirky cellar restaurant. Newer rooms are decked out in Biedermeier-style and seven are wheelchair-accessible.

Hotel Schloss Eckberg/Kavaliershaus (☎ 809 90; www.schloss-eckberg.de; Bautzner Strasse 134; s €85–97, d €118–135; ☎ ☎ ☎) You'll feel like royalty when arriving at this romantic estate set in its own riverside park east of the Neustadt. Rooms in the historic Schloss are pricier and have more flair, but staying in the modern Kavaliershaus lets you enjoy almost as many amenities and the same dreamy setting.

Rothenburger Hof (☎ 812 60; www.rothenburger-hof.de; Rothenburger Strasse 15–17; s €105–115, d €135–145, apt €125–165; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This quiet launch pad for Neustadt explorations counts among its assets apartments with kitchenette and balcony, a Moorish-style steam room and an extra-lavish breakfast.

The three Ibis hotels – in identical GDR-era concrete beehives along Prager Strasse – are not pretty, but they do offer good value for money. They all have snug, functional rooms (singles €53 to €66, doubles €68 to €91, breakfast is €9):

Hotel Bastei (☎ 4856 6661; ☎ ☎)

Hotel Königstein (☎ 4856 6662; ☎ ☎)

Hotel Lilienstein (☎ 4856 6663; ☎ ☎)

TOP END

Dresden Hilton (☎ 864 20; www.hilton.com; An der Frauenkirche 5; s/d from €122/142, breakfast €19; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Big, busy and very central, the Hilton is a small village with 333 handsome rooms, over a dozen bars and restaurants, a full-service spa and fitness club, and security worthy of a president. Kids stay free in their parents' room.

Radisson SAS Gewandhaushotel (☎ 494 90; www.radissonsas.com; Ringstrasse 1; r €125–290, ste €450–550, breakfast €19; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Another top choice for class and personal service. Housed in a former fabric factory, the public areas are stunning and most Biedermeier-style rooms have whirlpool baths in their marble-fitted bathrooms.

Hotel Bülow Residenz (☎ 800 30; www.buelow-residenz.de; Rähnitzstrasse 19; s/d €190/240, breakfast €19; ☎ ☎ ☎) This place is a class act all-round,

from the welcome drink to the cute bears delivered at turndown, the free minibar to free DSL. Even the standard rooms are spacious and the restaurant has a fine reputation as well.

Westin Bellevue (☎ 8050; www.westin.com/dresden; Grosse Meißner Strasse 15; s €160-230, d €180-260, breakfast €19; P X ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Baroque and modern elements blend smoothly in this sprawling and elegant property, where the nicest rooms give you unparalleled views of Dresden's famous silhouette.

Kempinski Hotel Taschenbergpalais (☎ 491 20; www.kempinski-dresden.de; Taschenberg 3; s €270-355, d €300-385, ste €480-900, breakfast €24; P X ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This restored 18th-century mansion is Dresden's heavyweight, with views over the Zwinger, incredibly quiet corridors and Bulgari toiletries. In winter, the courtyard turns into an ice rink.

Eating

ALTSTADT

The Altstadt brims with restaurants, most of them targeting the tourist hordes. For a bit more local flavour, try some of the places on pedestrianised Weisse Gasse (or head to the Neustadt).

brenNessel (☎ 494 3319; Schützengasse 18; mains €4.50-10) The city's best vegetarian cuisine is prepared in the kitchen of this cute half-timbered house with a woody interior and leafy cobbled courtyard. It's a favourite hangout for off-duty Semperoper musicians.

Ladencafé Aha (☎ 496 0673; Kreuzstrasse 7; mains €5-12; ☎ 10am-midnight) At this warm and cheerful smoke- and stress-free zone above a one-world store, you can sip delicious coffee, pick from the international menu, leaf through the many magazines or watch your kiddies play with the provided toys.

Sophienkeller (☎ 497 260; Taschenberg 3; mains €7-16) The tourist-oriented 1730's theme may be a bit overdone, but the costumed wenches do actually serve up good local specialities and wines. Try the famous Dresden *Trichter* (drinking funnel).

Barococo (☎ 862 3040; Altmarkt 10; snacks from €4.50, mains €8-20) Often packed to the gills, this fish restaurant has nice Altstadt views from the upstairs dining room and amazing Piscean wall sculptures made from silver cutlery.

Gänsedieb (☎ 485 0905; Weisse Gasse 1; mains €8-15) One of nearly a dozen choices on Weisse Gasse, the 'Goose Thief' serves hearty schnitzels, goulash and steaks alongside a full range

of Bavarian Paulaner beers. The name, by the way, was inspired by the fountain outside.

Also recommended:

Grand Café (☎ 496 2444; An der Frauenkirche 12; mains €10-20; ☎ 10-1am) Yummy cakes and more in the gold-trimmed Coselpalais.

Ogura (☎ 864 2975; An der Frauenkirche 5; meals from €25; ☎ noon-2pm, 5.30-10.30pm) Dresden's best sushi restaurant, inside the Hilton.

NEUSTADT

Raskolnikoff (☎ 804 5706; www.raskolnikoff.de; Böhmische Strasse 34; mains €4-12) This bohemian café in a former artists' squat was one of the Neustadt's first post-Wende pubs. The menu is sorted by compass direction (borscht to quiche Lorraine to smoked fish) and there's a sweet little beer garden out the back, and a gallery and pension (single/double room €30 to €45) upstairs.

Nudely Turm (☎ 804 3094; Bautzner Strasse 1; mains €5-13) A lifesaver for families, this pasta place has cartoony menus and great views. Children under four eat free.

PlanWirtschaft (☎ 801 3187; Louisenstrasse 20; mains €6-15; ☎ 9-1am) Only fresh, organic ingredients sourced from local butchers and farmers make it into the international potpourri of dishes at this long-time favourite. There's a romantic courtyard for balmy days and a small hostel (☎ 889 4894; www.louise20.de) upstairs.

El Perro Borracho (☎ 803 6723; Alaunstrasse 70, Kunsthof; tapas €2.90) A glass of Rioja, a platter of tapas, a cobblestoned courtyard, a balmy summer night – close your eyes and you'll feel (almost) transported to Seville at this buzzy place in the cheerful Kunsthofpassage.

Villandry (☎ 899 6724; Jordanstrasse 8; mains €8-16; ☎ 6.30-11.30pm Mon-Sat) The folks in the kitchen here sure know how to coax maximum flavour out of even the simplest ingredients, and to turn them into super-tasty Mediterranean treats for eyes and palate. Meals are best enjoyed in the lovely courtyard.

Le Maréchal de Saxe (☎ 810 5880; Königstrasse 5; mains €9-14) One of several upmarket restaurants in this smart area, offering proper 18th-century Saxon court cuisine.

Drinking

ALTSTADT

Fährgarten Johannstadt (☎ 459 6262; Käthe-Kollwitz-Ufer 23b; ☎ 10-1am Apr-Oct) East of the Altstadt, right on the Elbe, is this idyllic beer garden

with great ales, grilled meats, memorable views and a children's playground.

Rauschenbach Deli (☎ 821 2760; Weisse Gasse 2; mains €7-15; ☎ 9-1am) A café by day, this contemporary spot morphs into a chic bar with an endless cocktail menu when the moon gets high. Nice terrace, too.

Classic American Bar (☎ 491 2720; Kleine Brüdergasse) This one's for the grown-ups – all clubby with dark wood, red leather banquettes, a piano and some neat Wild West murals inspired by the books of Karl May.

NEUSTADT

If you're up for a night on the razzle, head to the Äussere Neustadt, which is chock-a-block with café-bars. Alaunstrasse, Louisenstrasse and Görlitzer Strasse are the main drags.

Scheune (☎ 802 6619; Alaunstrasse 36-40) A GDR-era youth club has been reborn as an artsy pub and alternative rock venue here, with a beer garden and Indian food on the menu (mains €5 to €10).

Neumanns Tiki (☎ 810 3837; Görlitzer Strasse 21) This Polynesian cocktail bar and (homemade) ice-cream parlour in the Kunsthofpassage has shown that it's not just 'flavour of the month'. Caipirinha happy hour runs until 9pm.

Café 100 (☎ 801 7729; Alaunstrasse 100) Wine lovers should make a beeline for this candle-lit pub, with its romantic cavernous cellar and 250 wines on the menu. It's a great place for first dates.

Frank's (☎ 802 6727; Alaunstrasse 80) Famed for its huge cocktail menu, this is a long-running Neustadt stalwart.

Wohnzimmer (☎ 563 5956; Alaunstrasse 27) Take grandma's sofas, combine with flowery wallpaper and candlelight, add some smooth sounds and you've got yourself one stylish and conversation-friendly watering hole.

Café Europa (☎ 804 4810; Königsbrücker Strasse 68; ☎ 24hr; ☎) Newspapers, intimate lighting and free internet facilities feature at this smart, relaxed café that's open around the clock.

Reisekneipe (☎ 267 1930; Görlitzer Strasse 15; ☎) Dream of faraway places at this exotic pub while quaffing a beer in a thatched hut, an oriental lounge or a Sherpa lodge. Hardened globetrotters give mid-week slide-show talks.

Entertainment

The finest all-round listings guide to Dresden is SAX (€1.30), sold at newsstands. Regular freebies include *Blitz* and *Frizz*, and the

Kneipensurfer and *Nachtfalter* maps. They can be found at the tourist offices, and in cafés and pubs.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Dresdner Philharmonie (☎ 486 6306; www.dresdnerphilharmonie.de) The city's renowned orchestra performs mostly at the Kulturpalast on Altmarkt. Also check the listings magazines for concerts at the Hofkirche, Dreikönigskirche, Kreuzkirche and Frauenkirche.

Sächsische Staatsoper (☎ 491 1705; www.semperoper.de) Dresden is synonymous with opera, and performances at the spectacular Semperoper (p171) are brilliant. Tickets are hard to come by, though, so plan well ahead or hope for returns.

CLUBS

Strasse E (www.strasse-e.de; Werner-Hartmann-Strasse 2) Dresden's most high-octane party zone is in an industrial area between Neustadt and the airport. Half a dozen venues cover the entire sound spectrum, from disco to dark wave, electro to pop. Take tram 7 or 8 to Industriegelände. Some of the clubs below are closer to town.

Dance Factory (☎ 802 0066; Bautzner Strasse 118; ☎ Thu-Sat) This very popular spot, east of the Neustadt, has the usual mix of R&B, cheese and trance/techno in four rooms. The bouncers can be choosy.

Down Town (☎ 811 5592; Katharinenstrasse 11-13; ☎ Fri, Sat & Mon) This iconic old factory gives you early *Saturday Night Fever* with its 1970s and '80s nights on Fridays. On Mondays latex lovers invade for the legendary Nasty Love Club.

Flower Power (☎ 804 9814; www.nubeatz.de/fpd; Eschenstrasse 11) The spirit of the '60s is kept alive at this staple of the Dresden student scene, with DJs every night.

U-Boot (Bautzner Strasse 75; ☎ Wed, Fri & Sat) Anything from reggae to nu-punk, catering for the skater crowd.

LIVE MUSIC

Alter Schlachthof (☎ 858 8529; Gothaer Strasse 11) The industrial charm of an old slaughterhouse draws a party-happy crowd for mostly alternative concerts, from bands like Calexico to Fury in the Slaughterhouse...how appropriate.

Blue Note (☎ 801 4275; www.jazzdepartment.com; Görlitzer Strasse 2b; ☎ to 5am or later) Small, smoky and smooth, this converted smithy has live

jazz almost nightly until 11pm, then turns into a night-owl magnet until the wee hours. The talent is mostly regional.

Katy's Garage (☎ 656 7701; Alaunstrasse 48) This place, a key venue for indie gigs and club nights throughout the week, is in a former tyre shop.

Jazzclub Neue Tonne (☎ 8026017; www.jazzclub-tonne.de; Königstrasse 15) Bigger names hit the stage here, and it's a bit more polished than Blue Note.

GAY & LESBIAN VENUES

Dresden's gay scene is concentrated in the Neustadt. For listings, turn to **GegenPol** (www.gegenpol.net, in German).

Boy's (☎ 7968824; www.boysdresden.de; Alaunstrasse 30; ☎ Tue-Sun) A lively bar-club with parties on Friday and Saturday. A top venue for S&M (standing and modelling, not what you were thinking...).

Queens (☎ 803 1650; Görlitzer Strasse 3) The kitsch décor is the perfect backdrop for this pulsating hot spot, famous for its *Schlager* (schmalzy German pop songs) parties.

Sappho (☎ 404 5136; Hechtstrasse 23) This new women's café is an excellent addition to Dresden's thriving lesbian gay map.

Valentino (☎ 889 4996; Jordanstrasse 2; ☎) A low-key café with great cakes, ice cream and internet access.

CINEMAS

Check www.kinokalender.com for monthly listings. Undubbed English films are shown at the following:

Programmokino Ost (☎ 310 3782; Schandauer Strasse 73) South of the Altstadt.

Quasimodo (☎ 866 0224; Adlbergasse 14)

Ufa-Palast (☎ 482 5825; St-Petersburger-Strasse 24a)

THEATRE

There's an active theatre scene in Dresden. Many small companies perform throughout the city; SAX has the scoop. Buy theatre tickets at tourist offices or the theatre's box office an hour before the performance. Many theatres close from mid-July to the end of August.

Schauspielhaus (☎ 491 3555; www.staatsschauspiel-dresden.de; Altstadt Ostra-Allee 3; Neustadt Glacisstrasse 28) The renowned Staatsschauspiel ensemble plays mostly crowd-pleasers by German playwrights in two venues.

Carte Blanche (☎ 204 720; www.carte-blanche-dresden.de; Priessnitzstrasse 10) Drag queen shows at their finest.

Societätstheater (☎ 803 6810; www.societaets-theater.de; An der Dreikönigskirche 1a) A modern and experimental theatre.

Getting There & Away

Dresden airport (☎ 881 3360; www.dresden-airport.de) has mostly domestic and holiday charter flights.

Dresden is 2¼ hours south of Berlin-Hauptbahnhof (€32). For Leipzig choose from hourly ICE trains (€26, one hour) or RE trains (€18.30, 1¼ hours). The S-Bahn runs half-hourly to Meissen (€4.80, 40 minutes). There are connections to Frankfurt (€76, 4¼ hours) and Prague (€26, 2½ hours).

Dresden is connected to Leipzig via the A14/A4, to Berlin via the A13/A113, and to the Czech Republic via the B170 south.

For ride shares contact **Mitfahrzentrale** (☎ 194 40; Dr-Friedrich-Wolf-Strasse 2).

Getting Around

Public transport is operated by **Dresdner Verkehrsbetriebe** (☎ 857 1011), which has several information kiosks, including one outside the Hauptbahnhof.

The S2 train serves the airport from the Hauptbahnhof and Dresden-Neustadt (€1.70, 23 and 14 minutes respectively). Budget about €10 for a taxi to the Hauptbahnhof.

Single bus and tram tickets cost €1.70, a day pass is €4.50. The family day pass, for two adults and up to four kids, is a steal at €5.50. Tickets are available aboard and from vending machines at stops.

The starting rate for taxis is €2.10. Taxis line up at the Hauptbahnhof and Neustadt station, or ring ☎ 211 211. For short hops within the Altstadt, consider a Velotaxi pedicab (rickshaw), which charge €2.50 per person for the first kilometre, then €1 for each additional kilometre.

Bicycle hire is available at the Hauptbahnhof (☎ 461 3262) and Neustadt (☎ 461 5601) stations for €7 per day.

AROUND DRESDEN Schloss & Park Pillnitz

Baroque has gone exotic at this **pleasure palace** (☎ 261 3260; park admission free; ☎ park 5am-dusk, visitors centre 9am-6pm May-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Apr), festooned with fanciful Chinese flourishes. This is where the Saxon rulers once lived it up during long hot Dresden summers. A mere 10km south-east of Dresden, Pillnitz is dreamily wedged

in between vineyards and the Elbe, and is best reached aboard a steamer operated by **Sächsische Dampfschiffahrt** (☎ 0351-866 090; one-way/return €9.20/14.30; ☎ 1½ hr); boats leave from the Terrassenufer in Dresden (Map pp168-9). Otherwise, bus 83 goes pretty close to the palace.

You can explore the wonderful gardens on your own or join a **guided park tour** (adult/concession/family €3/2/8; ☎ 11am & 1pm May-Oct). To learn more about the history of the palace and life at court, visit the new **Schlossmuseum** (adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, guided tours 11am & 1pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) in the Neues Palais.

Two other buildings, the Wasserpalais and the Bergpalais, house the **Kunstgewerbemuseum** (Arts & Crafts museum; ☎ 4914 2000; adult/concession/family €3/2/5, more during special exhibits; ☎ Bergpalais 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, Wasserpalais 10am-6pm Wed-Mon), which is filled with fancy furniture and objects from the Saxon court, including Augustus the Strong's throne.

Schloss Moritzburg

Rising impressively from a lake 14km north-west of Dresden, **Schloss Moritzburg** (☎ 035207-8730; adult/concession/family €6/4/10; ☎ 10am-5.30pm daily Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov, Dec & Mar, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Jan & Feb) is yet another baroque playground of August der Starke. The rich interior boasts ornate leather wall coverings, paintings, furniture and the recently restored Federzimmer (Feather Room), featuring August's fanciful bed. Guided tours in German (€2) are conducted hourly. The palace parkland is ideal for drifting around.

Buses 326 and 458 run to Moritzburg from behind Dresden's Neustadt train station (€3.40, 25 minutes). For a more atmospheric approach, first take the S1 train to Radebeul-Ost (€1.70, 13 minutes), then catch the 1884 narrow-gauge **Lössnitzgrundbahn** (€5.30, 30 minutes) to Moritzburg, from where it's a short walk to the Schloss.

Radebeul

Although a separate town, Radebeul serves as an upmarket bedroom community of Dresden, and has a couple of quirky museums. First up is the **Karl-May-Museum** (☎ 0351-837 300; Karl-May-Strasse 5; adult/concession/child €6/4/2; ☎ Tue-Sun 9am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Feb), essentially a tribute to Germany's greatest adventure writer. May's rousing tales have sold over 100 million copies worldwide and for generations shaped the image of the American Wild West

and the Near East in German minds. Villa Shatterhand charts his life and work, while Villa Bärenfett has a highly-rated exhibition on Native Americans.

Further west along Meissener Strasse, the oddly intriguing **Zeitreise Lebensart DDR 1949-1989** (☎ 0351-811 3860; Wasastrasse 50; adult/concession €6/4.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) provides a fascinating glimpse into daily life in the GDR. There are three floors crammed with memorabilia, including a great collection of Trabis, ingenious self-contained camping units, plus tons of toys, toasters, televisions and other trinkets.

The sun-kissed slopes around here produce some fairly good wine, with some of the finest hailing from **Schloss Wackerbarth** (☎ 0351-895 5200; www.schloss-wackerbarth.de; Wackerbarthstrasse 1; ☎ 9.30am-8pm), another 4km further west. You can taste wine (€1 per mini-serving) whenever the store is open, but it's more fun to combine a tasting with a tour (most tour guides have English skills). Wine tours run daily at 2pm, with sparkling wine tours going at 5pm. The cost for either is €9 and includes three tastes.

From Dresden, take the S1 train to Radebeul-Ost (€1.70, 13 minutes).

Schloss Weesenstein

A magnificent sight, high above the Müglitz River, **Schloss Weesenstein** (☎ 035027-6260; www.schloss-weesenstein.de; adult/child/concession €4.50/2/3; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar) is one of the most undervisited and untouched palaces in Germany. In an amazing alchemy of styles, it blends its medieval roots with later Renaissance and baroque embellishments. This results in an architectural curiosity where the horse stables somehow ended up above a much younger residential tract.

Weesenstein owes much of its distinctive looks to the noble Binau family, who were granted the palace by the Margrave of Meissen in 1406, and continued to live there for 12 generations until 1772. In the 19th century, it became the home of philosopher-king Johann of Saxony, who also took time off from his royal duties to translate Dante into German. Lavishly furnished and decorated rooms on the ground floor contain an exhibit about the man and life at court. This is completed by two or three annually changing exhibits.

There are several restaurants, including a café in the former palace prison, a traditional

brewpub and the upmarket Königliche Schlossküche. After filling your belly, you can take a digestive saunter in the lovely baroque park.

During the Whitsun (Pentecost) weekend, the town holds its **Mittelalterfest** (adult/concession €7/5), a medieval festival featuring jousting, crafts, food and freshly brewed beer.

Schloss Weesenstein is about 16km south-east of Dresden. Coming by train from Dresden requires a change in Heidenau (€5.10, 30 minutes). Weesenstein train station is about 500m south of the castle – follow the road up the hill. By car, take the A17 to Pirna, then head towards Glashütte and follow the signs to the Schloss.

SAXON SWITZERLAND

Also known as Elbsandsteingebirge (the Elbe Sandstone Mountains), Saxon Switzerland (Sächsische Schweiz) embraces one of Germany's most unique and evocative landscapes within its 275-sq-km boundaries. This is wonderfully rugged country where Nature has chiselled porous rock into bizarre columns, battered cliffs, tabletop mountains and deep valleys and gorges. The Elbe courses through thick forest, past villages and mighty hilltop castles. No wonder such fabled beauty was a big hit with artists of the Romantic Age, including the painter Caspar David Friedrich and fairytale writer Hans Christian Andersen. In 1990, about a third of the area became Saxony's first and only national park.

You could check off the area's highlights on a long day trip from Dresden, but to truly 'get' the magic of Saxon Switzerland, consider spending at least a couple of days here. Hitting the trail will quickly get you away from the tourist hordes and there are plenty of intriguing pockets tucked away in the valleys. The area is also among the country's premier rock climbing meccas, offering over 15,000 routes, and cyclists can follow the lovely Elberadweg.

Getting There & Around

There are only three bridges across the Elbe: two in Pirna and one in Bad Schandau. Passenger ferries (bicycles allowed) cross the Elbe in several other villages.

BOAT

From April to October, steam boats operated by **Sächsische Dampfschiffahrt** (☎ 0351-866 090) plough up the Elbe several times daily between

Dresden and Schöna, stopping in Rathen, Königstein, Bad Schandau and other towns. You can make the entire trip from Dresden or travel between towns.

BUS

From mid-April to October, a bus service operated by **Frank Nuhn Freizeit und Tourismus** (☎ 035021-676 14; www.frank-nuhn-freizeit-und-tourismus.de) shuttles between Königstein, Bad Schandau and the Bastei four times daily. The same company also operates the so-called Bastei-Kraxler, which makes hourly runs between 9.30am and 5pm from the town of Wehlen up to the Bastei. Buy tickets from the bus driver.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Towns are linked to Dresden and each other by the B172; coming from Dresden, it's faster to take the new A17 and pick up the B172 in Pirna.

TRAIN

The handy S1 connects Bad Schandau, Königstein, Rathen and other Saxon Switzerland towns with Dresden, Radebeul and Meissen every 30 minutes. Bad Schandau is also a stop on some long-distance trains travelling between Hamburg, Berlin and Vienna.

Bastei

The open fields and rolling hills surrounding the Bastei region, on the Elbe, give little clue as to the drama that lies beyond. One of the most breathtaking spots in Germany, this is a wonderland of fluted pinnacles (up to 305m high) and panoramic views of the surrounding forests, cliffs and mountains – not to mention a magnificent sightline along the river itself. This is the single most popular spot in the national park, so crowds are pretty much guaranteed unless you get here very early or late in the day.

Bastei is an old-fashioned word meaning 'bastion' or 'fortress', in this case the **Felsenburg** (☎ 03501-581 00; adult/concession €1.50/0.50; ☎ 9am-6pm), a wooden castle occupying this strategic spot from the early 13th century until 1469. These days, a series of footbridges links the crags on which the castle was built, but its remnants are so few that it requires archaeological training, or at least a lot of imagination, to picture the place. A highlight is the replica of a catapult once used by castle residents to

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Its highest peak rises to 723m, meaning Saxon Switzerland ain't exactly the Alps, so how did the region get its name? Credit belongs to the Swiss, actually. During the 18th century, the area's romantic scenery, with its needle-nose pinnacles and craggy cliffs, lured countless artists from around the world. Among them was the Swiss landscape artist Adrian Zingg and his friend, the portraitist Anton Graff, who had been hired to teach at Dresden's prestigious art academy. Both felt that the landscape very much resembled their homeland (the Swiss Jura) and *voilà*, the phrase 'Saxon Switzerland' was born. Travel writers picked it up and so it remains to this day.

pelt attackers with ball-shaped rocks. During sieges they would simply destroy the wooden bridges, sending their enemies plummeting to their deaths. Fortunately, these days the much-photographed **Basteibrücke** leading to the castle grounds is made of stone. For the classic view, follow the little unpaved trail veering left off the main track just before reaching the bridge.

SLEEPING & EATING

The only hotel option up here is **Berghotel Bastei** (☎ 035024-7790; www.bastei-berghotel.de; s €44-48, d €72-116; ☎), a nicely spruced-up GDR-era hotel with comfy rooms, a decent restaurant with superb views, plus extras like bowling and sauna.

Otherwise, you can find rooms from about €15 per person in the convenient but nondescript village of **Lohmen** (tourist office ☎ 03501-581 024; Schloss Lohmen 1), a couple of kilometres due northeast, or in nearby **Rathen** (☎ 035024-704 22; Füllhölzelweg 1), a tiny but postcard-pretty resort town right on the Elbe. A characterful, good-value option here is **Burg Altrathen** (☎ 035024-7600; www.burg-altrathen.de; Am Grünbach 10-11; dm €13, d €44-76, tower ste €100; ☎) in a medieval castle above town.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The nearest train station is in Rathen, where you need to catch the ferry across the Elbe, then follow a sweat-inducing 30-minute trail to the top of the Bastei. En route you'll pass the lovely **Felsenbühne** (☎ 035024-7770), an open-

air summer theatre that stages light-hearted fare beneath a spectacular rocky backdrop.

To get there by bus, see opposite. Public bus 237 also makes the trip to the Bastei from Pirna or Lohmen.

Drivers should arrive before 10am to snag a spot in the inner Bastei car park (€3 for three hours, €5.50 all day), from where it's only a 10-minute walk to the viewpoints. Otherwise, you need to park in the outer lot (€2.50 all day) and catch the frequent shuttle bus (€1 each way) or walk for at least half an hour.

Königstein

South of Rathen, the Elbe has carved an S-curve ending at Königstein 6km away. The town would be unremarkable were it not for the massive citadel built right on a tabletop mountain some 260m above the river. **Festung Königstein** (☎ 035021-646 07; adult/concession/family €5/3/12, audio-guide €2.50; ☎ 9am-8pm Apr-Sep, 9am-6pm Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar) is the largest intact fortress in the country, and so imposing and formidable that it was never even attacked. Begun in the 13th century, it was repeatedly enlarged and is now a veritable textbook in military architecture, with 30 buildings spread across 9.5 hectares. Highlights include the **Brunnenhaus**, with its seemingly bottomless well, Germany's oldest extant barracks, and the **Georgenburg**, once Saxony's most feared prison, whose famous inmates included Meissen porcelain inventor Johann Friedrich Böttger. During WWII, it served as a POW camp and a refuge for art treasures from Dresden.

More than anything, however, it is the spectacular views deep into the national park and across to the Lilienstein tabletop mountain that give this place its special appeal.

There are several eateries up at the fortress and more in the town below. The **tourist office** (☎ 035021-682 61; www.koenigstein-sachsen.de; Schreiberberg 2) can help with finding lodging. A great budget pick is **Ferdinands Homestay** (☎ 035022-547 75; www.ferdinandshomestay.de; Halbestrasse 51; dm €7.50-15, s/d/tw €26.50/33/33, tent/adult €2.50/4; ☎ ☎), a small and friendly riverside hostel and campsite combo in a secluded, remote spot on the northern bank. Call for directions.

Daily, from April to October, a tourist train makes the steep climb half-hourly, starting at 9am from Reissiger Platz in Königstein (€1.70). Both drop you at the bottom of the fortress, from where you can get a lift or walk.

Alternatively it's a strenuous 30- to 45-minute climb from the bottom. The nearest car park is down below, off the B172.

Bad Schandau

☎ 035022 / pop 3300

Bad Schandau, a poky little spa town on the Elbe just 5km north of the Czech border, is the most central of Saxon Switzerland's towns and a great base for hikes.

The **tourist office** (☎ 900 30; www.bad-schandau.de; Markt 12; ☎ 9am-9pm daily May-Oct, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun Nov-Apr) and the **Nationalparkhaus** (☎ 502 40; www.lanu.de; Dresdner Strasse 2b; adult/concession/family €4/3/7.50; ☎ 9am-6pm daily Apr-Oct, 9am-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) are in the centre of town. At the latter's interactive exhibit you'll learn how the sandstone formations were shaped and get an easy general introduction to the park's flora and fauna. A free English-language audio-guide is available.

At the southern end of town, the century-old **Personenaufzug** (passenger lift; adult/child return €2.50/1.50; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr & Oct, 9am-7pm May-Sep, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar) whisks you up a 50m-high tower for a commanding view. A footbridge links the structure to a pretty forest path that runs partially along the ridge. A good destination to head for is the **Schrammsteinaussicht**, a viewpoint about an hour's moderately strenuous walk away. It overlooks the rugged Schrammsteine, the densest rock labyrinth in the national park and hugely popular with rock hounds.

The **Kirnitzschalbahn** (one-way/return €3/4) is a museum-piece tram that runs 7km northeast along the Kirnitzsch River to the **Lichtenhainer Wasserfall**, a good spot to begin a hike among the sandstone cliffs. Trams run every 30 minutes from April to October.

Another fun excursion is to the hamlet of **Hinterhermsdorf**, in a remote cul-de-sac about 14km east of Bad Schandau. Here you can hire flat-bottomed boats for floats on the Kirnitzsch River through an idyllic canyon – you can't feel much more secluded than this. Bus 241 (€1.70, 35 minutes) leaves from Bad Schandau several times (daily).

SLEEPING & EATING

Lindenhof (☎ 4890; www.lindenhof-bad-schandau.de; Rudolf-Sendig-Strasse 11; s €36-50, d €46-84; ☎) Smart hotel with a good traditional restaurant.

Parkhotel (☎ 520; www.parkhotel-bad-schandau.de; Rudolf-Sendig-Strasse 12; s €50-70, d €76-96; ☎) An excellent spot to feed your craving for luxury, the

Parkhotel has cheerful rooms in three buildings in a parklike riverside setting. Stress-melting spots include the elegant spa, a good-sized fitness area and a popular restaurant.

MEISSEN

☎ 03521 / pop 29,000

Some 27km northwest of Dresden, at the heart of a rich wine-growing region, Meissen is a compact, perfectly preserved old town. Crowning a rocky ridge above it is the Albrechtsburg palace, which in 1710 became the cradle of European porcelain manufacturing. The world-famous Meissen china, easily recognised by its trademark insignia of blue crossed swords, is still the main reason the town is such a favourite with coach tourists. Fortunately, the Altstadt's cobbled lanes, dreamy nooks and idyllic courtyards make getting away from the shuffling crowds a snap.

Orientation

Meissen straddles the Elbe, with the old town on the western bank and the train station on the eastern. The pedestrian-only Altstadtbrücke (bridge) near the station is the quickest way across, and it presents you with a picture-postcard view of the town. Follow Elbstrasse west to the central square, Markt, and the tourist office. Drivers need to take the Elbtalbrücke further north.

Information

Commerzbank (Hauptbahnhof)

Café Domizil (☎ 407 852; Burgstrasse 9; per 30min €1.70) Internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 419 40; www.touristinfo-meissen.de; Markt 3; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Nov, Dec, Feb & Mar)

FUMMEL VISION

While you're in Meissen, it's virtually compulsory to try the peculiar local patisserie known as the *Meissner Fummel*. Resembling an ostrich egg made of very delicate pastry, legend has it the Fummel was invented in 1710 as a test to stop the royal courier from drinking between deliveries – great care is required if you want to get it home in one piece! Test your skills at the 150-year-old **Café Zieger** (Burgstrasse), by the foot of the Rote Stufen.

Sights

The Markt is framed by the **Rathaus** (1472) and the Gothic **Frauenkirche** (☎ 453 832; tower adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 10am-noon & 1-5pm Apr-Oct) whose carillon is the world's oldest made from porcelain; it chimes a different ditty six times daily. Climb the tower for fine views of the Altstadt.

Even grander vistas will be your reward after schlepping up the Burgberg via a series of steep, stepped lanes. On top, the 15th-century **Albrechtsburg** (☎ 470 70; Domplatz 1; adult/concession/family €3.50/2.50/9; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb, closed 10-31 Jan) is considered to be Germany's first residential palace, and it housed the original Meissen porcelain factory from 1710 to 1864. Exhibits currently include a selection of medieval sculpture normally on view at the Albertinum in Dresden, which at the time of writing was being renovated. Mostly, though, it's the intriguing architecture that's likely to impress, most notably the Grosser Wendelstein staircase and the eye-popping room vaulting.

Next to the palace is the towering **Dom** (cathedral; ☎ 452 490; Domplatz 7; adult/concession/family €2.50/1.50/6; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Feb), a Gothic masterpiece with medieval stained-glass windows and delicately carved statues in the choir. Combination tickets for both buildings are €5.50/3.50/14.50.

Queues may be long, but we recommend you brave them anyway to witness the stunning artistry and craftsmanship that makes Meissen porcelain so unique at the recently expanded **Porzellan-Museum** (☎ 468 700; Talstrasse 9; adult/concession/family €8/4/18; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Apr). It's right next to the actual porcelain factory, about 1km south of the Altstadt. Start with a 30-minute tour (with English audio-guide) of the Schauerwerkstätten, a series of four studios where you can observe the creative process during live demonstrations. It'll help you gain a better appreciation for the finished product on display at the Schauhalle inside an integrated Art Nouveau villa. Highlights include a 12-person table setting and a 3.6m-high table-top 'temple'.

Sleeping

Herberge Orange (☎ 454 334; www.herberge-orange.de; Siebeneichener Strasse 34; s/d/tr with shared bathroom €20/32/45) This former home of porcelain-factory apprentices has been converted into

friendly and unpretentious accommodation, which is most popular with wallet-watching nomads.

Mercure Grand Hotel Meissen (☎ 722 50; www.dresden-hotel-meissen.de; Hafenstrasse 27-31; s/d/ste from €75/87/127; ☎) If you usually associate Mercure properties with cookie-cutter flair, you'll be pleasantly surprised by this contender. Inside a park-framed Art Nouveau villa on the east bank, it has stylish rooms and a good restaurant.

Hotel Burgkeller (☎ 414 00; www.meissen-hotel.com; Domplatz 11; s/d €69/115, with balcony €85/125; ☎) This luxury hill-top option has everything you could want – commanding views, glorious beer garden and its location adjacent to the cathedral.

Hotel Goldener Löwe (☎ 411 10; www.meissenhotel.com; Heinrichsplatz 6; s €70-90, d €115-135; ☎) Everything works like a well-oiled machine at this warm and welcoming hotel in a handsome 17th-century building near the Markt. The 36 rooms have imaginative furnishings and all major amenities.

Eating

Zollhof (☎ 402 614; Elbstrasse 7; mains €4-12) The flower-festooned beer garden with its eccentric fountain is the best place to sample the typical German dishes here, or to try lighter ones officially 'stolen' from Jamie Oliver.

Domkeller (☎ 457 676; Domplatz 9; mains €5-10) Meissen's oldest restaurant offers breathtaking city views from the leafy terrace and good-value local dishes; the menu's even 'translated' into Saxon.

Grüner Humpen (☎ 453 382; Burgstrasse 15; mains €5.40-9) Fill your belly with home-style German cooking amid old radios, vinyl albums and other eclectic flea-market décor.

Weinschänke Vincenz Richter (☎ 453 285; An der Frauenkirche 12; mains €11-17; ☎) The romance factor is high at this top-flight restaurant, despite the rather martial décor (historic guns and armour) and the decidedly unromantic torture chamber (unless you're into S&M, that is). Expect attentive service, expertly prepared regional cuisine and wines from their own estate.

Getting There & Around

From Dresden, take the half-hourly S1 train (€5.10, 35 minutes) to Meissen. For the porcelain factory, get off at Meissen-Triebischtal.

A slower but more fun way to get there is by steam boat operated by Sächsische Dampfschiffahrt. These leave the Terrassenufer in Dresden (Map pp168–9) daily between May and September at 9.45am (one-way €11, two hours). Boats return to Dresden at 2:45pm. Many people opt to go up by boat and back by train, or vice versa.

The hop-on, hop-off **City-Bus Meissen** (adult/concession/family €3.60/2.50/9) links all important sights between 10am and 6pm daily from April to October.

WESTERN SAXONY

LEIPZIG

☎ 0341 / pop 500,000

In Goethe's *Faust*, a character named Frosch calls Leipzig 'a little Paris'. He was wrong – Leipzig is more fun and infinitely less self-important than the Gallic capital. It's an important business and transport centre, a trade-fair mecca, and arguably the most dynamic city in eastern Germany.

Leipzig became known as the *Stadt der Helden* (City of Heroes) for its leading role in the 1989 democratic revolution. Its residents organised protests against the communist regime in May of that year; by October, hundreds of thousands were taking to the streets, placing candles on the steps of Stasi headquarters and attending peace services at the Nikolaikirche.

By the time the secret police got round to pulping their files, Leipzigers were partying in the streets, and they still haven't stopped – from late winter street-side cafés open their terraces, and countless bars and nightclubs keep the beat going through the night.

Leipzig also stages some of the finest classical music and opera in the country, and its art and literary scenes are flourishing. It was once home to Bach, Schumann, Wagner and Mendelssohn, and to Goethe, who set a key scene of *Faust* in the cellar of his favourite watering hole. And the university still attracts students from all over the world. It's the kind of city you just can't help liking.

Orientation

Leipzig's city centre – and most of the key sights – lie within a ring road tracing the former medieval fortifications. From the Hauptbahnhof on the ring's northeastern

edge, simply follow Nikolaistraße south for a couple of minutes to Grimmaische Strasse, the main east–west artery connecting ex-socialist Augustusplatz with the historic Markt.

The impressive 26-platform Hauptbahnhof (1915, renovated 1998) isn't just one of the largest passenger terminals in Europe, but it also houses a fabulous two-storey shopping mall with more than 150 shops (open until 10pm, with many open on Sunday). It's probably the only station on the planet where it's genuinely fun to shop, despite the hideously expensive toilets (€1.10!).

Leipzig's dazzling Neue Messe (trade fairgrounds) are 5km north of the Hauptbahnhof (take tram 16). The central tram station is outside the station.

The Leipzig-Halle airport is 18km to the north of the city (see p193).

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Hugendubel (☎ 01801-484 484; Petersstrasse 12)

Three floors of books, including foreign-language novels.

Lehmans Buchhandlung (☎ 3397 5000; Grimmaische Strasse 10) Great selection and free coffee upstairs.

Reisefibel (☎ 215 870; Salzgässchen 24) Travel books, maps and a travel agency.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Leipzig Card (for one day €7.90, for 3 days €16.50) Free or discounted admission to attractions, plus free travel on public transport. It's sold at the tourist office and most hotels.

EMERGENCY

Police (☎ emergency 110)

Police headquarters (☎ 9660; Dimitroffstrasse 5)

INTERNET ACCESS

Copytel.de (☎ 993 8999; Grimmaische Strasse 23; per hr €1.50; ☎ 9am–10pm Mon–Sat, noon–10pm Sun)

Internet Cafe (☎ 462 5879; Brühl 66; per hr €2; ☎ 10am–10pm)

Le Bit Café (☎ 0163-298 2092; Rosa-Luxemburg-Strasse 32; per hr €2.50; ☎ 10–3am)

Webcafé (Reichsstrasse 16–18; per hr €2; ☎ 10am–10pm)

LAUNDRY

Maga Pon (☎ 993 8798; Gottschedstrasse 11; wash/dry €3.50/0.50) Combination laundry and hip café.

Schnell und Sauber (Dresdner Strasse 19; €3)

LIBRARIES

Deutsche Bücherei (German National Library; ☎ 227 10; Deutscher Platz 1; ☎) The largest library in Germany, with 13.5 million volumes in a fabulously restored building.

Bibliothek Albertina (☎ 973 0577; Beethovenstrasse 6; ☎) Beautifully restored university library, good for periodicals and foreign-language books.

MEDICAL SERVICES

After-hours emergencies (☎ 192 92; ☎ 7pm–7am)

Klinikum St Georg (☎ 9090; Delitzscher Strasse 141)

Take tram 16 to this hospital.

Universitätsklinikum Leipzig (☎ 971 7300; Liebigstrasse 20) Hospital and clinic.

MONEY

Reisebank (☎ 980 4588; Lower Level, west hall, Hauptbahnhof; ☎ 9am–8pm Mon–Sat, 1–6pm Sun)

POST

Post Office Augustusplatz (☎ 9am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat)

Post Office Hauptbahnhof (☎ 6am–10pm) Inside Presse & Buch bookshop on train level, western end.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Leipzig Tourist Service (☎ 710 4260; www.lts-leipzig.de; Richard-Wagner-Strasse 1; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, 9am–4pm Sat & Sun)

Dangers & Annoyances

Don't leave any valuables in your car, as there is plenty of smash-and-grab theft.

Sights

MUSEUM DER BILDENDEN KÜNSTE

An edgy glass cube is the new home of the **Museum der Bildenden Künste** (Museum of Fine Arts; ☎ 216 990; Katharinenstrasse 10; adult/concession permanent exhibit €5/3.50, temporary exhibit €6/4, combination ticket €8/5; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue & Thu–Sun, noon–8pm Wed), which has a well-respected collection of paintings from the 15th century to today, including works by Caspar David Friedrich, Lucas Cranach the Younger and Claude Monet. Highlights include rooms dedicated to native sons Max Beckmann, Max Klinger, whose striking Beethoven monument is a veritable symphony of marble and bronze, and Neo Rauch, a chief representative of the New Leipzig School.

STADTGESCHICHTLICHES MUSEUM

This **museum** (City History Museum; ☎ 965 130; Markt 1; adult/child €4/3; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun), found in the

Altes Rathaus, chronicles the ups and downs of Leipzig's history. Some temporary themed exhibits are on display nearby in a **new building** (Böttchergässchen 3; adult/concession; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun).

ZEITGESCHICHTLICHES FORUM

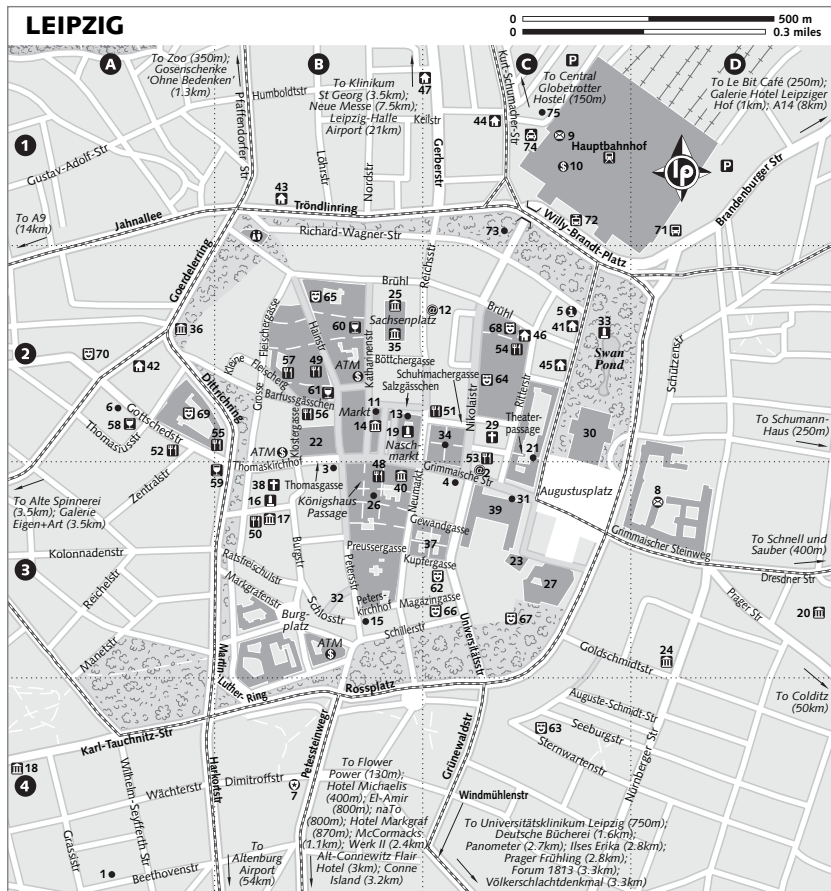
Opened in 1999, the engaging **Zeitgeschichtliches Forum** (Forum of Contemporary History; ☎ 222 20; Grimmaische Strasse 6; admission free; ☎ 9am–6pm Tue–Fri, 10am–6pm Sat & Sun) depicts the history of the GDR from division and dictatorship to resistance and demise. You can see legendarily harsh GDR cleaning products, watch video clips of stunned and despairing people as the Berlin Wall was built between them, and be moved by the events of the peaceful revolution of 1989 that started right here in Leipzig. Ask for the English-language pamphlet translating the main captions.

STASI MUSEUM

In the GDR the walls had ears, as is vividly documented in this **museum** (☎ 961 2443; Dittrichring 24; admission free; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–6pm Sat & Sun) on the all-pervasive power of the Ministry for State Security (Stasi for short), the country's secret police. It's housed in the former Leipzig Stasi headquarters, in a building known as the Runde Ecke (Round Corner). Displays on propaganda, preposterous disguises, cunning surveillance devices, Stasi recruitment among children, scent storage and other chilling machinations reveal the GDR's all-out zeal when it came to controlling, manipulating and repressing its own people.

NIKOLAIKIRCHE

Originally Romanesque and Gothic, **Nikolaikirche** (St Nicholas Church; ☎ 960 5270; ☎ 10am–6pm) now sports an amazing classical-style interior with palm-like pillars and cream-coloured pews. More recently, the church was a key player in the nonviolent movement that eventually brought down the GDR regime. In 1982 it began hosting 'peace prayers' every Monday at 5pm (which are still ongoing) and in 1989 it became the chief meeting point for peaceful demonstrators. A pamphlet recounts the 'miracle' of 9 October 1989, when 600 SED party faithful, who had been sent to the church to break up the services, ended up listening to the sermon and joining the protesters.



THOMASKIRCHE

The composer Johann Sebastian Bach worked in the **Thomaskirche** (St Thomas Church; ☎ 212 4676; www.thomaskirche.org; Thomaskirchhof 18; ☎ 9am-6pm) as a cantor from 1723 until his death in 1750, and his remains lie buried beneath a bronze epitaph near the altar. The Thomanerchor (p193), once led by Bach, is still going strong and now includes 100 boys aged eight to 18. The church tower can be climbed on weekends (€2).

BACH-MUSEUM

Opposite the Thomaskirche, in a baroque house, is the **Bach-Museum** (☎ 964 110; www.bach-leipzig.de; Thomaskirchhof 16; adult/concession/family €4/2/6; ☎ 10am-5pm), which focusses on the composer's

life in Leipzig. After all, this is where he wrote the *Matthäus Passion*, the *Johannes Passion* and the *Weihnachtsoratorium*. There are portraits, manuscripts and other Bach memorabilia. Admission to the Bach-Museum includes an English-language audio-guide.

MENDELSSOHN-HAUS & SCHUMANN-HAUS

Two other important composers have museums dedicated to them in Leipzig: Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, who lived (and died) in the **Mendelssohn-Haus** (☎ 127 0294; www.mendelssohn-stiftung.de; Goldschmidtstrasse 12; admission €3; ☎ 10am-6pm); and Robert Schumann, who spent the first four years of his marriage to Leipzig pianist Clara Wieck in the **Schumann-Haus** (☎ 393 9620; www.schumann-verein.de; Inselstrasse

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18; admission €3; ☎ 2-5pm Wed-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun). Combined admission to these two and the Bach-Museum is €6.

GRASSIMUSEUM

Recently renovated, the university-run **Grassimuseum** (www.grassimuseum.de; Johannisplatz 5-11; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) unites several collections. At the fabulous **Musikinstrumenten-Museum** (☎ 973 0750; http://mfu.uni-leipzig.de; adult/concession/family €3/2/7) you can discover music from five centuries in the prestigious and rarity-filled exhibits, in an interactive sound laboratory, and during concerts. At the **Museum für Völkerkunde** (Ethnological Museum; ☎ 973 1900; www.mvl-grassimuseum.de; adult/concession €3/2) you can plunge into an eye-opening journey through the cultures of the world. Still to return to its permanent base in 2007 is the **Museum für Angewandte Kunst** (Museum for Applied Arts; ☎ 213 3719). Call for times and admission.

GALERIE FÜR ZEITGENÖSSISCHE KUNST

Edgy contemporary art in all media is the platform of the **Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst** (☎ 140 810; Karl-Tauchnitz-Strasse 9/11; adult/concession per space €4/2, both spaces €7/3, free admission Wed;

☎ 2-7pm Tue-Sat, noon-7pm Sun), which has changing exhibits housed in a minimalist container-like space and a late-19th-century villa. The latter is the future home of the gallery's permanent collection of 1950s and '60s German informal art.

VÖLKERSCHLACHTDENKMAL

Some 100,000 soldiers lost their lives in the epic 1813 battle that led to the decisive victory of Prussian, Austrian and Russian forces over Napoleon's army. Built a century later, the **Völkerschlachtdenkmal** (☎ 878 0471; Battle of Nations Monument; Prager Strasse; adult/concession €5/3; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar) is a sombre and imposing 91m colossus, which towers above southeastern Leipzig, not too far from the actual killing fields. The **Forum 1813** (adult/concession €3/2, combination ticket €7/4.50) chronicles the events, or else you can rent an audio-guide with English-language commentary. In June/July, the naTo culture club (see p192) hosts its annual 'bath tub race' in the large reflecting pool that sits below the monument is to take tram 15 to Völkerschlachtdenkmal.

PANOMETER

The happy marriage of a *panorama* (a giant painting) and a *gasometer* (a giant gas tank) is a **panometer** (☎ 121 3396; www.asisi-factory.de; Richard-Lehmann-Strasse 114; admission €8/6; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun). The unusual concept is the brainchild of artist Yadegar Asisi, who creates a new image every 15 months or so. Past examples have included scenes from the Himalayan mountains and ancient Rome. Take tram 16 to Richard-Lehmann-Strasse/Zwickauer Strasse.

ALTE SPINNEREI

'Cotton to culture' is the motto of the **Alte Spinnerei** (☎ 498 0270; Spinnereistrasse 7; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sat), a 19th-century cotton spinning factory turned artist colony. Around 80 New Leipzig School artists, including Neo Rauch, have their studios in this huge pile of red-brick buildings, alongside designers, architects, goldsmiths and other creative types. Their work is displayed in about 10 galleries, including **Galerie Eigen + Art** (☎ 960 7886; www.eigen-art.com), internationally famous for championing young artists. It's in the southwestern district of Plagwitz; take tram 14 to S-Bahnhof Plagwitz.

ZOO

Not your run-of-the-mill **zoo** (☎ 593 3385; www.zoo-leipzig.de; Pfaffendorfer Strasse 29; adult/child/concession €11.50/7.50/10; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Sep, 9am-6pm Apr & Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar), the Leipzig version has lots of rare species, plus perennial crowd-pleasers such as tigers, lions and gorillas. The new elephant habitat, built to look like a Cambodian temple, has been a highlight since 2006. Take tram 12.

Walking Tour

This 4km Historic Centre circuit starts at the Markt and moves clockwise to Augustusplatz, before exploring the attractive south of the old quarter. It's a 1½-hour walk, but will take the best part of a day if you make all the stops.

On the Markt, the arcaded Renaissance **Altes Rathaus** (1; 1556), one of Germany's most stunning town halls, houses the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum (p185). On the opposite side of the Markt, the **Marktgalerie** (2) is one of the shiny new shopping complexes that have been popping up throughout central Leipzig in recent years.

These modern malls continue the tradition spawned by the historic **Mädlerpassage** (3),

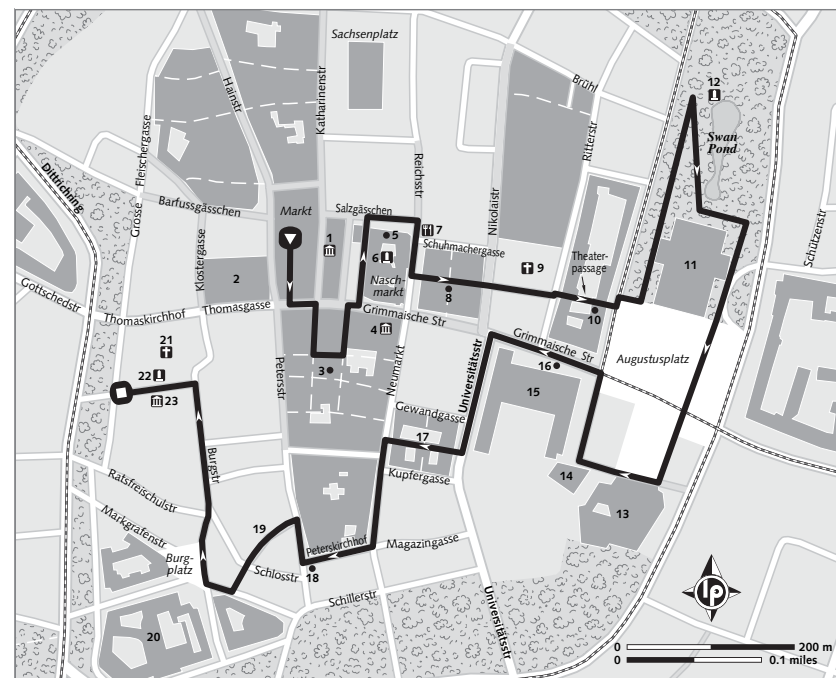
easily among the world's most beautiful shopping arcades. Enter it from Grimmische Strasse, south of the Markt. A mix of neo-Renaissance and Art Nouveau, it opened as a trade hall in 1914 and was renovated at great expense in the early 1990s. Today it's home to shops, bars and restaurants, most notably, Auerbachs Keller (see Eating, p191). There are statues of Faust, Mephistopheles and some students near the Grimmische Strasse exit; according to tradition you should touch Faust's foot for good luck.

Next door, the **Zeitgeschichtliches Forum** (4; p185) is a must for anyone interested in GDR history. Immediately opposite is the Naschmarkt (snack market) which is dominated by the **Alte Börse** (5; ☎ 961 0368; ☎ Mon-Fri by appointment), an ornate former trading house (1687). In front is a **statue of Goethe** (6; 1903), showing him as a young law student at Leipzig University. Today the Alte Börse is a cultural centre hosting concerts, plays and readings throughout the year.

Continue north on Naschmarkt, turn right on Salzgässchen and go to the corner of Reichsstrasse and Schuhmachergässchen, which is dominated by the beautiful Art Nouveau façade of the **Cafe Riquet** (7; p191). Continue a bit south on Reichsstrasse, then turn left into **Specks Hof** (8), another shopping arcade, where you'll pass a water basin that functions as an upside-down bell; ring it by wetting your hands with the water and running them back and forth over two pommels. If you hit it right, the water starts to fizz. Specks Hof itself contains a beautiful series of tile and stained-glass reliefs by Halle artist Moritz Götze. The eastern portal of Specks Hof takes you straight to the **Nikolaikirche** (9, p185).

Carry on east through the Theaterpassage to reach Augustusplatz, Leipzig's cultural nerve centre. The glass structures (which conceal lifts to the underground car park) glow at night, lending the concrete slabs some much-needed warmth. The Theaterpassage itself runs through the 11-storey **Kroch-Haus** (10), which was Leipzig's first 'skyscraper' and now houses part of the university's art collection. Topped by a clock and two muscular bronze sentries who bash the bell at regular intervals, the motto (in Latin) reads: 'Work conquers all'.

The behemoth ahead is the functional **Opernhaus** (11; opera house; 1956-60), backed by a little park with a pond and a **statue of**



WALK FACTS

Start Markt
Finish Bach-Museum
Distance 4km
Duration 1½ hours

Richard Wagner (12). At the opposite end of Augustusplatz is the boxy **Neues Gewandhaus** (13; 1981), home to the world-famous Gewandhaus Orchestra, which was founded in 1743 and is one of Europe's oldest civic orchestras. Just next door, and sticking out like the tall kid in your third-grade picture, is the landmark **MDR Hochhaus** (14; lift €2; ☎ 11am-11pm), a rather attractive skyscraper from 1970, with a viewing platform and restaurant on top.

On the west side of Augustusplatz, the run-down GDR-era **Universität Leipzig** (15; university building), with its bronze relief depicting Karl Marx, is expected to soon have a date with the wrecking ball. Not too many Leipzigers will likely shed a tear, for many still

remember the medieval Paulinerkirche which stood here until being demolished in 1968 by GDR authorities. A handful of beautiful **epitaphs** (16) salvaged from the church are on display in a glass case on Grimmische Strasse.

From Grimmische Strasse, hook a left on Universitätsstrasse and look for the entrance to the **Städtisches Kaufhaus** (17; Universitätsstrasse 16), the site of the city's first cloth exchange (Gewandhaus) and later the inaugural concert hall of the Gewandhaus Orchestra. Composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy once led a music school here, and there are now free concerts in the summer. Since August 2005, the central courtyard has featured the Strasse der Stars, Leipzig's version of the Walk of Fame. Michael Schumacher, Joe Cocker and Mariah Carey are among the celebrities whose plaster-cast hands are displayed in a series of cube-shaped cases.

Exit the Städtisches Kaufhaus, head south on Neumarkt, then turn right on Peterskirchhof and you'll come to **arko** (18; ex-Café Richter; ☎ 960 5235; Petersstrasse 43; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat), the oldest coffee retailer in town

(since 1879). This fabulous and eclectic building, with its golden iron spiral staircase, is worth a gander; the luscious beans are wonderful too.

From here head north on Petersstrasse, a major shopping boulevard, to the glorious new glass-covered **Petersbogen (19)** arcade, where you'll find Leipzig's Casino (admission free, open from 2pm to 2am) upstairs.

Petersbogen spills out on Burgplatz, where you confront the impressive 114m-high tower of the neo-baroque **Neues Rathaus (20)**; ☎ 1230; ☎ 6.45am-4.30pm Mon-Fri), one of the world's largest town halls with some 600 rooms. It was completed in 1905 and stands on the foundations of the Pleissenburg fortress. Recently renovated, it has a rich interior, including a grand staircase straight out of a Donald Trump dream.

From Burgplatz, turn north and walk up Burgstrasse to the **Thomaskirche (21, p186)**. Outside the church is the **Bach Memorial (22, 1908)** showing the composer standing against an organ, with his left-hand jacket pocket turned inside-out (with 20 children from two marriages, the great man always claimed to be broke). The **Bach-Museum (23, p186)** is just opposite the church.

Festivals & Events

Highlights of Leipzig's annual events calendar include the **Leipziger Buchmesse** (Book Fair; www.leipziger-buchmesse.de) in late March, the second biggest in the country after Frankfurt. The **Honky Tonk** (www.honky-tonk.de) pub festival in May features dozens of bands and a shuttle bus between drinking holes. On Whitsuntide, goths from around the world descend for the **Wave-Gotik-Treffen** (www.wave-gotik-treffen.de), the world's largest goth festival, with a pagan village, a medieval market and lots of dark music and merriment. The 10-day **Bach Festival** (www.bach-leipzig.de) takes place in late May or early June.

Sleeping

The Leipzig tourist office runs a free **accommodation service** (☎ 710 4255), with singles/doubles from around €22.50/40.

Mitwohzentrale (☎ 194 30; Goethestrasse 7-10; ☎ 9am-8pm) arranges flat rental (from €20 per person per night).

Budget

Hostel Sleepy Lion (☎ 993 9480; www.hostel-leipzig.de; Käthe-Kollwitz-Strasse 3; dm €13-16, s/d €28/40, linen

€2, breakfast €3; ☎ ☎) Budget-minded nomads will feel welcome at this low-key hostel, with 60 clean and comfy beds in cheerfully painted rooms with private facilities. Major sights and a great party zone are just steps away.

Central Globetrotter Hostel (☎ 149 8960; www.globetrotter-leipzig.de; Kurt-Schumacher-Strasse 41; dm €13-15, s/d €24/36, linen €2, breakfast €4; ☎ ☎) This friendly Hauptbahnhof-adjacent hostel has 80 beds in artsy rooms sporting pine beds and lockers. The kitchen is big enough to cook up a storm, but facilities are shared.

Pension Schlaf Gut (☎ 211 0902; www.schlafgut-leipzig.de; Brühl 64-66; s €30-40, d €43-53; ☎ ☎) You decide the level of comfort at this modular sleep station. The base rate buys the room; small extra fees are charged for TV, kitchen use, daily cleaning, parking and breakfast.

Midrange

Midrange accommodation in the centre is the preserve of the big chains; for something a little more individual you'll have to look a bit further afield.

Galerie Hotel Leipzig Hof (☎ 697 40; www.leipziger-hof.de; Hedwigstrasse 1-3; s €47-115, d €57-135; ☎ ☎ ☎) Leipzig's most unique place to unpack your bags is this 'gallery with rooms', which brims with originals created by local artists since 1989. It's a first-rate stay, yet surprisingly affordable, as is the restaurant.

Alt-Connewitz Flair Hotel (☎ 301 3770; www.flairhotel.com/connewitz; Meusdorfer Strasse 47a; s €45-60, d €70-90; ☎ ☎ ☎) Saxon hospitality is alive and well at this traditional mum-and-son operation in the southern suburb of Connewitz. Rooms are older but in great shape, and the restaurant serves delicious home-cooked meals.

Hotel Markgraf (☎ 303 030; www.markgraf-leipzig.de; Körnerstrasse 36; s €40-55, d €55-75, apt €65-100; ☎ ☎) This smartly run hotel puts you within staggering distance of the Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse nightlife. Many rooms overlook a pretty little park and there's a sauna for relaxing.

Hotel Michaelis (☎ 267 80; www.hotel-michaelis.de; Paul-Grüner-Strasse 44; s €75-150, d €90-180; ☎ ☎ ☎) Close to the Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse hipster mile and the city centre, this well-run place gets our thumbs up for its 59 handsome rooms, well-respected restaurant (with a leafy terrace) and original art collection.

Also recommended:

Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten (☎ 985 10; Kurt-Schumacher-Strasse 23-29; s €73-114, d €92-150; ☎ ☎) Spotless, well-maintained and near the Hauptbahnhof.

Dorint Novotel (☎ 995 80; Goethestrasse 11; s/d €64/89, breakfast €14; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Good value, central and great for families.

Top End

Hotel Fürstenhof (☎ 1400; www.luxurycollection.com/fuerstenhof; Tröndlinring 8; r €230-300, breakfast €19; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This intimate but grand hotel, with a 200-year pedigree, finds ump-teen ways to spoil its guests. It has updated old-world flair, impeccable service, a gourmet restaurant and an oh-so-soothing grotto-style pool and spa.

Westin Leipzig (☎ 9880; Gerberstrasse 15; r €100-400; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Never mind the bland façade, because it merely conceals Leipzig's most design-conscious hotel, whose mega-cool lobby leads to 436 luxurious rooms. Don't miss having a drink at the Falco bar on the 17th floor with the entire city panorama unfolding below.

Eating

Restaurants

Sol y Mar (☎ 961 5721; Gottschedstrasse 4; mains €4-12; ☎ 9am-open end) This is a sensuous place, with soft lighting, ambient sounds and a lush interior (including padded pods for noshing in recline). Despite the concept, the pretence factor is surprisingly low, and so are the prices.

Koslik (☎ 998 5993; Zentralstrasse 1; mains €8-13; ☎ 9am-3am) A stylish wood interior complements the tasty world cuisine offered here, with great breakfasts and meals from pizza to Thai soup to Swiss potato *rösti*.

Auerbachs Keller (☎ 216 100; Grimmische Strasse 2-4, Mädlerspassage; mains €7-20) Founded in 1525, Auerbachs Keller is one of Germany's best-known restaurants. It's cosy and touristy, but the food's actually quite good and the setting memorable. In Goethe's *Faust – Part I*, Mephistopheles and Faust carouse here with some students before they ride off on a barrel. The scene is depicted on a carved tree trunk in what is now the Goethe Room (where the great writer allegedly came for 'inspiration').

Barthel's Hof (☎ 141 310; Hainstrasse 1; mains €7-20; ☎ 7am-midnight) This is a sprawling place with outdoor seating in a courtyard, occasional buffet specials and quirky Saxon dishes such as *Heubraten* (marinated lamb roasted on hay).

Retschenka (☎ 149 2235; Steibs Hof, Nikolaistraße 28-32; mains €7-16; ☎ 11am-midnight Tue-Sun) Gorbachev ate at this kitschy-blue but endearing traditional Russian restaurant tucked away in

a courtyard. On weekends, enjoy your borscht to the sound of live folk music.

Zill's Tunnel (☎ 960 2078; Barfußgässchen 9; mains €7-15; ☎ 11.30am-midnight) Empty tables are a rare sight at this outstanding restaurant offering a classic menu of robust Saxon dishes. Sit on the outside terrace, in the rustic cellar, or in the covered 'tunnel' courtyard.

Medici (☎ 211 3878; Nikolaikirchhof 5; mains €19-35; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 6-11pm Mon-Sat) The interior may resemble a suspension bridge, but this classy Italian spot is widely mentioned as a Leipzig favourite. Mains come in small or large, but serious gourmets go for the three- to five-course set menus (€46 to €62).

Gosenschenke 'Ohne Bedenken' (☎ 566 2360; Mendkestrasse 5; mains €4-12; ☎ noon-1am) This historic tavern, backed by the city's prettiest beer garden, is the perfect place to sample *Gose*, a local top-fermented beer often served with a shot of liqueur. The menu has a distinctly carnivorous bent.

El-Amir (☎ 308 2568; Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse 59; mains €2.50-5) For the best (and biggest) doner in Leipzig, bar none, come to this little hole-in-the-wall place, across from naTo (p192).

Cafés

Café Riquet (☎ 961 0000; Schuhmachergässchen 1; mains €6-12; ☎ 9am-10pm Sun-Thu, 9am-midnight Fri & Sat) Two bronze elephants guard the entrance to this Viennese-style coffeehouse in a superb Art Nouveau building.

Café Kandler (☎ 213 2181; Thomaskirchhof 11; mains €6-12; ☎ 10am-8pm) This café's antiquated ambience is a fine place to enjoy the delicious local sweets called *Bachtaler* (essentially a giant chocolate truffle) and *Leipziger Lerchen* (cake filled with marzipan and jam). It has an excellent tea selection.

Zum Arabischen Coffe Baum (☎ 961 0061; Kleine Fleischergasse 4; mains €7.50-15; ☎ 11am-midnight) Despite the exotic name, Leipzig's oldest café is as stuffy as your grandma's attic, but the cakes and meals are excellent and there's a free coffee museum to boot. Composer Robert Schumann used to be a regular.

Drinking

Leipzig has several party zones. In the centre, the so-called *Drallewatsch*, which centres on Barfußgässchen and Kleine Fleischergasse, is the place for the see-and-be-seen scene, with plenty of outdoor tables for showing off that tan. Locals tend to prefer the more low-key

watering holes west of here, especially along Gottschedstrasse. A more alternative vibe rules south, along student-flavoured Karl-Liebnecht-Strasse, sometimes known as Karli or Südmeile. Nearby, Münzgasse is another up-and-coming party strip. Also see below and right for more drinking ideas.

Milchbar (☎ 980 9594; Gottschedstrasse 1) Colourful lighting makes everyone look good in this youthful bar where live DJs spin house music nightly after 9pm. They've got cocktails and great milk shakes in case you feel like laying off the booze.

Sixtina (☎ 0177-476 4855; Katharinenstrasse 11) At some point in the last few years the word 'absinthe' has ceased to mean 'bad idea', and the result is places like Sixtina, wholly dedicated to the deadly green fairy. We blame the parents.

Spizz (☎ 960 8043; Markt 9) Classic brass instruments dangle above the stage at this city slicker, where you might catch some cool jazz. It has three levels, a good range of wine and beer and slow service (due to sheer numbers).

Cafe Barbakane (☎ 702 5590; Universitätsstrasse 9) Part of the cavernous Moritz-Bastei, this is an always lively café-bar with courtyard seating and dirt-cheap yet delicious fare (€2 to €4) to vanquish that hangover.

McCormacks (☎ 301 9796; Karl-Liebnecht-Strasse 75) The high-octane vibe, foamy pints of Guinness and lovely flower-filled beer garden make this one of the best Irish pubs in town.

Luise (☎ 961 1488; Bosestrasse 4; ☎ 9am-open end) Empty tables are a rare sight at this perennial favourite, where a mostly not-so-very-young crowd has a good time from morning till the wee hours.

Entertainment

The best listings magazine is *Kreuzer* (€1.80), although the free monthlies *Frizz* and *Blitz* might do just fine.

LIVE MUSIC

Moritz-Bastei (☎ 702 590; Universitätsstrasse 9) This classic student club occupies a warren of historic cellars below the old city fortifications. It has live bands or DJs most nights, and the neat Café Barbakane (see Drinking, above), and runs films outside in summer.

nato (☎ 391 5539; www.nato-leipzig.de; Karl-Liebnecht-Strasse 46) The mother of Leipzig's alternative music pub-clubs, with jazz, experimental and indie sounds alongside films and theatre. Take trams 10 or 11.

Conne Island (☎ 301 3038; Koberger Strasse 3) This former squatter's haunt has morphed into the city's top venue for punk, indie, ska, rock and hip-hop concerts. It's in the southern suburb of Connewitz; take tram 9 to Koberger Brücke.

Werk II (☎ 308 010; www.werk-2.de; Kochstrasse 132) This large cultural centre in an old factory is great for catching up-and-coming bands or alternative film and theatre. It's also in Connewitz; take tram 9 to Connewitzer Kreuz.

CLUBS

Flower Power (☎ 961 3441; Riemannstrasse 42) It's party time any time at this wackily decorated haunt (check out the old pinball machines). The action doesn't reach a crescendo until 4am and the music tends to be older than the crowd.

Dark Flower (☎ 0163-633 0011; Hainstrasse 12-14) This sweaty and cavernous cellar is the darling of the Goth crowd, although electro, rock and '80s also make it onto the turntable.

Ilse Erika (☎ 306 5111; Bernhard-Göring-Strasse 152) The living-room look makes this small but legendarily club feel warm and welcoming. Music-wise, expect indie, electronic and whatever the mostly student-age crowd has on their iPod.

Bounce 87 (☎ 149 6687; Nikolaistrasse 12-14) This is a key venue for black music: mellow R&B and soul in the Red Lounge, cool rap classics in the Blue Basement.

GAY & LESBIAN VENUES

GegenPol magazine (www.gegenpol.net, in German) and several free publications keep track of the ever-changing gay scene. Also check www.gayleipzig.de (in German) for ideas.

Rosa Linde (☎ 149 9360; www.rosalinde.de; Steibs Hof, Brühl 64-66) Nice, intimate bar, café and information centre for men and women.

Blau Trude (☎ 212 6679; Sternwartenstrasse 16) This lesbi-gay-bi-transgender club is a scene stalwart, but it recently moved to new digs outside the city centre.

New Orleans (☎ 960 7989; Brühl 56) A low-key mixed place with a modern interior, some Cajun flavour and flirt-friendly table telephones.

CINEMAS

Prager Frühling (☎ 306 5333; www.kinobar-leipzig.de; Bernhard-Göring-Strasse 152) 'Prague Spring' might sound a bit militant, but this is actually an excellent arthouse cinema, which sometimes shows offbeat foreign films in the original. It's above Ilse Erika (see Clubs, above).

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Gewandhausorchester (☎ 127 00; www.gewandhaus.de; Augustusplatz 8) Led by Ricardo Chailly since 2005, this is one of Europe's finest and oldest orchestras, with a tradition harking back to 1743 – Mendelssohn was one of its conductors. It performs primarily at the Neues Gewandhaus as well as in the Thomaskirche.

Thomanerchor (☎ 984 420; www.thomaskirche.org; Thomaskirchhof 18) This famous boys' choir performs Bach motets and cantatas at 6pm on Friday and 3pm on Saturday, and also sings during Sunday services at 9.30am and 6pm at the Thomaskirche (p186). Special concerts take place throughout the year.

Oper Leipzig (☎ 126 1261; www.oper-leipzig.de; Augustusplatz 12) Leipzig's Opernhaus (opera house) has a 300-year tradition, and has had Henri Maier at the helm since 2002. The programme is an eclectic mix of classics, contemporary works like *Angels in America* and newly commissioned operas such as *The Black Monk*, based on a Chekhov novel. Best of all, the Gewandhausorchester provides the music.

Also check the listings magazines for concerts at the Bach-Museum (p186), the Schumann-Haus (p186), the Mendelssohn-Haus (p186) and the Nikolaikirche (p185).

THEATRE & CABARET

Schauspielhaus (☎ 126 80; www.schauspiel-leipzig.de; Bosestrasse 1) The repertory at Leipzig's largest theatre ranges from classics infused with modern elements to new plays by up-and-coming writers.

Theater Neue Szene (☎ 980 9393; Gottschedstrasse 16) The Schauspielhaus also operates this intimate stage where works by contemporary playwrights, often with a critical bent, are the bread and butter.

Krystallpalast (☎ 140 660; www.krystallpalastvariete.de; Magazingasse 4) This company puts on the finest variety shows in town, with snake women, flamenco, trapeze acts and more.

Academixer (☎ 2178 7878; Kupfergasse 3) For a dose of satirical cabaret, head to this place near the university.

Getting There & Away

AIR
Leipzig-Halle airport (☎ 224 1155; www.leipzig-halle-airport.de) is served by domestic and international flights from two dozen airlines, including Lufthansa, German Wings, Air

Berlin, Condor and Cirrus. RyanAir flies into **Altenburg airport** (www.flughafen-altenburg.de) from London-Stansted.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Leipzig lies just south of the A14 Halle–Dresden autobahn and 15km east of the A9, which links Berlin to Nuremberg. It's best to leave your vehicle in a car park or garage. The one at the Leipzig Hauptbahnhof charges a maximum of €3 for 24 hours (except on Saturday, when the rate goes up to €15). Between 8am and 6pm, parking at the zoo costs a reasonable €2.50 for four hours.

RIDE SERVICES

The **Mitfahrzentrale** (☎ 194 40; Goethestrasse 7-10; ☎ 9am-8pm) can organise shared rides.

TRAIN

Leipzig is an important link between eastern and western Germany, with connections to all major cities. There are frequent services to Frankfurt (€61, 3½ hours), Munich (€74, five hours), Dresden (€18, 1¼ hours), Berlin (€36, 1¼ hours) and Hamburg (€79, three hours).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORTS

Leipzig-Halle airport is served by RE trains twice hourly (€3.40, 15 minutes), leaving from the Hauptbahnhof. A taxi to or from the city centre costs around €30.

Altenburg airport is located about 50km south of Leipzig and is connected to the city centre by a bus shuttle (€12, 1¼ hours). It goes to/from the central bus station on the eastern side of the Hauptbahnhof. For further information, contact ☎ 03447-850 613 or www.thuesac.de.

BICYCLE

Zweirad Eckhardt (☎ 961 7274; Güterstrasse; ☎ 6am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat), right by the Hauptbahnhof, hires out bikes for €8 per 24 hours.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Public transport is operated by **LVB** (☎ 194 49; www.lvb.de), which runs an **information kiosk** (☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat) on Willy-Brandt-Platz outside the Hauptbahnhof. The central tram station is here as well. The S-Bahn circles the city's outer suburbs. Single tickets cost €1.30 for up to four stops and €1.70 for longer trips; day passes are €4.90.

TAXI

Funktaxi (☎ 4884) and **Löwen Taxi** (☎ 710 00) are the main local firms. There is a €2.10 hire charge and then it's €1 per kilometre.

AROUND LEIPZIG
Colditz Escape Museum

Built high on a crag above the sleepy town of Colditz, some 46km southeast of Leipzig, is the impressive **Schloss Colditz** (☎ 034381-437 77; www.schlosscolditz.com; Schlossgasse 1; adult/concession/family €5/3/12; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm daily Nov-Mar), a Renaissance palace that's seen stints as a hunting lodge, a poorhouse and a mental hospital. Mostly, though, it's famous as Oflag IVC, a WWII-era high-security prison for Allied officers, including a nephew of Winston Churchill. Most had already escaped from less secure camps and been recaptured. Some 300 made further attempts, and 31 actually managed to flee. The would-be escapees were often aided by ingenious self-made gadgetry, including a glider fashioned from wood and bed sheets, and a homemade sewing machine for making bogus German uniforms. Most astounding, perhaps, is a 44m-long tunnel below the chapel that French officers dug in 1941-42, before the Germans caught them. You can see some of these contraptions, along with lots of photographs, in the small but fascinating **Fluchtmuseum** (Escape Museum) within the palace. Several inmates wrote down their experiences later, of which Pat Reid's *The Colditz Story* is the best known account.

At the time of writing, sections of the palace were being remodelled into a new DJH hostel.

Bus 931 runs to Colditz from Leipzig. You can also take a train to Bad Lausick and catch bus 613 from there. The one-way trip takes between 90 minutes and two hours. The town is at the junction of the B107 and B176 roads between Leipzig and Chemnitz.

CHEMNITZ

☎ 0371 / pop 250,000

Like most eastern German cities, Chemnitz (pronounced *kem-nits*) has had to completely reinvent itself since reunification, and it has done so with remarkable success. Its smoke-stack industries once earned it the nickname of 'Saxon Manchester', and the GDR dubbed it Karl-Marx-Stadt, and gave it a Stalinist

makeover. Such scars don't heal easily, but Chemnitz has done its best. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in the revitalised city centre, now an attractive, pedestrianised shopping and entertainment district. New architecture by Helmut Jahn and Hans Kollhof mixes nicely with a few surviving Renaissance buildings. Add to that a lively cultural scene, one of Europe's largest intact Art Nouveau quarters and an unpretentious air, and you've got more than a few good reasons for a stopover.

Orientation

Chemnitz is 80km southwest of Dresden and is a gateway to the Erzgebirge (Iron Ore Mountains). The city centre, anchored by the Markt and encircled by a ring road, is about a 10-minute walk south of the train station via Bahnhofstrasse or the Stalinist-flavoured Strasse der Nationen. Trams 1, 2, 4 and 6 also link the two; get off at Zentralhaltestelle. The tallest building in town, the Hotel Mercure, is great for keeping your bearings. The little Chemnitz River, west of the city centre, flows north-south.

Information

There are several banks with ATMS in the Markt area.

Main post office (cnr Posthof & Strasse der Nationen)

Tourist office (☎ 690 680; www.chemnitz-tourismus.de; Markt 1; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat)

Vobis (☎ 533 6515; basement, Galerie Roter Turm; per hr €2) Internet access.

Sights**KUNSTSAMMLUNGEN CHEMNITZ**

A palatial 1909 building, just off the GDR-era Strasse der Nationen, shelters the **Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz** (Chemnitz Art Museum; ☎ 488 4424; adult/concession €3/2; ☎ noon-7pm Tue-Sun), a high-calibre collection of 19th- and 20th-century German artists. The list of heavy hitters includes Caspar David Friedrich and Lovis Corinth and, most famously, the Chemnitz-born Expressionist painter Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, a co-founder of the artist group Die Brücke.

In late 2007 the museum will expand into a second building, the Museum Gunzenhausen at Stollberger Strasse 2. The focus will be on New Objectivity artists, including Otto Dix, and will also include works by Max Beckmann, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and others.

KARL-MARX-DENKMAL & AROUND

A rare vestige from the GDR era awaits near the corner of Strasse der Nationen and Brückenstrasse, where a humongous 7.1m-high **bronze head of Karl Marx** occupies a spot in front of a wall-size frieze. It exhorts: 'Workers of all countries, unite!' in several languages.

Across the street, past the Stadthalle/Hotel Mercure complex, is the **Roter Turm**, a medieval defence tower.

DASTIETZ

Chemnitz's new pride and joy, **DASTietz** (Moritzstrasse 20) is a former department store reborn as a cultural centre. Besides the public library and a few shops, it now harbours the **Neue Sächsische Galerie** (☎ 367 6680; adult & concession €2, under 14yr free; ☎ 10am-6pm Thu-Mon, 10am-8pm Tue), which presents postwar works by Saxon artists. It's a small but growing collection, begun only in 1990 when its founders set up shop locally in the former Stasi headquarters. Also here is the **Museum für Naturkunde** (Natural History Museum; ☎ 488 4551; adult/concession/family €4/2.50/8; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, closed Wed), where the most interesting display, the Versteinertes Wald (petrified forest), can be admired for free in the atrium; some of the stony trunks are 290 million years old.

MARKT

Chemnitz's compact centre has been given a complete facelift since reunification, and it has evolved into an attractive commercial hub. Now, historic buildings rub shoulders with such notable newcomers as the glass-and-steel Galeria Kaufhof department store (designed by Helmut Jahn), and the Galerie Roter Turm, a shopping mall ensconced by a sandstone façade.

Both form part of the ensemble encircling the bustling Markt, which is dominated by the **Altes Rathaus** (Old Town Hall), an imposing white 15th-century building with a Renaissance portal, and the **Neues Rathaus** (New Town Hall), which looks older but only dates to 1911. Completing this impressive silhouette is the **Hoher Turm** (High Tower) behind the Altes Rathaus. The adjacent **Jakobikirche** is a Gothic church topped by a neat roof turret and updated with an Art Deco façade.

SCHLOSS AREA

Across the river, the **Schlossteich** is a large park-ringed pond, with a music pavilion for

summer concerts. Towering over it is the **Schlosskirche** (☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 2.30-5.30pm Sun Apr-Oct, 11am-4pm Tue-Sat Nov-Mar), a 12th-century Benedictine monastery later recast into a weighty Gothic hall church. Its treasures include Hans Witten's intriguing sculpture *Christ at the Column* (1515). Just south of the church stands the reconstructed **Schloss** itself, which houses the **Schlossbergmuseum** (☎ 488 4501; Schlossberg 12; adult/concession €3/1.80; ☎ 1-7pm Tue-Fri, noon-9pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun). The vaulted interior is actually better than the historical displays and paintings.

HENRY VAN DE VELDE-MUSEUM

Fans of multitalented Belgian artist Henry Van de Velde will enjoy this small **museum** (☎ 533 1088; Parkstrasse 58; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed, Fri, Sat & Sun) inside the 1903 Villa Esche, his first commission in Germany. The downstairs dining room and music salon have been restored as period rooms, while upstairs you'll find a small collection of the artist's crafts and furniture. It's about 2.5km south of the centre (tram 4 to Haydnstrasse).

If you enjoy Art Nouveau architecture, you might also find a stroll through the **Kassberg** neighbourhood rewarding; it's about 1km west of the centre (bus 26 to Barbarossastrasse). The building at the corner of Barbarossastrasse and Weststrasse is especially stunning.

Sleeping

Hotel Sächsischer Hof (☎ 461 480; www.saechsischer-hof.de; Brühl 26; s/d €55/75; ☎) This family-run hotel is on a quiet street not far from the Hauptbahnhof and the Schlossberg, and is a good bet if you're simply looking for a decent, solid place to stay.

Hotel Mercure (☎ 6830; www.mercure.com; Brückenstrasse 19; r €50-125, breakfast €14; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This hotel stands out from the pack, and not only because of its lofty 26-floor tower. Modern, efficient and with full service, it has some neat features, including an old-timer vehicle exhibit in the lobby, a free sauna and a lavish breakfast buffet served in the restaurant on the 26th floor. Rooms are snug but great views are guaranteed.

Hotel Chemnitz Hof (☎ 6840; www.guennewig.de; Theaterplatz 4; s €82-92, d €108-126; ☎ ☎ ☎) Behind the stolid façade awaits this classy establishment, with Bauhaus-style décor, eccentric artworks and 98 comfortable rooms

sheathed in warm colours; some overlook Theaterplatz.

Eating & Drinking

And der Schlossmühle (☎ 335 2533; Schlossberg 3; mains €4-20) One of several options at the foot of the castle, this 1704 half-timbered gem serves German food and has a woody interior and gardenlike terrace.

Turmbrauhaus (☎ 909 5095; Neumarkt 2; mains €3-10) The hearty food at this upbeat brewpub is pitched to mainstream tastes, but the service is swift, the prices are low, the ale is tasty and the outdoor tables are great for people-watching.

Ratskeller (☎ 694 9875; Markt 1; mains €8-18) This atmospheric place is wildly popular for huge portions of local cuisine, and it has over 120 dishes on the menu! You can choose between rustic or sophisticated sections, and the painted and vaulted ceilings are so gorgeous you may want to eat them too.

Getting There & Around

Chemnitz is linked by direct train to Dresden (€11.70, 1½ hours), Leipzig (€13.40, one hour) and Zwickau (€3.90, 55 minutes). The east-west A4 skirts Chemnitz, while the A72 heading south for Munich originates here.

Buses and trams make up the local public transport system. Single tickets start at €1 for short rides; individual day passes are €2.90 per person, or €5 for families.

AROUND CHEMNITZ

Augustusburg

About 13km east of Chemnitz, draped across a craggy mountain top above forests and fields, Augustusburg (population 5100) is one of those relatively undiscovered gems people rave about, with friendly locals to boot. The big draw here is the oversized **Schloss** (☎ 037291-380 18; www.die-sehenswerten-drei.de; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar), built in 1572 as the summer residence of Elector August, the great-great-great grandfather of Saxon ruler Augustus the Strong. Combined admission to the complex's five museums is €6.60 for adults, €5 with a concession and €18 for a family, but individual tickets can be purchased as well.

The Schloss is nicknamed the 'Palace of the Bikers' for good reason. This is where you'll find the **Motorradmuseum** (adult/concession €3.20/2.40), one of the largest and most prestigious

collections of motorcycles in Europe. Treasures include classic Horch, DKW (later MZ) and BMW roadsters, and some very rare Harley models. In the former stables, the focus is on a somewhat earlier mode of transportation in the **Kutschenmuseum** (adult/concession €1.60/1.20), which brims with Cinderella-worthy horse-drawn carriages.

Another wing contains the **Jagdtier- und Vogelkundemuseum** (adult/concession €2.80/2.10), which has adorable dioramas featuring local feathered and furry creatures – a likely winner with the kiddies. Admission is also good for several antler-filled rooms dealing with the palace's hunting history. The main reason for coming up here, though, is to see the Venusaal, a vast hall decorated with original 16th-century murals depicting a spooky, mythical mountainscape. Finally, there's the **Kerker** (adult/concession €1.60/1.20), a dark, damp and cold underground prison that is now filled with medieval torture instruments.

Other palace sections can only be seen on **guided tours** (adult/concession €3/2) in German. These include the **residential wing**, the **palace church**, which has an altar painting by Lucas Cranach the Younger, and the **Brunnenhaus**, which still contains the wooden mechanism that once brought water up from a 130m-deep well.

You also have to pay separately to climb the **Aussichtsturm** (viewing tower; €1), for clear views across the region.

Outside the north entrance is the **Adler- und Falkenhof** (falconry; demonstrations adult/concession €5/3; ☎ 11am & 3pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct), with owls, buzzards, eagles, and other trained hunting birds performing in-flight demonstrations.

The complex also contains a **DJH hostel** (☎ 202 56; dm under 26yr €15.30-17.30, over 26yr €18.30-20.30; ☎) and several restaurants. For more lodging and eating options, head down into the village, where you'll also find the **tourist office** (☎ 395 50; www.augustusburg.de; Marienberger Strasse 24; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Trains run from Chemnitz to Erdmannsdorf (€2.80, 20 minutes), from where you take the **Drahtseilbahn** (funicular) to Augustusburg (one-way/return €4/3).

On weekends and holidays between Easter and October, an excursion bus called *Der Augustusburger* travels directly from the Zentralhaltestelle in Chemnitz (see p194) to the

palace (return €6, 30 minutes). This service is operated by **CVAG** (☎ 237 0333; www.cvag.de, in German).

Coming from Chemnitz, motorists should follow the L236 country road east to the Schloss. From the A4, get off at Frankenberg, take the B169 to Flöha, then switch to the B180 to Augustusburg.

ZWICKAU

☎ 0375 / pop 101,000

A gateway to the Erzgebirge (Iron Ore Mountains), Zwickau has written an especially important chapter in German automobile history. It is the birthplace of both the Audi brand (in 1910) and the GDR-era Trabant, which began rolling, very slowly, off assembly lines in 1957 (also see boxed text, p198). The city's newly revamped car museum is a must for anyone even remotely interested in the subject. Production continues today courtesy of Volkswagen, which brought much-needed jobs to the area. As a result, Zwickau feels less depressed than other former GDR industrial cities, and also has a fairly lively centre teeming with pubs and restaurants. This, plus an impressive cathedral, the birth house of composer Robert Schumann and some of Germany's oldest homes, make Zwickau worth a stop.

Orientation

The compact and largely pedestrianised Altstadt is encircled by Dr-Friedrichs-Ring. The Hauptbahnhof (central train station) is about 800m west of the ring road; simply follow Bahnhofstrasse, then Schumannstrasse.

Vogtlandbahn regional trains to the Czech spa town of Karlovy Vary stop right in the heart of town, just south of the Markt and Rathaus.

Information

Main post office (Hauptstrasse 18-20)

Deutsche Bank (☎ 271 90; cnr Innere Plauensche Strasse & Dr-Friedrichs-Ring)

Tourist office (☎ 271 3240; www.zwickau-tourist.de; Hauptstrasse 6; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat)

Sights

AUGUST HORCH MUSEUM

A century of automobile history comes alive in this amazing **car museum** (☎ 2717 3812; www.horch-museum.de; Audistrasse 7; adult/concession €5/3.50; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun) that will enlighten and

entertain even non-car-buffs. Exhibits sprawl within the original early-20th-century Audi factory, and are presented with great imagination. Old-timer gems include a 1911 Horch Phaeton, Silberfeil racing cars from the 1930s, and – yes – plenty of Trabants (produced here until 1989). You can walk inside an early gas station, inspect Audi founder August Horch's original office, stroll down a GDR streetscape and even learn how Trabants were made. English-language audio-guides are available for €2. The museum is about 2.5km north of the Altstadt; take tram 7 to Kurt-Eisner-Strasse.

PRIESTERHÄUSER ZWICKAU

Next to the Dom, the **Priesterhäuser Zwickau** (Priests' Houses; ☎ 834 551; Domhof 5-8; adult/concession/family €4/2/9; ☎ 1-6pm Tue-Sun) give you a close-up look at medieval living conditions. This ensemble of pint-sized cottages were built between the 13th and 15th centuries, and they rank among the country's oldest surviving residential buildings. Church employees lived here as late as the 19th century. Imagine the people who've come before you as you climb up the creaky stairs, duck into small chambers or inspect the soot-stained kitchen. A modern annex has changing exhibits about the town history.

DOM ST MARIEN

West of the Schumann-Haus, **Dom St Marien** (Domhof; admission €1, tower €1; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat) is a late-Gothic hall church that will quicken the pulse of art fans. Foremost among its treasures is the 1479 altar painting by Michael Wohlge-muth (a teacher of Albrecht Dürer) plus an emotionally charged pietà (1502) by famous local sculptor Peter Breuer, and some ultra-rare Protestant confessionals. For details, ask to borrow the English pamphlet.

ROBERT SCHUMANN-HAUS

Behind Hauptmarkt is the **Robert-Schumann-Haus** (☎ 215 269; Hauptmarkt 5; adult/concession/family €4/2/9; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat), where this renowned composer of the Romantic Age was born and spent the first seven years of his life. Exhibits trace the various life stations of the man who sadly went seriously bipolar in his 30s, and died young in Bonn (p565). A highlight is the piano once played by Schumann's wife, Clara Wieck, herself a noted pianist. There's a monument to the man in the northeast corner of the Hauptmarkt.

JOHANNISBAD

A 10-minute walk north of the Altstadt, the **Johannisbad** (☎ 272 560; Johannisstrasse 16; adult/concession per hr €3/2.50, per 2hr €4.50/3.50; ♿ 10am-10pm Mon & Wed, 8am-10pm Tue & Thu, 10am-11pm Fri, 9am-10pm Sat & Sun) is a beautiful old Art Nouveau swimming pool and sauna complex, which is worth a look even without taking a dip. Walk north on Max-Pechstein-Strasse, then right on Johannisstrasse.

Sleeping & Eating

Brauereigasthof Zwickau (☎ 303 2032; www.brauhaus-zwickau.de; Peter-Breuer-Strasse 12-20; s/d €45/60; ♿) This is an excellent bargain base. It has five simple but cosy rooms, with ancient exposed beams, above a sprawling resto-pub that makes its own beer and schnapps and serves hearty meals in belt-loosening portions (€6 to €13).

Zum Uhu (☎ 295 044; www.zum-uhu.de; Bahnhofstrasse 51; s/d/tr €33/62/75) This little family-run place is an excellent place for soaking up some local colour, especially in the congenial restaurant – specialists in Saxon cuisine. Rooms range from rustic to modern and are pretty spacious.

Achat Hotel (☎ 8720; www.achat-hotel.de; Leipziger Strasse 180; s/d Mon-Thu €106/118, Fri-Sun €63/75; ♿ ♿ ♿) This modern and spotless hotel feels all business all the time, but it has plenty

of comfort factors to satisfy the leisure brigade. These include a 24-hour sauna, super-sized rooms and a restaurant that even draws locals (mains €7 to €14). Take tram 4 to 'Neue Welt'.

Zur Grünhainer Kapelle (☎ 204 8255; Peter-Breuer-Strasse 3; mains €8-14.50) Feast on Saxon dishes in this old chapel with its cross-vaulted ceilings, fabulous carved furniture and uneven art exhibits. The house speciality is the charmingly named *besoffne Wildsau* (drunken boar)!

El Greco (☎ 273 7002; Alter Steinweg 2; mains €8-16) Huge menus are not usually a sign of quality, but that rule doesn't apply at this rock-solid Greek eatery where we haven't had a bad meal yet. Expect authentic dishes, quality ingredients and smiling service.

Sky Lounge (☎ 390 9969; Peter-Breuer-Strasse 19; dinner mains €12-27; ♿ from 9am) This hipster place is a surprising island of sophistication. An elevator whisks you to the top floor, where you'll find a lounge, a restaurant and two terraces to catch the morning and afternoon sun. Breakfast is served any time.

Drei Schwäne (☎ 204 7650; www.drei-schwaene.de; Gartenstrasse 1; mains €18-22) Food fanciers will want to make the trip out to this tiptop place, where the cuisine is inspired by the robust flavours of Provence, Tuscany and the Alsace. Excellent wines and welcoming hosts ensure a memorable evening.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS

More than anything else, Zwickau has been shaped by the automobile industry and by one man in particular: August Horch (1868–1951). The first Horch cars rolled into the streets in 1904 and quickly became the queen among luxury vehicles, besting even Mercedes Benz. Horch, alas, was a better engineer than a businessman and in 1909 he was fired by his investors. Not missing a step, he simply opened another factory across town, calling it Audi (Latin for Horch, which means 'listen' in German).

Ever wondered why the Audi symbol is four interlinking rings? They stand for Audi, Horch, DKW and Wanderer, the four Saxon car makers who merged into a single company called Auto-Union during the Great Depression. After the war, Audi moved to Ingolstadt in Bavaria. As for Zwickau, it became the birthplace of the Trabant – the GDR's answer to the Volkswagen Beetle. The name means 'satellite' in German, and was inspired by the launch of the world's first satellite – the Soviet Sputnik – in 1957, a year before production started.

By the time it ceased in 1991, more than three million Trabis had rolled off the assembly lines here, most of them for export to other socialist countries – which is why regular GDR folks had to wait up to 13 years (!) to get one.

Because of the country's chronic steel shortage, the Trabi's body was made from reinforced plastic called Duroplast. Powered by a two-stroke engine similar to that of a large lawnmower, this rolling environmental disaster pumped out five times the amount of fumes as the average Western vehicle. Berlin residents still talk of waking up the day the Wall opened to see a vast queue of Trabants stretching down the road, with a dull brown cloud gathering overhead...

Drinking

Berlin it ain't, but you can still have a rollicking good time along Zwickau's **Kneipenstrasse** (pub row), aka Peter-Breuer-Strasse. Choices include **egghead** (☎ 303 3386; Peter-Breuer-Strasse 34), a sleek but unpretentious cocktail bar with all kinds of mixed drinks, shakes and tasty crêpes for sustenance.

Kick back with a cocktail amid the gilded baroque mirrors, huge aquarium and red leather lounges in buzzy **La Bodeguita del Medio** (☎ 440 6741; Innere Schneeberger Strasse 2a; ♿ Tue-Sat).

Getting There & Around

Zwickau has direct train links to Leipzig (€13.40, 1¼ hours), Chemnitz (€3.90, 55 minutes), Dresden (€19.10, 1¾ hours) and other cities. Drivers should take the A4 rather than the A72, which will have construction delays for years to come.

Single tickets on trams and buses are €1.60, day passes are €2.90.

AROUND ZWICKAU

In an old palace in Lichtenstein, about 14km east of Zwickau, the mind-boggling **Daetz-Centrum** (☎ 037204-585858; www.daetz-centrum.com; Schlossallee 2; admission incl audio-guide €8/6; ♿ 10am-6pm) is a private collection of wood sculpture from five continents. Its owner promises to 'take you around the world in 80 minutes', past Native American kachina dolls, intricate masks from Micronesia, delicate figurines from China and other treasures – some 600 in all. You can also watch a changing crew of international artists carving away in the workshop. Take the Hohenstein-Ernstthal exit off the A4 or the Hartenstein exit off the A72.

EASTERN SAXONY**BAUTZEN**

☎ 03591 / pop 42,200

The deep valley of the Spree River and the medieval towers that rise from cliffs above it create a fine metaphor for the dual nature of Bautzen, which celebrated its 1000th anniversary in 2002. While the town is undeniably German, its heritage is also influenced by the Sorbs, Germany's sole indigenous minority (see boxed text, p158). Several Sorb cultural institutions are based here, and public signage

is bilingual, though you'd be lucky to hear the language spoken.

Though badly damaged many times over its history, the Altstadt's labyrinth of cobbled lanes has hardly changed for centuries, and many beautifully restored historic buildings remain, including no fewer than 17 towers and much of the town fortification.

Orientation

The Spree River ribbons along the western side of Bautzen's Altstadt, which is centred on the Hauptmarkt. The Hauptbahnhof is a 15-minute walk south of the old quarter, and is reached via Bahnhofstrasse, Karl-Marx-Strasse and Lauengraben. For the classic view of the town silhouette, follow Lauenstrasse west to the Friedensbrücke.

Information

Internetcafé Bautzen (☎ 277 110; Steinstrasse 13;

per 30min €1.50; ♿ 9am-11pm Mon-Sat, 2-11pm Sun)

Post office (Postplatz)

Sparkasse (Kornmarkt) A bank.

Tourist office (☎ 420 16; www.bautzen.de; Hauptmarkt 1; ♿ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri year-round, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Mar-Oct, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun Nov-Feb)

Sights**REICHENTURM**

An exploration of Bautzen might start with a climb up the **Reichenturm** (☎ 460 431; Kornmarkt; adult/child €1.20/0.60; ♿ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct), on the eastern edge of the Altstadt. The addition of the baroque cupola in 1718 caused the 53m-high structure to start tilting. Today it deviates 1.4m from the centre, making it one of the steepest leaning towers north of the Alps. Nearby, the **Stadtmuseum** (city museum; ☎ 498 50; Kornmarkt 1) is scheduled to reopen with a new, modern concept in 2008.

HAUPTMARKT

Reichenstrasse leads west from the tower, past fancy baroque houses to the **Hauptmarkt**, site of the tourist office and thrice-weekly farmers markets. The square is dominated by the impressive **Rathaus**, with an 18th-century baroque exterior that masks a Gothic origin. The intriguing **sundial** measures time, as well as the lengths of the days and nights for each date.

DOM ST PETRI

North of the Hauptmarkt is the **Fleischmarkt**, the old meat market, dominated by the **Dom St**

Petri. This is the only *Simultankirche* in eastern Germany, meaning it serves both Catholics and Protestants. When the Reformation reached Bautzen in 1524, both congregations agreed to share the church, with the Protestants holding services in the nave and the Catholics in the choir. There's a waist-high iron grating separating the two – although it was 4m high until 1952!

Just behind the Dom is the **Domstift**, a U-shaped bishop's palace entered via a richly decorated baroque palace. Loads of objects gleam inside the **Domschatzkammer** (treasury; ☎ 351 950; ☎ 10am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri), the oldest being a portable 13th-century enamel altar.

Behind the palace, a lane leads down to the **Nicolaiturm** tower and a cemetery cradled by the romantically ruined **Nicolaikirche**, which was destroyed in the Thirty Years' War.

SCHLOSS ORTENBURG

Further west is Schloss Ortenburg, on a strategic cliff-top spot that's been occupied by a series of castles since the 7th century. You enter the complex through its most interesting structure, the late-Gothic **Matthiasturm** (Matthias Tower), named for the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus who ruled over the region in the late 15th century – you can see him depicted on horseback as a monumental relief on the tower.

The main palace houses a regional courthouse and is not open to the public. A smaller one, off the courtyard, contains the **Sorbisches Museum** (☎ 424 03; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar), which displays Sorb folk art, musical instruments, costumes and other items in the old salt storehouse.

Across the square is Bautzen's new theatre, noteworthy mostly for the amazingly detailed **neoclassical sandstone frieze** that's been incorporated into the façade. Sculpted by Ernst Rietchel in 1804, it depicts the tragedy of Orest from ancient Greek mythology and originally decorated the now-destroyed Hoftheater in Dresden.

ALTE WASSERKUNST

South of the Schloss, and along the old town wall, is the **Alte Wasserkunst** (☎ 415 88; adult/concession €1.50/1; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar), a tower containing an ingenious late-medieval pump station, which is once again operational.

BAUTZEN PRISONS

It seems incongruous that this pretty, historic town has been known as *Gefängnistadt* (prison town) for over a century. The first facility, **Bautzen I**, a yellow brick structure from 1904, gained such notoriety under the Nazis and later the Soviets that it earned the moniker *Gelbes Elend* (Yellow Misery). Completely modernised, it's still used as a correctional facility today.

South of town is **Bautzen II**, which became a Stasi prison in GDR times. Many famous regime opponents – including Rudolf Bahro, who later co-founded the Green Party in West Germany – served their sentences here. Today, it's a **Gedenkstätte** (memorial site; ☎ 404 74; www.gedenkstaette-bautzen.de; Weigangstrasse 8a; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun) for the victims of political oppression.

Sleeping

DJH hostel (☎ 403 47; jhbautzen@djh.de; Am Zwinger 1; dm under/over 26yr €16.40/19.40, s €20.40/26.40, d €53/60; ☎) The local hostel has a fairytale location in the old ramparts behind the Domstift.

Alte Gerberei (☎ 301 011; www.hotel-alte-gerberei.de; Uferweg 1; s/d €45/65; ☎ ☎) You'll find Old European charm galore in this historic eight-room pension right by the river. The flower-filled courtyard, the river-facing rooms and the wine restaurant are great for unwinding.

Dom-Eck Hotel Garni (☎ 501 330; www.wjelbik.de; Breitengasse 2; s/d €55/70; ☎) Right by the Dom, this family pension was designed by Sorbian and German artists, and has good-sized modern rooms. Breakfasts start with a big buffet served in a bright wintergarden.

Schloss-Schänke (☎ 304 990; www.schloss-schaenke.net; Burgplatz 5; s/d €46/66; meals €10-18; ☎) This was once a Franciscan residence, but the 11 renovated rooms are hardly monastic. The restaurant has good-value set menus for around €20.

Hotel Goldener Adler (☎ 486 60; www.goldeneradler.de; Hauptmarkt 4; s/d €67/97; ☎ ☎) History spills from every nook and cranny of this spiffy four-star hotel with its doesn't-get-more-central location. Cap off a day about town with dinner or a drink in the romantic vaulted cellar.

Eating & Drinking

Sam's Bar (☎ 490 964; Fleischmarkt 4; dishes €3-12) For salads, sandwiches and other café-style fare, come to this relaxed hangout that stays open longer than any other place in town.

Mönchshof (☎ 490 141; Burglehn 1; mains €4-10) With servers dressed like monks and dishes served in rustic earthenware, this place may go a bit overboard with the medieval theme, but the creative food is worth the drama. It also has a pretty terrace.

Wjelbik (☎ 420 60; Kornstrasse 7; mains €8-13) You can't help but be charmed by your host here, Veronika Mahling, who will greet you, Sorbian style, with a little bread and salt and a hearty *Witajæe k nam!* (Welcome!). It's the best place to try specialities such as the Sorbian Wedding (braised beef with horseradish sauce) under wonderful beamed ceilings. There's no service here on weekday afternoons.

If Bautzen had something like a 'restaurant row', it would be Schlosstrasse, where you'll find about half a dozen eateries, including **Zur Apotheke** (☎ 480 035; Schlosstrasse 21; mains €8-11) inside an olde-worlde pharmacy. It has a progressive menu of German food, including some calorie-reduced chicken dishes.

Getting There & Away

Regional trains service Bautzen from Görlitz (€6.40, 40 minutes) and Dresden (€9.10, one hour). The A4 to Dresden or Görlitz runs just south of town. You can park fairly cheaply at Parkplatz Centrum on Äussere Lauenstrasse.

GÖRLITZ

☎ 03581 / pop 59,000

Some 100km east of Dresden, on the Neisse River, Görlitz is Germany's easternmost city, and is also one of its prettiest. It miraculously came through WWII with nary a shrapnel wound and today is a veritable encyclopaedia of architecture, with stunning examples from the Gothic, Renaissance, baroque and Art Nouveau periods. GDR honchos declared the entire city a protected monument, but then invested little in its upkeep. Only after reunification did huge federal cash infusions restore beauty to this ageing grande dame. Largely unmarred by the trappings of commercialisation (no 'golden arches' here), the nearly 4200 heritage buildings make the place feel almost like a film set. No surprise, then, that Görlitz stood in for 19th-century Paris and New York in the 2004 remake of *Around the World in 80 Days*, starring Jackie Chan.

The Berlin Wall may have tumbled long ago, but Görlitz is still a divided city. After WWII it was split in two when the Allies made the

Neisse River the boundary between Germany and Poland. Görlitz' former eastern suburbs are now known as Zgorzelec (*zgo-zhe-lets*).

Orientation

The Altstadt spreads to the north of the Hauptbahnhof. From here, Berliner Strasse and Jakobstrasse, the main shopping streets, run south to Postplatz. Beyond, the city is organised around a trio of squares starting with Demianiplatz in the west, followed by Obermarkt and then Untermarkt. From the latter, Neissstrasse leads down to the Neisse River and the new Altstadtbrücke, the footbridge to Zgorzelec. Bring your passport if crossing.

Information

There's a Deutsche Bank on Demianiplatz, and a Sparkasse and Dresdner Bank on Postplatz.

Görlitz tourist office (☎ 475 700; www.g-tm.de, www.goerlitz.de; Brüderstrasse 1; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun)

I-Vent tourist office (☎ 421 362; www.goerlitz-tourismus.de; Obermarkt 33; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat, 9.30am-3pm Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat Nov-Mar) Private tourist office.

Post office (Postplatz)

Sights

OBERMARKT & SOUTHERN ALTSTADT

Obermarkt, Görlitz' largest square, is flanked by some great baroque buildings on its north side. At the eastern end is the 16th-century **Dreifaltigkeitskirche** (☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun), which has an odd floor plan and nifty late-Gothic altar.

Punctuating the square's west end like the dot in an exclamation point is the 49m-high **Reichenbacher Turm** (☎ 671 355; adult/concession €1.50/1; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, to 8pm Fri May-Oct), part of the old fortification, which was still inhabited until 1904. Inside are exhibits, but most people just want to climb to the top for the views.

Just behind the tower is the 1490 **Kaisertrutz**, a squat structure also formerly part of the city's defence system. It normally houses an art collection, but has been under restoration for years. Meanwhile, restoration has been completed on the **Theater Görlitz** (☎ 474 747; Demianiplatz 2), which many consider Dresden's Semperoper in miniature; it's behind the Kaisertrutz.

East of here, on Marienplatz, is the **Dicker Turm** (Fat Tower), with walls almost 6m thick in some places. Walking south on Steinstrasse, past the **Frauenkirche**, soon gets you to the **Karstadt department store** (An der Frauenkirche 5-7), which would be unremarkable were it not for its most amazing Art Nouveau interior, canopied by a kaleidoscopic glass ceiling. Another architectural delicacy from the same period is the sparkling **Strassburg Passage**, a light-flooded shopping arcade connecting Berliner Strasse and Jacobstrasse.

UNTERMARKT & EASTERN ALTSTADT

The most beautiful patrician houses flank the Untermarkt, linked to Obermarkt by Brüderstrasse. The building at the square's centre is the **Alte Börse** (old stock exchange), now a hotel.

First up on your right, on the south side of Untermarkt, is the magnificent 1526 Schönhof, Germany's oldest residential Renaissance structure. It now houses the brand-new **Schlesisches Museum zu Görlitz** (☎ 879 10; Untermarkt 4; adult/concession €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), which offers a creatively presented romp through the rich cultural history of Silesia in 17 themed rooms (start at the top). A free English-language guide is available and audio-guides are planned.

Immediately opposite, taking up the square's entire western side, is the **Rathaus** (town hall), begun in 1537 and built in three sections and styles. If you take a moment to observe the lower of the two clocks on the tower, you'll notice that the helmeted soldier in the middle briefly drops his chin every minute.

As you continue clockwise, other buildings of note are the peculiar late-Gothic **Flüsterbogen** at No 22, where you can whisper sweet nothings to your sweetie via the reverberating stone arch in the entranceway, and the Renaissance **Ratsapotheke** (pharmacy) at No 24, easily recognised by its spidery sun dial.

Circling the square eventually takes you to Neissstrasse. At No 30 stands the town's only pure baroque house, the **Barockhaus** (☎ 671 410; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, to 8pm Fri), now a museum filled with fancy furniture and art. Also note the **Biblisches Haus** next door, whose façade is like a Bible carved in sandstone. The river and the Altstadtbrücke crossing to Poland are a few more steps downhill.

Turn left on Kränzelstrasse for the Gothic **Peterskirche** (☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun), where the star attraction is the fascinating 'Sun Organ' fashioned by Silesian-Italian Eugenio Casparini, with tiny pipes shooting off like rays.

HEILIGES GRAB

A 10-minute walk along Grüner Graben, north of the Reichenbacher Turm, drops you at the **Heiliges Grab** (admission €1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun), an exact replica of the original Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (which has since been altered repeatedly). It was commissioned some 500 years ago, by a local mayor in atonement for getting the neighbour's girl knocked up when he was a youngster.

Sleeping

DJH hostel (☎ 406 510; Goethestrasse 17; dm under/over 26yr €15/18, s/d €19/25; ☎) For this, rather sober hostel, take the Hauptbahnhof south exit, turn left and walk for 15 minutes (or take tram 1 to Goethestrasse).

Picobello Pension (☎ 420 010; www.picobello-pension.de; Uferstrasse 32; s €19-25, d €32-44, breakfast €5; ☎ ☎ ☎) Near the river, these bargain apartments are simple but surprisingly good. Amenities include a sauna and bike rentals.

Hotel Börse (☎ 764 20; www.boerse-goerlitz.de; Untermarkt 16; s €60-75, d €95-115; ☎ ☎ ☎) Four-poster beds, huge glass chandeliers, patterned parquet floors and elegant antiques are the hallmarks of this stylish yet spirited hotel. Mineral water and DSL are welcome freebies.

Herberge Zum Sechsten Gebot (☎ 764 20; www.boerse-goerlitz.de; s/d €50/70; ☎ ☎) Hotel Börse's owner also runs this excellent place across the square. The name pays homage to the sixth commandment (Thou shalt not commit adultery), but hilariously the spacious, modern rooms are named for famous sinners, such as Henry VIII and the Marquis de Sade.

Gästehaus im Flüsterbogen (☎ 764 20; www.boerse-goerlitz.de; s €58-70, d €75-85, tr/q €110/125; ☎ ☎) Check in here (another good option from the owners of Hotel Börse) if you need plenty of elbow room. Wonderful sleigh beds and other antique furnishings add character by the armload.

Sorat Hotel Görlitz (☎ 406 577; www.sorat-hotels.com; Struvestrasse 1; s €66-90, d €86-110; ☎ ☎) Days kick off with a champagne breakfast at this central hotel with tasteful, modern rooms (some with wheelchair access). Ask about weekend rates.

Romantik Hotel Tuchmacher (☎ 473 10; www.tuchmacher.de; Petersstrasse 8; s €95-110, d €120-143; ☎ ☎) The most unusual rooms at this posh oasis of charm near the Peterskirche (bell alert!) sport richly painted baroque ceilings, but others are just as nice with warm hues and classical furnishings. There's a lovely wellness area for relaxing, and a popular restaurant for refuelling.

Eating

Acanthus (☎ 661 810; Neissstrasse 20; mains €6-12) Among the many eating options on Neissstrasse is this superb and versatile noshery, with a varied menu, a secluded riverside beer garden and a confusing but atmospheric network of internal passages.

St Jonathan (☎ 421 082; Peterstrasse 16; mains €7-12) Despite its sleek furniture and stunning historic setting, this place only looks expensive. Enjoy delicious German food below the painted vaulted ceiling or, for a romantic tête-à-tête, book the single table inside (!) the fireplace. Also explore the back of the building with its atrium staircase, where textile merchants used to display their wares.

Vierradenmühle (☎ 406 661; Hotherstrasse 20; mains €8-14) Service is slow but the Saxon and Silesian food is excellent at this place. Sticking out into the Neisse next to the new Altstadtbrücke, it is Germany's easternmost restaurant.

Restaurant Lucie Schulte (☎ 410 260; Untermarkt 22; mains €12-26; ☎ 6pm Mon-Sat) Your tastebuds are likely to do cartwheels when you try the creative flavour pairings at this refreshingly progressive venue. It's set in historic barrel-vaulted rooms off the romantic courtyard of the Flüsterbogen building, and has great wines, too.

Getting There & Away

Frequent trains run between Görlitz and Dresden (€16.10, 1½ hours) via Bautzen (€6.40, 40 minutes). For Berlin (€33, three hours), a change in Cottbus is likely. Buses and private Lausitzbahn trains also serve Zittau (€5.60, 40 minutes). There are also four trains daily to Wrocław (Breslau; €15.70, three hours) with one crawling on to Warsaw (10 hours).

Görlitz is just off the A4 autobahn from Dresden; turn off after the Königshainer Berge tunnel, which at 3.3km is currently Germany's second-longest – the longest is the Rennsteig tunnel in Thuringia, an astonishing 7.9km in length! The B6, B99 and B115 converge just north of town.

ZITTAU

☎ 03583 / pop 25,000

About 35km south of Görlitz, Zittau is an intriguing outpost in a far-flung corner of Germany, hemmed in by Poland and the Czech Republic. Basically untouched during WWII, it preserves a largely intact baroque Altstadt. Post-reunification restoration, however, hasn't progressed quite as far here as in other Saxon cities, and the many dilapidated buildings still provide a glimpse of Zittau's appearance in GDR times. Since 1999, the town's star attraction has been the *Grosse Zittauer Fastentuch*, an ultra-rare Lenten veil that was joined by a second, smaller one in 2005. These treasures make Zittau the hub of the newly founded Via Sacra, a cross-border holiday route linking sites of religious importance.

Orientation & Information

The Altstadt is a 10-minute walk south of the Hauptbahnhof, via Bahnhofstrasse and Bautzener Strasse.

Post office (Haberkomplatz 1)

Sparkasse (cnr Neustadt & Frauenstrasse)

Tourist office (☎ 752 200; www.zittau.de; Markt 1; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 1-4pm Sun May-Oct)

Sights & Activities

Zittau's central square, the **Markt**, exudes almost Mediterranean flair thanks to its baroque fountain, patrician townhouses and imposing Italian-palazzo-style **Rathaus** (town hall), drafted by none other than Prussian building master Karl Friedrich Schinkel.

Schinkel also designed the **Johanniskirche** (☎ 510 933; tower adult/concession €1.50/1; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) north of the Markt. It's a neoclassical church with two towers that don't match, one of which can be climbed for sweeping views of the mountains. If you're here at noon or 6pm, you might run into the city trumpeter who plays little tunes daily at those times.

East of the Markt, via Frauenstrasse, is the **Neustadt** square, with several fountains and the weighty **Salzhaus**. Originally a 16th-century salt storage house, this now houses shops, restaurants and the public library.

Continuing on Frauenstrasse soon takes you to the **Museum Kirche zum Heiligen Kreuz** (☎ 500 8920; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar). This former church now shelters Zittau's most famous attraction, the

1472 **Grosses Zittauer Fastentuch** (large Lenten veil). This house-sized painted linen cloth shows a complete illustrated Bible in 90-odd scenes – Genesis to the Last Judgement. Its original purpose was to conceal the altar from the congregation during Lent. Also note the morbidly charming tombstones in the little church cemetery.

Smaller in size, but no less precious or rare, is the 1573 **Kleines Zittauer Fastentuch**, which is the new star exhibit at the **Kulturhistorisches Museum Franziskanerkloster** (☎ 554 790; Klosterstrasse 3; adult/concession €2/1.50; 🕒 10am-noon & 1-5pm Tue-Sun), a short walk west of here. This depicts the crucifixion scene framed by 40 symbols of the Passion of Christ and is one of only six such veils that have survived. Combination tickets for both veils are €5 per adult (€3 concession), which includes an English-language audio-guide. The rest of the museum has exhibits chronicling regional history.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Dreiländereck (☎ 5550; www.hotel-dle.de; Bautzener Strasse 9; s €60-65, d €75-85; 📞 🕒) This one-time brewery right in the Altstadt is a top choice, with warmly furnished rooms dressed in green-and-gold hues, and a contemporary brasserie with vaulted ceilings. The only downside is the proximity of the Johanniskirche bells!

Hotel Dresdener Hof (☎ 573 00; www.hotel-dresdener-hof.de; Äussere Oybiner Strasse 9/12; s/d €46/64; 📞 🕒) Set in its own small park with a sparkling pond, this is an old-fashioned affair, but the rooms are large, the staff are friendly and accommodating, and the Altstadt is only a five-minute walk away.

Savi (☎ 708 297; Bautzener Strasse 10; meals €2-8; 📞 🕒) This in-crowd café-bar-gallery is great for a snack, light meal, drink or checking email (€0.60 per 15 minutes).

Dornspachhaus (☎ 795 883; Bautzener Strasse 2; mains €5-11) Dripping with history, this upmarket option next to the Johanniskirche serves delicious regional cuisine and also has a lovely courtyard. It's named after the mayor who commissioned the building.

Klosterstübl (☎ 517 486; Johannisstrasse 4; mains €5-12) This updated inn has an uncluttered look – all

the better to show off the rich oak wainscoting, huge tile oven and hilarious murals featuring frolicking monks. The menu features several regional dishes, including *Wickelklösse* (vegetable-stuffed dumplings).

Getting There & Away

There are direct trains to Dresden (€15.90, two hours) and Görlitz (€5.60, 40 minutes). Going to Bautzen usually requires a change in Görlitz or Löbau (€6.40, 1½ hours). For Berlin, change in Cottbus (€37.60, four hours).

The B96 (to Bautzen), B178 (to Löbau) and B99 (to Görlitz) all converge in the town centre.

AROUND ZITTAU

Zittauer Gebirge

South of Zittau, hugging the Czech and Polish borders, the Zittauer Gebirge is the smallest low-mountain range in Europe. With its idyllic gorges, thick forests and whimsical rock formations, it's great for hiking and relaxing.

You can drive or take the bus, but getting there is more fun aboard the 110-year-old narrow-gauge **Bimmelbahn**. This was originally designed for brown-coal mining work, but now puffs up to the sleepy resort villages of Oybin and Jonsdorf, splitting at Bernsdorf. The service to Oybin (€5.90, 40 minutes) stops at the **Teufelsmühle** (Devil's Mill), built for silver miners in the 17th century; here you can glimpse the **Töpfer peak** (582m) to the east.

Alternatively, you can hike to Oybin on a clearly marked trail, taking you south along the Neisse River before veering off into the hills (11km). Oybin and Jonsdorf both make good bases for extended hikes, though Oybin is more picturesque.

Burg und Kloster Oybin (☎ 7340; www.burgundkloster-oybin.de; adult/concession/family €3.50/2.50/9; 🕒 9am-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct-Mar), a romantically ruined castle and monastery on a beehive-shaped hill north of the town, was commissioned by German emperor Charles IV in the 14th century. The dramatic ensemble is an ideal setting for summer concerts, or just for poking around on your own.

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