

Fairytale Christmas Stroll in Munich

Written by Jill Kerr Tepe

Saturday, 08 January 2011 13:57 - Last Updated Wednesday, 23 February 2011 13:05

My husband is of German heritage, so he has been begging me to take him to the Fatherland for a while.



I had already visited Cologne and Heidelberg in '94, so I wanted to try a new city that would emit that quintessential German flair, and I wanted to go during the Christmas season. Bavaria, the southern region, is really what people picture when they think of Germany: picturesque foothills of the Alps, traditional *dirndls*, lakes, steep roofed buildings, and castles galore littering the countryside. At the heart of it all is Munich (*München*) -- the capital of Bavaria, a bustling city full of modernism that still manages to maintain its storybook-quality and small-town feel.



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Upon touchdown at the Munich airport, we found ourselves in the midst of a veritable snowy winter wonderland -- perfect for exploring the city and the *Christkindlmarkets*, or Christmas markets. We checked in at our budget-friendly hotel located near the main train station (*Hauptbahnhof*)

) called the

Hotel Drei Löwen

(3 Lions), and set off to uncover Munich's secrets. From the

Hauptbahnhof

, we headed east on

Bayerstraße

for essentially 1 block, which runs you directly into

Karlsplatz

, a fabulous city square which features an ice skating rink, the ubiquitous

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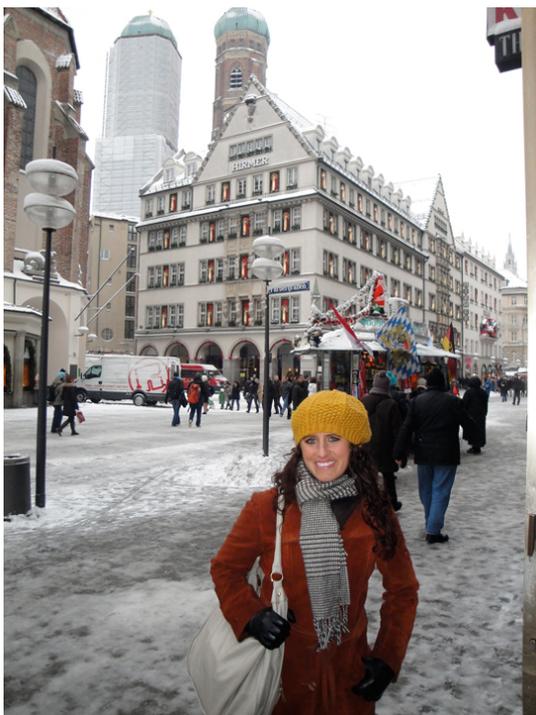
(food stalls selling sausages, etc.), and gorgeous architecture in the form of the

Bayerisches Staatsministerium der Justiz

, or simply translated, the

Bavarian State Ministry of Justice

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Karlsplatz is also the gateway to the pedestrian shopping district, called *Fussgaengerzone*, which runs from

Karlsplatz

to

Marienplatz

. The shopping is great for both budget-minded mullers and high-end haute couture lovers.

Some notable stores include about 5 different H&M variations and locations, Mango, Hirmer department store, and a plethora of jewelry stores carrying all sorts of wrist ornaments

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(containing numerous watches of which my husband is guilty of lusting after). You will also find, just near the Hirmer department store, the beautiful

Frauenkirche

displaying the onion towers that are the heart of the Munich skyline.



At the end of the shopping is the famed *Marienplatz*, dominated by the ethereal and gargantuan gingerbread-esque building known as

Rathaus

or New Town Hall. This building exudes boastful beauty like a beautiful woman in a red dress -- you can't take your eyes away, nor do you want to. Here's your chance to sidle up to an

imbiss

and purchase a sausage, a beer or a glüwein (delicious hot wine) and then laze away the day meandering through the stalls of the Christmas market to the soundtrack of your favorite Christmas carols. Peruse the handmade ornaments and local goods, purchase a few postcards, and go compare yourself next to the Christmas tree that is so large you'd swear Paul Bunyan has a holiday home in Rathaus. Try not to miss the

glockenspiel

-- the clock tower on Rathaus that shows figures from the story of the wedding of Wilhelm V to Renata of Lorraine. It chimes daily at 11 and 12 o'clock. The show runs about 15

minutes (source: <http://www.muenchen.de/Tourismus>).

I won't skirt the issue: it was quite chilly walking around in the falling snow, but we were appropriately dressed and enjoying the sights. If you want a tip for ducking in and out of the cold, Munich literally has a whole subterranean city in the form of underground shopping malls centered around the U-bahn and S-bahn lines. You can use these entrances to avoid crossing crowded streets and getting out of the wind. But don't sell yourself short -- make sure you walk around and see the sights first, and then you can use these toasty shortcuts later if you're passing through the same area and just want to warm up a bit.

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