



Munich

A fearlessly modern city with a historic soul, Munich has much to offer its visitors. Read on for some ideas on what to see and do on a weekend break

Munich, located on the River Isar, is Germany's third largest city. Popular for its annual festival, Oktoberfest, there are many reasons to visit year round.

GETTING THERE

The following airlines offer routes to Munich:

Birmingham BMI British Midland, Lufthansa

Edinburgh British Airways, Easyjet

London Air Berlin, BMI British Midland,

British Airways, Easyjet, Lufthansa

Manchester BMI British Midland, Lufthansa

GETTING AROUND

The airport bus (every 20 minutes) is €10 one-way or €16 return. It's a 45-minute journey which ends at the railway station, then it's a couple of stops on the tube or a decent walk into the Old Town.

Munich's well-developed public transport system is made up of bus, tram, train (S-bahn) and underground (U-bahn). Although you'll probably spend most of your time in the walkable Altstadt, you might want to make use of the U-bahn to start a walk somewhere up the Englischer Garten, or take the tram out to Nymphenburg Palace. Fares depend on the number of zones you travel through, from €1.10 for a 'short trip' of a few stops to €8.80 if you go through four or more zones. See www.mvv-muenchen.de for information.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

The Old Town

Munich is a hefty city, but on a short visit there you'll spend most of your time in and around the manageable Altstadt (Old Town). Marienplatz is the supposed focal point, but while the Gothic town hall is undoubtedly

eye-catching, the workaday setting means it's hard to appreciate. The twirling dancers of its famous Glockenspiel are momentarily charming when they appear three times a day, so are worth catching if in the area.

Simply wander where your feet take you, poking your nose in and out of slick shops and cafés. Maximilianstrasse is the city's posh shopping street, but there's plenty of interest in the backstreets too. Gradually wind your way north to impressive Odeonsplatz, where Hitler staged his failed beer hall coup at the now defunct Bürgerbräukeller.

Munich Residenz

www.residenz-muenchen.de

The former residence of the Bavarian rulers has so many rooms you'll need to return to see them all – some are only open in the morning and others in the afternoon. One visit will be enough for most people, though – we marginally preferred the afternoon selection. Even if you don't fancy the reconstructed apartments and ceremonial rooms, consider visiting just the treasury, which shows off riches like a gem-encrusted statuette of St George skewering the dragon.

The Alte, Neue and Moderne Pinakothek

www.pinakothek.de

Three art galleries of major standing are clustered just northwest of the Old Town. The Alte Pinakothek, which has the strongest collection, exhibits European paintings from the Middle Ages to the 18th century. The Neue Pinakothek takes the story up to Art Nouveau, and the striking Pinakothek der Moderne brings things up to the present day.

Rather than trying to 'do' them all, decide which period interests you and take your time. The Alte Pinakothek has arguably the strongest collection if you've no preference.

Englischer Garten

The Englischer Garten is one of the largest city parks in the world, stretching from the centre right out to the city boundary. Its 900 acres are crisscrossed by streams and paths, all of which mysteriously seemed to lead us in the direction of the Chinese Tower and its enormous beer garden (see 'Places to eat and drink' overleaf). When you're done, you might need a nap on the grass, but if you're still feeling lively, turn west into the university district where you'll find countless bars and restaurants on Schellingstrasse and around.

Nymphenburg Palace

www.schloesser.bayern.de

Once an out-of-town summer house and now surrounded by suburbs, Nymphenburg is well worth the 20-minute tram jaunt from town. Most remarkable is Ludwig I's 'Gallery of Beauties' – 36 portraits of objects of his admiration. Smaller palaces are dotted around the fine gardens, like Amalienburg, a gorgeous confection with wood carvings climbing the walls. It's dishevelled and dusty, but all the more atmospheric for it, as if the owners have just moved out.

Oktoberfest

Theresienwiese park annually transforms into the venue for arguably the world's biggest booze-up, held over the course of two beer-sodden weeks. We weren't in town at the time so can't give you a personal view, but see www.muenchen.de for details.

**For the full magazine report on Munich,
see p34 of the Sept 2008 issue of Which? Holiday**

Visit the shops

Dallmayr (www.dallmayr.de) is Munich's answer to Fortnum & Mason, with whole sections devoted to posh coffees, jams and preserves. For a more down-to-earth foodie experience, head for the Viktualienmarkt, with market stalls and shops nestling under redbrick arches, and of course the obligatory beer garden. Also pay a visit to Elly Seidl (www.ellyseidl.de). Various branches are scattered around the city selling exquisite candies, chocolates and liqueurs.

PLACES TO EAT AND DRINK

Augustiner

Neuhauserstrasse 27

www.augustiner-restaurant.com

With far more German patrons, the Augustiner beer cellar feels more like the real deal than the Hofbräuhaus.

Chinese Tower Beer Garden

Englischer Garten

Our favourite spot in town for glugging away while munching on pretzels was the gigantic beer garden at the Englischer Garten's Chinese Tower, the sort of place which might make you abandon your plans for the afternoon. If you've stocked up on goodies at Dallmayr or the Viktualienmarkt, bring them here as you're allowed to eat your own food.

Hofbräuhaus

Am Platzl 9

www.hofbraeuhaus.de

Irredeemably touristy, but so what, the city's most famous beer hall is a riot. The band makes itself heard above a roar of chatter as waitresses in traditional *dirndls* swing frothy *mass* (a litre of beer) from bar to table.

Paros

Kirchenstrasse 27, www.paros-muenchen.de

Munich's dining scene is by no means parochial, so if you find you need a break from German cooking, you're spoiled for choice. We tried this lively modern Greek restaurant and were treated to authentic examples of *dolmades* and feta-stuffed meatballs (€10).

Retters

Frauenstrasse 10 & 12, www.retters.de

Retters offers a dose of understated elegance, with wood-panelled walls and a glass front looking out towards the Viktualienmarkt. Food is international modern, like chicken risotto spiked with a touch of chilli. Perky German wines are a speciality, and you can pick up a bottle of anything you enjoy at the wine merchant next door. A two-course set menu is €18 at lunchtime, €29 at dinner.

Vinorant Alter Hof

Alter Hof 3, www.alter-hof-muenchen.de

A great find for a modern take on northern Bavarian cuisine. Start with a wafer thin 'pizza' with shredded bacon and spring onion (€7), then move on to something homely like pork knuckle with Riesling sauerkraut (€11).

GOOD PLACES TO STAY

Prices are for the cheapest double room in October 2008, including breakfast and taxes.

Creatif Hotel Elephant

Tel 0049 89 555 785

www.creatif-hotel-elephant.com/english

Boldly decorated design-on-a-budget. Not the perfect location, but handily situated close to the railway station. £78

Gastehaus Englischer Garten

Tel 0049 89 383 9410

www.hotelenglischergarten.de

A long way from the centre, but if you don't mind the hop on the U-bahn this is a good value choice in a quiet location.

£82, breakfast not included

Hotel Olympic

Tel 0049 89 231 890, www.hotel-olympic.de

Just outside the Altstadt, this stylish townhouse conversion has modern art throughout. Breakfast meats and cheeses are of decidedly superior quality. £124

USEFUL INFORMATION

Time difference UK +1 hour

Dialling code The country code for the Germany is 0049

Exchange rate £1 = €1.27

When to go Munich is a year-round city, though you may want to deliberately time your visit to coincide with or avoid Oktoberfest, depending on your preferences.

FURTHER INFORMATION

■ Frommer's *Munich & the Bavarian Alps* (2007), £11.99 (ISBN 9780470100905)

■ *Insight FlexiMap*, £4.99 (ISBN 9789814137256)

■ Munich's official site www.muenchen.de

■ There are tourist information offices in the main train station (Bahnhofplatz 2) and in the town hall (Marienplatz).

