

Gorlitz, Germany: An undiscovered gem

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CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Located on a wide sweep of the Elbe River, Dresden enjoyed a Golden Age in the 1700s that encouraged the construction of imposing palaces, churches, public buildings and residences, filled with great treasures. This magnificence was reduced to rubble by allied bombs at the end of World War II. A dilemma arose: To raze and rebuild or restore? The courageous decision was made by the people of Dresden to restore the city center to its baroque splendor. Now, the world is grateful.

The journey has been long and challenging, but the end is near. Majestic buildings have been expertly restored, and are open to the awe and admiration of the public, including the impressive Albertinum, one of the world's finest art galleries, the Semper Opera House, among Europe's best, the world-famous Zwinger Palace art complex, the Residenzschloss, a leading gallery whose restoration to its royal splendor is nearing completion, and the riveting, strikingly beautiful Frauenkirche, one of Europe's greatest churches.

Dresden is a must-experience travel destination. It has everything — history, culture, cuisine, grandeur, verve, friendly people and is a good value.

Not far from Dresden is romantic Meissen, known the world over for its porcelain, and lovely, cultured Leipzig, where Bach resided and Wagner was born. An undis-



Church Of The Middle Ages

The town of Gorlitz is home to St. Peter & St. Paul Church that dates back to the 1400s.

covered gem is Gorlitz, a small city of about 57,000 people 38 miles northeast of Dresden. Gorlitz was first mentioned in an historic document in 1071 and was for centuries a vigorous, successful trading center. It was located on both sides of the Neisse River, but with the end of World War II, the eastern part of the city became the Polish town of Zgorzelec. Connected by two short bridges, the cities exist amicably side by side.

Unscathed by the war, the architectural heritage of Gorlitz has remained pure, suffering from

gross neglect, though, while the Russians were in control. Since reunification, however, the city has been lovingly and faithfully restored. Its quiet, narrow, meandering alleys and rich architectural past lend a discernible charm to this most eastern of Germany's cities. The ornate homes and warehouses of the wealthy merchants in the Upper Market have been given face-lifts, not reproduced. The city's oldest section surrounds the Lower Market, whose prominent buildings, including the ancient Rathaus (Town Hall) are authentic, as they

were hundreds of years ago.

Looming high above the river is the majestic St. Peter and St. Paul Church, which traces back to 1423. Of great interest is its organ, built in 1703 and called a sun organ, because its keyboard is arranged like the rays of the sun.

From a more recent time, the Karstadt department store dates to 1912-13 and is Germany's only art-nouveau department store. Beautifully preserved, the store's main level has an impressive, colorful glass cupola and several stunning free-standing staircases.

An interesting 20-minute drive south of Gorlitz, nestled against the west bank of the Neisse River, is the fascinating St. Marienthal's Convent. It was founded in 1234 and has been operating continuously ever since, for 772 years! To survive today's world, one part of the convent complex has been converted into a youth hostel, another into a popular convention center. Part of the complex, which included the stables, has been transformed into a first-class hotel. The convent is a fascinating place, where the profound practice of religion co-exists with a commercial world.

Gorlitz has an abundance of good restaurants and pubs, but we elected one night to go to Zgorzelec for dinner. The nearby restaurant is on the river, down some steps to the lower level of a former mill. The interior is vaulted, with low ceilings, red brick, and heavy wooden tables and chairs. It was abuzz with conversation. Much personality with no pretense. The menu pays homage to hearty, traditional Polish fare, with local beer as the perfect accompaniment. Prices are more than reasonable. We ate, drank, and talked for hours.

Gorlitz survived World War II without damage, leaving intact 1,000 years of history and a mélange of architectural styles. It's an undiscovered gem, certainly for Americans.

Top quality, comprehensive services for visitors to Gorlitz are available through i-vent (info@i-vent-online.de) or check the website at www.goerlitz-tourismus.de.

Art Calendar

ARTS COUNCIL OF THE MORRIS AREA will host the "April Arts" fundraising event beginning with a cocktail reception at 5 p.m. on Saturday, April 8 at Schering-Plough, 1 Giralda Farms in Madison. During the reception, New Jersey artists will work on and complete original works of art onsite that will then be auctioned off to benefit the arts council. Complete dinner will be held at

the homes of various hosts/hostesses in the area. For more information, call (973) 285-5115 ext. 13 or email ctrubert@morrisarts.org.

BOURAS GALLERIES is located at 25 DeForest Ave. in Summit. The original pastels and prints of Ann Coleman of Vermont will be on view through April.

Galleries are open by appointment. Call Linda Cole (908) 277-6054.

CARPE DIEM, a new fine art gallery on East Hill Road, Califon, replaces the former gallery ONEmain in High Bridge. The new exhibit "An Early Spring" will fea-

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