



*Strolling through Marienplatz, Munich's central city square, on a moonlit night is one of the better ways to enjoy the city's skyline. The square itself is buzzing with activity, with numerous restaurants, shops, live bands, and the occasional outdoor market.*

## Bavarian Bloom

IN THE PULSATING CITY OF MUNICH, HISTORY AND MODERNITY THRIVE

By MALAVIKA BHATTACHARYA

Bavaria's capital is a particularly amorous city. Every now and then, you're reminded that "Munich Loves You": The city's tag line is plastered across numerous walls on little posters, it stares down at you from shop windows, and is splattered across memorabilia at street stalls.

History and modernity collide in this 855-year-old city where Gothic church spires and baroque palaces define the skyline, while hip nightclubs define the "work-hard, play-hard" ethos of its citizens. The city that birthed Oktoberfest hosts

vibrant cultural festivals through the year, drawing thousands into its open spaces to celebrate with concerts, theatre, open-air food stalls, and street markets.

Dig into Munich's many layers and contrasts. Enjoy a laid-back afternoon at a museum and feel the city's irrepressible energy as the bars fill up after hours.

### DAY 1

#### **MORNING** Hot Wheels

Start the morning with an eyeful of cutting-edge German engineering at the headquarters of auto giant BMW. The

**BMW Welt** is a futuristic, double-cone-shaped glass structure housing the company's latest vehicle models. The "gallery" doubles up as a collection centre for new customers. Visitors can browse the cool exhibits that include models of the MINI and BMW i series, get up close with the sleek machines, check out their interiors, and take pictures with them. Pick up a souvenir at the BMW Welt Lifestyle & Accessory Shop (*Mon-Sat 9 a.m.-6 p.m.*), grab a quick bite at The Biker's Lodge (*daily 10 a.m.-6 p.m.*), and proceed to the adjoining BMW Museum. Spread across

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**NAVIGATE**  
▶ 48 Hours



River surfing, where the surfer rides a static wave created when the water rushes over a rock (top left), originated in Munich in the early '70s; Not surprisingly, the most popular souvenirs sold in the city that birthed the Oktoberfest are beer steins (top right), traditional ornamental beer mugs with lids; The traditional Auer Dult market (bottom left), which takes place three times a year at Marienhilfplatz city square is considered the largest crockery market in Europe; Fans of the German automaker BMW can visit its museum (bottom right) in Munich to see a wide range of cars on display, often including quirky ones like this model made of plasticine or a current exhibit of lightweight models made from aluminium and carbon fibre, on until 27 July.

three levels, vintage automobiles, uber-modern race cars, and slick motorcycles stand testimony to the company's 90-year-old legacy. Get the audio guide—available in seven languages—for information and backstories on the exhibits.

(BMW Welt daily 7.30 a.m. to midnight; +49-89-125016001; [www.bmw-welt.com](http://www.bmw-welt.com); entry free. BMW Museum Tue-Sun 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; entry €9/₹760; audio guide €2/₹170).

**AFTERNOON** *Riding Waves*

Bratwurst may be the order of the day in meat-eating Bavaria, but in Munich, vegetarian is now in vogue. With many young people opting for a meat-free lifestyle, restaurants catering to this clientele operate to a full house. Grab a light, veggie lunch at the bright **Prinz Myshkin** (+49-89-265596; [prinzmyshkin.com](http://prinzmyshkin.com)), where the vegetarian

sushi platter and Ayurvedic thali are hot selling items, and well-behaved pets are welcome to curl up under tables.

The landscaped greens of the expansive **Englischer Garten**, located in the centre of town, are a popular port of call on a summer afternoon. Head towards the **Eisbach Channel** on the southern edge to witness river surfing. Munich may be 500 kilometres from the coast, but a large community of surfing enthusiasts has turned to the static wave on the man-made river to practice their sport. Daredevil surfers in neoprene bodysuits manoeuvre the fast-paced, metre-high wave on the narrow channel's icy waters ("Eisbach" translates to "ice creek").

**EVENING** *A Litre of Lager*

Admire the magnificent architecture of the **Old Town Hall** and the famous

**Rathaus-glockenspiel** at **Marienplatz**, the central square, and shop at the trendy **Kaufingerstrasse** and **Neuhauser Strasse**. Both streets are lined with glittering shop windows and crowded with fashion-forward locals enjoying an evening on the town.

Skip the tourist-overrun Hofbräuhaus and head to the 130-year-old **Löwenbrau Brewery** (10 a.m. to midnight; +49-89-5472669; [www.loewenbraueukeller.com](http://www.loewenbraueukeller.com)), one of six breweries located inside Munich. The cavernous beer hall is always packed to the rafters with locals and travellers enjoying its twelve house brews. A warm summer evening is best spent under chestnut trees in the outdoor garden nursing a refreshing Radler, a mix of beer, lemonade, and soda pop. Waitresses in typical peasant costumes (dirndls), dish out highly recommended Bavarian specialities like fillets of char fish on a bed of spinach.

FRANZ MARC FREI/CORBIS (SURFER); STEVEN WIDLER/CORBIS (SOUVENIR); IMAGE BROKER/INDIAPICTURE (CAROUSEL, CAR)



Brandhorst Museum houses one of the biggest Andy Warhol collections in Europe (left) and often includes exhibits by controversial artist Damien Hirst; The museum's facade (right) is made up of 36,000 ceramic sticks in 23 different colours.

**DAY 2**

**MORNING** *Art Beat*

Begin the morning with coffee and croissants at the swank **Bayerischer Hof Hotel's** Breakfast Room Roofgarden (daily 6 a.m.-11 a.m.; +49-89-2120892; [www.bayerischerhof.de](http://www.bayerischerhof.de)) with a view of the old city's spires and rooftops. Michael Jackson often stayed at this hotel, and his popularity in Munich is apparent with the **MJ memorial** situated right outside. It's plastered with photographs, flowers, and handwritten notes, and maintained solely by his fans.

Munich is a maze of museums and galleries. **The Pinakothek der Moderne** and **Alte Pinakothek** are among the most popular, but the unique design of **Brandhorst Museum** (Tue-Sun 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; +49-89-238052286; entry €7/₹595) makes it a top choice for fans of pop and contemporary art. It houses more than a hundred works by iconic artist Andy Warhol, and with a multicoloured facade of 36,000 glazed ceramic sticks, the building looks like a work of modern art itself.

**AFTERNOON** *Festival Express*

Munich is more than just beer and Oktoberfest. The city's palpable energy is on display through the year at lively, open-air festivals. The **Munich Spring Festival** held in April each year has a fairground atmosphere with rides and beer tents. **Auer Dult** market and fair, held three times a year, channels the same vibe, and is a shopper's delight.

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Marienplatz is named after the Marian column, a religious monument dedicated to the Virgin Mary, erected at the city's centre in 1638.

The bi-annual **Tollwood festival** held in summer and winter (June-July and Nov-Dec; [www.tollwood.de](http://www.tollwood.de)) is a grand, multicultural affair where tents lit in psychedelic colours sell everything from Ethiopian fare to Buddhist thangkas. With theatre productions and concerts from around the world, Tollwood defines Munich's alternative spirit.

German Christmas is done in style: During the season, head to one of the 24 Christmas markets in the city for hot mulled wine (*glühwein*), roasted sausages, and plenty of festive cheer. Among the oldest is the vibrant **Christkindlmarkt** at Marienplatz. Sip honeyed wine and people-watch at the Medieval market as locals in flowing robes and capes shop at the rustic, wooden stalls.

**EVENING** *Party like the Bavarians*

Munich's nightlife is booming with hip pockets and cool clubs. **Fraunhofer** (+49-89-266460) is an authentic Bavarian restaurant with a quaint theatre in the backyard where musicians, actors, and comedians have been performing for over four decades. With a peeling stucco ceiling and wooden tables piled with potato salad and sausages, head to this tavern for the organic meat, Spaten beer, and distinctly local vibe. End your night at the popular **Milch Bar** (daily 11 p.m.-7 a.m.; +49-89-45028818; [milchundbar.de](http://milchundbar.de); entry €6/₹510), where a young, enthusiastic crowd is on the dance floor until the wee hours of the morning. ■

BROKER/INDIAPICTURE (MUSEUM, TOWN SQUARE), CARLOS SANCHEZ PEREYRA/JAI/CORBIS (BICYCLE)