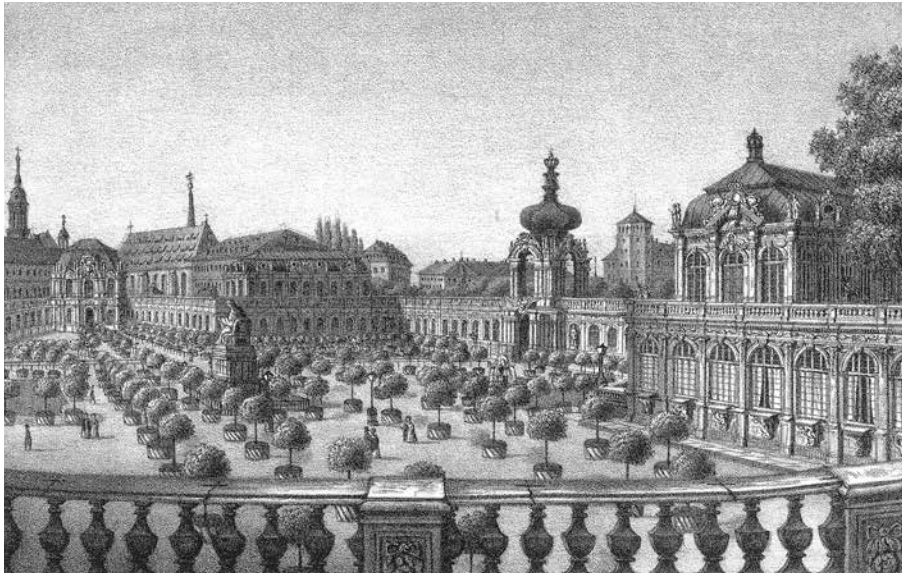




Dresden at Christmas

Art, architecture and music in the Saxon capital



Dresden, the Zwinger c. 1845.

21–27 December 2022 (MI 594)

7 days • £3,050

(including tickets to 2 performances)

Lecturer: Tom Abbott

Walks to see the fine 18th- & 19th-century architecture and outstanding art collections.

Musical performances in the Semperoper, Kulturpalast or the Frauenkirche (programmes to be confirmed in summer).

Day excursion to Meissen.

Rebuilding, restoration and refurbishment has wrought wonders in this once shattered city.

Dresden's greatness as a city of the arts was very much the creation of two electors in the 18th century: Frederick Augustus I ('the Strong', 1694-1733) and his son Frederick Augustus II. (1733-1763). Though founded at the beginning of the thirteenth century, for its first five hundred years it was a minor city of little distinction. This despite having been selected as residence in 1485 by the branch of the dukes of Saxony that gained the electorate in 1547.

Augustus the Strong's pillaging of the state treasury to feed his reckless extravagance was both symbol and to some extent the cause of his dismal record in most areas of statecraft, but his achievements as builder, patron and collector rank him among the most munificent of

European rulers. Great architecture, a picture collection of legendary richness, magnificent accumulations of precious metalwork and ceramics (porcelain was manufactured here for the first time in Europe) and a glorious musical life transformed Dresden into one of the most admired and visited cities in Europe and a major destination on the Grand Tour.

If to a somewhat lesser degree, subsequent rulers of Saxony continued the tradition of cultural embellishment (and political ineptitude: they had a tiresome habit of joining the losing side). In the nineteenth century, 'the Florence on the Elbe' acquired buildings by Schinkel and Semper, and Weber and Wagner were directors of the opera house. In the twentieth century, Richard Strauss added to its illustrious musical history.

From early in the seventeenth century Dresden has been one of the most important operatic centres north of the Alps. Performing in the magnificent 19th-century theatre designed by Gottfried Semper, the modern company has built upon the long-standing tradition of high standards of musicianship and visually exciting (if not avant-garde) productions to ensure a consistently high standard of performance.

Itinerary

Day 1: Fly at c. 12.30pm from London Heathrow Airport (British Airways) to Berlin. Dinner in the hotel upon arrival in Dresden.

Day 2. Introductory walking tour of the city including the exterior of the Zwinger, a unique Baroque confection, a pleasure palace, arena for festivities and museum for cherished collections (interior visit later in the week). Afternoon visit to the great domed Frauenkirche, whose restoration is now complete. Some free time before dinner and *an evening musical performance to be confirmed.*

Day 3: Meissen, Dresden. Drive downstream to Meissen, ancient capital of Dukes of Saxony and location of the discovery of hard-paste porcelain. The largely 15th-century hilltop castle overlooking the Elbe, the Albrechtsburg, is one of the first to be more residential than defensive, and within the complex is a fine Gothic cathedral. Visit the world famous porcelain manufactory.

Day 4 (Christmas Eve). Morning visit of the Residenzschloss to see the wonderful Green Vault and its contents, one of the world's finest princely treasuries, once again displayed in their original venue. Free afternoon.

Day 5 (Christmas Day). In the morning and early afternoon return to the Zwinger complex. See the porcelain collection and the Old Masters Gallery, one of the finest collections in Europe, particularly strong on Italian and Netherlandish painting. Free afternoon before Christmas dinner.

Day 6. Morning guided walk through the Neustadt district of Dresden, including the *Dreikönigskirche* (Church of the Three Kings) as well as the opportunity to visit the *Kügelgenhaus*, the Museum of Dresden Romanticism. Some free time before dinner and *an evening musical performance to be confirmed.*

Day 7. Visit the Albertinum, reopened in 2010 after extensive renovations and home to the New Masters Gallery. Fly from Berlin to London Heathrow airport, arriving c. 5.30pm.

Dresden at Christmas
continued

Lecturer

Tom Abbott. Specialist in architectural history from the Baroque to the 20th century with a particular interest in German and American modern. Studied Art History in the USA and Paris and has a wide knowledge of the performing arts. Since 1987 he has lived in Berlin.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,050 or £2,780 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £3,460 or £3,190 without flights.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; 5 dinners with wine, water, coffee; interval canapés at one performance, all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer.

Music: tickets for 2 performances are included. Programmes are confirmed in the summer.

Accommodation. Taschenbergpalais, Dresden (www.kempinski.com/en/dresden/hotel-taschenbergpalais). a 5-star hotel in the heart of the Old Town, 2 minutes' walk from the Semperoper and the Zwinger. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? Vehicular access is restricted in the city centre. Participants are expected to walk to the concert venues and there is a substantial amount of walking and standing around in art galleries and museums. Average distance by coach per day: 35 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.