



# SECRET STYLE

Munich may not strut its stuff on the catwalk, but the Bavarian capital encompasses a chic core. Delve deep to discover German panache – from the city centre to the lofty heights of Germany's tallest mountain a short hop away



## “THE POPULATION OF MUNICH GREW QUICKLY,” EXPLAINS

Birgit Stempfle as we walk through Fünf Höfe, one of the city's upmarket shopping areas. “Economically it is doing very well, partly because of the automotive industry.” BMW, the kings of high-end motoring, are headquartered here and provide some 32,000 jobs in the city of around 1.4 million.

I'm in Bavaria seeking its trendsetters and so far Munich is proving to be a city of contrasts. On the surface, it is all *dirndls* and *lederhosen*, swilling its way through Oktoberfest and oom-pah-pah-ing along as it has always done, but delve a little deeper and a different picture comes into view – an inexorably fashionable side that displays class and style across all facets – from fashion design to architecture and fine dining.

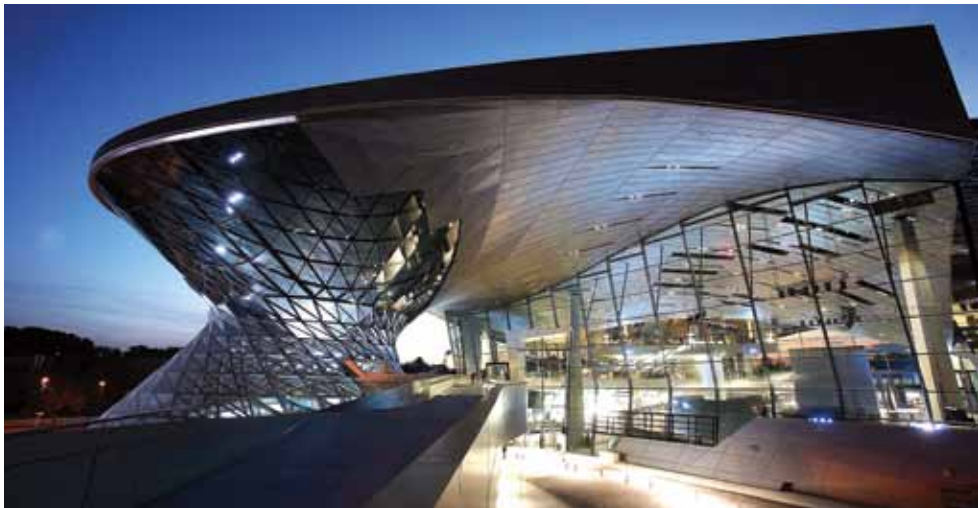
Nowhere is this more evident than on Maximilianstrasse, where the boutiques of international design houses jostle for premium position. All the big names are lined up like bowling pins – from Chanel to Dior and Hugo Boss. Louis Vuitton opened their first *maison* in Germany here at the end of April and it was also in Munich, not hip Berlin or happening Hamburg, that Louis Vuitton began their German odyssey more than 35 years ago. The flagship store is housed in the old *Rezidenzpost*, one of the first post offices in Germany. Fittingly, alongside the leather goods, watches, jewellery, bags and fashion Louis Vuitton are known for, a nook in the historic building is reserved for the newly-created “*Ecriture*” writing instruments and materials collection.

More Bavarian-styled finery can be found at Porzellan Manufaktur Nymphenburg, where porcelain artistry, every piece hand-made, is artfully arranged around the showroom. Pieces range from delicate light-as-a-feather tea cups to grand sculptures, such as the brightly-coloured parrot staring beadily across the space. Since its founding 260 years ago, Nymphenburg has counted the international high aristocracy, as well as embassies and palaces the world over, among its clientele. Its products are housed in the world's major design collections, such as MoMA in New York and the Fondation Nationale in Paris. Family-run, today it is internationally -recognised designers and artists shaping its profile: Barnaby Barford, Konstantin Grcic, Hella Jongerius, and Gustavo Lins, amongst others, have presented pioneering creations for contemporary porcelain design in recent years.

This venture epitomises an interesting facet of Munich's style scene – it is often the independent and family-owned businesses that are the most successful in blending traditional Bavarian and contemporary influences. Somehow they are authentically German, yet concurrently in tune with global fashion trends.

“When you are ready, Dallmayr is just down there,” says Birgit, pointing to an ornate, pastel-lemon coloured, Rococo palace. “It's the one that looks like a birthday cake,” she adds as she bids me farewell. Dallmayr, a long-standing family business, could well be translated as “delicious”. ▀





THE MOST STUNNING ASPECT OF THE REDESIGN – APART FROM THE SPARKLING VORTEX BY OLAFUR ELIASSON MADE OF POLISHED METAL AND COLOURED GLASS – IS THE INNOVATIVE LED TECHNOLOGY INCORPORATED INTO THE GALLERY

set within a magnificent Munich institution – the Palais an der Oper – and adorned with large picture artworks by well-known Munich artists. I am quickly learning that there is more to the city's cuisine than sausages and sauerkraut.

ARCHITECTURALLY, THE SEAMLESS COMBINATION OF old and new in Munich is represented by The Lenbachhaus. Built in 1891 as a studio and villa for artist Franz von Lenbach, the historic building was restored and remodelled by Foster & Partners architects, and recently inaugurated to accommodate contemporary concerns, including a new wing designed to house the magnificent *Blue Rider* collection. The German city rivalled Paris as a magnet for artists in the early 20th Century, and the *Blue Rider* group led by Russian Vasily Kandinsky and Munich native Franz Marc was arguably one of the most important avant-garde artist conglomerations. It is fitting that the largest collection of *Blue Rider* works are held here, in a building built around a building – the modern structure encasing the original Lenbach villa.

Perhaps the most stunning aspect of the redesign – apart from the sparkling vortex by Olafur Eliasson made of polished metal and coloured glass, which stretches from the atrium's ceiling to just above my head – is the innovative LED technology incorporated into the gallery. The bright, almost-natural feeling of airiness creates a dream-space fitting for artistic contemplation, the exception being two rooms of the *Blue Rider* collection, where black silk moiré lines the walls, making the colours pop in a visual feast.

Like the Lenbachhaus, Museum Brandhorst is housed in an architecturally-distinct building, designed by Sauerbruch Hutton. 36,000 ceramic rods in 23 different colours adorn the façade, looking like giant marshmallow strands. Located near the Pinakothek museums (The Pinakothek der Moderne is currently closed for renovation), the Brandhorst houses an extensive collection of modern and contemporary art including work by American artist Cy Twombly and an impressive selection of Andy Warhol's seminal pop art works.

MUNICH'S SPLIT PERSONALITY IN DESIGN TERMS CAN also be seen in its choice of fashion. Glancing into the windows of the trendy boutiques, themes emerge – crisp, clear lines and bold colours. I drop into the atelier of Ayzit Bostan, a Munich-based designer with exceptionally elegant, tailored collections that run not by seasons, but by inspiration. Munich's trend-setters have considered the label a secret tip for years. "I am really interested in art as well," says Bostan, commenting on her influences. "It inspires me. For me, Munich is a good place for inspiration. It is not a hard-core fashionable city, so you can concentrate on your own stuff. There is room for experimentation. I feel free here to make my decisions." In recognition of her contribution to the fashion world, Bostan has received a professorship in an arts school where she is training the next generation of designers. ▾



MUSEUM BRANDHORST IS HOUSED IN AN ARCHITECTURALLY-DISTINCT BUILDING DESIGNED BY SAUERBRUCH HUTTON. 36,000 CERAMIC RODS IN 23 DIFFERENT COLOURS ADORN THE FACADE, LOOKING LIKE GIANT MARSHMALLOW STRANDS

PREVIOUS PAGE: A model walks the runway during the Marcel Ostertag fashion show in Munich; the exterior of the Brandhorst Museum of contemporary art.

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The architecturally spectacular BMW World showroom and museum in Munich; contemporary porcelain design at Nymphenburg; the Louis Vuitton maison in Munich; fine dining at the restaurant Hunsinger in der Neuen Pinakothek where owner and chef Werner Hunsinger is known for his seafood dishes; *Golden Ribbon*, a lighting installation by Ingo Maurer.

Pushing open the heavy door, the aroma of coffee assaults my senses, with an after-scent of chocolate. An emporium of the best gourmet produce Bavaria has to offer, every shelf, stand and display case is loaded with temptations. For over a century Munich's bourgeoisie have dallied here. From perfectly sculpted marzipan works of edible-art to jars of preserves and delicatessen goodies, the delicacies on display are begging to be scooped up and packed into a picnic basket.

"Munich is often underrated," says Christian Valentini from the Munich Tourism Office over dinner at Kuffler California Kitchen. "There is so much here that many people don't know about, and these are the things we are trying to show. Everyone knows Oktoberfest, but they don't know about modern Munich," he adds, as I lift delicate morsels of lobster to my mouth.

Using their own interior design office, the Kuffler family have created a casual urban eatery serving simple grilled cuisine,



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Porsches available from Elite Rent-A-Car are icons of German engineering; Munich-based German fashion designer Ayzit Bostan creates timeless yet trendsetting fashion pieces; pedestrians walk past a sales office promoting articles around a Kandinsky exhibition at the Lenbachhaus; the sparkling vortex in the Lenbachhaus, created by Olafur Eliasson.







NOT ALL THE DESIGNS CREATED BY MAURER AND HIS TEAM ARE INDUSTRIAL, BUT ALL ARE VISUALLY STUNNING, RANGING FROM A CLEAR BULB WITH DELICATE BUTTERFLIES ALIGHTING ON ITS SURFACE, TO LED WALLPAPER AND HOLOGRAPHIC BULBS



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Museum Brandhorst's colourful ceramic-rod exterior; Zugspitze is Germany's highest mountain at 2,962 metres; the Bayerischer Hof hotel melds classic and contemporary design; Ingo Maurer's lighting designs include his winged bulb *Lucellino*.

"Munich is well known for good design even though many people talk about Berlin. You don't always see it, but people here work hard. Many people see my work and think that I live in Berlin," she laughs. Her back collections are in high demand, the designs building on each other, using classic lines with a twist. "It's not Paris, New York or Milan, but Munich has its own quality," she comments.

Miriam Schaaf, another made-in-Munich fashion designer, creates high-end everyday wear for modern fashionistas. "Munich designers are special because we have to fight harder to get some attention," she says. "There are a lot of talented people here indeed. I think the problem is that Munich is not a city you expect great innovation from. The basic values you connect Munich to are tradition, money, craftsmanship and Bavarian *gemütlichkeit* [congeniality]."

While Munich's image may not shout high fashion, the city is host to an established network of designers who have chosen its allure over New York or Berlin. "We have great design studios here for graphics or industrial design or architecture [but] I think we Munich-based designers have a lot of work to do to change the current conditions. Then you will hear more from us," Schaff promises.

One designer often heard from is Ingo Maurer, a genius in the field of lighting design. In Munich he is planning the light installation for the remodelled mezzanine level of Marienplatz subway station and his past projects include the interior of the Atomium in Brussels and a lighting concept for disused blast furnaces in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg. Among his best-known designs are the winged bulb *Lucellino* (1992) and *Porca Miseria!* (1994), a suspension lamp made with porcelain shards, one housed in MoMA.

Not all the designs created by Maurer and his team are industrial, but all are visually stunning, ranging from a clear bulb with delicate butterflies alighting on its surface, to LED wallpaper and holographic bulbs. In a nod to Andy Warhol and the pop art movement, Maurer's Campbell's soup can pendant light is a quirky graphic art work that demands attention. There is no doubt that Maurer is a shining light on the Munich product design scene.

**MORE CONSERVATIVE, YET EXUDING ELEGANCE, THE Bayerischer Hof hotel is a bastion of classic design, attracting both trendsetters and old money. This luxury hotel in the heart of Munich has a long history – it opened in 1841 on the wishes of King Ludwig I and has been owned by the Volkhardt family for over a hundred years. Currently managed by Innegrit Volkhardt, the interior of the hotel has undergone complete**

renovation and modernisation, sympathetic to the ingrained culture of class within its walls. Its pedigree has been recognised by celebrities over the years.

"Michael Jackson stayed at the hotel three or four times. Lots of musicians and artists have stayed here, like the Beatles or the Rolling Stones," explains Ulrike Barcatta, director of public relations for the Bayerischer Hof. "Next week we will have Robbie Williams," she says, as I wonder if I can engineer a meeting, perhaps over coffee at the lovely rooftop Blue Spa terrace.

In preparation, I slip into the spa for a Blue Spa Massage which combines a variety of massage styles – from shiatsu to Swedish and Thai – into one delicious eighty-minute session. The Blue Spa is the crowning glory of the Bayerischer Hof, an oasis of calm created by French architect, Andrée Putman. The blissful treatments are guaranteed to leave you feeling as pampered as a supermodel.

"We have an important gastronomic side too, including a Bavarian restaurant, a Polynesian one, a Michelin-starred restaurant, and an international restaurant," says Barcatta, leading me to the Bayerischer Hof's Garden Restaurant for lunch. Guests sit at sun-dappled tables in the al fresco courtyard, consuming delicacies such as gazpacho with white tomato foam and basil oil. The delicate flakes of transparent scallop Carpaccio offer hints of sea-air, while the fried prawns with tomato bread salad, parmesan and salsa verde compare in quality to the two-Michelin-starred dishes at Tantris, the city's Asian-styled gourmet temple. This long-standing culinary centre has been included in the list of architectural monuments worthy of protection by the Bavarian State Office for Monument Protection.

Later that evening I sit at a table in Munich's GOP Variety Theatre watching Munich's denizens of style swirl around me. Many sup on a pre-theatre meal as they wait for the heavy red velvet curtains to reveal the night's entertainment. Tonight the show is called *Spirit*, featuring incredible acrobats, parasol-twirling and body balancing acts, backed by live music and tied together by the antics of a talented, spindly-legged compere, reminiscent of the expressive emcee from *Cabaret*. I am

THIS LUXURY HOTEL IN THE HEART OF MUNICH HAS A LONG HISTORY – IT OPENED IN 1841 ON THE WISHES OF KING LUDWIG I AND HAS BEEN OWNED BY THE VOLKHARDT FAMILY FOR OVER A HUNDRED YEARS

impressed by the numbers attracted by this returned-to-vogue supper club style entertainment as the audience laughs, gasps and claps enthusiastically.

**TO EMULATE MUNICH'S STYLE, I TAKE SHORT-TERM** ownership of a Porsche 911 through Elite Rent-A-Car. Operation manager, Florian Mannhardt introduces me to the deliciously-sleek mechanical icon of German engineering. My friend Lily grins as she sinks into the soft-leather passenger seat and my hands slide onto the steering wheel, the engine giving its signature throaty purr. I am where I want to belong.

I'm no boy-racer, so with Lily's permission I forsake the *autobahn* for winding back roads, admiring the bucolic countryside almost as much as the Porsche's smooth handling. We head for the hills – literally. At Eibsee Station, only around an hour's drive from Munich, we are whisked up Zugspitze, Germany's highest mountain at 2,962 metres, in a cable car that dangles precariously over the forested landscape as it gives way to the stark alpine summit.

Clouds roll over the peak, at times obscuring the view in a meteorological game of hide and seek. A second cable car shifts us to a glacier, toddlers skidding down patches of snow, shrinking under the sun's smile. Below the cloud-line the panoramic views stretch before us, peaks and valleys kissing the horizon.

Culping down hearty Bavarian mountain fare at the mountain-top Gletschergarten, we plan our descent. "From snow to sea?" suggests Lily. "It's a lake," I reply. We chug downhill on the cog wheel train, the motion lulling us into a dazed languor which lingers until we jump into the brisk, deep-blue waters of Lake Eibsee. We emerge gasping for breath, alert and alive.

**AT REINDL'S PARTENKIRCHNER HOF THE ONLY THING** warmer than the sizzling sauna in the downstairs spa area is the greeting as the staff guide us to our mountain-view suite. The Bavarian-alps style hotel is another family affair, run by the Holzingers.

The understated ambience belies the cuisine on offer, which ranges from local specialties such as Bavarian ox Carpaccio with Werdenfelser chanterelles to essence of crayfish soup with melon pearls. Venison, Lake Staffelsee whitefish and veal tongue all make their way onto the innovative menu here. The courteous service provided by our waiter, who has been with the establishment for decades, is as charming as the presentation of our dishes.

As I sip home-made lemonade, I reflect on my perceptions of Germany. The traditional Bavarian beauty of the region imbues a subtle sophistication, led by Munich as it treads a path to the league of fashionable cities. Munich may not be brazenly hip, but for those in the know, it is Germany's secret capital of style, hidden in the heart of Bavaria. 🍷

WORDS GISELLE WHITEAKER

IMAGES: GALLO/GETTY CREATIVE, GISELLE WHITEAKER, INGO MAURER, MUNICH TOURISM, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM & ZUGSPITZLAND.