

The high quality of German-made everything makes Germany particularly agreeable for shopping. Just Pure biodynamic skin creams; Falke silk, wool and cotton socks – the best you can buy; elegant and timeless calf-leather Aigner handbags; robust but body-skimming Bogner skiwear; chic and hardy Rimowa luggage – oh, and BMW cars. All have stores in Munich. The wild and sprawling Berlin gets all the publicity, but Bavaria’s safe and pretty Munich is so enjoyable to shop in, too, with its pedestrianised streets and manageable size. Visitors from the UAE often first get to know Munich because of its Grosshadern, Bogenhausen and Rechts Der Isar clinics and other excellent hospitals, discovering the brilliant shopping between appointments. Others come primarily for the Christmas market, opening today (November 27), or the art. The big, airy, immaculately lit Neue Pinakothek, which opened in 2002, and the Brandhorst, which opened in 2009, hold two of the world’s most glorious collections of 20th-century paintings, with the great German expressionists – Otto Dix, Max Beckmann and Ernst Kirchner – especially well represented. But anyone could come for the luxury goods shopping alone – plus the odd serendipitous peeler – and leave feeling pretty pleased with themselves.

WHERE TO SHOP

The compact city centre – which you can cross on foot in about 15 minutes – has three main shopping areas. For antique shops and boutiques dedicated to the burgeoning young German designer scene, there’s the network of narrow streets in the Glockenbachviertel and Gaertnerplatz areas. These flank the huge square that houses the enormous must-see open-air **Viktualienmarkt food market** (closed on Sundays) and its surrounding patisseries and cafes. The main square, **Marienplatz**, where the Christmas market is set up each winter, is a two-minute walk away, and five minutes from that is the main luxury shopping area, centring on **Maximilianstrasse**. Grand and Renaissance-style, this is the most expensive shopping street in Germany. Home to Chanel, Wempe, Bucherer, Cartier, Vertu, Omega, Patek Philippe, Rolex and the like, it’s aesthetically pleasing to wander along. Nearby, the **Fünf Höfe complex**, designed by the Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron, is particularly appealing in snowy or cold weather. Partly open-air but mostly covered, it’s a chic string of courtyards linking a mix of familiar names such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Tory Burch and Prada, plus speciality shops and cafes.

DEPARTMENT AND CONCEPT STORES

The seven-floor **Ludwig Beck** department store, on Theatinerstrasse, with its excellent ground-floor beauty section, vies with the more sedate **Lodenfrey** – set up in 1842 by the family that pioneered loden (the first water-resistant fabric) – as the city’s best department stores. Among the more youthful-feeling concept stores, the newest is the Colette-copycat **Apropos**, at 12 Promenadeplatz, with fashion (Valentino, Armani, Missoni, Balmain, Tom Ford, Marc Jacobs, Santiago Gonzalez and Linari), books, homeware and a restaurant. At 28 Kaufingerstrasse – off the main square and home to some of Europe’s most expensive retail space – is the world’s largest concept store for men, **Hirmer Menstyle**. Six floors pack in a good mix of top labels, including Armani, Paul Smith, Canali, Belstaff and Hackett, while **Konen** at 3 Sendlinger Strasse stocks brands for men, women and children. The newly opened **Wild Munich** is the baby of the local stylist and fashion scout Beate Wild, with three floors given over to a coolly curated mix of German names such as Thomas Rath and international labels such as Issa London. And the old triple-gabled **Oberpollinger**, on Neuhauser Strasse, is a Saturday-afternoon must for any luxury shopper.

SPECIALITY STORES

On quiet Prannerstrasse, behind the Bayerischer Hof hotel, **Carpe Diem** sells delectable bed linen. With its Swarovski-buttoned little pillows, jewel-coloured duvet covers, outrageously seductive, buy-me-now-in every-colour soft alpaca throws for €299 (Dh1,400), you won’t leave unladen. Next door, the little costume-jewellery store is a treasure trove well worth browsing, too, with its chunky fake-gemstone-studded cuffs that look fabulous on a tanned wrist. **James Dowie** at 10 Brienner Strasse is the key place to know for



Rich pickings
The English Gardens offer inner-city river surfing. Right, the Fünf Höfe shopping complex spreads over 17,500 square metres. Bottom, the dining room in the Mandarin Oriental’s presidential suite.



REX FEATURES, MANDARIN ORIENTAL, MUNICH; CORBIS

men’s shoes. Also for men, and full of perfect gifting items, such as mechanical Swiss-made caged-dice cufflinks, say, handmade with eight ball bearings that set the dice in motion, is **Werner Scherer**, a big name in luxury men’s fashion in Germany since the 1950s, at 5 Platzl. **Cigars** at 139 Landsberger Strasse will spark the interest of any aficionado, with cigars from the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua and, of course, Cuba. In Fünf Höfe, **Screbiers** sells the pens Germany so excels at, from Lamy to Pelikan. Perhaps the ultimate speciality store, however, is **BMW World**, on the outskirts of the city. Germans love to come here to collect the annual new car they will have ordered from a local dealer, watching it being driven towards them down a splendidly dramatic glass road. And many international buyers discover that buying here, then shipping the car home, or driving back, is invitingly cheaper than buying at home.

WHERE TO STOP FOR COFFEE

The palatial **Cafe Luitpold** is one of the grandest cafes in Europe, famous for its chocolate making (with a little museum telling the story) and good for recovering after browsing through the 200-year-old Luitpoldblock shops on Brienner Strasse. Also with a uniquely Bavarian feel are the wood-panelled, high-ceilinged 18th- and 19th-century spots that you find throughout this old city, places where waiters speed around in long aprons – **Dallmayr**’s first-floor cafe for one, and the gorgeous **Restaurant Kronensaal** at 205 Lindwurm

Strasse for another. On a sunny weekend it’s fun to walk over (it takes barely five minutes) to the **English Gardens** – the world’s biggest city-centre park – for a coffee by the Chinese pagoda or boating lake. This is the only place anywhere you can see – or try for yourself – inner-city river-surfing. And you shouldn’t leave without walking through – no need to actually stay – the **Hofbräuhaus** on Orlando am Platzl, a vast hall that is in a permanent state of raucous uproar with an oompah band, beefy locals in feathered hats and a fleet of sausage-bearing waiters. Only in Germany, that one.

WHERE TO STAY

Visiting celebrities and those who value privacy tend to choose the sumptuous little **Mandarin Oriental** (www.mandarinoriental.com/munich; 0049 89 290 980; b&b from £441 [Dh2,615]). Barely a minute’s walk from the main square and the Viktualienmarkt, it has a chic rooftop terrace cafe bar China Moon, which has the best 360-degree views in the city, and becomes home to a delightful Bavarian mountain wooden chalet in the winter. The big draw is the feeling of closeted cossetting that comes from a hotel with just 48 rooms, 25 suites and sensationally efficient staff. The neutrally decorated bedrooms and their marble bathrooms are compact but high-ceilinged, with the finest of zillion-thread-count bed linen and blissfully comfortable goosedown pillows. The spa exudes professionalism; the restaurant is Michelin-starred and breakfast is a cosy affair, with excellent breads and pastries, if a limited selection of



THE FÜNF HÖFE COMPLEX ... A MIX OF FAMILIAR NAMES AND SPECIALITY STORES ... IS APPEALING IN COLD WEATHER

cold meats and cheeses, set out on a series of little tables. Envelopingly comfortable, with its intimate little lobby lounge, it’s unusually “boutique” for a Mandarin. The stately **Bayerischer Hof** (www.bayerischerhof.de; 0049 892 120 900; b&b from €496 [Dh2,320]), on the other hand, has been the city’s grandest see-and-be-seen-in hotel since it opened in 1841, built to accommodate King Ludwig I. It is extravagantly elegant and big, too: 280 rooms, 60 suites. The best of these are splendidly redone, spacious, in pale greys or greens, with the bathroom well removed from the bedroom and convenient open clothes-hanging space in the entrance lobby. The spa is delightful, one of the last projects by the designer Andrée Putman, with a pool and airy therapy rooms. Breakfast in the futuristic white-on-white sixth-floor restaurant, with some tables on a terrace planted with wild flowers, is pure pleasure. Entirely perfect, in fact, from the fineness of the porcelain and excellence of the tea to the temptations on offer, from top-quality smoked salmon and homemade jams to irresistible croissants.

GETTING THERE

Emirates (www.emirates.com) has direct return flights from Dubai to Munich from Dh2,555 in economy. Etihad (www.etihad.com) has direct return flights from Abu Dhabi at the same time from Dh2,595.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The city’s tourist site is unusually informative: www.muenchen.de