

A FOREIGNER'S
GUIDE TO:



Dresden

2024

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Dresden at a glance

Fun fact!

You can find the world's largest treasure chamber, the Green Vault, in the Dresden Castle.



Despite not being a megacity, Dresden offers a lifestyle that blends the best of both worlds. Home to almost 600,000 people, Dresden mixes urban energy – thriving cultural scene, exciting nightlife, and good quality of life – and small-town relaxed charm.

Beyond the city limits, Dresden offers unmatched access to nature. Four protected nature areas, perfect for weekend escapes, are within easy reach and an impressive 62% of the city's area is dedicated to woods and green spaces. The city's convenient location near the border makes it easy to have some Polish pierogi in Wroclaw or a Czech beer in Prague as part of a weekend trip – so you're sure to never be short of plans.

In 2020, Dresden launched a four-year plan to promote social equality and cultural participation through neighborhood centers and art programs. The city is aiming to be the 2025 European Capital of Culture, holding a strong commitment to both artistic expression and science and technology. Dresden's "Silicon Saxony" network connects universities, research institutes, and businesses to fuel innovation in 5G, AI, robotics, and healthcare. But while readying for a prosperous tech future, Dresden is also a very family and child-friendly city. With over 800 safe playgrounds and 600 parks, children have a generous choice of places to play and explore. Paired with a low crime rate, this makes Dresden a great choice for moving in with family.



Weather in Dresden

Dresden has a temperate oceanic climate, similar to much of Germany. However, its inland location brings some noticeable seasonal variations and slightly more extreme conditions than the rest of the country.

Summers tend to be warmer, with an average high of 25°C in August – perfect for enjoying the city’s many green spaces. On the other end, the city is known for its cold icy winters, so be prepared for an average high of 4°C in January (–2°C average low). You’ll get to see the Dresden streets covered in white from December to March, with February showing the most snowfall.

Cost of living

Compared to some of Germany's larger cities, Dresden offers a more moderate cost of living. Although not inexpensive, the city can be considered moderately affordable. Housing costs, in particular, give renters a greater value for money compared to other urban centers. Everyday expenses like transportation and groceries align with bigger cities, but goods like clothing and homeware can be found at lower prices.

Rent

In the city center, expect to find a 1-bedroom apartment for €650 - €750 and a 3-bedroom for around €1100 - €1,300. As with most cities, prices decrease outside the center. A 1-bedroom apartment in the suburbs can start at €450 while a 3-bedroom apartment averages €800 - €900, depending on amenities, building age, and lease length.

Utilities

Expect to pay around €280 - €300 per month in a one to two-bedroom apartment for utilities like electricity, water, garbage tax, and heating. Internet access costs are around €40 per month.

Transport

A monthly public transportation pass starts at €64.90 and single tickets at €3.00. Daily and weekly passes are also available.

Groceries

Depending on your lifestyle and food habits, groceries cost around €200 - €300 per month. For reference, a liter of regular milk can cost around €1.13, a kilo of white rice €2.35, a pack of 12 eggs €2.83, and a loaf of bread €1.47.

Activities and Entertainment

Gym memberships are available from €7.90 per week. A cinema ticket will cost around €10 - €12. The city offers multiple museums, with tickets averaging €12 - €14.

Housing

The cost of renting an apartment in Dresden can vary greatly depending on size, location, and level of comfort and modernity. You can expect to pay anywhere between €450 and €1,300 per month, depending on where in the city you want to live and the type of apartment you choose.

Start your search online, on general and specialized real estate websites, or consider a real estate agent for a personalized selection, but be aware of additional fees.



What you should know before starting your apartment search:

Documents

Be prepared to show your ID/passport, proof of income (salary confirmation or bank statements), and creditworthiness documentation (Schufa or similar). Some landlords might request a guarantor.

Deposits

Expect to pay a deposit equal to three months' rent (maximum), which will be returned upon lease end if you leave the apartment in good condition.

Utilities

Rent typically excludes utilities (water, electricity, heating, etc.). Make sure the rental contract clearly specifies which utilities are not included.

The Dresden neighborhoods

The ten Dresden districts are Altstadt, Neustadt, Pieschen, Klotzsche, Loshchwitz, Blasewitz, Leuben, Prohlis, Plauen, and Cotta. These districts are split into multiple neighborhoods, each catering to different lifestyles.



Here are some of the most popular neighborhood options:

Altstadt (Old Town)

The very heart of Dresden, ideal for those who enjoy being “in the center of the action”. Explore the biggest entertainment variety in the city, with plenty of art galleries, museums, small cinemas, shops, cafés and restaurants. Altstadt is very popular amongst tourists, with attractions like the baroque Zwinger Palace and the Semperoper opera house. Rent in this neighborhood is the most expensive in Dresden and finding an apartment to rent here will prove more difficult than other areas of the city, as they can be scarce.

Neustadt (New Town)

Full of trendy bars, art scenes, and a youthful vibe, Neustadt is popular amongst younger crowds. After dark, explore a variety of cocktail bars and live music venues. By day, discover art galleries, attend local events, or admire street art. Tour a collection of vintage stores and get a taste of German cuisine and baked goods at local brunch restaurants and coffee shops.



Fun fact!

Dresden has more scientists and research institutions than any German city its size



Hechtviertel:

Affordable and vibrant, this up-and-coming area near Neustadt offers alternative bars, community spaces like the Kunsthofpassage, and lower rents. It's ideal for those seeking a unique and vibrant atmosphere while staying on budget.

Blasewitz:

A family-friendly neighborhood with green spaces like the Schillerplatz Park, good schools, and a relaxed atmosphere. Blasewitz is ideal for those seeking a suburban feel within the city. Spend the day in the Dresden Zoo or explore the Großer Garten, one of Europe's largest city parks, where you'll find botanical gardens, a miniature railway, and even a cable car.

Loschwitz:

This neighborhood offers village charm and city convenience at once. Find your dream family home or explore the upscale Weisser Hirsch neighborhood. Walk along the Elbe River and ride the Loschwitz Suspension Railway - the oldest mountain railway in Germany - for panoramic views.

Friedrichstadt:

Affordable, spacious apartments and a vibrant art scene make Friedrichstadt ideal for those looking for unique living spaces at lower prices. Once a baroque city complex, parts of the district are now protected historical monuments. Explore the area's industrial heritage alongside its lively art scene.



Moving around

Dresden offers one of the most comprehensive local transport networks in Germany. Within Dresden, residents can travel by train, bus, tram, and ferry, and public transportation is available 24/7, every 10 minutes, during the day. The network includes 12 tram routes and 29 bus routes in regular service.

Tickets are available at many stops, onboard vehicles, or the DVB mobile app. This app also offers real-time information on departures and disruptions and features an interactive map for easy route planning.

To explore beyond the city center, use one of the three Dresden suburban railway services that connect you to the greater Elbe valley region:

- **S1:** Meissen to Schöna via Pirna (Saxon Switzerland)
- **S2:** Pirna to Dresden Airport via Dresden-Hauptbahnhof (city center)
- **S3:** Dresden-Hauptbahnhof (city center) to Tharandt and Freiberg via Freital

Fun fact!

Dresden is home to the world's oldest overhead railway



Dresden's public transport system also offers the "MOBIbike" bike-sharing program. With 1,000 bikes available at designated MOBIpoints, you can easily pick up and return a bike for a healthy and eco-friendly way to explore the city.

For those who prefer to drive, roads are controlled through a smart traffic management system that helps optimize traffic flow. Additionally, motorways and highways provide easy access to and from the city.



Healthcare

Renowned for its quality and comprehensive coverage, the German healthcare system offers peace of mind to residents. Health insurance is mandatory for all residents in Germany. As an expat, you have two main options: public health insurance (GKV) and private health insurance (PKV).

Public Health Insurance (GKV) covers 90% of the population. Signing up is usually automatic if you're employed – your employer includes you in social contributions, with health insurance being a part of it.

All health insurance plans in Germany, regardless of public (GKV) or private (PKV) options, include a minimum standard of coverage:

In-patient or Hospitalization:

hospital stays as a ward patient, ensuring access to necessary medical facilities during illnesses or emergencies;

Out-patient care:

consultations with both general practitioners and medical specialists (e.g., cardiologists) are covered;

Prescription medications:

essential medications prescribed by licensed physicians;

Pregnancy care:

expecting mothers receive comprehensive prenatal and pregnancy-related care;

Basic dental care:

routine dental services are included (aesthetic teeth cleaning may incur an additional fee);

Dependent coverage:

spouses, civil partners, and children (to a specific age limit) residing with the policyholder are automatically covered at no additional cost.

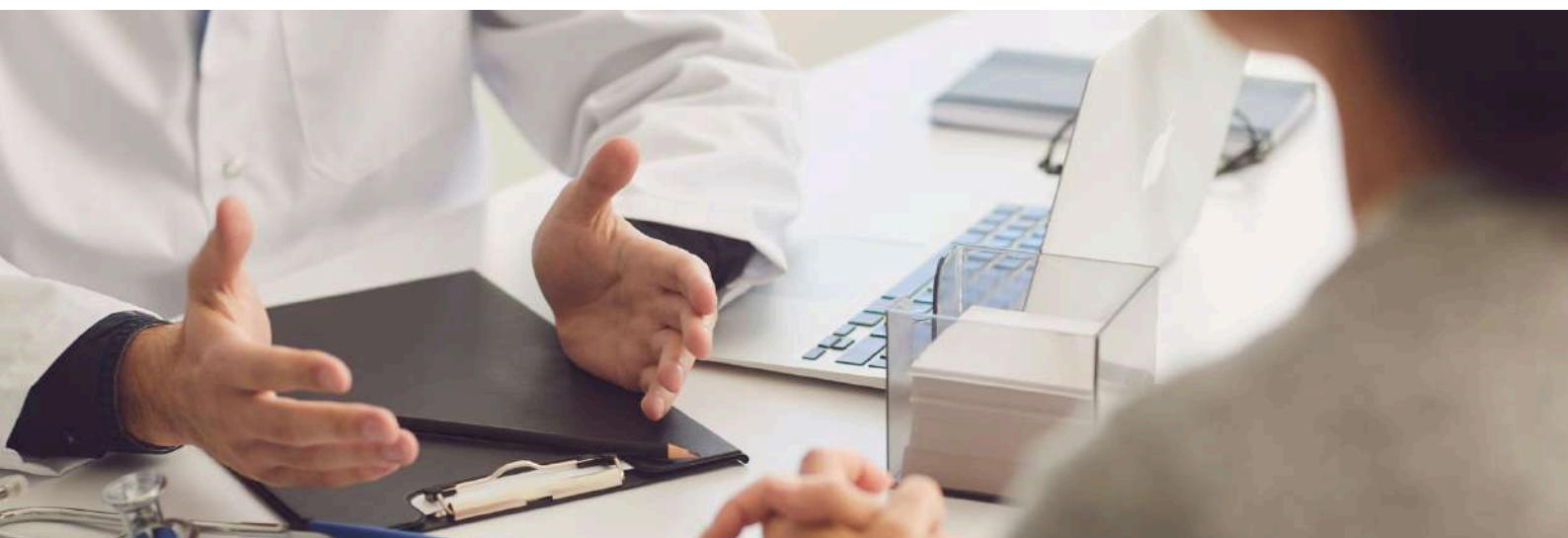
In Germany, most medications require a doctor's prescription and can only be filled at a pharmacy. This means you'll usually pay for over-the-counter medication yourself, but your health insurance will cover most prescription drugs.

For prescription drugs, you'll pay a 10% surcharge, between €5 and €10. You won't ever pay more than the medication itself. These rules apply to both regular pharmacies and online pharmacies.

Looking for a doctor while in Dresden?

The [Health guide for immigrants in Saxony](#) provides information on key healthcare issues, including potential next steps and competent local points of contact.

Should you need medical care, remember 112 for emergencies and ambulance services (free call). For urgent, non-life-threatening issues after hours or weekends, call 116 117 (also free).





Groceries

Dresden offers grocery shopping options catering to every taste and budget. Throughout the city, you'll easily find multiple budget-friendly supermarket giants like Aldi and Lidl, minimarkets, and specialty stores such as Asian minimarkets or organic produce shops.

Supermarkets

Rewe and KONSUM-Markt are the main supermarket options in Dresden. You'll find multiple stores not too far from the Dresden city center.

Budget retailers

Popular budget supermarket chains Lidl and Aldi have stores all over the city and its surroundings, offering private-label food and household products. You'll also find multiple Netto Marken-Discount stores.

Grocery stores

Asian markets, especially Indian stores, are popular throughout Dresden, with multiple shops scattered throughout the city. Near the city center, you can find bio, organic, and gourmet shops.



Food

Dresden offers global options alongside must-try Saxon specialties. From pizzas to hearty Bavarian dishes, dining alongside live music and relaxed Sunday brunches, there's something for everyone. For those relocating with four-legged friends, a lot of the city's restaurants and cafés are pet-friendly.

Traditional Saxon food is known for its generous portions and focus on meat but between savory sausages, tangy pickled vegetables and gluttony cakes, even light eaters will find something they like.

To start, warm up with a bowl of Sächsische Kartoffelsuppe (potato soup) with chunks of browned sausage, or try the unique Holunderbeerensuppe (elderberry soup) with lemon, spices, cream and croutons.



Pulverturm

Restaurant set in a gunpowder tower originally built in 1565, serving traditional Saxon cuisine such as potato soup with sausage, pork roulade, and Sächsische Quarkkäulchen.

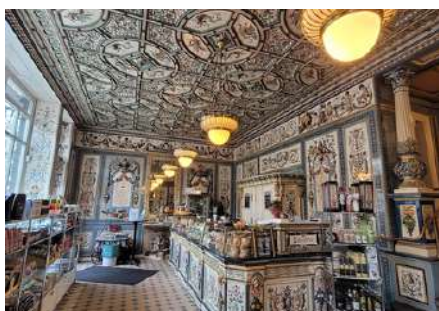


Ballhaus Watzke

More than 100 years old, this space combines a restaurant, ballroom, and brewery. Try regional specialties like pork neck in beer sauce with mushroom goulash, alongside their own house-brewed beers.

For a local main course, go for the Dresdner Sauerbraten – a leg of beef marinated for several days in a stock of herb vinegar and malt beer, bay leaves and spices. After being roasted, it's served with red cabbage and dumplings. Another great option is the Rinderroulade: a thin-sliced round steak, coated with mustard and diced bacon, and served with cooked red cabbage, burgundy gravy and a traditional Königsloß potato dumpling coated in breadcrumbs.

Coffee and cake are an important tradition in Saxony, and Dresden is not an exception. In many of the city's coffee houses, you'll find Eierschecke, a three-layered cake with quark cheese and custard. During the Christmas season, try Saxony's most well-known culinary specialty: the Dresdner Christstollen. According to a 100-year-old recipe, Dresdner Stollen has to be made with a distinct ratio of key ingredients – butter, rum-soaked raisins, almonds, candied lemon, orange peel and a secret mix of spices – otherwise, it's not Dresdner Stollen.



Pfunds Molkerei

The oldest dairy shop in East Germany, founded in 1879, now a milk bar. Taste different varieties of milk, cheeses and buy specialities, like milk jam or milk grappa.



aha - LadenCafe

Split-level cafe with outdoor sitting serving vegetarian and vegan options, combining traditional German soups and international-inspired mains.



VEGAN HOUSE

Vegan restaurant with a couple of spaces in the city, serving mostly Asian-inspired vegan dishes.

Fun fact!

Gose Beer was so popular in Leipzig in the 1800s that the city was called "the Gose city".





Culture and Entertainment

Dresden offers a rich mix of history and culture. Besides admiring its impressive baroque buildings, you'll find entertainment and activities for every taste and season.

Start with the city's most famous landmark trio: the Zwinger Palace, the Semperoper Opera House, and the Church of Our Lady. Beyond these must-sees, explore Brühl's Terrace, the Royal Palace, the Elbe Castles, and the unique garden city of Hellerau.

Art lovers can explore Dresden's many galleries and museums, like the Albertinum, for modern and contemporary art, and the State Art Collections for works from Renaissance to present day.





Fun fact!

Dresden is home to Germany's oldest Christmas market, the Striezelmarkt, the earliest record of which dates back to 1434.

If you're looking for musical entertainment, Dresden caters to all music tastes. Classical music lovers can enjoy performances at the renowned Semper Opera House or the Dresden Philharmonic's modern concert hall. Jazz fans can explore the city's many clubs and hidden venues or festivals like the Jazztage Dresden. Every Monday, Jazzfanatics organizes a free jazz concert that you can attend at Kulturzentrum Scheune. Concerts and festivals like the Dresden Music Festival keep the city energized throughout the year.

Even the cold Dresden winters offer fun activities. Visit the ice rink in the Heide Forest and skate amongst the forest trees or immerse yourself in the festive spirit at Germany's oldest Christmas market, the Striezelmarkt, known for its lights, colors, and tempting food stalls.

Worth seeing:

- Zwinger and Old Masters Picture Gallery
- Semperoper Opera House
- Frauenkirche Church (Church Of Our Lady)
- Dresden Royal Palace and Museums
- Brühl's Terrace
- Pillnitz Palace and Gardens



Arrival and settling-in

Landing in Dresden:

Your arrival begins at Dresden Airport, served by major airlines like Condor, Lufthansa, Ryanair, Turkish Airlines, and Eurowings.

Connections:

Dresden Airport is right next to the A4 motorway for easy car access. The airport also has its own train station with S2 suburban trains running every 30 minutes to Dresden-Neustadt and the main station (21 minutes). Alternatively, buses 77 and 80 stop directly outside the terminal, with bus 77 connecting to a tram for the main station.

Communications:

EU citizens (and those from Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein) enjoy "roam like at home" privileges – this means you can use your domestic allowance of minutes, texts and data when traveling in these countries. Remember, this applies for a maximum of 63 days within four months.

For those from non-participating countries and extended stays, popular providers like Vodafone, O2, Tchibo, Lidl Connect, Aldi talk, and Blau mobil offer long-term contracts (often 24 months) or prepaid cards. SIM cards are readily available at supermarkets and provider shops.



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Please note:

This guide reflects information accurate as of April 2024. Prices, transportation schedules, and living costs can change. We encourage you to confirm this information with official sources for the latest updates.

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Whether your employees are moving to Dresden, another German city, or any of our 30+ worldwide locations, our expert team is here to guide you every step of the way.