

## ROYAL CHARMS AT THE SCHLOSSHOTEL PILLNITZ, DRESDEN, GERMANY

By Anne Z. Cooke, Tribune Media Services  
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DRESDEN, GERMANY -- The Schlosshotel Pillnitz, in the shade of its royal neighbor, Pillnitz Castle and Park, knows the glamour is half the attraction. But there's more behind the stately 18th-century facade than meets the eye. This family-owned hotel, on the outskirts of Dresden, has the soul of a friendly country inn. After a long day on the road, we were relieved and pleased to be greeted by a welcoming staff, warm and inviting bedrooms, modern bathrooms and a bustling restaurant with a mouth-watering menu.

A renovated four-star property, the Schlosshotel's three suites and 45 double rooms, decorated in oak and knotty pine and a green-and-red color scheme, have queen or twin beds, hair dryers, satellite TV, mini-fridge, dial telephones and in-room wi-fi access. The reception desk is on duty 24-7 and you can order room service. The safe behind the desk is available to store valuables.

The service, too, is prompt and friendly. The doorman who carried our bags refused a tip, the desk clerk located several hard-to-find local phone numbers and the maid hurried to bring extra pillows and a tube of toothpaste.

The Kamin Restaurant, casual and convivial, serves authentic Saxony and German specialties. The wine list includes various local and national wines, as well as regional and European ales and beer. Breakfast, included in the room rate, is served in the Fleiderhof Cafe. In warm weather, you can order lunch or dinner on the outdoor terrace, under umbrellas.

Even if none of this were true, the location alone, chosen by the kings of Saxony for their summer palace, would be a dealmaker. The Castle and Park, on the banks of the Elbe River, was once private property. Today it's a public park, open to day tourists and to hotel guests. Accessible on a moment's notice, the gardens and woods make a perfect rural walkabout.

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Other hotels in the heart of historic Dresden, the capital of Saxony, may tempt you. The town, rebuilt and recreated from the ashes of World War II, is arguably Germany's most beautiful urban center. But at the Schlosshotel you'll be just eight miles away, a quick trip by taxi or -- if you need some exercise -- by bicycle.

The Elbe River passenger ferry docks 100 yards away and offers pleasure outings and transportation to other riverside towns. Or you can rent a bicycle at the hotel and ride for miles along the riverside bicycle path. Behind the hotel, Pillnitz Park provides similar outdoor solitude, for sunning, sketching or walking. Here five palaces are grouped around a formal baroque garden with geometric flowerbeds, a large fountain and gravel paths. A tree-lined "allee," once the carriage road, winds through the woods passing a greenhouse, experimental garden and other outbuildings.

For more about the Schosshotel's tours and packages, review the hotel's Website (remember to click on the English translation). The hotel will plan an opera and/or symphony in Dresden, for you, with tickets. A dozen other possibilities include museum visits, cultural tours, city discovery, horseback riding, river tours and romance packages.

#### INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE:

Stay at the Schlosshotel Pillnitz while you are traveling from Berlin to Dresden, through the former East Germany, or during a visit to Dresden, in east central Germany. The hotel is on the Elbe River, about 8 miles from the city center. Parking is available. Dresden's Klotzche Airport is 12 miles away.

Double rooms are moderately priced, starting at about \$125 a night for two. However, prices will fluctuate based on the season, currency exchange and availability. Current packages include three nights for the price of two, and four nights for the price of three.

For information or to book online, go to [www.schlosshotel-pillnitz.de](http://www.schlosshotel-pillnitz.de), call 001-03-51-2614-0, or write to August-Bockstiegel Strasse 10, 01326 Dresden, Germany.

(Anne Z. Cooke relives her travels at home in Venice, Calif.)

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