

# Rebuilding Dresden

Bombed to smithereens in the final days of World War II, Dresden has risen like a phoenix from the ashes and is now one of Europe's more diverse cities.  
AMANDA HURLEY reports. Photos: TRAVEL INK.



**D**RESDEN is a city easily overlooked. For most, it is yet another stop on the long train ride between Prague and Berlin, somewhere to catch a quick blast of fresh air and shake off the after-effects of the absinthe imbibed in the Czech Republic.

But to miss Dresden is to dismiss a city firmly at the forefront of Germany's underground scene. If it is electronic music that you've come to Germany for, you could do worse than spend a night or two in Neustadt, Dresden's alternative quarter.

Here, nestled amid a square mile of low-key streets, are more than 150 bars, cafes

and venues, not to mention the numerous shops filled with the latest avant-garde designs. There are record shops and stores with translucent mushrooms glowing under the rays of neon lights, shops devoted to intricately stitched cowboy boots and others filled with clothes made from materials as diverse as hessian and silk.

Every available space in Neustadt not already filled with a bar or a shop is covered in graffiti — huge murals that span the walls of entire buildings, several storeys high. Bright lurid colours are separated by thick black lines into twisted faces, decaying cars or the names of the

artists who design each piece. Here, even the children's play area is the product of someone's overactive imagination — swings and slides have been furnished from wood into morphyic, insect-like shapes, watched over by the benevolent gaze of a stylised woman, depicted in yet another huge mural.

Flyers advertising dub, drum 'n' bass and psychodelica nights can be found plastered all over the place and hostel staff advise exploring every laneway in Neustadt, no matter how uninspiring, as most venues are tucked away, reliant on local knowledge for their custom.