

Meißen -- Where Dishes Are Worth More Than Jewels

Meißen residents may not have heard the shop keeper's warning popular in the English speaking world, but they fully support the sentiment it expresses:

"Pretty to look at, nice to hold. If you break it consider it sold."

Yes, they think. Keep your clumsy hands off our plates!

Of course, you will want to keep your hands to yourself anyway. Meißen porcelain, known popularly but erroneously in the West as Dresden China, is quite valuable. This is especially true of the colorful sculpted figurines and statuettes on display in the Meißen museums.

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Irreplaceable, the artistry reflects both the ingenuity of the makers and the power of the Saxon governors who could get such talent artists to this small town 25 km from [Dresden](#).

Meißen was the first home for the Saxon governors, earning the town the nickname "The Cradle of Saxony." With its gentle but tall hills and lush Elbe river valley to tempt them, the Saxons built Albrechtsburg, the first castle in Germany designed as a home instead of a fort. With the Peter & Paul Cathedral attached to it, you will want to tour both and then admire the view of the old town from the castle hill.

At night in the trendy old town you will want to look back up and admire the view of the castle — it's lit and really stands out against the night sky.

The castle was used as more than a pretty summer retreat — it was also the secret home of the first

Meißen porcelain factory. The recipe for making porcelain was considered an invaluable trade secret. The kings protected it like it was worth more than gold, and kept the craftsmen locked in the castle.

As you admire the wares at the annual summer pottery festival, try to imagine that only three or four of all the hundreds of potters at the market knew how to make the clay. Then be glad that all of them do and pick up a cool souvenir — the artistry that drove Meißen porcelain to fame is still thriving in the region.