

## WO KANN MAN ESSEN UND TRINKEN? (Where can you eat and drink?)

essen / speisen / trinken

### LEIPZIG'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH COFFEE

Discover Leipzig's long history with coffee—from beverage of the counterculture and definer of social status to inspiring decadent desserts.

Germany's very first coffee house may or may not have been in Leipzig, but Germany's coffee house culture was certainly born here. And Leipzig has the coffee houses to prove it. These were popular meeting places in the trade fair city as far back as 1695, and in the intervening centuries Leipzig residents have come to be known as *Kaffeisachsen* (Saxon coffee drinkers). None of the original 30 coffee houses remains, but several later ones do, one dating as early as 1711.

That was the year that coffee-lovers began gathering at Zum Arabischen Coffe Baum, a café near the Marktplatz in the Kleine Fleischergasse, and it was here that we began our tour through Leipzig's three-century love affair with the aromatic bean. Given its long history—it's Germany's oldest remaining coffee house—Zum Arabischen Coffe Baum is an appropriate setting for the coffee museum that fills its upper floors.

Here the history of coffee unfolds in a series of displays and detailed descriptive panels (in German and English), with particular attention to Saxony and to Leipzig's coffee houses. The more than 500 artifacts range from historic coffee grinders (Leipzig was Germany's major manufacturer of these in 1700s) and roasting equipment to delicate porcelain coffee cups and vintage advertising. Together they tell a fascinating story.

Before industrialization, only the wealthy could afford this luxurious imported drink, but by the mid-1800s it had become the drink of the masses. Workers stayed alert with it, and the poorest brewed a pot and dipped bread in it to fuel them (and dull hunger pangs) throughout the day.

Displays of cups and china coffee sets explain that the same economic divides were true of cups. Only the rich could afford costly china imported from Asia, cups that didn't interfere with the flavor or burn the fingers as tin and other metal vessels did. But when an alchemist in Dresden discovered the secret of porcelain production during the reign of Augustus the Strong, Saxony became a center for its manufacture. Full sets were still expensive, so collection sets were popular—a matching cup, saucer and small plate. People carried them when traveling, in

specially designed leather cases.

*Blümchenkaffee*, a term coined in the early 1700s, described coffee so pure and clear that you could see the flower in the bottom of the china cup. Originally a compliment denoting both that the coffee was of fine quality and that the drinker could afford china cups, it later became a term of derision for weak, watery coffee.

As coffee became more available, so did public places to drink it. The first one in Europe had opened in Venice before the mid-1600s, inspired by the Venetian Republic's close association with the Ottoman Empire. Others began to open elsewhere in Europe and opinions differ on whether the first was in Bremen or in Leipzig. But coffee beans were offered at the Leipzig Trade Fair in 1670, and by the late years of the century merchants in this trading city were using coffee houses as a place to gather and carry on business. The first coffee stall was opened in the marketplace in 1694 by Lehmann, who proclaimed itself "Chocolatier to the Royal Polish and Saxon Court."

Germany's first coffee houses were more like pubs but in the early 1800s a new type arose, more refined and elegant cafés catering to middle and upper classes. Women, who previously drank coffee in private homes or genteel coffee gardens, began to patronize them and these upscale coffee houses became the center of a social scene. In the early 1900s, music became popular in German cafés, often featuring player pianos made in Leipzig, Germany's foremost producer of mechanical instruments at the time.

The second floor of Zum Arabischen Coffe Baum replicates three styles of coffee house: the Café Français, the Vienna Café and the Arab Coffee Shop, complete with low divans, deep cushions and brass coffee service.

As we sampled the brews in Leipzig's historic temples to coffee, we also sampled their signature cakes and pastries, appropriate since Saxony is where the hallowed German tradition of *Kaffee und Kuchen* began. For at least three centuries, Saxon bakers have been enthusiastic creators of cakes, which found a perfect home in the coffee houses. These became an integral part of Leipzig's coffee story, and individual cafés became known as the place to savor