

C THE UNSEEN

Chemnitz on its way to becoming the European Capital of Culture 2025

Once the richest city in Germany, then not really making an appearance for decades and only remembered by many as the "former Karl Marx Stadt", Chemnitz is now on its way to representing Germany as the "European Capital of Culture" in 2025. How did it get this far and what did Chemnitz do to deserve it? The answers are: Ingenuity, courage and hard work.

Perhaps it all began in 1357, when Chemnitz was granted the so-called bleaching privilege ("Bleichprivileg"). All textiles in the surrounding area could only be bleached in Chemnitz, making the city the center of trade and transshipment in the region. The **affinity with textiles and their production** was to remain and led to more than a third of the workforce in Chemnitz being employed in the textile industry as early as the 17th century. In 1799/1800, the Bernhard brothers established the first mechanical cotton spinning mill in today's Harthau district. Chemnitz blossomed into an industrial stronghold and soon became a major city and the richest city in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. Entrepreneurial spirit, coupled with Chemnitz's can-do mentality, led to innovative inventions and modern achievements. The Saxon locomotive king Richard Hartmann was just as much at home here as the loom imperialist Louis Ferdinand Schönherr.

Early on, the industrialists bought splendid houses and acted as patrons. Art and culture were highly valued in urban society and those with sufficient financial means employed young European architects such as Henry van de Velde. The preserved and now renovated **Villa Esche**, owned by stocking manufacturer Herbert Eugen Esche, still bears witness to this today. The **König Albert Museum**, the headquarters of the Chemnitz Art Collections on the Theaterplatz, is also a testament to this period and the investment in timeless aesthetics. Magnificent religious buildings and an entire Art Nouveau neighborhood followed. Largely spared from the war, a walk across the **Kaßberg** is a must when visiting the city today.

After the Second World War, Chemnitz had to reinvent itself. A large part of the city center was almost completely destroyed shortly before the end of the war. In 1953, the city changed its name and from then until 1990 was known as "**Karl-Marx-Stadt**". This was followed not only by the inauguration of the large, well-known bronze sculpture of the philosopher's head in the city center, but also by an extensive urban development program. The city center provided space for new plans and buildings – some of which are still visible today in the now highly regarded style of **Eastern Modernism**. More people moved into the city, living space became scarce and housing estates such as the "Fritz Heckert"-area were built on the outskirts.

In the shadow of Leipzig and Dresden, Chemnitz has developed its very own culture over the years. A culture characterized by machismo. An old film says that in Karl-Marx-Stadt, workers "built their own city". They were good, they could do it – but they didn't make a big fuss about it. After the political change in 1990, a number of residents left their city and it was once again confronted with issues that did not allow it to take a deep breath. The redesign of the city center, the **revitalization of brownfield** sites and dealing with vacancies were urgent issues that came to the fore. But the city also mastered these challenges with the help of committed people; the Technical University grew, companies were founded here and "Made in Chemnitz" is now internationally recognized as a seal of quality and innovative solutions. Since October 2020, it has been clear that Chemnitz has the potential to make even more of it and also appear on the European cultural map. An international jury recommended the city as **European Capital of Culture 2025**, which was also unanimously confirmed by the Conference of Culture Ministers at the beginning of January 2021. In the Capital of Culture year 2025, projects under the motto "C the Unseen" will bring undiscovered places to life and make the invisible visible.

The **“European Makers”** will take center stage and weave the thread of history into the future. More than 100 projects in over 1,000 events will then put the cultural facets of the city. The good news: Even though the final program will not be announced until autumn 2024, guests will not have to wait until the Capital of Culture year to explore the previously undiscovered in Chemnitz and the region. A number of projects have already been launched along the way.

The **PURPLE PATH**, for example, is currently developing into a unifying brand in the Capital of Culture region. Like an art trail, it will run through the entire cultural region in 2025, highlighting and creating new art in public spaces. The first works have already been installed: In Thalheim/Erzgebirge you can admire spruces by artist Friedrich Kunath, in Flöha Tanja Rochelmeyer designed a railway station subway under the title "Glance" and the sculpture "Stack" by British artist Tony Cragg can be seen in the spa gardens in Aue-Bad Schlema. The official opening of the PURPLE PATH is planned for 11-13 April 2025.

Parishes in the city and the region are also involved – some altars are already artistically veiled during the altar wrappings at Passiontide. With the Chemnitz model (“Chemnitzer Modell”), adventurous travelers can easily reach impressive cathedrals (for example in Annaberg-Buchholz) or places steeped in history (for example in Limbach-Oberfrohna). Cycling enthusiasts can explore the surrounding area on the Chemnitz Valley cycle path and no matter where visitors end up, it is always worth meeting the local people.

Places for new networks and cultural events will also be created in the context of the Capital of Culture year, always with the aim of having an impact beyond this. In the region, these are so-called maker hubs, where creative ideas can be spun and a regional exchange on specific topics is promoted. In Chemnitz itself, intervention spaces in individual neighborhoods become meeting places and are intended to bring together people with different interests. One example of this is the garage campus on Zwickauer Straße in Chemnitz, a former tram depot for which a development concept

with detailed usage scenarios was created with the involvement of numerous stakeholders and is currently being realized step by step.

In the future, **festivals in Chemnitz** will reach a European level – for example, KOSMOS Chemnitz will become KOSMOS Europe. The annual Festival for Democracy offers a platform for exchange and encounters in the center of the city. The Fête de la Musique, the Leselust and the Museum Night are already connecting the city and the surrounding area, and further European collaborations in these areas are planned for 2025. Of course, sports culture also plays a major role in the Capital of Culture year and on the way there. In the years since the successful application for the title, around 100 amateur cyclists have ridden from Chemnitz to Europe and back in the European Peace Ride.

Art and culture enthusiasts will definitely get their money's worth in the city's established museums and institutions. The **Chemnitz Art Collections** ("Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz") have made a name for themselves throughout Germany with legendary exhibitions. Highlights in the year of the Capital of Culture include an exhibition at the Gunzenhauser Museum entitled "European Realities", which focuses on realism movements of the 1920s and 1930s in Europe. The Museum at the Theaterplatz is also dedicating a special exhibition to the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch, focusing in particular on the theme of fear in his work. Another museum highlight in the city, the Chemnitz State Museum of Archaeology, in the Schocken department stores' once created by Erich Mendelsohn, is dedicated to around 300,000 years of cultural history on 3,000 square meters. A major special exhibition on the subject of mining, which tells a story of passion and greed, will begin there in autumn 2024.

The five divisions of **Chemnitz Theatre** converge in the cultural heart of the city: Opera, philharmonic, drama, ballet and puppet theatre. Powerful productions, spectacular stage sets and international collaborations are realized anew every season. The ensemble of the Chemnitz Opera House performed works by Richard Wagner as early as the opening program in 1909. This started a tradition that regularly attracts Wagner lovers from all over Germany to the "Saxon Bayreuth". The theatre is currently housed together with the puppet theatre in the Spinnbau in Altchemnitz, as the Schauspielhaus is being renovated. However, this should not deter anyone from visiting the theatre, as the temporary building has an industrial charm and great authenticity. The annual festival "Tanz, Modern, Tanz", curated by the ballet, brings modern European dance to the streets and makes it clear that the whole city can be a stage if you just let yourself get involved.

As already mentioned, Chemnitz is one of Germany's industrial cradles. The **Chemnitz Industrial Museum** on Zwickauer Straße is dedicated to this history, but also to the present and future. In the Capital of Culture year, the Chemnitz twin city of Manchester is the focus of an exhibition here. The 26-hectare Chemnitz **Hilbersdorf Saxon Railway Museum** is a unique technical monument in Europe. The open-air museum presents an impressive collection of steam, diesel and electric locomotives in two roundhouses, as well as the rope winding system for breaking up and rebuilding goods trains. Those interested in industrial culture should not miss a visit to the **Saxon Museum of Vehicles** too. This displays a variety of different models in the historic

setting of one of the oldest multi-store car parks in Germany. And anyway: Garages will also play a major role in the Capital of Culture year, as they are representative of a visible facet of Eastern European mentality. And, to be honest, they also stand for joint enterprise.

In addition to the major cultural institutions, an **exciting subculture** has also developed in Chemnitz in recent years. With numerous festivals, club and open-air concerts, cabaret performances, markets, galleries and off-theatre venues, a large number of people from the cultural and creative scene add a splash of color to the green cityscape. The **Begehungen festival**, in which a wasteland is made accessible and artistically performed on every year, and the multimedia **Biennale Pochen**, which sets artistic standards every two years with reference to the history and future of the city, should be emphasised here as examples.

You can also find more information on upcoming events at www.chemnitz.travel. The travel magazine "Visit Chemnitz" also offers comprehensive insights into the city's highlights. Information about the Capital of Culture 2025 can be found at www.chemnitz2025.de/en. More about the region can be found at www.chemnitz-zwickau-region.de.

Information about Chemnitz and guided tours of the city can be obtained from the Chemnitz Tourist Information Centre at Markt 1 in 09111 Chemnitz or by calling +49 371 690680.