

DRINKING

top picks

- Ä (p224)
- Freischwimmer (p222)
- Heinz Minki (p223)
- Kiki Blofeld (p223)
- Kptn A Müller (p225)
- Möbel Olfe (p223)
- Prater (p226)
- Würgeengel (p223)

DRINKING

Berlin is a great place for boozers. Cosy pubs, riverside beach bars, beer gardens, underground dives, DJ bars, snazzy hotel lounges, designer cocktail temples – with such variety, finding a party pen to match your mood is not exactly a tall order. The edgier, more underground venues are on the east side, with places out west being posher and more suited for date night than dedicated drinking. Generally, the emphasis is on style and atmosphere, and some proprietors have gone to extraordinary lengths to come up with unique design concepts. That said, there's now such a glut of spacey Stanley Kubrick-inspired bars that someone should invent a vaccine. Enough already.

The line between café and bar is often blurred, with many places changing stripes as the hands move around the clock. Alcohol is served pretty much all day if you're keen on getting a head start. Dedicated bars open between 6pm and 8pm and usually keep pouring until the last tippler leaves. Some have happy hours, especially in tourist-thick Mitte and student-flavoured Friedrichshain.

A phenomenon that takes over the Scheunenviertel in the evening hours is the organised pub crawl. For about €12 each, a few dozen global nomads get wasted on free shots and cheap drinks at a handful of touristy bars and pubs. Insider Tours and New Berlin Tours (see p308) are among the companies operating these drink-a-thons that seem to be especially popular with the 'triple-A crowd' (Anglo-Saxons, Americans and Australians).

ETIQUETTE

Table service is common in German bars and pubs and you shouldn't go and order at the bar unless you intend to stay there, or if there's a sign saying *Selbstbedienung* (self-service). It's customary to keep a tab instead of paying for each round separately. Fortunately, the practice of bottle service has not yet caught on in Berlin, except at some fancy clubs and lounges in Charlottenburg, where tables are reserved for groups willing to shell out top euros for bottles of mediocre champagne or vodka.

Note that in bars with live DJs €1 is usually added to the cost of your first drink. Tip bartenders about 5%.

Drinking in public is legal but can be frowned upon, especially if it's done on the U-Bahn or on the street.

SPECIALITIES

Beer continues to be a beloved (and cheap) libation and most places pour a variety of local, national and import brews. *Fassbier* (draught beer) is generally limited to one or two brands of local lager or Pils, usually served in 300mL or 500mL glasses. A speciality is *Berliner Weisse*, a light, sour beer served with a shot of raspberry (red) or woodruff (green) syrup, which is popular with tourists and old-time Berliners.

All places stock at least one variety of *Weizenbier* (wheat beer), in 500mL bottles with a choice of *Hefe* (yeasty) and *Kristall* (filtered); this is most Berliners' choice for afternoon

or early evening drinking. Other options are *Schwarzbier* (black beer, like porter), *Dunkelbier* (dark ale) and *Bock* (strong, seasonal beer). In recent years, flavoured beers like Becks Green Lemon have made inroads. Non-alcoholic Clausthaler and Becks are common, and you can drink your lager as an *Alster/Radler* (with lemonade or orangeade) or a *Diesel* (with coke). If you're bored with beer, there are lots of alternatives, like German *Sekt* or Italian *prosecco* (sparkling wines, often served on the rocks), vodkas or absinthe concoctions.

Cocktails have undergone a major renaissance, with caipirinhas and mojitos being common standbys; the vodka-based 'Watermelon Man' also has its share of fans, especially among women. For the best taste sensations sample the house creations at one of the serious specialist places.

The quality of wine in bars and cafés ranges from drinkable to abysmal, which is probably why so many Germans drink it with fizzy water, called a *Weinschorle*. If you're not boozing, a *Saftschorle* (fizzy water and juice) is a refreshing alternative. Carbonated sodas also have their takers, with most preferring German-made organic Bionade to Coke and other imports.

HISTORIC MITTE

BEBEL BAR Map pp76–7

Bar

☎ 460 6090; www.hotelderome.com; Behrenstrasse 37; ☎ from 9am; 📍 Französische Strasse Channel your inner Cary Grant and belly up to the bar at this smooth, mood-lit thirst

parlour at the **Hotel de Rome** (p265). Don't bother if you're the caipi type – you'd be wasting the barman's considerable talents. Blending fresh fruit, exotic herbs and spices with quality booze, cocktails here have a progressive, sexy edge that goes over well with the global Armani crowd.

NEWTON BAR Map pp76–7 Bar

☎ 202 9540; www.newton-bar.de, in German; Charlottenstrasse 57; ☎ 10am–3am; 🍷 Französische Strasse, Stadtmitte

At this glamour vixen on Gendarmenmarkt you can swirl your whisky with the posh set with an entire wall of Helmut Newton's high-heeled nudes stimulating the imagination. On your way to the upstairs humidior and smoking lounge (in winter only), you'll even pass a signed photograph of the master himself. In fine weather, sit outside and see if you and your stogey can stop that cutie on the footpath.

SHÖCHÜ Map pp76–7 Bar

☎ 301 117 333; www.ma-restaurants.de; Behrenstrasse 72; ☎ 6pm–2am Mon–Sat; 🍷 Unter den Linden, ☎ 100, 200, TXL

Don't have the fat wallet to sample Tim Raué's exquisite food at **MA** (p198) or **uma** (p199)? Well, scrape together your pennies and enjoy the same luxurious setting in the attached bar, where you can get liquefied on a classic martini or on clever shōchū-based cocktails infused with green tea, sesame, jasmine and other tantalizing ingredients.

WINDHORST Map pp76–7 Bar

☎ 2045 0070; Dorotheenstrasse 65; ☎ from 6pm Mon–Fri, from 9pm Sat; 🍷 Friedrichstrasse

Discerning drinkers wishing to unwind in a sophisticated setting will find a thoroughly five-star ambience at this postage-stamp-sized bar where your host, Günter Windhorst, 'shakes' things up with a passion.

CAFÉ EINSTEIN Map pp76–7 Café

☎ 204 3632; www.einsteinuddl.com, in German; Unter den Linden 42; ☎ 7am–midnight; 🍷 Unter den Linden

One of Berlin's few coffeehouses with big-city flair, this cosmo spot is great for scanning the power-crowd for famous faces – discreetly, please – while nosing on homemade apple strudel. The changing photography exhibits in the café and atrium aren't half bad either.

FASSBENDER & RAUSCH Map pp76–7 Café

☎ 0800-757 8810; www.fassbender-rausch.de; Charlottenstrasse 60; ☎ 11am–8pm; 🍷 Stadtmitte Like froth on a cappuccino, this nirvana for chocophiles hovers above the eponymous truffle **emporium** (p181) on Gendarmenmarkt. Fill an entire day's calorie quota with a big cup of deliciously decadent *El Cuador Crema* (dark drinking chocolate infused with cream), and perhaps indulging in one of its artful tarts for good measure. Views of the Deutscher Dom are a sweet but sugar-free bonus.

TADSCHIKISCHE TEESTUBE Map pp76–7 Café

☎ 204 1112; www.restaurant-trofeo.de, in German; Am Festungsgraben 1; ☎ 5pm–midnight Mon–Fri, from 3pm Sat & Sun; 🍷 100, 200, TXL This authentic Tajik teahouse inside an 18th-century town palace feels as though it was plucked from an *Arabian Nights* fairytale. Students, old hippies and curious tourists lounge on thick oriental carpets drinking steaming teas poured from silvery samovars. The exotic room was given to the East German leadership by the Soviets in the 1970s. Shoes and smoking are no-nos.

MITTE – SCHEUNENVIERTTEL

AMBULANCE BAR Map pp104–5 Bar

☎ 281 2095; Oranienburger Strasse 27; ☎ from 8pm; 🍷 Oranienburger Strasse

No first aid required: the Ambulance Bar is a healthily hip modern lounge that's refreshingly untacky, despite being stuck in tourist central. Red lights make everyone look good, and nightly 'DJ pleasures' kick in after 10pm. Cocktails are competently mixed but don't expect any bargains.

GREENWICH Map pp104–5 Bar

☎ 2809 5566; Gipsstrasse 5; ☎ from 8pm; 🍷 Weinmeisterstrasse

So hip it doesn't even bother with a sign, this highfalutin' fixture on the cocktail circuit is another Midas-touch venture by Heinz Gindullis, the man behind **Cookies** (p231). You'll have plenty of time to study the mamba-green bar and sofas, illuminated aquariums and eye-candy crowd while you're waiting...and waiting...for your expert cocktail. Love it or hate it.