

INTRODUCING BERLIN



The dramatic canopy of the Sony Center (p111)

THOMAS WINZ

Berlin is a scene-stealing, head-turning combo of glamour and grit, teeming with top museums and galleries, grand opera and guerrilla clubs, gourmet temples and ethnic snack shacks.

Over the past decade, Berlin's become a pillar of the fashion, art, design and music worlds, not just keeping up with but setting new trends. A global influx of creatives has turned it into a cauldron of cultural cool that's often compared to New York in the '80s. What draws them is Berlin's legendary climate of tolerance, openness and experimentation infused with an edgy undercurrent that gives this 'eternally unfinished' city its street cred.

All this trendiness is a triumph for a town that's long been in the crosshairs of history: Berlin staged a revolution, was headquartered by fascists, bombed to bits, ripped in half and finally reunited – and that was just in the 20th century! Famous landmarks such as the Reichstag, the Brandenburg Gate, Checkpoint Charlie and what's left of the Berlin Wall are like a virtual 3-D textbook in a city where you'll find history staring you in the face every time you turn a corner.

Perhaps it's because of its heavy historical burden that Berlin is throwing itself into tomorrow with such contagious energy. At times the entire city seems to be bubbling over into one huge party. Cafes are jammed at all hours, drinking is a religious rite and clubs host their scenes of frenzy and hedonism until the wee hours. Sleep? Fuhgeddabout it!

BERLIN LIFE

Berlin is a sprawling city but key areas are pleasingly compact and human-scale. Traffic flows freely, public transportation is brilliant, you can walk without fear at night, clubs have no velvet ropes and your restaurant bill would only buy you a starter back home.

But try to put your finger on the pulse of Berlin and you'll find that, much like the mysterious movements on a Ouija board, that pulse is already moving on to another location. Today's downtrodden neighbourhood becomes tomorrow's dream of wide-eyed students and artists, young entrepreneurs and, eventually, developers. The city's famously low rents are slowly disappearing, office buildings displace beloved riverside party venues, and 'loft-living' is the new buzzword. Well-established nightlife spots are being forced into closing by noise-sensitive new neighbours lacking the tolerance that attracted them to Berlin in the first place.

On the economic front, there are some slivers of sunlight on the horizon. Between 2005 and 2010 almost 500 companies moved to Berlin, creating 21,000 new jobs while investing €1.7 billion. Still, the dreams of those who shape the future collide with one inescapable fact: the city is broke. The unemployment rate is among the highest in Germany, the city debt hovers at a staggering €60 billion and the ambitious reconstruction of the royal city palace had to be postponed by at least four years for lack of funds.

Still, the band plays on. In a city that is truly 24/7, the creativity, sensory overload and hedonism roar with unapologetic abandon. Where New York might be the Big Apple, Berlin is the Big Appetite and the hunger for experimentation and challenge is rarely sated. It's a city where you can fairly hear and feel the collision between past and future, what is possible and what is realistic, the cultural hopes and the culture clashes between people who've joined together from around the globe in one big experiment.

Berlin may be losing some of its famously raw edge, but at least for now, it's in no danger of selling its soul.

'Where New York might be the Big Apple, Berlin is the Big Appetite'



Enjoy the outdoors at Mauerpark (p196), with dining, drinking, entertainment and Berlin's best flea market

DAVID PEVERS

HIGHLIGHTS



ICONIC BERLIN

In Berlin, the past is always present. Strolling around, you can't help but pass by legendary sights that take you back to the days of Prussian glory, the Nazi-era nadir, the Cold War chill or the euphoria of reunification. Like a 3-D textbook, only better.





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DAVID PEEVERS



5

RICHARD NEBESKY

- 1 **Brandenburger Tor** Take in the famous Brandenburg Gate, a backdrop for presidential speeches, Pink Floyd concerts and World Cup soccer public viewing parties (p81)
- 2 **Reichstag** Stand in awe of history at Germany's political power nexus (p75)
- 3 **Berlin Wall** Don't miss the most famous Berlin landmark. Only, where is it? (p82)
- 4 **Fernsehturm** Get high at Germany's tallest structure, the TV Tower (p95)
- 5 **Schloss Charlottenburg** Try to avoid palace envy at this pretty Prussian power display (p122)
- 6 **Neue Synagoge** Visit the beautiful beacon of Berlin's Jewish renaissance (p102)



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KRZYSZTOF DYDYSKI



RICHARD NEBESKY

1 Beate Uhse Erotikmuseum

Learn a trick or two at this arty and educational space (p130)

2 **Legendary liberalism** Get ready for the classic 'boy meets girl' story. Or maybe *The Crying Game*? (p260)

3 **Christopher Street Day** Join the throngs out and about at Berlin's gay party of the year (p262)

NAUGHTY BERLIN

Las Vegas may hold the title as the world's 'sin city' but Berlin is no slouch in the libido department. Dive in and be as nice or nasty as you want, pretend to be someone else entirely or live out your most frisky fantasies.



DAVID PEEVERS



DAVID PEEVERS

ON THE WATERFRONT

Boasting more bridges than Venice, Berlin is shaped by water and there are plenty of opportunities for taking a cooling dip, sipping cocktails on a sandy beach or going on an aquatic sightseeing tour.



KRZYSZTOF DYDYNKI

2 Boat cruises Soak up the sun as you drift gently past Berlin's finest landmarks (p311)

3 Beach bars Enjoy a cold drink at an urban beach – summers wouldn't be the same without them (p224)

3 Badeschiff Cool off in summer, heat up in winter at this unique barge-turned-pool (p147)



DAVID PEEVERS



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KARL JOHANNES/LOOK FOTO

AFTER DARK

Berlin's your oyster when the moon's high in the sky. Knock back tasty libations at dive bars or designer dens, hobnob with hipsters at hot-stepping clubs, get your kicks in a coterie of cabarets or point your highbrow compass towards the opera.



RICHARD NEBESKY



KRZYSZTOF DYDYNski



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1 Freischwimmer Grab a cocktail and catch a cool evening breeze at this boathouse-turned-bar (p225)

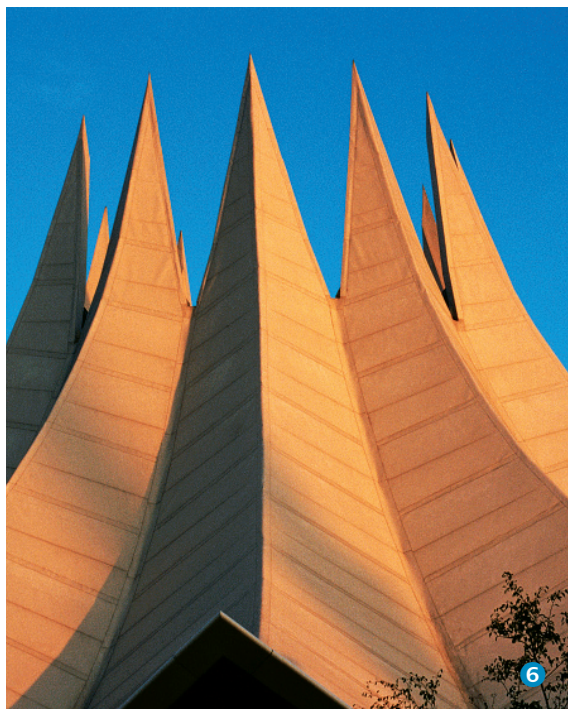
2 Clubs Put on your dancing shoes and party till dawn and beyond (p231)

3 Berliner Philharmonie Indulge your ears with symphonic strains in an iconic venue (p250)

4 Life is a cabaret Flash back to Roaring Twenties glamour at Bar Jeder Vernunft (p238)

5 Drinking dens From trashy dives to cocktail temples, explore the endless variety of booze parlours to reach an altered state (p219)

6 Tempodrom Take in a rock concert or sporting event at this tent-shaped temple of entertainment (p237)



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KRZYSZTOF DYDYNSKI

1 East Side Gallery Check out the longest Berlin Wall remnant – it's also the world's biggest outdoor canvas (p149)

2 Luftbrückendenkmal Pay tribute to a true 'triumph of the will' in the age of democracy (p145)

3 Checkpoint Charlie Stand in a hot spot of the Cold War (p144)



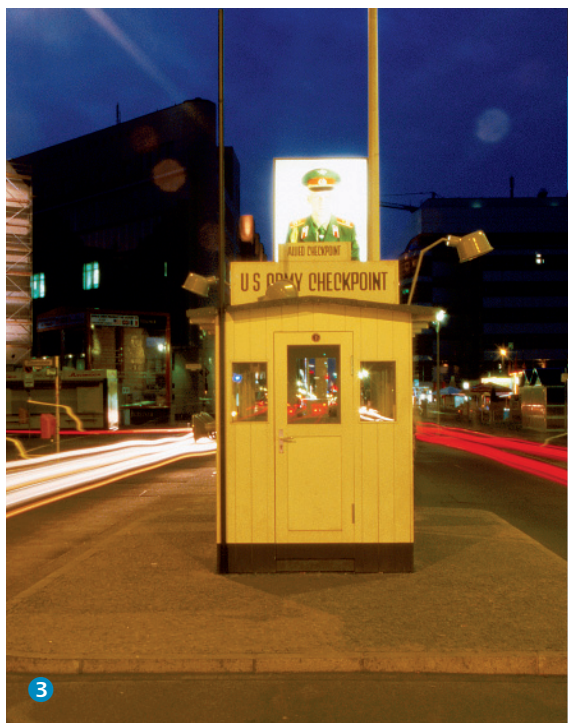
GUY MOBERLY

RED BERLIN

Soviet spies, CIA operatives, border guards, spectacular escapes, military standoffs – Berlin was ground zero of the Cold War, the Wall a tangible metaphor for a world divided by politics and ideology. Prepare for goose bumps when facing the ghosts of the past.



LEE FOSTER



MARTIN MOOS

GREEN BERLIN

It's a jungle out there, with parks, forests, lakes and rivers swathed across one third of the metropolis. Fantastic outdoor spots lurk in every neighbourhood, making it a snap to take a break from the tourist track and get a dose of asphalt-free exercise.



BERNHARD LIMBERGER/GETTY

1 Wannsee Opt for a natural high while lying low at the Wannsee (p165)

2 Tiergarten Picnic among beech trees, rhododendrons and statues in Berlin's central park (p117)



DAVID BORLAND

BERLIN RITUALS

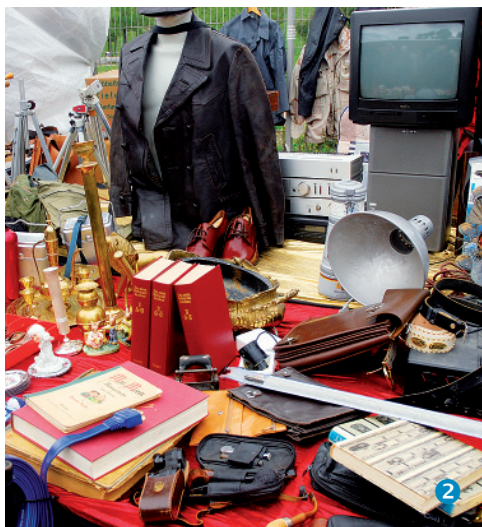
You too can be 'ein Berliner'! Get that wicked little tattoo, spend hours over breakfast, watch the world on parade while perched in a cafe or beer garden, or scarf up Euro icons at a fabulous flea market. C'mon, join Team Berlin.

1 Cafe scene in Prenzlauer Berg Watch the world on parade over cakes and cappuccinos (p228)

2 Flohmarkt am Mauerpark Indulge in a spot of urban archaeology at Berlin's best flea market (p196)



GUY MOBERLY



DAVID PEEVERS

DIVINE DINING

Berlin's cuisine scene is as varied, fun and adventurous as the city itself. Hunker down for plates of hearty German food, report to top toques for the latest in concept cuisine, sample global plates in exotic locales or simply get your doner kebab fast-food fix.



IMAGE BROKER

1 Currywurst Take a bite! If there ever was a fast food with cult status, this would be it (p199)

2 Top doners Scratch your fast-food itch... And the *Döner* Oscar goes to: Schlemmerbuffet! Applause! (p205)

3 Grill Royal Rub shoulders with the rich and famous at this elegant waterside fine-diner (p203)



DAVID PEEVERS



ANDRÉS LABES

THE AUTHOR

Andrea Schulte-Peevers



Andrea has travelled the distance to the moon and back in her visits to over 60 countries and carries her dog-eared passport like a badge of honour. Her fascination with Berlin's mystique goes back to her first stay in

the summer of 1989, a few months shy of the Wall's collapse. During many return trips she has watched Berlin shed its Cold-War-era brooding and blossom into an vibrant, creative, seductive and confident metropolis. Born and raised in Germany and educated in London and at UCLA, Andrea has built a career on writing about her native country for nearly two decades. She's authored or contributed to more than 40 Lonely Planet titles, including the first edition of this guide as well as the *Berlin* Encounter and *Germany* country guides. After this trip she's seriously considering permanently trading her house in Los Angeles for a sunny apartment in Berlin.

ANDREA'S TOP BERLIN DAY

As a child I hated Sundays because there was nothing to do but stay home and watch TV. Boring! These days, I love Sundays, at least

in Berlin and provided I'm not hung over from the night before... But let's say I got a good night's sleep and have been tickled awake by bright sunshine – perfect! I wake up my husband David, we hop on our bikes and head down to Anna Blume (p228) for a leisurely breakfast. I kiss him goodbye, then pedal through beautiful Prenzlauer Berg to meet up with my best friend Uli and her eight-year-old boy Matt. We've promised to take him to Legoland Discovery Centre (p111), where we spend an hour getting acquainted with giant giraffes, dragons and knights all made from those little plastic pieces. Matt loves it. And strangely, we do too. Matt needs his nap, so I head back to Prenzlauer Berg, stopping at Wimbi (p217) for a quick naan pizza for lunch. I spend the early part of the afternoon foraging for treasure at the Flohmarkt am Mauerpark (Mauerpark flea market; p196), then break for cappuccino at Mauersegler (p228) before ambling over to the park's little amphitheatre where the insanely popular Bearpit Karaoke (p159) is already in full swing. For an hour or two I cheer and clap along with the other 2000 folks as Detlev croons and Maurizio moonwalks. The place always puts me in a happy mood, so I arrive with a big smile at the Prater beer garden (p228), where I join some friends for a quick beer and bratwurst before winding down the day in style with a classical concert in the Spiegelsaal (p250) at Clärchens Ballhaus. Sundays don't get much better than this!

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are passionate, dedicated travellers. They don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage, so you can be sure the advice you're given is impartial. They travel widely to all the popular spots, and off the beaten track. They don't research using just the internet or phone. They discover new places not included in any other guidebook. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, palaces, trails, galleries, temples and more. They speak with dozens of locals every day to make sure you get the kind of insider knowledge only a local could tell you. They take pride in getting all the details right, and in telling it how it is. Think you can do it? Find out how at lonelyplanet.com.

GETTING STARTED

No matter whether you're a backpacker, a three-button suit, a cocky jetsetter, a trendy urban nomad or travelling with the tots, you'll find all your needs and expectations met in Berlin. Room and travel reservations are a good idea between June and early September and around major holidays and trade fairs year-round, but otherwise you can keep your advance planning to a minimum (but do have a look at the boxed text on p21). Whatever you do, don't overbook yourself. Berlin is definitely a city that rewards spontaneity.

WHEN TO GO

Berlin has a continental climate, which generally translates into scorching summers and freezing winters, although in recent years global warming has turned such time-tested rules on their heads. In other words: the weather is unpredictable. So whenever you visit, check the forecast and pack accordingly. Rain or shine, May, June, September and October are generally the months to see the city at its best and sop up local colour by the bucketful. That's when festivals, street fairs and cultural events of all stripes are in full swing and temps are pleasant enough for chilling in outdoor cafes and beer gardens or for skipping around Berlin's many parks, forests and other natural assets.

Summers essentially bring a major population exchange: Berliners leave town for hotter climes, while tourists, especially from southern Europe, flock to Berlin to escape the heat. This is the time of outdoor anything: concerts, plays, opera, parties, beach bars, cinema and so on.

In winter, days are short (the December sun, if there is any, sets around 3.30pm) and the entire city is often gloomy and cold, so life moves pretty much indoors. This is the time to slow down and make an in-depth study of museums and galleries, attend concerts and plays or warm up for a couple of hours over hot latte in a cosy cafe. The best winter month by far is December, when the city is bathed in a decorative sea of lights and the air is redolent of mulled wine and gingerbread scents wafting from the city's many Christmas markets. Hotel rates are pretty much constant year-round.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Berlin is very much a party town with a busy year-round calendar of concerts, street parties, sports events, trade shows and festivals celebrating everything from film to fetish, music

top picks

BEST FESTIVALS

- **Berlinale** (opposite)
- **Ber-Mu-Da** (p20)
- **Christopher Street Day** (p262)
- **Internationale Tourismus Börse** (opposite)
- **Karneval der Kulturen** (p18)

to fashion, porn to travel. Major events such as **Christopher Street Day** (p262), **Karneval der Kulturen** (Carnival of Cultures) and New Year's Eve bring hundreds of thousands of revellers to town, filling hotels, restaurants and venues to capacity. Berlin's **tourist office** (www.visitberlin.de) has an events calendar and can also help you book tickets. The listings magazines *Tip* (www.tip-berlin.de, in German) and *Zitty* (www.zitty.de, in German) are the best sources for up-to-the-minute events listings. For events primarily geared towards the GLBT community, see the **Gay & Lesbian Berlin** chapter, p257.

January

BERLIN FASHION WEEK

☎ 6290 0850; www.berlin-fashionweek.de
Designers, buyers and media descend upon Berlin to check out the latest streetwear, green fashions and bodywear at such fashion fairs as Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, Bread & Butter, Premium and Bright. Some events are open to the public.

INTERNATIONALE GRÜNE WOCHE

☎ 303 80; www.gruenewoche.de
The week-long International Green Week, which is a consumer fair for food, agriculture and gardening, is a great excuse for gorging on exotic morsels from around the world.

LANGE NACHT DER MUSEEN

☎ 283 973; www.lange-nacht-der-museen.de
Culture meets entertainment on the last Saturday of January when up to 100 museums keep their doors open until at least midnight. Shuttle buses ferry people between venues. It's a truly sociable affair and fun for the entire family.

TRANSMEDIALE

☎ 2474 9761; www.transmediale.de
Digital media art gets full bandwidth at this progressive festival that also investigates how digital technologies shape today's society and artistic endeavours.

February

BERLINALE

☎ 259 200; www.berlinale.de
Berlin's international film festival draws stars, starlets, directors, critics and the world's A-to-Z-list celebrities for two weeks of screenings and glamour parties around town. The lucky ones go home with a Golden or Silver Bear, while top lesbian flicks are awarded the Teddy. Screenings often sell out, so book early.

March

INTERNATIONALE TOURISMUS BÖRSE

☎ 303 80; www.itb-berlin.de
Take a virtual trip around the globe at the world's largest international travel expo (more than 10,000 exhibitors); it's trade-only during the week but open to the public at the weekend.

MAERZMUSIK

☎ 2548 9100; www.maerzmusik.de
'Music' or 'soundscapes'? You decide after a day at March Music, a contemporary festival celebrating a boundary-pushing palette of sounds, from full orchestral symphonies to experimental recitals, many of them new or commissioned.

April

ACHTUNG BERLIN

www.achtungberlin.de
About 70 flicks about Berlin and at least partially produced in the city compete for the New Berlin Film Award at this

festival. Screenings take place at Babylon (p252) and other locations, with many writers, directors, producers and actors in attendance.

FESTTAGE

☎ 2035 4555; www.staatsoper-berlin.org
Staatsoper (p253) boss Daniel Barenboim brings the world's finest conductors, soloists and orchestras to Berlin for this 10-day, highbrow hoedown of gala concerts and operas, with an emphasis on that brilliant 'bad boy' composer Richard Wagner.

GALLERY WEEKEND

☎ 2838 6464; www.gallery-weekend-berlin.de
Join art collectors, critics and other fellow art-ficionados in keeping tabs on the Berlin art scene on a free hop around 40 of the city's best galleries. Held over a three-day weekend, usually in late April or early May.

SEHSÜCHTE

☎ 0331-620 2780; www.sehsuechte.de
Berlin's international student film festival, now based in Potsdam (p282), provides five days of the most random, experimental, alternative and occasionally pretentious cinematic efforts around.

May

BRITSPOTTING

www.britspotting.de
It's hard to imagine the Brits returning the compliment, but this small festival of Brit and Irish flicks that never made it into the multiplexes is a huge hit with Berlin art-house buffs.

MAY DAY MADNESS

Not for those of a nervous disposition, May Day (1 May) sees Berlin's central districts (Kreuzberg and Prenzlauer Berg especially) become the venue of large-scale anti-capitalist, anti-globalisation, anti-whatever demonstrations. Traditionally, right-wing groups schedule their marches for the same day, the police turn out in force and within a couple of hours there's chaos. That means violence, vandalism and burning vehicles – we only mention this at all so you can stay out of the way.

KARNEVAL DER KULTUREN

☎ 6097 7022; www.karneval-berlin.de

Berlin's answer to London's Notting Hill Carnival celebrates the city's multicultural tapestry with parties, exotic nosh and a fun parade of flamboyantly dressed dancers, DJs, artists and musicians shimmying through the streets of Kreuzberg.

THEATERTREFFEN BERLIN

☎ 2548 9269; www.theatertreffen-berlin.de

The Berlin Theatre Gathering is a three-week showcase of new productions by emerging and established German-language ensembles from Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

June

See [p262](#) for details about Christopher Street Day.

ALL NATIONS FESTIVAL

☎ 250 025; www.allnationsfestival.de, in German

Take a trip around the world on a single day when a dozen or so Berlin-based foreign embassies open their doors to promote their respective countries with food, drink, music and talks.

BERLIN AIR SHOW (ILA)

☎ 3038 6006; www.ila-berlin.com

Zeppelins to fighter planes, gliders to balloons and jet liners – if it flies, it'll probably be at this huge international aerospace exhibition and air show held every two years (next time in 2012).

BERLIN BIENNALE

☎ 243 4590; www.berlinbiennale.de

This biennial curated forum for contemporary art explores international artistic trends and invites young artists to showcase their work in various locations around town for about eight weeks. One of the main venues is the KW Institute for Contemporary Art ([p105](#)), which originated the first Biennale back in 1998.

DMY INTERNATIONAL DESIGN FESTIVAL

☎ 5301 4888; www.dmy-berlin.com

As Unesco-designated 'City of Design', it's only natural that Berlin should host this annual design festival, which brings

renowned, young and experimental creatives together to present new products and discuss future trends.

FÊTE DE LA MUSIQUE

21 Jun

☎ 4171 5289; www.lafetedelamusique.com, in German

Summer starts with good vibrations thanks to hundreds of free concerts during this global music festival that first came online in Paris in 1982.

SANDSATION

☎ 0176-9688 6279; www.sandsation.de

A fantasy world built from sand takes shape for eight summer weeks starting in early June. At more than 6m high, these ain't your little brother's sandcastles! Music, cocktails and children's events keep things dynamic.

July

BERLIN FASHION WEEK

☎ 6290 0850; www.berlin-fashionweek.de

Local and international designers present next year's spring fashions during the summer edition of Berlin's fashion fair.

CLASSIC OPEN AIR GENDARMENMARKT

☎ 01805-600 121; www.classicopenair.de

Five days, five alfresco concerts – from opera to pop – delight an adoring crowd hunkered on bleachers before the regal backdrop of the Konzerthaus. No ticket? No problem. Just bring a beer and eavesdrop with the penniless masses outside the flimsy canvas enclosure.

August

BERLINER BIERFESTIVAL

☎ 6576 3560; www.bierfestival-berlin.de, in German

Who needs Oktoberfest when you can have the 'world's longest beer garden'? Pick your poison from over 300 breweries from nearly 100 countries along 2km of Karl-Marx-Allee.

BERLINER GAUKLERFEST

☎ 206 2673; www.gauklerfest.de, in German

Comedians, magicians, puppeteers, artistes, clowns, dancers, jugglers and other *Gaukler* (cabaret-type artists) take over

Schinkelplatz on Unter den Linden for 10 merry days in early August.

FUCKPARADE

www.fuckparade.org

Relax! It's not what you think but simply your average antifascist demonstration. Make sure to wear black or risk not fitting in.

INTERNATIONALE FUNKAUSSTELLUNG

☎ 3069 6924; www.ifa-berlin.de

Find out what gadgets everyone will want for Christmas at this huge international consumer electronics fair at ICC Messe.

LANGE NACHT DER MUSEEN

☎ 283 973; www.lange-nacht-der-museen.de
The summer edition of the January event; see p17.

TANZ IM AUGUST

☎ 2474 9777; www.tanzimaugust.de, in German
Step out gracefully to this international dance festival that attracts loose-limbed talent and highly experimental choreography from around the globe.

September

BERLIN MARATHON

☎ 3012 8810; www.berlin-marathon.com
Sweat it out with the other 50,000 runners or just cheer 'em on during Germany's biggest street race, which has seen nine world records set since 1977.

BERLIN MUSIC WEEK

www.berlin-music-week.de
Catch tomorrow's headliners during this week-long celebration of global music. The Popkomm trade show and the Berlin Festival line-up of DJs and bands are the main events. Bring serious stamina for *Clubnacht* (Club Night), when €14 buys entry to 40 dance clubs.

INTERNATIONALES LITERATURFESTIVAL

☎ 2787 8620; www.literaturfestival.com
Dozens of authors from all corners of the world celebrate the power of the pen with the literary public through readings, workshops and events.

MUSIKFEST BERLIN

☎ 2548 9100; www.berlinerfestspiele.de
World-renowned orchestras, choirs, conductors and soloists come together for two weeks of concerts at the Philharmonie (p250) and other venues around town.

October

ART FORUM BERLIN

☎ 3038 2076; www.art-forum-berlin.com
Find out what's hot in art at this well-established international contemporary art fair that brings together leading galleries, collectors and the merely curious.

BERLINER LISTE

☎ 2809 6115; www.berliner-liste.org
Held around the same time as the Art Forum (above), the Berliner Liste brings together young galleries and emerging artists with the hot shots of the international scene.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

☎ 3186 0114; www.festival-of-lights.de
For two weeks, Berlin isn't only about sightseeing but also about 'lightseeing'. Historic landmarks such as the Fernsehturm (TV Tower), the Berliner Dom and the Brandenburg Gate sparkle with illuminations, projections and fireworks.

JAZZ IN DEN MINISTERGÄRTEN

☎ 01805-4470; www.jazzland.de, in German
Once a year in October, the permanent representations (offices) of seven German *Länder* (states) in the Ministerial Gardens area near Potsdamer Platz open their doors to the public for a night of jazz.

PORN FILM FESTIVAL

www.pornfilmfestivalberlin.de
Vintage porn, Japanese porn, indie porn, sci-fi porn – the 'Berlinale' of sex brings alternative skin flicks out of the smut corner and onto the big screen.

TAG DER DEUTSCHEN EINHEIT

3 Oct

Raise a toast to reunification on the German national holiday celebrated with street parties across town – from the Brandenburger Tor (Brandenburg Gate) to the Rotes Rathaus (town hall).

YOU BERLIN

www.you.de, in German

Stay ahead of the fashion, sports, beauty and lifestyle curves at Europe's largest youth fair, complete with concerts, live TV tapings and roving casting agents.

November & December

BER-MU-DA

www.bermuda-berlin.de

A celebration of electronic dance music, BerMuDa (Berlin Music Days) is a new club festival that brings the world's best DJs to the best of Berlin clubs (Berghain, Cookies, Watergate, Weekend etc – see the Nightlife chapter [p231](#)) for wild and sweaty dance parties. It will all culminate with a huge festival at Tempelhof airport.

CHRISTMAS MARKETS

www.visitberlin.de

Pick up shimmering ornaments or get smashed on mulled wine at dozens of yuletide markets held throughout December in such locales as Breitscheidplatz ([Map p128](#)) and Alexanderplatz ([Map p96](#)).

JAZZFEST BERLIN

☎ 2548 9100; www.jazzfest-berlin.de

This top-rated jazz festival has doo-wopped in Berlin since 1964 and presents fresh and big-time talent in dozens of performances all over town.

NIKOLAUS

6 Dec

On St Nicholas' Day children leave their shoes outside their door to receive sweets if they've been nice, and a stone if they've been naughty. Eventually this custom developed into Father Christmas' more international yearly rounds, but in Germany they seem pretty attached to the original – all kinds of clubs hold Nikolaus parties, complete with costumed St Nicks.

SILVESTER

31 Dec

Ring in the new year hugging complete strangers, cooing at fireworks, guzzling bubbly straight from the bottle and generally misbehaving. The main action is at Brandenburger Tor, but pros and purists may prefer watching the city light up from atop the Kreuzberg hill in Viktoriapark or from Breitscheidplatz ([Map pp140-1](#)).

COSTS & MONEY

If you're used to £5 pints, \$12 glasses of cabernet or €8 lattes, you're in for a pleasant surprise when visiting Berlin, the Western European capital where you can get the most bang for your euro. Your average Berlin hotel room costs €76 compared to €108 in London and €111 in Paris. In restaurants, the price of a main course would merely buy an appetiser in Moscow or Vienna. And getting around is a snap with the excellent and easy-to-understand public transportation system and reasonably priced and plentiful cabs.

Of course, how much you end up spending depends on what kind of traveller you are and what experiences you wish to have. The daily tab for a stay in a midrange hotel, two sit-down meals, using public transportation, spending some money on sightseeing and going to bars and clubs should be somewhere between €90 and €140 (per person, travelling as an adult couple). For mere survival, you'll need to budget €30 to €60 per day, but this will have you sleeping in hostel dorms, eating in cafes or at fast-food stands or preparing your own meals, and limiting your entertainment. Of course, if you're a high roller, Berlin has no shortage of luxury hotels, Michelin-starred restaurants and fancy bars to help you part with your money.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Do your homework and check out the following sites so you can hit the ground running when you get to Berlin. Websites with events listings are covered on [p230](#).

HOW MUCH?

Bottle of water at supermarket €0.40

Cinema ticket €6-8

Currywurst €1.50

Glass of beer (0.3L) €2.80

Latte macchiato €3

Nightclub entry €5-15

Petrol (1L) €1.38

Public-transport day pass €6.30

Souvenir T-shirt €15

Watermelon Man €7-10

ADVANCE PLANNING

About two or three months ahead, check the website of Berlin's **tourist office** (www.visitberlin.de), which comes with a searchable database of major upcoming special events and also gives you the option of buying tickets using a credit card. Performing-arts venues usually have their own online calendars and booking facilities.

Tickets to the Berliner Philharmonie (p250), Staatsoper Unter den Linden (p253), Sammlung Boros (p79), Chorin Monastery's summer concerts (p289) and Historisches Grünes Gewölbe (p293) and Semperoper (p294) in Dresden, and for major musical touring acts often sell out and should be booked as early as possible. The same is true for key soccer games such as the German soccer league final in late May. Tickets to regular season matches, though, are usually available on game day.

One week before you go, check the online versions of the listings magazines *Tip* (www.tip-berlin.de, in German) and *Zitty* (www.zitty.de, in German) for the latest openings, festivals and events in Berlin. One week should also be enough time for weekend dinner reservations at trendy or upmarket restaurants such as Cookies Cream (p201), Grill Royal (p203) or Reinstoff (p203). For other restaurants, calling a day ahead or even earlier in the day is usually sufficient.

3D Stadtmodell (www.3d-stadtmodell-berlin.de) Take a virtual journey through central Berlin with this Google Earth-powered 3-D model of 44,000 buildings; the top 40 are covered in greater detail and four of them (the Reichstag, Hauptbahnhof, Sony Center and Olympic Stadium) can even be 'entered'.

Berlin Hidden Places (www.berlin-hidden-places.com) Ideas for getting off the tourist track.

Berlin Tourism (www.visitberlin.de) Excellent, jam-packed, official tourist-office site; also lets you make room and ticket reservations in all major languages.

Berlin Unlike (<http://berlin.unlike.net>) Hip guide with up-to-the-minute reviews and happenings.

City of Berlin (www.berlin.de) Official government site with information on culture, transport, the economy and politics.

ExBerliner (www.exberliner.net) Online version of Berlin's savvy English-language mag to help you get plugged right into the scene.

Lonely Planet (lonelyplanet.com) The Thorn Tree travel forum is a great place to pick the brains of other travellers.

Museumsportal Berlin (www.museumsportal-berlin.de) Awesome searchable site that lists every museum in town along with handy lists on which ones are open on Monday, which are free and which are open late.

SUSTAINABLE BERLIN

Since our inception in 1973, Lonely Planet has encouraged readers to tread lightly, travel responsibly and enjoy the magic of independent travel. Travel is growing at a jaw-dropping rate, and we still firmly believe in the benefits it can bring. But we also encourage you to consider the impact of your visit on both the global environment and local economies, cultures and ecosystems.

There are few major cities with as many green and open spaces as Berlin. Parks, gardens, lakes, rivers, nature reserves and forests characterise its landscape and contribute to the high quality of life. Keeping Berlin green isn't just about sorting your trash or refilling that water bottle (the tap water here is perfectly fine); there are plenty of ways to make your entire visit more sustainable. For suggestions on how to get to Berlin without hopping on an aeroplane, check out the boxed text on p302.

Getting around Berlin is a snap thanks to the city's well-developed and comprehensive public transportation system, which is cheap, efficient and clean. So don't even think about coming here by car, especially since parking is expensive and scarce. Since 1 January 2008 you also need a special sticker to prove that your car is not a polluting klunker (see p304 for more). Even better, if in Berlin, do as Berliners do and get around by bicycle. Double brownie points: it's good for your heart *and* the environment. Turn to p303 to get the lowdown on renting two-wheelers.

When it comes to sightseeing, build your itinerary around more than the major sites and impacted hot spots. Get out into the leafy suburbs, swim in a lake, cycle the course of the Berlin Wall, hit the trail in a forest or pack a picnic and head to a park. There are also several attractions with an eco-angle. The southwestern suburb of Dahlem, for instance, has the Freilichtmuseum Domäne Dahlem (p163), a working farm that grows only organic produce. Nearby is the Museumsdorf Düppel (p164), a recreated medieval village where staff breed endangered sheep and pig species and grow historic strains of rye. In the Grunewald Forest is the Ökowerk (p132),

BASIC ETIQUETTE

DOS

- Say 'Guten Tag' when entering a business.
- State your name at the start of a phone call.
- Keep your hands above the table when eating.
- Bring a small gift, a bottle of wine or flowers when invited to dinner.
- Bag your own groceries in supermarkets. And quickly!

DON'TS

- Talk about WWII with a victor's mentality.
- Be late for meetings and dinner invitations.
- Expect the bill to arrive automatically in a restaurant; you have to ask for it.
- Assume you can pay by credit card, especially when eating out.
- Immediately call people by their first name.

a nature conservation and educational centre. This book is full of such ideas to get you off the beaten path. You might even want to put it away sometimes and simply get lost. (Tell us if you find a great new place.)

When it comes to food, Berlin offers several approaches to eating more sustainably. The German word for organic is *bio* and you'll see it everywhere these days. In fact, *bio* food stores have of late been proliferating faster than hothouse mushrooms. Heck, even budget supermarket chains like Netto and Aldi sell *bio* fruit and vegetables, albeit at slightly higher prices. Nearly every *Kiez* (neighbourhood) has its own weekly farmers market, with a growing number of vendors specialising in pesticide-free produce (see p207). Cafes and restaurants too have jumped on the green bandwagon and reviews in our Eating chapter often point out if chefs are putting organic veggies or fish, seafood and meats from sustainable sources onto the plates. In fact, the most aware chefs try to go *locavore* whenever possible, meaning they'll buy their lamb, asparagus, berries and other ingredients from small regional farms rather than importing them from goodness-knows-where. Fair-trade products have also been catching on fast, especially when it comes to tea and coffee, so get your java jolt from an ethically minded local cafe and not a global fast-food outlet.

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