

SHOPPING

top picks

- Berlinomat (p194)
- Contemporary Fine Arts (p190)
- Flagshipstore (p195)
- Flohmarkt am Mauerpark (p196)
- Scratch Records (p193)
- Stilwerk (p189)
- KaDeWe (p189)

SHOPPING

Berlin is a great place to shop, and we're definitely not talking malls and chains. The city's appetite for the individual manifests in small, unique boutiques that are a pleasure to explore. Shopping here is a benign activity that's as much about visual stimulus as it is about actual purchasing power. Whether you're into frugality or you're a power-shopper, you'll find plenty of intriguingly put-together windows that turn your head and make you explore Berlin's multifaceted neighbourhoods (known as *Kieze*) further.

The closest the German capital comes to having a shopping boulevard is Kurfürstendamm (Ku'damm) and its extension, Tauentzienstrasse. It's largely the purview of the same mainstream retailers you probably know from back home, from Mango to H&M to Levi's and Esprit. You'll find more of the same in such malls as Alexa and Potsdamer Platz Arkaden.

Getting the most out of shopping in Berlin, though, means venturing off the high street and into the *Kieze*. This is where you'll discover a cosmopolitan cocktail of indie boutiques stirred by the city's zest for life, envelope-pushing energy and entrepreneurial spirit.

Each *Kiez* comes with its own flair, identity and mix of stores calibrated to the needs, tastes and bank accounts of local residents. Go to posh Charlottenburg for international couture and to Kreuzberg for vintage garb and progressive streetwear. In Mitte, bustling Friedrichstrasse has cosmopolitan flair and big-label boutiques, while the Scheunenviertel and Prenzlauer Berg are local designer hotbeds. Schöneberg has the fabulous KaDeWe department store, but its side streets are lined with niche shops.

Note that most stores, especially smaller ones, do not accept credit cards.

OPENING HOURS

In theory, Berlin's shopkeepers are allowed to decide their opening hours from Monday to Saturday. In practice, only department stores, supermarkets, shops in major commercial districts (such as the Kurfürstendamm), and those in malls take full advantage of this. These stores usually open around 9.30am and close at 8pm or even later. Boutiques and other smaller shops keep flexible hours, opening some time mid-morning and generally

closing at 7pm or 8pm, sometimes an hour or two earlier on Saturday. Stores are closed on Sunday, except for some bakeries, flower shops and souvenir shops. Shops are allowed to open from 1pm to 8pm on two December Sundays before Christmas and on a further six Sundays throughout the year.

For the low-down on late-night and Sunday grocery shopping, see the boxed text on p214.

HISTORIC MITTE

Mitte's historic area makes for a pleasant day's wander, with a popular market close to Museumsinsel (Museum Island) and some good options for souvenir hunting among the tourist attractions. For heavy-hitting international retail names, make a beeline to Friedrichstrasse, especially the elegant Friedrichstadtpassagen, anchored by the visually dazzling Galeries Lafayette.

KUNST- & NOSTALGIEMARKT

Map pp76-7

Antiques & Collectibles

Am Kupfergraben; ☺ 10am-4pm Sat & Sun;

📍 Friedrichstrasse

Just west of Museumsinsel, this art and collectible market gets high marks for scenic location, but you're more likely to

top picks

SHOPPING STRIPS

- **Alte & Neue Schönhauser Strasse & Münzstrasse** (Map pp102-3) Up-to-the-minute fashions hot off the catwalk or sewing machine
- **Friedrichstrasse** (Map pp76-7) The place for big-name hunters to stake out their turf
- **Kastanienallee** (Map pp156-7) Neat knick-knacks and buzzing boutiques
- **Kurfürstendamm & Tauentzienstrasse** (Map p128) From household-name chains to high-end spends
- **Oranienstrasse** (Map pp140-1) Fashion-forward streetwear, local stalwarts and a laid-back spirit