



Germany

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Best Castles & Palaces

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Best Iconic Sights

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Why Go?

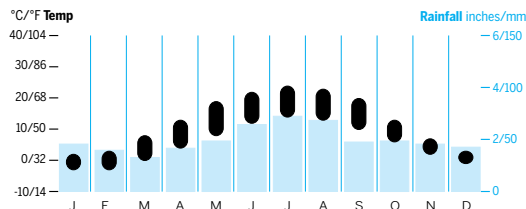
Few countries have had as much impact on the world as Germany. It has given us the printing press, the automobile, aspirin and historic heavyweights from Luther to Bach to Hitler. You'll encounter history in towns where streets were laid out long before Columbus set sail, and in castles that loom above prim, half-timbered villages.

The great cities – Berlin, Munich and Hamburg among them – come in more flavours than a jar of jelly beans but will all wow you with a cultural kaleidoscope that spans the arc from art museums and high-brow opera to naughty cabaret and underground clubs.

Germany's storybook landscapes will also likely leave an even bigger imprint on your memories. There's something undeniably artistic in the way Germany's scenery unfolds from the dune-fringed northern coasts via romantic river valleys to the off-the-charts Alpine splendour. As much fun as it may be to rev up the engines on the autobahn, do slow down to better appreciate this complex and fascinating country.

When to Go

Berlin



Jun–Aug Warm summers cause Germans to shed their clothes; night never seems to come.

Sep Radiant foliage and often-sunny skies invite outdoor pursuits; festivals galore.

Dec It's icy, it's cold but lines are short and Alpine slopes and twinkly Christmas markets beckon.

BERLIN

📍 030 / POP 3.61 MILLION

Berlin is a bon vivant, passionately feasting on the smorgasbord of life, never taking things – or itself – too seriously. Its unique blend of glamour and grit is bound to mesmerise anyone keen to connect with its vibrant culture, superb museums, fabulous food, intense nightlife and tangible history.

When it comes to creativity, the sky's the limit in Berlin, Europe's newest start-up capital. In the last 20 years, the city has become a giant lab of cultural experimentation thanks to an abundance of space, cheap rent and a free-wheeling spirit that nurtures and encourages new ideas.

All this trendiness is a triumph for a city that staged a revolution, was headquartered by Nazis, bombed to bits, divided in two and finally reunited – and that was just in the 20th century! Must-sees and aimless explorations – Berlin delivers it all in one exciting and memorable package.

👁 Sights

Key sights such as the Reichstag, Brandenburger Tor and Museumsinsel cluster in the walkable historic city centre – **Mitte** – which also cradles the **Scheunenviertel**, a maze-like hipster quarter around Hackescher Markt. Further north, residential **Prenzlauer Berg** has a lively cafe and restaurant scene, while to the south loom the contemporary high-rises of **Potsdamer Platz**. Further south, gritty but cool **Kreuzberg** and **Neukölln** are party central, as is student-flavoured **Friedrichshain** east across the Spree River. Western Berlin's hub is **Charlottenburg**, with great shopping and a swish royal palace.

👁 Historic Mitte

★ Reichstag

HISTORIC BUILDING

(www.bundestag.de; Platz der Republik 1, Visitors' Service, Scheidemannstrasse; 🚶 lift ride 8am-midnight, last entry 10pm, Visitors' Service 8am-8pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar; 🚶 100, 🚶 Brandenburger Tor, Hauptbahnhof, 🚶 Brandenburger Tor, Bundestag) **FREE** It's been burned, bombed, rebuilt, buttressed by the Wall, wrapped in fabric and finally turned into the modern home of the German parliament by Norman Foster: the 1894 Reichstag is indeed one of Berlin's most iconic buildings. Its most distinctive feature, the glittering glass dome, is serviced by a lift and affords fabulous 360-degree city views. For guaranteed access, make free reservations online, otherwise try scoring tickets at the Reichstag Service Centre for the same or next day. Bring ID.

★ Brandenburger Tor

LANDMARK

(Brandenburger Gate; Pariser Platz; 🚶 Brandenburger Tor, 🚶 Brandenburger Tor) A symbol of division during the Cold War, the landmark Brandenburg Gate now epitomises German reunification. Carl Gotthard Langhans found inspiration in Athens' Acropolis for the elegant triumphal arch, completed in 1791 as the royal city gate. It stands sentinel over Pariser Platz, a harmoniously proportioned square once again framed by banks, a hotel and the US, British and French embassies, just as it was during its 19th-century heyday.

★ Holocaust Memorial

MEMORIAL

(Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe; Map p456; 📞 030-2639 4336; www.stiftung-denkmal.de; Cora-Berliner-Strasse 1; audioguide adult/

ITINERARIES

Three Days

Come on, is that all you got? If the answer is really yes, drive down the **Romantic Road**, stopping in Rothenburg ob der Tauber and Füssen, then spend the rest of your time in **Munich**.

Five Days

Spend a couple of days in **Berlin**, head south to **Dresden** and **Nuremberg** or **Bamberg** for half a day each and wrap up your trip in **Munich** and surrounds.

One Week

This gives you a little bit of time to tailor a tour beyond the highlights mentioned above. Art fans might want to build **Cologne** or **Düsseldorf** into their itinerary; romantics could consider **Heidelberg**, a Rhine cruise or a trip down the **Romantic Road**; while outdoorsy types are likely to be lured by **Garmisch-Partenkirchen**, **Berchtesgaden** or the **Black Forest**.