



# Berlin

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Cafe Jacques (p99)
- » Horváth (p99)
- » Katz Orange (p96)
- » Uma (p97)
- » restaurant Tim Raue (p97)

## Best Places to Stay

- » Circus Hotel (p88)
- » Michelberger Hotel (p93)
- » Mandala Hotel (p92)
- » EastSeven Berlin Hostel (p94)
- » Motel One Berlin-Alexanderplatz (p89)

## Why Go?

Berlin is a bon vivant, passionately feasting on the smorgasbord of life. It's 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, the German capital has become a pillar of the fashion, art, design and music worlds, not just keeping with but setting new trends. A global influx of creatives has turned it into a cauldron of cultural cool on par with New York in the '80s. All this trendiness is a triumph for a city that's long been in the cross hairs of history: Berlin staged a revolution, headquartered fascists, was bombed to bits, ripped in half and finally reunited – and that was just in the 20th century! Must-sees or aimless explorations – this city delivers it all in one exciting and memorable package.

## When to Go

Spring and autumn are generally best for visiting Berlin as the weather is the most stable and cultural events of all stripes are in full swing. Summers essentially bring a population exchange as locals leave town for hotter climes and tourists, especially from southern Europe, flock to Berlin to escape the heat. This is the time of outdoor anything: concerts, festivals, beer gardens, parties, beach bars, cinema. Winters are cold and dark and life moves indoors, except during Christmas market season in December.

## Get Your Bearings

Key sights like the Reichstag and Brandenburger Tor, the elegant Unter den Linden boulevard and the famous Museumsinsel cluster in the historic city centre – Mitte – which is also home to the maze-like hipster quarter called Scheunenviertel. North of Mitte, charismatic Prenzlauer Berg entices with gorgeous town houses, cosy cafes and a fun flea market, while to the south loom the contemporary high-rises of Potsdamer Platz. Further south, gritty but cool Kreuzberg is party central, as is student-flavoured Friedrichshain east across the Spree River and home to the East Side Gallery stretch of the Berlin Wall. Western Berlin's hub is Charlottenburg, with great shopping and a famous royal palace.

### BERLIN FOR FIRST TIMERS

No one will believe you've been to Berlin if you haven't had your picture snapped against the backdrop of the Brandenburger Tor and taken in the stellar views from the top of the Reichstag dome (reserve ahead; p58). If you only have time for one museum, make it the Pergamon with its pirate's chest of ancient treasures. Pondering the Cold War on a stroll along the East Side Gallery, the longest remaining stretch of Berlin Wall, is an essential activity. Shoppers shouldn't leave without dropping in at the legendary KaDeWe department store. In summer, mingle with locals at a beach bar or in a beer garden. And don't even think about leaving without trying a *Currywurst*, the ultimate Berlin snack.

## Top 5: How to Feel Like a Berliner

- » Spend an afternoon wandering among the cute shops and cafes of the Bergmannkiez (p78) in Kreuzberg.
- » Hire a bike and ride along the smooth tarmac of defunct Tempelhof (p74) airport.
- » Get up at 6am to go clubbing at Berghain/Panorama Bar (p108).
- » Have drinks or a meal at Defne (p99), Horváth (p99), Cafe Jacques (p99) or any of the other eateries along the idyllic Landwehr canal.
- » See the Museumsinsel collections (p65) without the crowds on Thursday, when all five stay open as late as 10pm.

Berlin is a sprawling city split into 12 official *Bezirke* (districts, eg Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, Kreuzberg), which are subdivided into individual neighbourhoods called *Kieze*.

## Need to Know

For security reasons, compulsory reservations for visiting the Reichstag must be made online at [www.bundestag.de](http://www.bundestag.de). Book early to secure the most convenient time slots.

## Advance Planning

- » **Two months** Book online tickets to the Philharmonie, Staatsoper and Sammlung Boros
  - » **One month** Make online reservations for the Reichstag dome, the Neues Museum and the Pergamonmuseum
  - » **One week** Reserve a table at trendy or Michelin-starred restaurants, especially for Friday and Saturday nights
- ## Resources
- » **Berlin tourist office** [www.visitberlin.de](http://www.visitberlin.de)
  - » **Museum guide** [www.museumsportal.de](http://www.museumsportal.de)
  - » **Club guide** [www.residentadvisor.net](http://www.residentadvisor.net)