

Berlin

Berlin is the capital city of Germany and one of the 16 states (*Länder*) of the Federal Republic of Germany. Berlin is the largest city in Germany and has a population of 4.3 million within its metropolitan area and 3.4 million within the city limits. Berlin is best known for its historical associations as the German capital, for its lively nightlife, for its many cafes, clubs, and bars, and for its numerous museums, palaces, and other sites of historic interest. Berlin's architecture is quite varied: though badly damaged in the final years of World War II, Berlin has reconstructed itself greatly, and it is now possible to see representatives of many different historic periods in a short time within the compact city center, from a few surviving medieval buildings near Alexanderplatz, to the ultramodern glass and steel structures in Potsdamer Platz.

Districts

In Berlin there is more than one downtown area. Berlin has many districts or boroughs, called *Bezirke*, and each district has its unique style. Each *Bezirk* is composed of several *Kieze* - a Berlin term referring to "neighborhood", with their unique style. Some districts of Berlin are more worthy of the traveler's attention than others.



Districts of Berlin

Following are the districts of greatest interest:

- **Mitte**— The historical center of Berlin and the nucleus of the former East Berlin. Many cafes, restaurants, museums, galleries and clubs throughout the district, along with many sites of historic interest.
- **Charlottenburg**— Heart of City West and centered around the *Schloss Charlottenburg*.
- **Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg**— Associated with the left wing youth culture, artists and Turkish immigrants this district is somewhat noisier than most, lots of cafes, bars and clubs, but also some museums in Kreuzberg near the border to Mitte.
- **Prenzlauer Berg**— A trendy area undergoing gentrification, north of the city center. Popular with students, artists and media professionals, lots of cafes and bars
- **Schöneberg**— Cosy area for ageing hippies, young families and homosexuals. Famous are the markets on Saturdays, the street cafes (e.g. Akazienstraße) and the laissez-faire life style.
- **Zehlendorf**— Zehlendorf is one of the greenest and wealthiest districts in Berlin and the biggest university in town (Freie Universität) is located here, but often ignored are the great museums and some important historical buildings.

Areas of interest that are not districts but known rather by name than by district:

- **Ku'Damm** (short for *Kurfürstendamm*)— One of the main shopping streets in Berlin, especially for luxury goods. Many great restaurants and hotels, also in the side roads. Located in the district Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf.
- **Potsdamer Platz**— Once divided in two by the Berlin Wall, this area has been newly developed since reunification in a modern style. It has a large shopping center and two movie theatre complexes (3D IMAX and a multiplex showing only original English versions of first-run films). On fine days, the piazza under the spectacular dome of the Sony Center (designed by Helmut Jahn), has become a mecca for both Berliners and tourists. Located in the district Mitte.

Berlin has been officially divided into 12 large districts (*Bezirke*) since January 2001, a simplification of the previous 23 smaller districts (*Stadtteile, Bezirke*) that was undertaken purely for administrative efficiency. The smaller districts remain foremost in popular conceptions of the city, however, and are generally of a more practical size and cultural division for the purposes of the traveler. New names are usually compounded from the old names (e.g. Charlottenburg and Wilmersdorf merged to Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf).

New borough	Old boroughs
Mitte	Mitte, Tiergarten, Wedding
Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg	Friedrichshai, Kreuzberg
Pankow	Prenzlauer Berg, Weißensee, Pankow

Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf	Charlottenburg, Wilmersdorf
Spandau	Spandau (unchanged)
Steglitz-Zehlendorf	Steglitz, Zehlendorf
Tempelhof-Schöneberg	Tempelhof, Schöneberg
Neukölln	Neukölln (unchanged)
Treptow-Köpenick	Treptow, Köpenick
Marzahn-Hellersdorf	Marzahn, Hellersdorf
Lichtenberg	Lichtenberg, Hohenschönhausen
Reinickendorf	Reinickendorf (unchanged)

Understand

History

The foundation of Berlin was very multicultural. The surrounding area was populated by Germanic Swabian and Burgundian tribes, as well as Slavic Wends in pre-Christian times, and the Wends have stuck around. Their modern descendants are the Sorbian Slavic-language minority who live in villages southeast of Berlin near the Spree river.

In the beginning of the 13th century two towns (Berlin and Cölln) developed on each side of the river Spree (today the Nikolaiviertel and the quarter next to it beyond the river). As the population grew, the towns merged and Berlin became a center for commerce and the region's agriculture, but stayed small (about 10,000 inhabitants) up to the late 17th century - also because of the 30 years' war in the beginning of the 17th century, which led to death of about half of the population.

Since the late 17th century, when large numbers of French Huguenots fled religious persecution, Berlin has welcomed asylum seekers, religious, economic or otherwise. 1701 Berlin became capital of Prussia and 1710 Berlin and surrounding former autonomous cities were merged to a bigger Berlin. In 1871 Berlin became the capital of the new founded German Reich and a few years later, also because of the immensely growing industry, a city with more than one million inhabitants. Shortly after the first world war, in 1920, the last of the annexations of surrounding cities of Berlin led to the foundation of the Berlin as we know it nowadays. After the coming into power of the National Socialists, Berlin became the capital of the so called Third Reich and the domicile and office of Hitler (though the triumph of Hitler and his companions started in the south of Germany).

WW II led to destruction of most of central Berlin, thus many of the buildings that we see nowadays are reconstructed or planned and built after the war, which led to a very

fragmented cityscape in most parts of the inner town. Berlin was divided into four sectors (West Berlin into the French, American and British sector, East Berlin belonged to the USSR) because of the 2nd World War and in 1949 the GDR was founded with East Berlin as its capital - West Berlin belonged to West Germany (with Bonn as capital) and was an exclave (political island) in East Germany. Because of the growing tensions between West Germany and the GDR, latter built a wall between the countries - and around West Berlin, so the division was complete.

In 1989 the reunification started, the wall fell and in 1990 West and East Germany were merged officially together. Berlin became the capital of the reunified Germany in 1999.

After WW II and the building of the wall, large numbers of immigrants from Turkey were invited to West Berlin to work in the growing industry sector - in east Berlin the jobs were done mostly by Vietnamese immigrants. But also people from other communist countries, including the former Yugoslavia, not to mention Soviet soldiers who refused to return home, have helped to make Berlin more multicultural than ever.

Berlin is also a youth-oriented city. Before German unification, West Berliners were exempt from the West German civil/military service requirement. Social activists, pacifists and anarchists of all stripes moved to Berlin for that reason alone. Musicians and artists were given state subsidies. It was easy to stay out all night thanks to liberal bar licensing laws, and staying at university for years without ever getting a degree was a great way to kill time. In contrast with most of Germany, Prenzlauer Berg is said to have the highest per-capita birth rate in Europe (in fact it just seems so because of the high percentage of young women in the district).

After the fall of the wall, Berlin - especially the former East - has evolved into a cultural mecca. Artists and other creative souls flocked to the city in swarms after reunification, primarily due to the extremely low cost of living in the East. Despite the increased prices and gentrification as a result, Berlin has become a center for art, design, multimedia, electronic music, and fashion among other things. The particularly high number of students and young people in the city has only helped this cause. Just stroll down a street in Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain, or Mitte to get a glimpse of the new East Berlin.

Some famous artists of the region and their best-known works include Lucas Cranach the Elder, Lucas Cranach the Younger, Johann Gottfried Schadow, Marlene Dietrich (*The Blue Angel*), Leni Riefenstahl (*Triumph of the Will*), Bertolt Brecht (*Threepenny Opera*), Käthe Kollwitz, Kurt Tucholsky, Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Walter Gropius, Paul Klee, Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau (*Nosferatu*), Fritz Lang (*Metropolis*), Volker Schlöndorff, Wim Wenders (*Wings of Desire* (German: *Der Himmel über Berlin*)), Blixa Bargeld/Einstürzende Neubauten, Christopher Isherwood, Gunter Grass (*The Tin Drum*), members of the Bauhaus architectural movement and many more.

People

Berlin is a relatively young city by European standards, dating to the thirteenth century, and it has always had a reputation as a place filled with people from elsewhere. Someone who has lived in Berlin for ten years will see themselves as a "true Berliner," looking down on the person who has only been there for five. It may seem tough to find someone born and raised here! This is part of Berlin's charm: it never gets stuck in a rut.

A certain uneasy detente still exists between some former residents of East and West Berlin (and Germany). *Wessi* evolved as a derogatory nickname for a West German; its corollary is *Ossi*. The implication here is that after reunification, the West Germans automatically assumed the way they do things is the right way, and the way the Easterners should start doing it, too. Westerners got a reputation for being arrogant. They saw the Easterners as stubborn Communist holdouts only interested in a handout from the "rich West". Consider a shirt for sale in a shop inside the Alexanderplatz Deutsche Bahn station: *Gott, schütze mich vor Sturm und Wind/und Wessies die im Osten sind* ("God, protect me from the storm and wind, and Wessies who are in the East"). However, most of the younger generation do not share such biases.

Economy

One of the most important "products" produced in Berlin by both academic and company-sponsored institutes is research. That research is exported around the world just like tangible goods. German labor is highly efficient but comes at high cost. Strong trade unions, the end of West Berlin's pre-reunification subsidies and Germany's dense regulatory environment forced industry to concentrate on high quality and expensive products. Students went on strike in Berlin to oppose tuition fees in recent years. The universities have grown to their limits and most schools do not get sufficient funding. Students, housewives and self-employed people are not included in Berlin's official unemployment rate, currently standing at 14 percent (June2008).

Orientation

Berlin is - at least in many parts - a beautiful city, so allow enough time to get to see the sights. A good map, such as the Rough Guide Berlin map, is highly recommended. While the public transport system is superb, it can be confusing to foreigners, due to a lack of signs in some of the larger stations, so a good rail map is also essential. Roads into Berlin can also be confusing, so plan your route and drive carefully. Signs point to city districts rather than indicating compass directions, so it's a good idea to get to know where the various districts lie in relation to each other. This also applies to cyclists.

Berlin's Tourist Information Tourist Information Office is an excellent resource for finding out more about Berlin, providing a wealth of practical information and useful links. <http://www.btm.de/>

Get in

As the city was divided into two during the Cold War, many major parts of Berlin's infrastructure — such as airports — were built on both the east and west side. After the demolition of the Wall, the challenge has been to merge these formerly independent systems into one that serves all people in the metropolitan Berlin area.

By air

Berlin has three airports: <http://www.berlin-airport.de/EN/index.html>

- **Tegel International Airport (TXL)** - located in the north-west of the city; the main airport for the flag carriers (Lufthansa, BA, Air France, KLM, Delta etc) and hub for domestic flights as well as those from Western Europe and the USA. Buses from Tegel International Airport operate to S+U Alexanderplatz, Hauptbahnhof (bus TXL), and S+U Zoologischer Garten (buses X9 and 109) for the standard ticket fare. **Caution!** Do not take any train to the "Tegel railway (S-Bahn) station", which is not connected to the airport, but rather to the suburban village called Tegel. It is not possible to walk or to otherwise easily get to the airport from that station. *The Tegel International Airport does not have any railway station.* Any indication to a Tegel railway station refers to the remote S-Bahn station, even if railway staff at stations in other cities might tell otherwise.
- **Schönefeld (SXF)** - smaller airport southeast of the city centre; increasingly the focus for low-cost airlines (e.g. easyJet, RYANAIR and German wings) and charter flights in addition to traffic from Asia and eastern Europe. The airport is served by the S-Bahn and train: the line S9 will take you conveniently to (and through) the city centre via such major stations as S Ostbahnhof, S+U Alexanderplatz, S Hauptbahnhof and S+U Zoologischer Garten. There are also less regular but faster regional trains that cost the same and stop at these major train stations too. In S-Bahn and regional trains between the airport (zone c) and the city (zone a,b), the public transport ticket (zones a/b/c, 2,80 EUR) can be used. Stamp before boarding.
- **Tempelhof (THF)** - the "mother of all airports", an huge relic of the pre-war era due for closure in October 2008, Tempelhof is located immediately south of the city centre but has only a small number of connections serviced mainly by domestic and European flights (Eurowings, Windrose Air, Brussels Airlines and some private/business carriers). Take U6 at "Platz der Luftbrücke" to S+U Friedrichstraße Station.

Construction of the new **Airport Berlin Brandenburg International** has started at Schönefeld and the new airport is scheduled for opening in 2011. After this, all air traffic in the Berlin-Brandenburg region will be bundled at BBI, and other airports in the region closed down. <http://www.berlin-airport.de/EN/BBI/>

There are numerous direct flight connections between Berlin and major German and European cities. But for historical reasons it still can be difficult to find a direct flight to

Berlin from outside of Europe. Especially the German flag carrier Lufthansa http://www.lufthansa.com/online/portal/LH_COM will mostly fly to its major hub airports Frankfurt and Munich and offer connecting (or code-share) flights to Berlin.

Since end of 2005, Delta and Continental Airlines have established daily direct flights from New York (JFK and Newark).

By bus

Berlin is serviced from over 350 destinations in Europe. <http://www.berlinlinienbus.de/> Due to a German law supporting the German national railway there is only one bus corporation connecting Berlin with these destinations.

http://bundesrecht.juris.de/pbefg/_13.html Long distance buses arrive at Zentraler Omnibusbahnhof (Central Bus Terminal) in Charlottenburg. From there take the S-Bahn (station Messe Nord) or bus into town.

By train

Berlin is served by ICE, InterCity and EuroCity trains by the national German train corporation *Deutsche Bahn* (DB) <http://www.bahn.de/> which offers connections between Berlin and other German and major European cities. If you arrive in Berlin on a national (non-regional) DB trip, you are entitled to use your ticket in the whole local transport to your final destination within the city (Zone A).

Several night trains from/to Amsterdam, Paris, Zurich and Vienna (special offer for 29 euros in one direction) travel every day. They are popular with backpackers so reservations are recommended. Long-haul trains to Eastern European cities (Warsaw, Kaliningrad and Moscow) mostly use the Bahnhof Lichtenberg in Eastern Berlin. Make sure you have a reservation because these lines are also very popular.

Some private train companies such as *Veolia* offer connections to smaller cities in Eastern Germany. http://www.veolia-verkehr.de/tmpl/ExtensionPage_2204.aspx?epslanguage=ML

Stations

During the times of its division, Berlin had two main train stations: *Zoologischer Garten* (colloquial name *Bahnhof Zoo*) in the West, and *Ostbahnhof* in the East. The new 'Hauptbahnhof' may be titled 'Lehrter Bahnhof' on older maps & is situated between the S-Bahn stations Friedrichstrasse and Bellevue.

The new building for the central station **Hauptbahnhof** http://www.hbf-berlin.de/site/berlin_hauptbahnhof/en/start.html was opened in May 2006 and together with **Südkreuz** (southern cross) and **Ostbahnhof** (eastern station) - plus minor Gesundbrunnen in the north and Spandau in the north west - form the backbone of all connections. All are connected to either S- or U-Bahn (planned is both). All trains travel

through central station and a second major hub (depending on the destination you travel to or arrive from). Trains in the regional area (Berlin and Brandenburg) mostly use these stations. Regional trains stop at several stations within Berlin.

By car

All main roads and motorways join the *Berliner Ring*, or the A10, from which you can access the inner city. The city motorway is usually very crowded during rush hour.

As of January 1, 2008, Berlin requires all cars to have a "Low Emissions" sticker in order to enter the city center.

Get around

Berlin is a huge city. You can make use of the excellent bus, tram, train and underground services to get around. Taxi services are also easy to use and a bit less expensive than in many other big Central European cities. You can hail a cab (the yellow light on the top shows the cab is free), or find a taxi rank (Taxi stand). Taxi drivers are in general able to speak English.

Check the Berlin route planner (in English) to get excellent maps and schedules for the U-Bahn, buses, S-Bahn and trams, or to print your personal journey planner. The Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe (BVG) have a detailed fare list on their web site.

<http://www.fahrinfo-berlin.de/Fahrinfo/bin/query.bin/en?id=bvg&> ,
<http://bvg.de/index.php/en/Bvg/Start>

If you don't know how to get somewhere, or how to get home at night, call +49 30 19449, the Customer Service of the BVG. There are also facilities in most U-Bahn and some S-Bahn stations to contact the Customer Service directly. In 2005 the BVG introduced Metro lines (buses and tram) that run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All lines are marked with a big orange plate and a white M.

It's also worth noting that the house numbers do not necessarily run in one direction (up or down). On a lot of streets, the numbers ascend on one side and descend on the other. Especially on long streets check the numbering scheme first: you can find the name of the street and the numbers on that block at nearly every street corner.

Public transport ticketing

Berlin uses a zone system, but you are unlikely to need to go beyond zone A & B, except on trips to **Potsdam** or to the Schönefeld Airport (SXF). This is a very large area. The public transport system (U, S-Bahn, bus, tram) uses a common ticket.

Standard tickets are valid for any travel within two hours of validation, in a single direction, within the appropriate fare zones. There is no limit to transfers. For a single

journey you can buy a cheap, but this is only valid for 3 stops on the U-Bahn or S-Bahn (six stops by bus or tram); no transfers are permitted.

Several options are available for unlimited travel. Prices listed here are only for zones A and B, prices for A, B, and C cost marginally more. Check the machines for the actual prices:

- A **Tageskarte** (day card)
- Quadruple card "4 Fahrten Karte" (4 single trips bought at once for a reduced price)
- The **Berlin CityTourCard**: ticket valid for all public transport services in Berlin, Potsdam and the surrounding area and a discount card for many tourist attractions; available in four version: 48 hrs, a folded leaflet with inner city map and an overview of the S-Bahn and U-Bahn railway networks of Berlin is included; buy the CityTourCard at any ticket counters, ticket machines of the BVG and S-Bahn Berlin, hotels in Berlin, at one of the three Berlin airports or at the main station (Hauptbahnhof Berlin) or online. <http://www.citytourcard.com/english/berlin/>
- The **Berlin CityTourCard Museumsinsel** <http://www.citytourcard.com/english/berlin/ctc-museumsinsel/> valid for 72 hours in the tariff zone AB plus free admission to all museums on the Museumsinsel of Berlin (Old National Gallery, Old Museum, Bode Museum, New Museum (closed until autumn 2009) and Pergamon Museum); a folded leaflet with inner city map and an overview of the S-Bahn and U-Bahn railway networks of Berlin is included; buy the CityTourCard Museumsinsel in hotels, at the main station (Hauptbahnhof), Tegel airport and Schoenefeld airport, Zoologischer Garten, Alexanderplatz and Friedrichstraße or online
- The **Berlin WelcomeCard** discounts at many of Berlin's tourist attractions. Do check if it is suitable for your purposes. Weekly passes, Small group tickets for up to five persons. If you are traveling more than two trips a day, this ticket is cost-effective for three persons and above.

Purchasing tickets:

All tickets are available at vending machines at U- and S-Bahn platforms. English and other European languages are available. Payment is mostly by local bank cards and coins. A few vending machines accept banknotes (up to € 20). If you need assistance most larger stations have staffed ticket counters where you can ask questions and buy tickets. Buses will accept cash, and make change for tickets. Hotels may sell tickets as well.

In some places like Zoologischer Garten and Eberswalder Straße, people will try to sell used tickets to you. Be aware that you can go only one direction with a single-journey ticket (check the validation stamp and be careful as this could also be a pickpocket trick). Don't pay more than half the price.

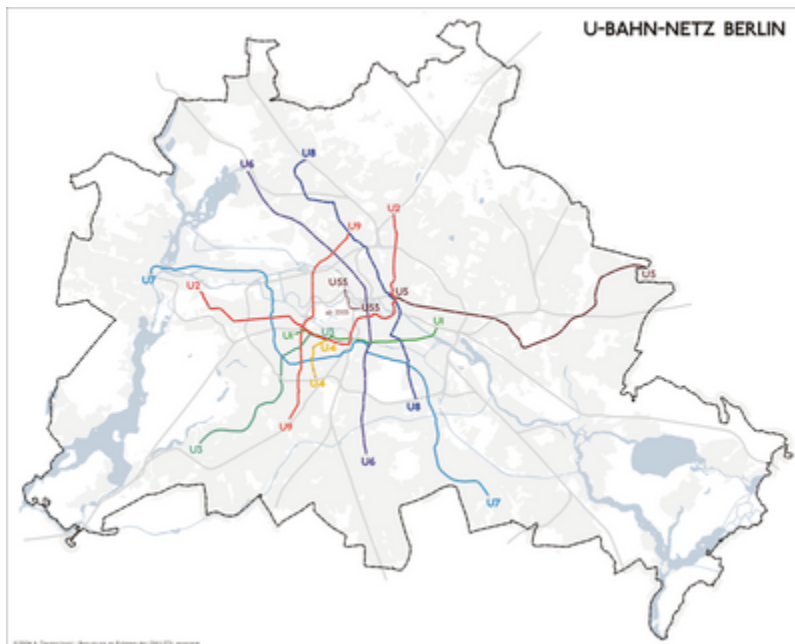
Validating tickets:

You need to **validate your ticket** using the machines on the U- and S-Bahn platforms or in the bus. The machines are yellow/white in the U-Bahn and the bus, and red on S-Bahn platforms. Validation simply means the machine prints a time stamp onto the ticket. Once validated, a ticket that is still valid will not have to be re-validated before each single trip. **You will pay a €40 fine if you are caught with an invalidated ticket.**

By train

Berlin has an amazingly efficient **S-Bahn**, trains run roughly every 10 minutes during daytime, every 5 minutes during rush-hour and every 20 minutes during the night and on weekends. Most S-Bahn lines run on an east-west route between Ostkreuz and Westkreuz via the stops Warschauer Straße, Ostbahnhof, Jannowitzbrücke, Alexanderplatz, Hackescher Markt, Friedrichstraße, Hauptbahnhof, Bellevue, Tiergarten, Zoologischer Garten, Savignyplatz and Charlottenburg. Other lines run along a circle track around the city, most notably the S 8 and the S 41, S 42, S 45, S 46 lines. <http://www.s-bahn-berlin.de/>

By underground



U-Bahn route map

The Berlin **U-Bahn** (subway/metro) is something to behold; it is so charmingly precise! There are no turnstiles to limit access, so it is technically possible to ride without a ticket, but if caught by a ticket checker you will be fined €40 so it is probably not worth the risk. All U-Bahn stations now have electronic signs that give the time of the next train, and its direction based on sensors along the lines.

Detailed maps can be found in every U-Bahn station and on the trains. Don't be confused by the alternative tram maps. U-Bahn stations can be seen from far by their big, friendly blue U signs. Together with the **S-Bahn** (which is administered by Deutsche Bahn and mostly runs aboveground), the U-Bahn provides a transportation network throughout greater Berlin that is extremely efficient and fast. On weekend (Friday to Sunday), as well as during the Christmas and New Year holidays, all U-Bahn and S-Bahn lines (except line U4) run all night, so returning from late night outings is easy, especially given the average start time of most 'parties' in Berlin (11PM to 1AM). During the week there is no U-Bahn or S-Bahn service from approximately 1AM to 4:30AM, but metro trams/buses and special Night Buses (parallel to the U-Bahn line) run every half an hour from 12:30AM to 4:30AM.

By Tram

The trams are mostly in East Berlin, as in the West the tram lines were removed to facilitate more vehicular traffic. If you don't have a ticket already, you can buy one inside the tram.

Two types of tram service are available. Metro/trams frequent more often as well as by night. Tram routes not so identified stop more frequently and may even include picturesque single-track rides through forested areas far east of the Mitte district.

By Bus

Although buses are the slowest public transport vehicles, these yellow double-decker buses are part of Berlin's transit landscape and they will get you in every corner of Berlin. Besides the normal and *metro* busses there are also *express* busses (marked with a X), which don't stop at every station.

The most famous bus line especially for tourists is bus route 100, which leaves from Zoo Station ("Berlin Zoologischer Garten") or - if you want to go the other way round - Alexanderplatz, and crosses most of historic Berlin, including many of the sites listed here. For the price of a city bus ticket or daily pass, it's possible to see much of the landmarks of Berlin from one of these yellow double-decker buses. Sit up top as it's easier to see the Reichstag, as well as the many historic buildings on Unter den Linden. If you're lucky, you'll get the legendary bus-driver who delivers a commentary (in Berlin-accented German) on the trip. Line 200 takes nearly the same route, but it goes through the modern quarters around Potsdamer Platz. Either ride is a must for any visitor to Berlin.

By Bicycle

Cycling is another great way to tour Berlin.

http://www.visitberlin.de/english/sightseeing/e_si_stadterkundungen_fahrrad.php

Berlin has few steep hills and offers many bicycle paths (*Radwege*) throughout the city (although not all are very smooth). These include "860km of completely separate bike paths, 60km of bike lanes on streets, 50km of bike lanes on sidewalks, 100km of mixed-use pedestrian-bike paths, and 70km of combined bus-bike lanes on streets. Bicycles are a very popular method of transportation among Berlin residents, and there is almost always a certain level of bicycle traffic. Bicycle rentals are available in the city, although the prices vary. In addition, the Deutsche Bahn (DB) placed many **public bicycles** <http://www.callabike-interaktiv.de/kundenbuchung/> throughout the city. These can be *unlocked* by calling a number on the bicycle with a cell phone (called "handy" in German). Seeing Berlin by bicycle is unquestionably a great way that will acquaint the traveller with the big tourist sites, and the little Sprees and side streets as well. Although it's good to carry your own map, you can also always check your location at any U-Bahn station and many Bus Stations. You can create your own bicycling maps online, optimized by less busy routes or fewer traffic lights or your favorite paving. <http://bbbike.radzeit.de/cgi-bin/bbbike.cgi> If you are not familiar with searching your own way through the city or you want more explanation to the sights you visit you can get guided bike tours (with bike included) on Berlin Bike. <http://www.berlinonbike.de/>

Talk

German is of course the main language in Berlin but you can easily find information in English and sometimes in French. Since the football world cup, all the public transportation staff got language training and should be able to help you in English. If you seem to be lost or hesitating in a metro station, a member of the staff could come to you to help you.

See

Museums

Berlin has a vast array of museums. Most museums charge admission for people aged 16 or older - usually €6 to €8 (only available is a day ticket with which one can also visit the other state museums - except special exhibitions) for the big museums, discounts (usually 50%) are available for students and disabled people with identification. However, the state-run museums grant free entrance four hours before closing every Thursday. A nice offer for museum addicts is the three day, which grants entrance to all the normal exhibitions of the approximately. 50 state run museums. Note that most museums are closed on Mondays! <http://www.smb.spk-berlin.de/smb/index.php>

- **Museumsinsel**. Literally "Museum Island", this area is best known for the vast **Pergamon-Museum**, which houses an extensive collection of ancient Greek, ancient Middle-Eastern and Islamic art and architecture. Other museums, which belong to the Museum Island, are the **Altes Museum** (with the Egyptian and the antique collection), the **Alte Nationalgalerie** (with mainly German paintings of the 19th century) and the reopened **Bode-Museum** with its fantastically presented

- sculpture collection and Byzantine art. The **Neues Museum** is under restoration and will open in 2009, it will harbour the Egyptian collection then.
- **Deutsches Historisches Museum**, Unter den Linden 2, Tel. +49 30 203040. German historical museum covering everything from pre-history right up to the present day. One can spend many, many hours here!
 - **Jüdisches Museum**, Lindenstraße 9-14, Tel. +49 30 25993 300. 10AM-8PM. Jewish Museum. Learn about the history of Jews in Berlin. Exhibitions of art and impressive modern architecture by Liebeskind. There is a small unrelated Jewish Museum at the Oranienburger Straße Synagogue.
 - **Gemäldegalerie**, Matthäikirchplatz, Tel. +49 30 266 2951. At the Kulturforum. Thousands of European paintings from the 13th to the 18th century. Works from Dürer, Raffael, Tizian, Caravaggio, Rembrandt and Rubens.
 - **Neue Nationalgalerie**, Potsdamer Straße 50, Tel. +49 30 266 2951 At the Kulturforum. Art from the 20th Century. This museum often houses temporary exhibitions during which the permanent collection is usually not on display.
 - **Museum für Naturkunde**. Near the main railway station. Natural science museum with a big collection of dinosaur skeletons, fossils and minerals.
 - **Mauermuseum at Checkpoint Charlie**. This museum is situated at the most famous historical checkpoint between the two Germanys.
 - **Museum of European Cultures**. The biggest of its sort in Europe. At the museum district of Dahlem.
 - **Ethnological Museum**. Again one of the world's most comprehensive museums. At the museum district of Dahlem. Well worth a visit for its splendid collection of Pre-Columbian archaeology! It now includes the:
 - **Topography of Terror**. This open-air museum documents the terror applied by the Nazi regime. It consists of excavated prison cells located directly under a remaining stretch of the Berlin Wall.
 - **DDR Museum** Karl-Liebknecht-Straße 1, 10178 Berlin. This small museum just over the river from the Berliner Dom. Really interesting with all the displays in German and English, it gives a good insight into life in the former GDR.
 - **Musikinstrumenten-Museum** Tiergartenstraße 1 (*am Kulturforum*), 10785 Berlin. This museum is part of the *Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung PK* and has an amazingly wide range of historic and unusual instruments on display.
 - **Berliner Medizinhistorisches Museum der Charité**, Charitéplatz 1, 10117 Berlin. Interesting exhibition charting the development of European hospitals from the 14th Century to the present day.

Private art galleries

As Berlin is a city of art, it is quite easy to find an art gallery on your way. They provide a nice opportunity to have a look at modern artists' work in a not so crowded environment for free. Some gallery streets with more than about a dozen galleries are Auguststraße, Liniestraße, Torstraße, Brunnenstraße (all Mitte, north of S-Bahn station Oranienburger Straße), Zimmerstraße (Kreuzberg, U-Bahn station Kochstraße) and Fasanenstraße (Charlottenburg).

- **Art Center Berlin Friedrichstraße**, Friedrichstraße 134, Tel. +49 30 27879020. Four floors of exhibitions with a relatively good variety of genres and artists. A very nice oasis of calm from the busy Friedrichstraße.
- **BoxoffBerlin** (a/k/a **bob**), Zimmerstraße 11, Tel. +49 30 44701555. Exhibitions of Berlin Artists. **bob** is also a shop for Berlin-Design-Souvenirs and a Café.
- **Galerie Eigen & Art**, Auguststraße 26, Tel. +49 30 280 6605. One of the most famous German art galleries, home to the Neue Leipziger Schule (Neo Rauch et al.)
- **loop -- raum fur aktuelle kunst**, Jagerstrasse 5, Jägerstrasse 5, 10117. Known for being the "incubator" of future famous Berlin artists, loop is right around the corner from the Lafayette shops. Primarily featuring sculpture, video, and painting.

Churches

There are some historically interesting and architecturally remarkable churches, which are the following:

- **Berliner Dom**— Easily the biggest and most impressive church, built at the turn of the century (19th/20th) as an expression of imperial power. Located next to the museum island. You can climb on top of the dome (beautiful view over the Berlin center) then.
- The Twin Towers of the **Deutscher Dom** (German Cathedral) and the **Französischer Dom** (French Cathedral) are located at the Gendarmenmarkt in Central Berlin.
- **Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche**— Highly symbolic church, dating back to 1891-95, with two completely new buildings aside the ruins of the World War II.
- **Marienkirche**— Located near Alexanderplatz, this is not only the highest church tower in Berlin (90 m), but also one of the oldest churches left in the historical center of Berlin (which is totally tore down in this area). Entrance is free and inside are many treasures from the old days.
- **Nikolaikirche**— The oldest church in Berlin, dating back to the beginning of 13th century (at least the stones next to the ground). Does not serve as a church. Changing exhibitions inside, entrance free.
- **St. Hedwigs Kathedrale**— Domed Church located at Bebelplatz/Unter den Linden, the oldest (mid 18th century) and one of the biggest catholic churches in Berlin, interior was redesigned in a modern style in the 1950s - but still many treasure chambers in the basement.

- **Friedrichswerdersche Kirche**— Nice church located near Unter den Linden/Museum Island, finished 1830 by Schinkel - English Neogothic style. Nice exhibition inside (neoclassical statues and an exhibition about Schinkel's life and work upstairs), entry is free.

Landmarks with observation decks

While Berlin has relatively few high-rise buildings, there are several monuments with observation decks. Probably the most famous of all is the TV Tower near Alexanderplatz, the tallest tower in Germany and second largest in Europe, which has a rotating café at the top spinning 360 degrees in just 30 minutes! 40 seconds is all it takes to reach the top by lift. But there are also other great observation desks, the main ones are listed below (for others have a look in the district pages).

- **Reichstag**— The German parliament near the Brandenburg gate building has a large glass construction on top with a great view of Berlin. Be prepared for long lines and an extensive security check. Free entrance.
- **Berliner Funkturm**— 150 meter high lattice tower, with open-air observation deck 124 meter above ground. Only observation tower on insulators! Located in the Western fair district, out of city center.
- **Berliner Fernsehturm**, Alexanderplatz. The TV tower is Germany's tallest construction: 368 meters high. Observation deck 204 meters above ground. Costs €9,50 as of April 2008.
- **Siegessäule** (*Victory Column*), Tiergarten. An old (1865-1873), 60 meters high monument with panoramic view in the very center of the city. Unfortunately no elevator so be prepared for 285 steps. The statue of Victoria on the top is the place where the angels congregate in the famous film "Der Himmel über Berlin" by Wim Wenders. It has also become something of a symbol for the annual Love Parade techno music festival.
- **Kollhoff Tower**, Potsdamer Platz. The fastest elevator in Europe takes you approximately 100 meters high.
- **Europa Center**, Zoologischer Garten. Shopping center with a panorama floor at the 20th floor (90 meters). In Budapester Straße, overlooking Kaiser-Wilhelm-Memorial Church.

History

Berlin does not attempt to hide the less savory parts of its history: a visit to the **Topography of Terror** (Mitte), for example, provides interesting but sobering insights into the activities of the Gestapo in Berlin during the Nazi years (1933-1945). Many of the walking tours also discuss scenes both of Nazi activity and of Cold War tension and terror.

- **Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe**. Opened in the spring of 2005, this gigantic abstract artwork covering an entire block near the Brandenburg Gate, including an underground museum with extensive details on the Holocaust and

the people who died during it. The blocks start out at ground level on the outer edges of the memorial, and then grow taller towards the middle, where the ground also slopes downwards. 3.5 million visitors in the first year make it one of the most visited memorials in Berlin - and it's worth it, as it's one of the most impressive memorials in Berlin.

- **Berlin Wall**— A large stretch of intact Wall can be found to the east of the city centre along the River Spree in Mühlenstraße near the Oberbaumbrücke. Known as the *East Side Gallery*, it is a section of the wall that is preserved as a gallery. This can be easily reached from Ostbahnhof or Warschauer Straße. It has many beautiful murals, politically motivated and otherwise. Another place to try is near the Martin-Gropius-Bau museum, currently under reconstruction. Two small pieces are also in Potsdamer Platz and in its neighborhood at the corner between Ebertstraße and Bellevuestraße).
- **Berlin Wall Memorial (Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer)**. (U-Bahn Bernauer Straße U8 or S-Bahn Nordbahnhof S1, 2, or 25, follow the signs in the stations - wall is Mauer in German). Often missed by tourists but an absolute must for anyone interested in this part of the city's history. It's a memorial to those who died crossing so you won't, fortunately, get the tackiness of the Checkpoint Charlie area; instead you will be left with a haunting feeling of what life with the wall may have been really like. The monument itself is a gigantic wasted opportunity, blank and featureless. The inscription on the outside, declaring it a monument to the victims of the "communist reign of violence", has sparked emotional debates and angered many local residents. The documentation center across the street on Bernauer Straße is excellent although most of the documentation is in German. The viewing platform gives you a tiny hint of the true scale of the Wall and how terrifying the "no man's land" between the two sections of walls must have been. When the documentation center is closed, both walls can be visited. There is some space between the concrete plates, which allow you to look at the area between the walls. There are also several small holes.

The Memorial is on Bernauer Straße which itself is a street with a great deal of Wall history: the first recorded Wall-related death of the notorious Peter Fechter was here, as was one of the famous tunnels and the famous photograph of the GDR border guard leaping over the barbed wire. Various monuments can be found along the entire length of the street, documenting nearby escape attempts and tunnels; captions are in German, English, French, and Russian. The Memorial itself is a complete section of 4th generation wall - both inside and outside sections, and you can peer through from the east side to see the remains of the electric fence and anti-tank devices in the death strip. It really helps you understand what an incredible feat it was to get from one side to the other -- and why so many died doing it.

- **Checkpoint Charlie**— Checkpoint Charlie, a crossing point between East and West Germany during the Cold War, is no more. Formerly, it was the only border crossing between East and West Germany that permitted foreigner's passage. Residents of East and West Berlin were not allowed to use it. This contributed to Checkpoint Charlie's mythological status as a meeting place for spies and other shady individuals. Now the remains of the Berlin Wall have been moved to permit building, including construction of the American Business Center and other institutions not given to flights of John Le Carré-inspired fancy.

At the intersection of Zimmerstraße and Friedrichstraße is the famous "You Are Leaving the American Sector" sign. The actual guardhouse from Checkpoint Charlie is now housed at the Allied Museum on Clayallee. For a more interesting exhibit go to the Haus am Checkpoint Charlie. This is a private museum with kitschy memorabilia from the Wall as well as the devices GDR residents used to escape the East (including a tiny submarine!).

Checkpoint Charlie gained its name from the phonetic alphabet; checkpoints "Alpha" and "Bravo" were at the autobahn checkpoints Helmstedt and Dreilinden respectively. Checkpoint Charlie's atmosphere was not improved at all on 27 October 1961 when the two Cold War superpowers chose to face each other down for a day. Soviet and American tanks stood approximately 200 meters apart, making an already tense situation worse.

- **Tempelhof airport** was used in the Berlin Airlift (Berliner Luftbrücke) in 1948 and 1949, and featured in movies like Billy Wilder's "One Two Three" with James Cagney, Horst Buchholz and Lilo Pulver. The terminal building is still fascinating: the halls and neighboring buildings, intended to become the gateway to Europe, are still known as the largest built entities worldwide, and have been described by British architect Sir Norman Foster as "the mother of all airports".

Zoo

Berlin has two zoos and an aquarium. The Berlin Zoo in the City West is the historic zoo that has been a listed company since its foundation. It's an oasis in the city and very popular with families and schools.

- **Berlin Zoo.** The largest range of species in the world. The zoo lies directly in the heart of the City West (opposite Bahnhof Zoo at Hardenbergplatz) and is especially famous for its panda bears and Knut, the polar bear cub born in captivity in late 2006. The Elephant Gate (Budapester Straße) is the second entrance next to the Aquarium and a traditional photo stop for most visitors because of the architecture.
- **Aquarium** Part of the Berlin Zoo, located at Budapester Straße in an historic building. Still the largest aquarium in Germany and a host to an amazing variety of fishes, crocodiles etc. One of the best places on a rainy day with children.

- **Tierpark Berlin.** Located in Friedrichsfelde, the Tierpark is more spacious than the historic Berlin Zoo and has been open for some 50 years. The compound also comprises a small château with its adjacent park.

Do

Explore

Go on a **Walking Tour** of Berlin - the Mitte and surrounding districts are sufficiently compact to allow a number of excellent walking tours through its history-filled streets. You'll see amazing things you would otherwise miss. Details are usually available from the reception desks of hostels and hotels. Some options include:

- **Berlin Stadtführungen Sightseeing Tours**, +49 (0)30 79745600. Organizes individual Berlin city sightseeing tours and Berlin city walks. Driven 3 or 4 hour Berlin tours according to the size of the group in a motor coach, panorama bus or mini van. Multi-lingual certified Berlin tour guides will accompany. Also Berlin day tours and Berlin Nightseeing tours.
- **Berlin with Merlin Tours**, Flughafenstraße 58. Runs on a tips-only basis. Brand new English tour starting at 10am outside Burger King at Zoologischer Garten Station every day except Tuesday and Friday. Brings you to the hidden spots of West-Berlin avoiding the tourist-ridden areas in the city centre. Fantastic for people that want to see more than just the main attractions.
- **Alternative Berlin.** Runs on a tips-only basis. English tour starting at 11.00am each morning at Alexander Platz TV tower in front of Starbucks coffee. This tour uses Berlin's transit system to cover a massive amount of territory and focuses on the underground sites and sounds of Berlin, including art & graffiti culture, technological wonders, and landmarks of rock & electronic music.
- **Insider Tours**, +49-30-6923149. English language walking tours with no reservation required. Simply show up at the pre-designated time and place. Choose the tour that interests you most. The classic 'Insider Tour' and 'Red Star' tours are both excellent. They also have a good pub crawl, where you get to see the coolest pubs in Berlin!
- **Humboldt Tours Berlin.** High quality tours. All guides are local PhD and graduate students in German history or American Fulbright exchange students. Comprehensive and entertaining general tours as well as various more detailed tours such as Architecture, Jewish History, bike tours and a Wild East Pub Crawl.
- **New Berlin Tours**, +49 30 510 50030. Runs on a tips-only basis. French, German, English and Spanish tours starting at 11am and 1pm and 4pm some of the year outside Starbucks at the Brandenburg Gate. Entertaining and performed by young people living in Berlin and interested in its history.

Special themed tours:

- **Eat-the-World.** Offers culture & food tours.

- **Brewer's Berlin Walking Tours**, +49 (0) 177 388 1537. English language walking tours. Famous for their 'All-Day' tour, the most complete introduction to the city's history, and 'Free Tour', their shorter sightseeing tour, on a tips-only basis. Tours meet outside the Bandy Brooks Shop (formerly Australian ice-cream) at Friedrichstraße S/U-Bahn station.

Guide yourself:

- **Berlin By Numbers**. Free guide in English using your mobile phone browser. Linked Wikipedia articles in all languages.
- If you prefer a private tour, there are several possibilities, such as:
- **Berlin Tour Guide**. In Hebrew and English.
- **Berlin Trails**. Offers several unusual guided tours ending in a beer tasting at a typical, authentic German brewery or pub. Sights include the hidden Bunkers of Berlin, the Stasi prison and city sightseeing tour although individual tours are also available.
- **The Berlin Expert**. Provides custom individual private guided walking tours of Berlin. Socially responsible. An American Jew living in the German capital for 6 years, he has walked almost every inch of Berlin, exploring its tormented and rich history, living its dynamic present. There was a lot of homework to do here. He's done it all and he will share it with you. Specializing in Jewish tours Berlin.
- **Berlin Sightseeing Tours**. Private Berlin tours at the date and time of your wish starting i.e. directly at your Berlin accommodation. Certified Berlin tour guides in most languages available.
- **Tour-the-East**, +49-30-47 03 47 47. This company is run by an American-German couple (both Ph.D.'s), specialists of customized high quality private tours, events and VIP service in "East & West" Berlin and environs in German, English, French, Russian and Polish. By exclusive arrangement, you can meet with politicians, artists, journalists, representatives of NGOs and others. With part of their proceeds they support sustainable community and development projects on-site.

Jewish Tours

- **Jewish Berlin**, 49-179-1494575. Offer Jewish themed tours in Berlin, including tours in the Berlin vicinity, such as tours to Potsdam and to the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camps. Guides are all active in various Jewish initiatives in the city.
- **Jewish Tours Berlin**, Brunnenstraße 33, +49 (0) 178 / 93 76 542. This company is run by skilled and experienced guides with close connections to Berlin's Jewish community.
- **Milk & Honey Tours**, +49-30-61 62 57 61. Run by German Jews, our company works with 16 guides, specialists of Jewish History, and provides individuals and groups with high knowledgeable and enthusiastic tours of "Jewish Berlin".

Berlin is also great for cycling due to its many bike paths and flat geography.

- **Berlin On Bike.** Offers "Berlin's Best" and "Berlin Wall Tours" on alternating days. Tours are 4 hours long and start at the Kulturbrauerei at 3pm.
- **Fat Tire Bike Tours,** +49 30 240 47991. Non-strenuous and entertaining city bike tours of Berlin. Tours start daily at the TV Tower at Alexanderplatz at 11am (and 4pm in summer months) and stop every couple hundred meters to discuss the sights as well as at a traditional beer garden in the park.
- **New Berlin Free Bike Tour,** +49 30 510 50030.

Boat trips

- **Stern und Kreisschiffahrt.** By far the biggest boat company in Berlin. They offer tours on most lakes.

Recreation

Pick up a copy of *Exberliner*, <http://www.exberliner.com/> the monthly English-language paper for Berlin to find out what's on, when and where. It provides high quality journalism and up-to-date listings. If you understand German, the activity planners for the city, *zitty* <http://www.zitty.de/> and *tip*, <http://www.zitty.de/> are available at every kiosk or get *Stadtkind* <http://www.stadtkind.de/> for free at several clubs and bars. Be prepared to choose among a huge amount of options.

- **Parks**

Berlin has many great parks that are very popular in the summer. **Green Berlin** operates some of them.

- **Tiergarten** is Berlin's largest park and hosts the Love Parade in July. In the summer and on weekends you will see loads of families with their barbeques.
- **Viktoriapark** (Kreuzberg) offers superb panoramic views across south Berlin. National monument by Schinkel on top of it.
- **Schlosspark Charlottenburg** is inside the area of the Charlottenburg Palace, but the green area of the park is free, so you can go there to have a walk even if you are not interested in the palace. It covers a large area and you can get in from the entrance just near the "New Pavilion" (Neuer Pavillon a.k.a. Schinkel Pavillon) placed on the right of Luisenplatz. The nearest station is Sophie-Charlotte Platz on the U2.
- **World's Garden** (Gärten der Welt) in Marzahn. Inside you can find a quite large and well established Chinese garden, a Korean garden, a small Bali's Garden/Glasshouse, an Oriental Garden with nice fountains and a cloister and a Japanese garden, which is a project by the city partnership of Berlin and Tokyo. Open daily from 9AM-4PM, in April and October until 6PM, from May-September until 8PM. Best time for a visit is in spring or summer. To get there, take the S7 until "Marzahn" station and continue with bus 195 until Eisenacher Straße.

- **Lakes, Beaches**
- **Wannsee** is called Berlin's "bath tub". The Strandbad Wannsee is the most famous bathing area with locals. Take the S-Bahn lines S1 or S7 to the station Nikolassee and follow the crowd!
- **Müggelsee** in the south east of Berlin is a popular swimming spot.

Festivals

- **Berlin Film Festival / Berlinale.** The city's largest cultural event and an important fixture in the global film industry's calendar (up there with Cannes and Venice). 150,000 tickets sold, 500 films screened and a host of associated parties and events every year. In contrast to e.g. Cannes, most screenings at the Berlinale are open to the public. Tickets are inexpensive and relatively easy to get for the "International Forum of Young Film" screenings and the "Berlinale Panorama" (movies which are not in the competition).
- **Lange Nacht der Museen,** InfoLine Tel. +49 30 90 26 99 444. A large cultural event in January and August with museums open until 2AM and extra events around the city. For details refer to the website.
- **Fête de la Musique.** 21st of June. All kinds of music around the city on this day co-coordinating with a similar day in several French cities.
- **Oberbaumbrücke Festival,** near the East Side Gallery (*just under the Oberbaumbrücke*). In August (check the exact dates). Artists are selling their works, amateur tango dancers are giving public performances and you can contribute to a collaborative painting on a very long canvas spread on the street along the festival.

Parades

- **Hanf Parade.** The Hanfparade is the biggest European political demonstration for the legalization of hemp for use in agriculture and as a stimulant.
- **Karneval der Kulturen.** In May or June (on Whit Sunday). The idea of the "Carnival of Cultures" is a parade of the various ethnic groups of the city showing traditional music, costumes and dances. Other more modern, alternative and political groups also participate. Similar events are also held in Hamburg and Frankfurt.
- **Karneval** In late February or early March. As a lot of people in Berlin originally came from the southern or western area of Germany where *Fasching*, *Fastnacht* or *Karneval* is celebrated, a carnival parade was also established in Berlin. It grew bigger and bigger (about 500.000 to 1 million people watching), but the costumes and cars are rather boring and the people are not as dressed up as in the "original" big carnival parades (Cologne, Mainz, Düsseldorf).

Theatre, Opera, Concerts, Cinema

Berlin has a lot of theater houses, cinemas, concerts and other cultural events going on all the time. The most important ones are listed here.

Theater

- **Deutsches Theater.** Classical theater with impressive line up of actors and directors.
- **Volksbühne am Rosa Luxemburg Platz.** Sometimes controversial, modern theater.
- **Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz** Modern theater.
- **Theater am Kurfürstendamm** Popular theater with TV celebrities in modern plays.
- **Theater des Westens** A historic theater in the former West Berlin, only musicals today.
- **Friedrichstadtpalast** Cabaret shows and revues with actresses from the former East German ballet.
- **Berliner Ensemble** Contemporary theater.

Opera

- **Komische Oper** Modern operas.
- **Deutsche Oper** Classic opera house of West Berlin.
- **Staatsoper Unter den Linden** The impressive building and royal history make the building alone worth a visit.
- **Neuköllner Oper** Voted several times best off-opera house and known for its modern and contemporary pieces. Most in German as usually relating to developments in Germany. Very creative and innovative.

Cinema

There are about a hundred cinemas in Berlin, although most of them are only showing movies dubbed in German, without subtitles. Listed below are some of the more important cinemas also showing movies in the original language (look for the OmU - "original with subtitles" - notation). Most movies, which are dubbed in German, are released a bit later in Germany. Tickets are normally €5 to €7. Monday to Wednesday are special cinema days with reduced admission.

- **CineStar** The "CineStar Original" cinema located inside the Sony Center at the Potsdamer-Platz shows only movies in English.
- **Babylon Kreuzberg** Also non-mainstream movies in this small cinema build in the 1950s.
- **Central** Repertory cinema located in an ex-squat near Hackesche Höfe.

- **Eiszeit**
- **Filmtheater Hackesche Höfe** Located on the 4th floor of the Hackesche Höfe. Very broad range of movies.
- **Neue Kant Kinos** One of the few old cinemas (founded 1912) left in Berlin's city west. Mostly non-mainstream European movies.

Concert Houses

- **Philharmonie** Berlin Philharmonic orchestra is one of the best in the world. Famous building and outstanding musicians make a reservation essential. Cheaper tickets usually available 2-4 hours before the concert if not sold out.
- **Konzerthaus** at Gendarmenmarkt.

Sport

In Berlin you can do virtually all sports

- The most popular sport is **soccer**, which is played all over the city. The Berlin FA lists all the clubs. Not to be missed is the Olympic Stadium, which hosted the 2006 world cup final. Hertha Berlin, Berlin's highest professional football team, plays there during the Bundesliga season in spring, fall and winter.
- Public **swimming** pools can be found around the city. Check out BBB for pool listings and opening times.
- **Sailing** on one of the many lakes is also popular. You can find sailing clubs and most universities have ships as well.
- **Golf** is popular as well: at U-Bahn station Gleisdreieck, for instance, there is a driving range with an amazing view on Potsdamer Platz and very popular with business travellers. You can find golf clubs all around Berlin, although for non-members Motzen has one of the best.
- **Ice hockey**: The Berlin Eisbären (Polar Bears) play this fast, exciting and very physical sport during the winter. The excitement is heightened the singing and chanting of the crowds, who are fuelled by the copious quantities of wurst and beer available.
- **Australian Football**: The Berlin Crocodiles host regular matches in the summer.

Spa

Spas are very trendy.

- **Day Spa** In Riverside hotel next to the Friedrichstadtpalast.
- Club Oasis Fitness Centre & Spa, Grand Hyatt Berlin Hotel, Marlene-Dietrich-Platz 2, +49 30 2553 1234 (berlin@hyatt.de)

Learn

Berlin has three major universities:

- **Freie Universität**, Founded after World War II in West Berlin and today the city's largest university by number of students, the Freie Universität has an impressive range of faculties and outstanding professors.
- **Humboldt Universität**, The oldest university in Berlin with an impressive record of alumni and professors – Albert Einstein, G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, to name but a few. During the Cold War it was the main university in East Berlin and after reunification there have been efforts to reinstate its former glory.
- **Technische Universität**, Technical university founded in West Berlin after World War II with a good reputation for its research.

There are several smaller universities and colleges in Berlin but the current restructure of the university makes it difficult to give an overview. The responsible senator of the City of Berlin has a good overview page.

Work

The current economic climate is getting better but work is still not easy to find in Berlin. If you don't have a sound level of German it's unlikely that you will find work easily. Any kind of skills (especially languages) that separates you from the mass will definitely improve your chances for a job.

If you are an EU citizen, a student or have a work permit you may be able to scrape by teaching English (Spanish, French, Latin are good, too) or working in a bar but it'll be tough, there's not much work around. Chances are better when big trade fairs or conventions are in town, so apply at temp agencies. Hospitality and call centers are constantly hiring but the illegal workforce is keeping wages low.

Berlin has a growing media, modeling and film industry. For daily soaps, telenovelas and movies most companies are looking for extras with something specific. Apply at the bigger casting and acting agencies.

For English-language jobs, it might be worth checking out the classified ads of the monthly magazine for English-speakers, *Exberliner*. <http://www.exberliner.com/>

Buy

Due to federal liberalization, shopping hours are theoretically unlimited. Nevertheless, many of the smaller shops still close at 8 p.m. Most of the bigger stores and nearly all of the malls are open additionally until 9 or 10PM from Thursday to Saturday. Sunday opening is still limited to about a dozen weekends per year, although some supermarkets located at train stations (Hauptbahnhof, Bahnhof Zoologischer Garten, Friedrichstraße, Innsbrucker Platz and Ostbahnhof) are open also on Sundays. Many bakeries and small

food stores (called *Spätkauf*) are open late at night and on Sundays in busier neighborhoods (especially Prenzlauer Berg, Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain). Stores inside the Hauptbahnhof central station have long opening hours (usually until about 10 or 11PM), also on Sundays.

The main shopping areas are:

Ku'Damm and its extension, **Taentzienstraße** remain the main shopping streets even now that the Wall has come down. *KaDeWe (Kaufhaus Des Westens)* at Wittenbergplatz is a must visit just for the vast food dept at the 6th floor. It's reputedly the biggest department store on Continental Europe and still has an old world charm, with very helpful and friendly staff.

Friedrichstraße is the upmarket shopping street in the former East Berlin with *Galeries Lafayette*s and the other Quartiers (204 to 207) as main areas to be impressed with wealthy shoppers. The renovated *Galeria Kaufhof* department store at Alexanderplatz is also worth a visit. The main shopping area for the alternative, but still wealthy crowd is north of Hackescher Markt, especially around the Hackesche Höfe. For some more affordable but still very fashionable shopping there is Prenzlauer Berg, Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain with a lot of young designers opening shops, but also lots of record stores and design shops. Constant changes make it hard to recommend a place though, but the area around station Eberswalder Straße in Prenzlauer Berg, around Bergmannstraße and Oranienstraße in Kreuzberg and around Boxhagener Platz in Friedrichshain are always great when it comes to shopping.

For cheap books, a nice choice is *Jokers Restseller* in Friedrichstraße 148 (tel +49 30 20 45 84 23) where there is a wide variety of secondhand books. For souvenirs, have a look just in front of the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche, these shops sell almost the same items as others, but are cheaper, not all the staff speaks English though. You can also get cheap postcards there (from €0.30 while the average price for normal postcard is €0.50-2). For *collectible stamps* go to Goethe Straße 2 (Ernst Reuter Platz, U2), where you can find a *Philatelic Post Office* from the Deutsche Post. They generally speak English. For alternative souvenirs (design, fashion and small stuff from Berlin designers and artists), go to *ausberlin* near Alexanderplatz, it's a bit hidden at the other side of Kaufhof at the Karl-Liebnecht-Straße.

Gifts + Souvenirs

- **BoxoffBerlin** (a/k/a **bob**), Zimmerstraße 11 (*U Kochstr.*) Only 100 m from *Checkpoint Charlie* you will find a small but very interesting place for extraordinary souvenirs and gifts. It's a shop, café and gallery in one. The shop offers unique souvenirs and cool gifts made by local designers (shirts, bags, comics, music, films, games, post cards, toys, and books). The Café has coffee specialties based on organically grown and fair traded espresso and an individual selection of soft drinks (e.g. Fritz Kola, Bionade) and beer (e.g. Berliner Weisse,

Palast-Bier) and the gallery shows changing exhibitions of contemporary art, films and more from Berlin artists. Open 11AM-8PM, *every day of the year*.

Flea markets

You can find dozens of flea markets with different themes in Berlin (mostly on weekends), but worth checking out is the big one at Straße des 17. Juni:

- **Straße des 17. Juni**, between Ernst-Reuter-Haus and *S-Bahn: Tiergarten*.
- **Mauerpark**, next to Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn Sportpark in Prenzlauer Berg (*U-Bahn: Eberswalderstrasse*).

Eat

A staple in Berlin is currywurst. It's a bratwurst covered in ketchup and curry powder. You can find them all over Berlin by street vendors. It's a must try when in Berlin. Two renowned Currywurst stands are "Konnopke's Imbiss" below Eberswalder Strasse U-Bahn station on line 2 and "Curry 36" opposite the Mehringdamm U-Bahn station in Kreuzberg (only two stops south of Checkpoint Charlie). Both of these offer far friendlier service than many of Berlin's more upmarket eateries.

Eating out in Berlin is incredibly inexpensive compared to any other Western European capital or other German cities. The city is multicultural and many cultures' cuisine is represented here somewhere, although it is often modified to suit German tastes. Vegetarians can eat quite well with a little bit of research and menu modification even if Berlin seems like a carnivore heaven with all the sausage stands. Many kebab restaurants have a good selection of roasted vegetables and salads. *Falafels* are also tasty and suitable for vegetarians.

All prices must include VAT by law. Only upmarket restaurants may ask for a further **service surcharge**. Note that it is best to ask if credit cards are accepted before you sit down -- it's not that common to accept credit cards in some parts of the city. Most likely to be accepted are Visa and Mastercard, all other cards will be only accepted in some upmarket restaurants.

One of the main tourist areas for eating out is **Hackescher Markt / Oranienburger Straße**. This area has dramatically changed during the years: once full of squats and not-entirely-legal bars and restaurants, it had some real character. It is rapidly being developed and corporate and even the most famous squat - the former Jewish-owned proto-shopping mall "Tacheles" - has had a bit of a facelift. There are still some gems in the side streets, though: the "Assel" (Woodlouse) on Oranienburger Straße, furnished with DDR-era furniture, is still relatively authentic and worth a visit, especially on a warm summer night. Oranienburger Straße is also an area where prostitutes line up at night, but don't be put off by this. The area is actually very safe since several administrative and religious buildings are located there.

For cheap and good food (especially from Turkey and the Middle East) you should try Kreuzberg and Neukölln with their abundance of Indian, pizza and *Döner Kebab* restaurants (Berlin was the birthplace of the Döner Kebab about 30 years ago). Prices start from 2 € for a kebab or Turkish pizza (different from the original Italian recipe and ingredients). If you are looking for a quick meal you could try getting off at Görlitzer Bahnhof or Schlesisches Tor on the U1 line - the area is filled with inexpensive, quality restaurants.

Kastanienallee is a good choice too - but again not what it used to be since the developers moved in (much less exploited than Hackescher Markt, though). It's a popular area with artists, students and has a certain Bohemian charm. Try Imbiss W, at the corner of Zionskirchstraße and Kastanienallee, where they serve superb Indian-fusion food, mostly vegetarian, at the hands of artist-chef Gordon W. Further up the street is the Prater Garten, Berlin's oldest beer garden and an excellent place in the summer.

Waiters and tipping

The custom in Berlin is to tell the waiter how much you're paying when you receive the bill - don't leave the money on the table. If there is confusion with the tip, remember to ask for your change, *Wechselgeld* (money back).

Normally a 5-10% tip is OK (or round up to the next Euro) if you are satisfied with the service, but remember that even if waiters don't get paid much anywhere, in Western Europe they are not dependent on tips to make a living as they are in the U.S., and it is possible to live on one's hourly wage. If the service has been very good and friendly feel free to tip more (especially when they help you with the language!).

Restaurants

- **Kreuzberg & Friedrichshain**— Young and independent student area with big Turkish community in Kreuzberg).
- **City West/Charlottenburg**— Heart of West Berlin with good quality restaurants.
- **Mitte**— Political and new center of East Berlin with upmarket restaurants.
- **Schöneberg**— City slickers and street cafe atmosphere.
- **Pankow***mdash; Buzzing Prenzlberg and its lively student scene.

Breakfast

It is very common to go out for breakfast on weekends for brunch (long breakfast together with lunch, all you can eat buffet, usually from 10AM to 4PM and for 3 to 10 euro - sometimes including coffee, tea or juice). Here are some special tips (see the district pages for further):

For children

- **Charlottchen**, Droysenstraße 1, tel +49 30 324 47 17. Buffet breakfast and institution for parents and prepared for children of all ages, indoor play room!
- **Strandbad Mitte**, Kleine Hamburger Straße 16, tel+49 30 24 62 89 63. Playground next to the restaurant and good breakfast.

Buffet breakfast (brunch)

- **City Guesthouse Berlin**, Gleimstraße 24, tel +49 30 4480792. Brunch buffet, Sunday 8AM to 2PM, Breakfast Buffet Mo-Sa 8AM to 12AM.
- **Cafe Sarotti-Höfe**, Mehringdamm 57, tel +49 30 61 62 09 39. Located in a former chocolate factory with buffet! U6/U7, Mehringdamm.
- **Operncafé**, Unter den Linden 5, tel +49 30 20 26 83. On Sundays, they have a nice jazz brunch with live music in an intimate atmosphere (reservation strongly recommended), all other days, a standard buffet applies. Bahnhof Friedrichstraße.
- **Grüne Lampe**, Uhlandstraße 51, tel +49 30 88 71 93 93. Excellent Russian breakfast buffet.
- **Zur Steinquelle**, Lise-Meitner-Straße, [0] 30 / 21094 .
- **Athen**, Alte Gasse, [0] 30 / 27895.
- **Kilombo**, Kaulbachstraße , [0] 30 / 28387.
- **Myra**, Luisenstraße, [0] 30 / 17986.

Individual style

- **Telecafé**, Panoramastraße 1a, tel +49 30 242 33 33. Enjoy breakfast in front of a city view right at the top of the Fernsehturm.
- **Dachgartenrestaurant Käfer**, Platz der Republik 1, tel+49 30 22 62 99 0. Breakfast from 9-10:30AM at the top of the Germany's parliament.
- **Kleine Kneipe**, Allers Weg, [0] 30 / 10059.
- **Cadoro**, Stollbergstraße , [0] 30 / 26538.
- **Golden Tweenis**, Holzstraße , [0] 30 / 8120 .

Upper-class

- **Café im Literaturhaus**, Fasanenstraße 23, tel +49 30 882 54 14. Classical style, waiters in livrée.
- **Desbrosses**, Potsdamer Platz 3, Tel. +49 30 337 77 64 00. The Ritz Carlton imported a whole French brasserie that freshly bakes bread.
- **Rama**, Diebsweg, [0] 30 / 28738.
- **Cafe Forum**, Leopoldst, [0] 30 / 28769.
- **Satluss**, Buschkoppel, [0] 30 / 10628.

Drink

Pub crawling is popular in Berlin, especially among backpackers. There are several tour companies but the best known pub crawl for backpackers is organized by New Berlin

Tours. Keep in mind that you won't get into the cooler bars that way as they try to keep the doors closed for pub crawl tourists.

- At **Warschauer Straße** (which you can reach via S-Bahn and U-Bahn station *Warschauer Straße*) and more specifically **Simon-Dach-Straße** and around **Boxhagener Platz** you can find a wide variety of bars. It is common for locals to meet at *Warschauer* to go to a bar there.
- **Cafe Einstein** is one particular example of a home grown coffee chain, which has nice staff, great coffee and is fairly priced. In particular, the Einstein on Unter den Linden is as far from "junk coffee" as it's possible to be.
- There are lots of **Irish bars** all over the city, as there are in all European cities. If you like off-the-shelf Irish bars or watching the football in English then you won't be disappointed, but in a city with new cool bars opening pretty much daily and a huge range to choose from, you'll find that these cater mostly to the Irish construction workers and Germans attracted by Irish music, which is often played in them. The Irish pub in the Europa Center at Tauentzienstraße is famous. Located in the basement of a skyscraper, you will find a big Irish pub and a rowdy crowd on the weekend. It also claims to have the longest bar in all of Berlin!
- If you want to get some tap water in a bar ask for "*Leitungswasser*" (if you just say "water" (*Wasser*), you will receive mineral water), it is common if you drink coffee. They should not charge you for it but you should order some other drink as well.

Bars

Berliners love to drink cocktails, and it's a main socializing point for young people. Many people like to meet their friends in a cocktail bar before clubbing. Prenzlauer Berg (Around U-Bahnhof Eberswalder Str., Helmholtzplatz, Oderberger Straße & Kastanienallee), Kreuzberg (Bergmannstraße, Oranienstraße and the area around Görlitzer Park and U-Bahnhof Schlesisches Tor), Schöneberg (Goltzstraße, Nollendorfplatz, Motzstraße for gays), and Friedrichshain (Simon-Dach-Straße and around Boxhagener Platz) are the main areas. There aren't as many illegal bars as there was in the 90s but bars open and close faster than you can keep up with - check out the bar and cocktail guides in the bi-weekly magazines *Tip* or *Zitty*. For recommended bars, have a look at the district pages.

Clubs

The club scene in Berlin is one of the biggest and most progressive in Europe. Even though there are some 200 clubs in the city, it's sometimes difficult to find the right club for you since the best ones are a bit off the beaten track and most bouncers will keep bigger tourist groups (especially males) out. Entrance is cheap compared to other big European cities, normally from 5 to 10 euro (usually no drink included).

The main clubbing districts are in the east: Mitte (especially north of Hackescher Markt and - a bit hidden - around Alexanderplatz), Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg (around Schlesisches Tor) and Prenzlauer Berg (around station Eberswalder Str.). Some mainstream clubs are located in Charlottenburg and at Potsdamer Platz. Electro and techno are still the biggest in Berlin, with lots of progressive DJs and live acts around. But there are also many clubs playing 60s beat, alternative rock and of course mainstream music. Clubbing days are Thursday, Friday and especially Saturday, but some clubs are open every day of the week. Partying in Berlin starts around midnight (weekends) and peaks around 2AM or 3AM in the normal clubs, a bit later in many electro/techno clubs. Berlin is famous for its long and decadent after hours, going on until Monday evening.

Stylish

- **40 seconds**, Potsdamer Straße 58, tel+49 30 890 642 41 Posh club with dinner area and amazing view over the Potsdamer Platz. Mainstream R'&'B and house music.
- **Bangaluu**, Invalidenstraße 30, tel +49 30 809 690 77 Stylish club and luxury bed-restaurant (up to 10 course dinner) in a former post office. House and hip hop music mainly.
- **Week-End**, Am Alexanderplatz 5 (the building with the Sharp sign on top) Located in the 12th floor of a GDR office building. Amazing views over the city in classical club style for young people. Parties till the dawn. Recently complemented by the new after-hours club 15th Floor in the same building, as well as a roof bar. Electro, techno and house, sometimes hip hop.

Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain

- **Watergate**, Falckensteinstraße 49 (*U Schlesisches Tor / S Warschauer Straße*), Great electronic/drum & bass club with two floors directly at the Spree River - great panoramic view. Open Wednesday (only one floor), Friday, Saturday. Tough door policy.
- **Maria am Ostbahnhof**, Stralauer Platz 34/35 (*next to Schillingbrücke*) Cool location with lots of progressive live sets and concerts (mainly electro/techno, but also independent/alternative Pop/Rock concerts).
- **Berghain/Panorama Bar**, Am Wriezener Bahnhof (*S Ostbahhof*), A huge techno club with a gay majority (Berghain) in an old power generation plant. Be prepared for a tough door policy. Not for teenagers, no cameras allowed (even mobiles with a camera are confiscated). Open Saturdays; Panorama Bar (mainly straight crowd) upstairs additionally on Fridays. Parties until Sunday afternoon.

Schöneberg

- **90 Grad**, Dennewitzstraße 37 One of the first party addresses for the rich, beautiful and famous. Mainstream house and R & B.

Mitte

- **Tresor**, Köpenicker Str. 59-73 Perhaps THE Berlin techno club. The old venue was closed in 2005 but Tresor reopened in May 2007 in an old power plant in the southeast of Berlin-Mitte.
- **Kaffee Burger/Russendisko**, Torstraße 60, tel +49 30 280 464 95. Bar and club with GDR living room atmosphere. Russendisko is performed every second Saturday by author Wladimir Kammer. Sometimes live music (Neo-Polka).
- **White Trash Fast Food**, Schönhauser Allee 6-7, tel+49 30 50 34 86 68 Chinese decoration in the location of an ex big Irish pub makes you feel like in a Tarantino movie. Alternative concerts, cowboy hats, beards and 60s to 70s style - if those are your things then you have a new home. Also has a restaurant with great burgers and self brewed beer.
- **KitKatClub**, now in the Sage Club, Köpenicker Str. 76 A very famous address, a unique clubbing concept mixing techno/electro/trance music with sexual freedom. Be careful and open-minded, and respect the strict dress code. Nonstop party from Saturday night to Sunday evening. The owner of the KitKatClub (Simon Thaur) is also famous for his extreme-fetish porno-movies.

Sleep

After the end of the Cold War, Berlin witnessed a construction boom of hotels and offices. The boom has meant that there are tons of hotels, which results in comparatively cheap prices even in the 5 star category. Especially for a short visit, it may be best to stay at a place in Berlin-Mitte (around Friedrichstraße or Alexanderplatz for example), as most of the main sights are located there. Due to its history, most hotels in Berlin are still located in the western part of town (i.e. Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf). You won't find any hotel located directly at the new main train station but they plan to build some in the near future. Cheapest are youth hostels (called Jugendherbergen, only for members) and hostels (similar to youth hostels, but for everyone, mostly backpackers stay here, usually also with one and two-bed rooms), you will find also bed and breakfast offers (often private) and boarding houses (Pension, more familiar and smaller than hotels).

Talk

Most people under 40 in Berlin are able to speak English in a varying degree of fluency, but it might not be as widely spoken as you might expect, so a few key German phrases are worth having, especially in the suburbs and generally in non touristic places.

Some people are afraid of speaking English due to their limited experience in talking to foreigners. So a lot of people pretend not to speak English but might understand your intention if you explain your desire with some gestures. Basic French and Russian is partly spoken because French in West Berlin and Russian in East Berlin were taught in schools.

There are some words in Berlin that differ from regular German, especially in the former East Berlin the language preserved a certain level of dialect.

Schrippe: Roll.

Stulle: Sandwich.

Broiler: grilled chicken.

Pfannkuchen: doughnut (without a hole in the middle but with filling)

Contact

You can find internet cafes and telephone shops all around Berlin. Do a bit of research with the telephone shops because most have a focus region in the world. Many bars, restaurants and cafes offer free wi-fi for their guests.

The mobile network (3G/GPRS/GSM) covers the whole city. If you are coming from a non-GSM standard country (eg. North America) check your mobile phone for GSM compatibility.

A free wireless network covers parts of Berlin, but requires special software on your computer. More information including maps of Berlin with coverage is available online,.

Stay safe

Berlin is a safe place but it has some not so well maintained areas as well. No specific rules apply with the exception of public transportation and tourist areas where **pickpockets** are a problem. Watch your bags during rush hours and at larger train stations.

There are certain areas, especially in northern Neukölln and parts of Kreuzberg to the south of the city centre and Wedding to the north, where the risk of falling victim to robberies and assaults is slightly higher. Especially during the night, tourists should visit these areas with some caution as a mixture of drunken party people & poor neighborhood can lead to trouble.

Since the 1980s there have been **localized riots** on Labour Day (1st May). In general they took and take place in Kreuzberg around Oranienstraße/Mariannenplatz. Nowadays they start usually in the night before May 1st, especially in the Mauerpark (Prenzlauer Berg), at Boxhagener Platz and in Rigaer Str. (Friedrichshain) and continue at the evening of May 1st in Kreuzberg and the mentioned areas. They became rather small since 2005 due to engagement of the citizens who celebrate the Labour Day with a nice "myfest" in Kreuzberg and well-planned police efforts. Even so, it is better to stay out of these areas after 8pm and until sunrise. Vehicles should not be parked in these areas either!

Racially-motivated violence is rare but the risk is higher on the outskirts of East Berlin. It is recommended for non-Caucasian tourists to be attentive in areas such as Lichtenberg,

Hellersdorf, Marzahn, Treptow and Köpenick in the evening and night, especially if alone. Rule of thumb: when heading to the eastern part of Berlin, stay inside the S-Bahn-Ring (number S41, S42) and you'll be alright.

The police in Berlin are competent and not corrupt therefore if you try to bribe you are likely to spend a night behind bars to check your background. They are generally helpful to tourists. Most of the officers are able to speak English, so don't hesitate to approach them if you are frightened or lost.

The nationwide emergency number is **112** for medical emergencies and fires, while the police emergency number is **110**.

Get out

- **Potsdam** is the capital of the surrounding federal state of Brandenburg and not far away southwest of Berlin and makes a perfect day trip. Especially the park of Sanssouci (a world heritage site) with its great famous palaces, is worth a visit. You can get there with the S-Bahn S7 or Regional-Bahn RE1 to the station *Potsdam Hauptbahnhof* or *Park Sanssouci* (fare zone C). It takes about half an hour from Berlin Hauptbahnhof or Friedrichstraße.
- **Sachsenhausen** located in outer Oranienburg, a quiet suburb housing the remains of one of the Nazi concentration camps on German soil. There's also a small palace in the center of Oranienburg.
- **Bernau** is a medium-sized town north of Berlin with some medieval remains from the 14th and 15th century such as a city wall and the late Gothic church St. Marien. The S-Bahn S2 takes you there in about half an hour from S-Bahn station Friedrichstraße.
- To the south, **Dresden** is 2.5 hrs & **Leipzig** is about one hour by train.
- The **Müritz lake region** to the north is a national park with some hundred lakes.
- **Frankfurt an der Oder** on the Polish border is within easy reach.
- The beautiful **Baltic seashore** (e.g. Usedom) is near enough for a day trip by train.
- **Szczecin** (Stettin) in Poland is about two and a half hours by train.
- **Poznań** (Posen) in Poland is three hours by train.
- The **Raststaette Grunewald** at the S-Bahn station *Nikolassee* is a good spot for hitching if you're heading south or west.

For more info see: www.wikipedia.org

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