

New World Order:

Two Days in Berlin

Ravaged by war, bisected by grey concrete and barbed wire, Berlin spent almost half a century literally torn apart. But when the wall crashed down in 1989, the city was presented with a blank canvas. Huge swathes of what had been no-man's land, right in the centre of the city, were crying out for life. Happily the cream of contemporary architects seized this magical opportunity and Berlin is now one of the most exciting visions on the European map.

THE REICHSTAG TO THE KU-DAMM

The best way to see Berlin is on two wheels, so shake off your morning cobwebs and head to one of the numerous bike-hire shops in the city (check out www.fahrradstation.de for some rental locations). Pedal off to Germany's parliament building the **Reichstag** (Platz der Republik 1; www.bundestag.de), Berlin's most spectacular fusion of old and new. To beat the queues, you'll have booked a table for coffee in the rooftop restaurant **Käfer** (☎ 93 317 95652262 9933). Once refreshed, climb Lord Norman Foster's stunning glass egg-shaped dome and feast your eyes on the amazing view.

Back at ground level, take a closer look at striking **Paul-Löbe-Haus** (shaped like a double-sided comb) and **Marie-Elisabeth-Lüders-Haus** to the north of the Reichstag. Designed by Stefan Braunfels these flashy government buildings are connected by a double bridge over the Spree, symbolising reunification. West of here is the **Bundeskanzleramt** by Axel Schultes and Charlotte Frank; you can see why Berliners call it the 'Washing Machine'.

Next up, follow the meandering cycle paths of the beautiful **Tiergarten park**, one of the world's largest

city parks, and head to Zoologischer Garten. Outside the station turn right up Hardenbergstraße and after a few minutes spot **Ludwig-Erhard-Haus** (Fasanenstraße 83-84; www.leh-berlin.de) whose high-tech design by Nicholas Grimshaw was apparently inspired by the armadillo. Turn left here and you'll soon see the huge sail atop Josef Paul Kleihues' **Kantdreieck** (Kantstraße 155), drifting in the wind like a giant weather vane.

Further down Fasanenstraße, glide through the late 19th-century bourgeois grandeur of one of Berlin's most fashionable streets, perusing the fascinating **Käthe-Kollwitz Museum** (Fasanenstraße 24; www.kaethe-kollwitz.de) or having a bite at **Café Wintergarten** next door. Once refuelled, retrace your tracks and turn right onto **Kurfürstendamm** (or Ku-damm), old West Berlin's main shopping street. Flex your credit card a while before looking in the **Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis Kirche** (Breitscheidplatz), whose sheared spire is a haunting reminder of the war. Finally, grab some sushi in **KaDeWe's** famous foodhall (Tauentzienstraße 21-24; www.kadewe-berlin.de), drop your bike back at the shop and hop on the S-Bahn, heading for happening **Hackescher Markt** for some well-earned beers.

MARKING HISTORY

Start the day with Daniel Libeskind's gashed and spiky **Jüdisches Museum** (Lindenstraße 9-24; www.juedisches-museum-berlin.de), the largest Jewish museum in Europe. Gain an insight into a particularly torturous piece of history through the building's disorienting, jagged design and enthralling exhibits.

Potsdamer Platz is your next stop. Formerly the buzzing centre of metropolitan life, this area was decimated by war, cleaved by the wall and left to rot. It's now symbolic

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of the new Berlin, with gleaming glass structures designed by architectural luminaries such as Arata Isozaki, Rafael Moneo, Richard Rogers and Helmut Jahn, and housing hotels, museums, offices and restaurants. Admire the steel umbrella of the **Sony Center** (www.sonycenter.de) which becomes a rainbow at night, and spy the **Kaisersaal** within. Here the only surviving room of the pre-war Hotel Esplanade has been transformed into a glass-coated gourmet restaurant. Take Europe's speediest lift to the **Panorama Observation Deck** (Potsdamer Platz 1; www.panoramapunkt.de) and view **DaimlerCity**, **Beisheim Center** and the other shiny buildings from above.

After a light lunch at **Gosch** (Alte Potsdamer Strasse 1), wander over to the dramatic **Diplomatenviertel** and admire the colourful, interlinked **Austrian Embassy** (Stauffenbergstraße 1), the ornamental **Egyptian Embassy** (6-7) and other diplomatic quarters. Now follow Eberstraße to the **Holocaust Memorial** (www.holocaust-mahnmal.de), an undulating maze of concrete pillars designed by Peter Eisenman to commemorate Europe's six million murdered Jews. The underground information centre describes the history of the genocide.

Beyond this stands the **Brandenburg Gate** (Pariser Platz), once hidden behind the wall and now restored to its former glory. It was here that Ronald Reagan famously urged Mr Gorbachev to "tear down this wall" in 1987. A line of bricks in the road in front traces the path of the wall. Walk under the gate, passing Frank Gehry's **DG Bank**, whose clean façade belies a whimsical interior of atrium and floating steel. Turn right into Wilhelmstraße for a peek at Michael Wolford's **British Embassy**, whose sandstone façade is pierced by a jutting blue cube and a purple cylinder.

Back around the corner it's time for tea at the **Hotel Adlon Kempinski** (Unter den Linden 77; www.hotel-adlon.de): an elegant, extravagant confection of mini cakes on silver tiers, endless Lapsang Souchong and

soothing harp music. And if that wasn't treat enough, wrap up your day with spell-binding classical music at the modernist **Philharmonie** (Herbert-von-Karajan-Straße 1; www.berliner-philharmoniker.de).

Sleeping

Budget:

Circus Hostel im Weinbergsweg (www.circus-berlin.de; ☎ 2839 1433) Clean rooms, fab showers, cheery staff and a tip-top location make this the best hostel in Berlin.

Midrange:

Künstlerheim Luise (www.kuenstlerheim-luise.de; ☎ 28 44 80) Choose between surrealism, minimalism and science fiction and earn your room's artist a pretty penny in royalties.

Top End:

Brandenburger Hof (www.brandenburger-hof.com; ☎ 214 050) Welcome to a design-junkie's dream: Bauhaus furniture, Prussian elegance, Italian refinement and a glass-roofed indoor garden perfect for cocktails.

For more reviews of Berlin accommodation, check out the Sleep section on www.lonelyplanet.com/accommodation.

By Laetitia Clapton

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