

# Berlin



Brassy, bold and beautiful in its austerity, Berlin is a sexy temptress that ensnares with her infinite riches, a creative genius that amazes with unique ideas and trends, and a hotbed of hedonism, feasting passionately on the buffet of life. And above all, she's a clever chameleon, endlessly adaptable and thriving on change, almost pursuing it like a drug. Berlin is all that and then some to those who live here, and those ready for the journey to the depths of her past, present and future.

With a history that has disproportionately shaped Europe's destiny, Berlin is a galvanic force in German, European and world affairs, yet functions on a welcoming and exquisitely human scale. It's a city in which you can embrace and be embraced, relish and revel in its abundant charms and variety with total abandon, and feel energised in ways you'll feel in few other world-class cities.

If you've travelled around Germany, you'll know why Berlin feels like a most 'un-German' city, largely free of rigid social structure. A trendsetter by nature and necessity, Berlin feeds on fledgling moods, trends and appetites and processes them into the new *Zeitgeist*. The world has always looked to Berlin – in fascination, horror or sometimes in deep sympathy. At once repellent and seductive, light-hearted and brooding, Berlin continues to be a city of exhilarating extremes.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Royal Encounters** Make a date with Nefertiti and her entourage at the Altes Museum (p108)
- **Chill-out Float** Let the sights drift by you while sipping a cool drink on the deck of a river cruiser (p123)
- **Life's a Beach** Sip mai tais while soaking up the rays at the Badeschiff (p120), a unique place for a refreshing dip
- **Views** Take in the panorama from the Reichstag cupola (p111) or the Fernsehturm (p109)
- **Party Animals** Make an in-depth exploration of the bars along Schlesische Strasse (p119), then party till breakfast at Watergate (p138)
- **Wall Art** Pick your favourite graffiti on a stroll along the longest remaining stretch of the Berlin Wall at the East Side Gallery (p115)
- **Offbeat** Descend into the dark and dank world of WWII bunkers on a tour of the Berliner Unterwelten (p124)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 030

■ POPULATION: 3.39 MILLION

■ AREA: 889 SQ KM

## HISTORY

By German standards, Berlin entered onto the stage of history relatively late and pattered along in relative obscurity for centuries. Founded in the 13th century as a trading post, it merged with its sister settlement Cölln across the Spree River in 1307. The town achieved a modicum of prominence after the powerful Hohenzollern clan from southern Germany took charge in 1411, at least until the 17th century when it was ravaged during the Thirty Years' War (1618–48) with only 6000 people surviving the pillage, plunder and starvation.

Ironically, the war's aftermath gave Berlin its first taste of cosmopolitanism. Keen on quickly raising the number of his subjects, Elector Friedrich Wilhelm (called the Great Elector; r 1640–88) shrewdly invited foreigners to settle in Berlin. Some Jewish families arrived from Vienna, but the bulk of the new settlers were Huguenot refugees from France. By 1700, one in five locals was of French descent.

Elector Friedrich III, the Great Elector's son, presided over a lively and intellectual court, but was also a man of great political ambition. In 1701, he simply promoted himself to become King Friedrich I of Prussia, making Berlin a royal residence and capital of the new state of Brandenburg-Prussia.

His son, Friedrich Wilhelm I (r 1713–40), laid the groundwork for Prussian military might. Soldiers were this king's main obsession and he dedicated much of his life to building an army of 80,000, partly by instituting the draft (highly unpopular even then) and by persuading his fellow rulers to trade him men for treasure. History quite appropriately knows him as the *Soldatenkönig* (Soldier King).

Ironically, these soldiers didn't see action until his son Friedrich II (aka Frederick the Great; r 1740–86) came to power in 1740. Friedrich fought tooth and nail for two decades to wrest Silesia from Austria and Saxony. When not busy on the battlefield, 'Old Fritz', as he was also called, sought greatness through building (much of Unter den Linden dates back to his reign) and embracing the ideals of Enlightenment. With some of the day's leading thinkers in town (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Moses Mendelssohn among them), Berlin blossomed into a great cultural centre some even called 'Athens on the Spree'.

Old Fritz' death sent Prussia on a downward spiral, culminating in a serious trouncing of its army by Napoleon in 1806. The French marched triumphantly into Berlin on October 27 and left two years later, their coffers bursting with gold. The post-Napoleonic period saw Berlin caught up in the reform movement sweeping through Europe. Since all this ferment brought little change from the top, Berlin joined other German cities, in 1848, in a bourgeois democratic revolution. Alas, the time for democracy wasn't yet ripe and the status quo was quickly restored.

Meanwhile, the Age of Industrialisation had snuck up on Berliners, with companies like Siemens and Borsig vastly spurring the city's growth and spawning a new working class and political parties like the Social Democratic Party (SPD) to represent them. Berlin boomed politically, economically and culturally, especially after becoming capital of the German Reich in 1871. By 1900 the population had reached the two million mark.

Once again war, WWI in this case, stifled Berlin's momentum. In its aftermath, it found itself at the heart of a power struggle between monarchists, Spartacists and democrats. Though the democrats won out, the Weimar Republic (p33) only brought instability, corruption and inflation. Berliners responded like there was no tomorrow and made their city as much a den of decadence as a cauldron of creativity. Artists of all stripes flocked to this city of cabaret, Dada and jazz.

Hitler's rise to power put an instant halt to the fun. Berlin suffered heavy bombing in WWII and an invasion of 1.5 million Soviet soldiers during the final, decisive Battle of Berlin in April 1945. During the Cold War, it became ground zero for hostilities between the US and the USSR. The Berlin Blockade of 1948 and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 were major milestones in the standoff. For 40 years, East and West Berlin developed as two completely separate cities.

With reunification, Berlin once again became the German capital in 1990 and the seat of government in 1999. Rejoining the two city halves, alas, has proved to be painful and costly. Mismanagement, excessive spending and corruption led to the collapse of the centre-right government and the election of Klaus Wowereit, an openly gay Social Democrat, as governing mayor. His agenda of severe spending cuts and attracting new

business has done little so far to improve the balance sheet. Such lack of success, however, has done little to lessen Wowereit's popularity, as was confirmed by his re-election in September 2006.

Multiculturalism and the integration of immigrants have been other hot topics around dinner tables in recent years. In early 2005 a wave of 'honour killings' of young Muslim women wishing to live a western lifestyle shocked not only Berliners but the world as well. Schools in Kreuzberg and surrounds, where nearly every student is of non-German descent, have raised the spectre of *Parallelgesellschaften* (parallel societies) and challenged Berliners' legendary tolerance.

But the news isn't all bad. Berlin continues to be a hotbed of creativity. Fashion, design and tourism are all booming industries. And in 2006, the entire city was swept up in World Cup fever. Welcoming the global community with open arms and hearts, Berliners put aside their worries for a month and did what they do best: party!

## ORIENTATION

Berlin is made up of 12 administrative districts of which the central ones hold the most interest to visitors. Mitte, formerly in East Berlin, is the city's historic core and packs such blockbuster sights as the Brandenburger Tor, the Holocaust Memorial, Unter den Linden boulevard, Museumsinsel and the Fernsehturm (TV Tower). The Scheunenviertel area, anchored by the Hackesche Höfe, is jammed with bars, restaurants, galleries and quirky boutiques. It segues into Prenzlauer Berg to the north, a gentrified and largely residential district with nightlife centred on Käthe-Kollwitz-Platz, Schönhauser Allee and Helmholtzplatz.

South of Mitte, Kreuzberg counts Checkpoint Charlie and the Jüdisches Museum (Jewish Museum) among its highlights. Eastern Kreuzberg, around Kottbusser Tor, has been nicknamed 'Little Istanbul' for its large Turkish population. Across the Spree River is Friedrichshain, where you'll find the East Side Gallery, the longest surviving section of the Wall.

West of Mitte, Tiergarten boasts most of Berlin's large-scale postreunification projects, including the government district, the spanking-new Hauptbahnhof and Potsdamer Platz. The vast Tiergarten park links Mitte with

Charlottenburg, the hub of western Berlin. Sights here cluster around Bahnhof Zoo (short for Zoologischer Garten), including the war-ruined Kaiser-Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche, the Kurfürstendamm (Ku'damm) shopping mile and the amazing Berliner Zoo. Further west is Schloss Charlottenburg (Charlottenburg Palace), one of the city's must-see sights, and still beyond, the newly renovated Olympiastadion. Much of Charlottenburg, though, is upmarket residential, as are adjoining Wilmersdorf and Schöneberg. The latter also has a throbbing gay and lesbian scene around Nollendorfplatz.

For details about Berlin's airports and train stations, see p142 and p144.

## Maps

The maps in this book should suffice in most cases, although the foldout map available for €1 from the Berlin Infostores (p105) might be a useful supplement.

For detailed explorations of the outlying suburbs, you'll need a larger city map such as those published by ADAC, the RV Verlag Euro City or Falkplan. These are widely available at petrol stations, bookshops, newsagents and tourist offices and cost between €4.50 and €7.50.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

- Another Country** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6940 1160; Riemannstrasse 7) Library-store run by an eccentric Brit.
- Berlin Story** (Map p98; ☎ 2045 3842; Unter den Linden 40) Berlin-related books, maps, videos, guides and magazines, many in English.
- Dussmann – Das Kulturkaufhaus** (Map p98; ☎ 2025 1111; Friedrichstrasse 90; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat) The ultimate in books and music; lots of reading corners and occasional signings, concerts and other events.
- East of Eden** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 423 9362; Schreinerstrasse 10) Living room-type store perfect for browsing.
- Hugendubel** (☎ 01801-484 484) Charlottenburg (Map p102; Tauentzienstrasse 13); Mitte (Map p98; Friedrichstrasse 83); Potsdamer Platz (Map pp100-1; Potsdamer Platz Arkaden) Excellent chain shop with a café and sofas for lounging.
- Schropp** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 2355 7320; Potsdamer Strasse 129) Guidebooks and maps galore.

### Cultural Centres

- British Council** (Map p98; ☎ 311 0990; Hackescher Markt 1) Well-stocked library with books, videos and periodicals, plus internet access and events.

## BERLIN IN...

## One Day

Get up early to beat the crowds to the dome of the **Reichstag** (p111), then snap a picture of the **Brandenburger Tor** (p106) before exploring the maze of the **Holocaust Memorial** (p106). From there you're off on a classic saunter along **Unter den Linden** (p106) with a detour to **Gendarmenmarkt** (p107) and the glamorous **Friedrichstadtpassagen** (p121). After lunch, take a peek inside the **Berliner Dom** (p108) before being awed by Nefertiti at the **Altes Museum** (p108) and the Pergamon Altar at the **Pergamon Museum** (p107). Finish up at the **Scheunenviertel** (p109) where you should have no trouble sourcing good spots for dinner, drinks and dancing.

## Two Days

Follow the one-day itinerary, then revisit Cold War history at **Checkpoint Charlie** (p114) and the nearby **Haus am Checkpoint Charlie** (p114). Spend the rest of the morning at the amazing **Jüdisches Museum** (p113) before heading off to Berlin's showcase of urban renewal, the **Potsdamer Platz** (p111). Make a stop here at the **Filmuseum Berlin** (p111) or walk a few steps west to the **Kulturforum** (p112) and the superb **Gemäldegalerie** (p113). At night, sample the cuisine and bar scene of **Prenzlauer Berg** (p129 and p134).

## Three Days

Follow the two-day itinerary, then devote the morning of day three to **Schloss Charlottenburg** (p114) where you shouldn't miss the Neuer Flügel (New Wing) or a spin around the Schlossgarten park. Catch the U-Bahn to Bahnhof Zoo, then study the legacy of Helmut Newton at the **Museum für Fotografie** (p117). Pick up some last-minute souvenirs along the **Kurfürstendamm** (p140) and in the **KaDeWe** (p140), then have an early dinner before catching some live jazz at **Quasimodo** (p139) or the latest show at the **Bar Jeder Vernunft** (p135).

**Goethe Institut** (Map p98; ☎ 259 063; Neue Schönhauser Strasse 20)

**Institut Français** (Map p102; ☎ 885 9020; Kurfürstendamm 211)

## Discount Cards

**Berlin WelcomeCard** (48/72hr €16/22) Entitles one adult and up to three children under 14 to unlimited public transport within the Berlin-Potsdam area and free or discounted admission to museums, shows, attractions and tours. It's available at the Berlin Infostores (p105), U- and S-Bahn ticket vending machines and many hotels.

**Berlin WelcomeCard Culture+** (72hr €35) This excellent value card combines the Berlin WelcomeCard and the SchauLust Museen Berlin museum pass and is available at all Berlin Infostores.

**CityTourCard** (48/72hr €15/20) Includes transportation and small discounts for attractions and tours but only within Berlin. Available at some hotels and through U- and S-Bahn vending machines. The Premium version (€39.90) includes admission to 50 museums and a trip up the Fernsehturm (TV tower).

**SchauLust Museen Berlin** (adult/child €15/7.50) Unbeatable deal for culture vultures. Valid on three consecutive days, this pass gives unlimited admission to about 70 of Berlin's museums, including blockbusters like

the Pergamon and the Neue Nationalgalerie. Sold at the Berlin Infostores and participating museums.

## Emergency

**American Hotline** (☎ 0177-814 1510) Crisis hotline and referral service, not only for Americans.

**BVG Public Transport Lost & Found** (Map p133; ☎ 194 49; Potsdamer Strasse 180/182)

**Drug hotline** (☎ 192 37)

**Emergency numbers** (☎ police 110, fire brigade & ambulance 112)

**International Helpline** (☎ 4401 0607; 📞 6pm-midnight) Help in any crisis situation, in English.

**Medical Emergencies for Berlin Visitors** (☎ 01804-2255 2362)

**Municipal Lost & Found** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 7560 3101; Platz der Luftbrücke 6)

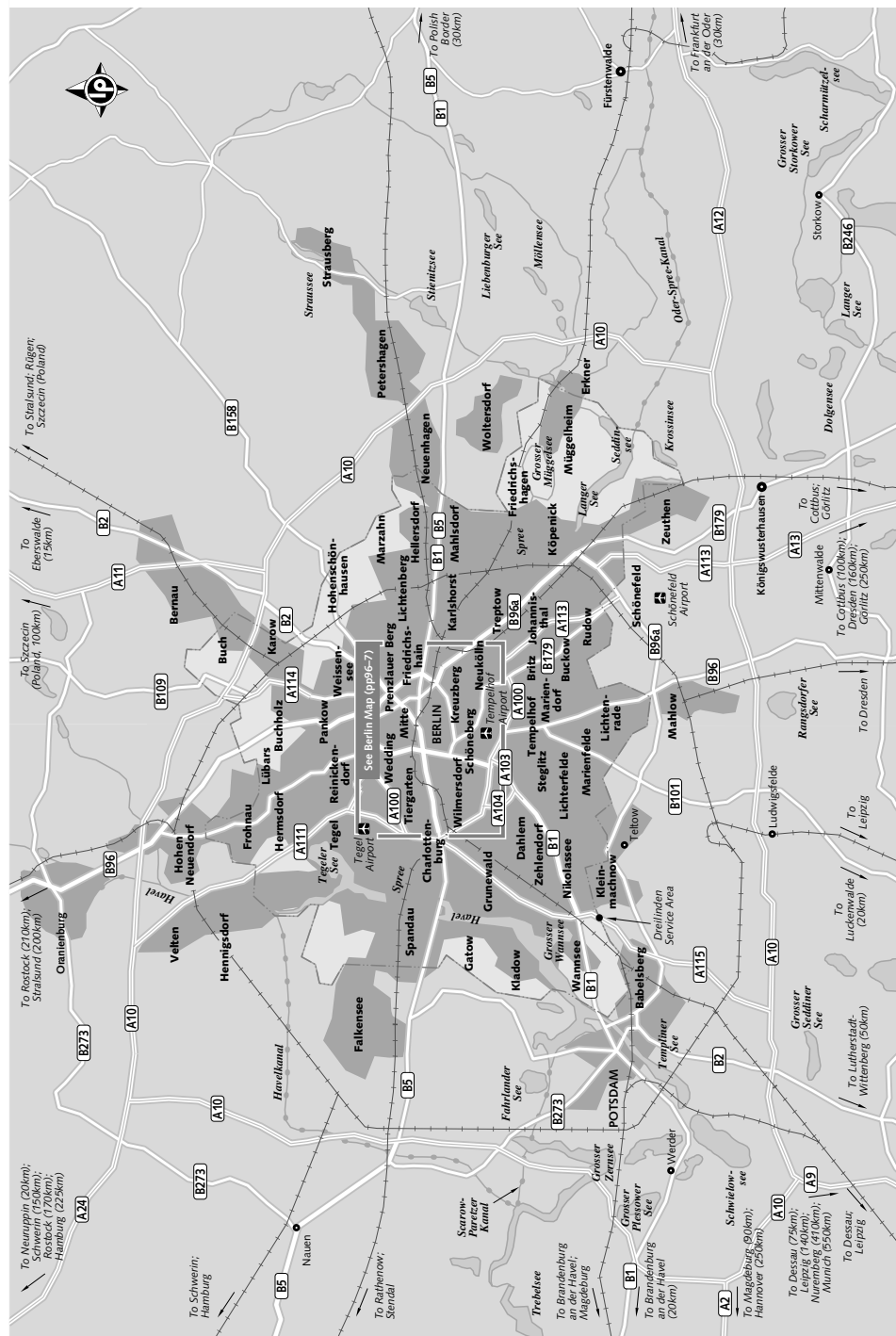
**Rape Crisis Hotline** (☎ 251 2828, 615 4243, 216 8888)

**Wheelchair Breakdown Service** (☎ 0180-111 4747)

## Internet Access

Many hostels, hotels and cafés now offer wireless internet surfing, with the cafés sometimes providing it free with a purchase. The

(Continued on page 104)





Tarifbereich Berlin A B C Haltestellen in Berlin C Haltestellen in Brandenburg

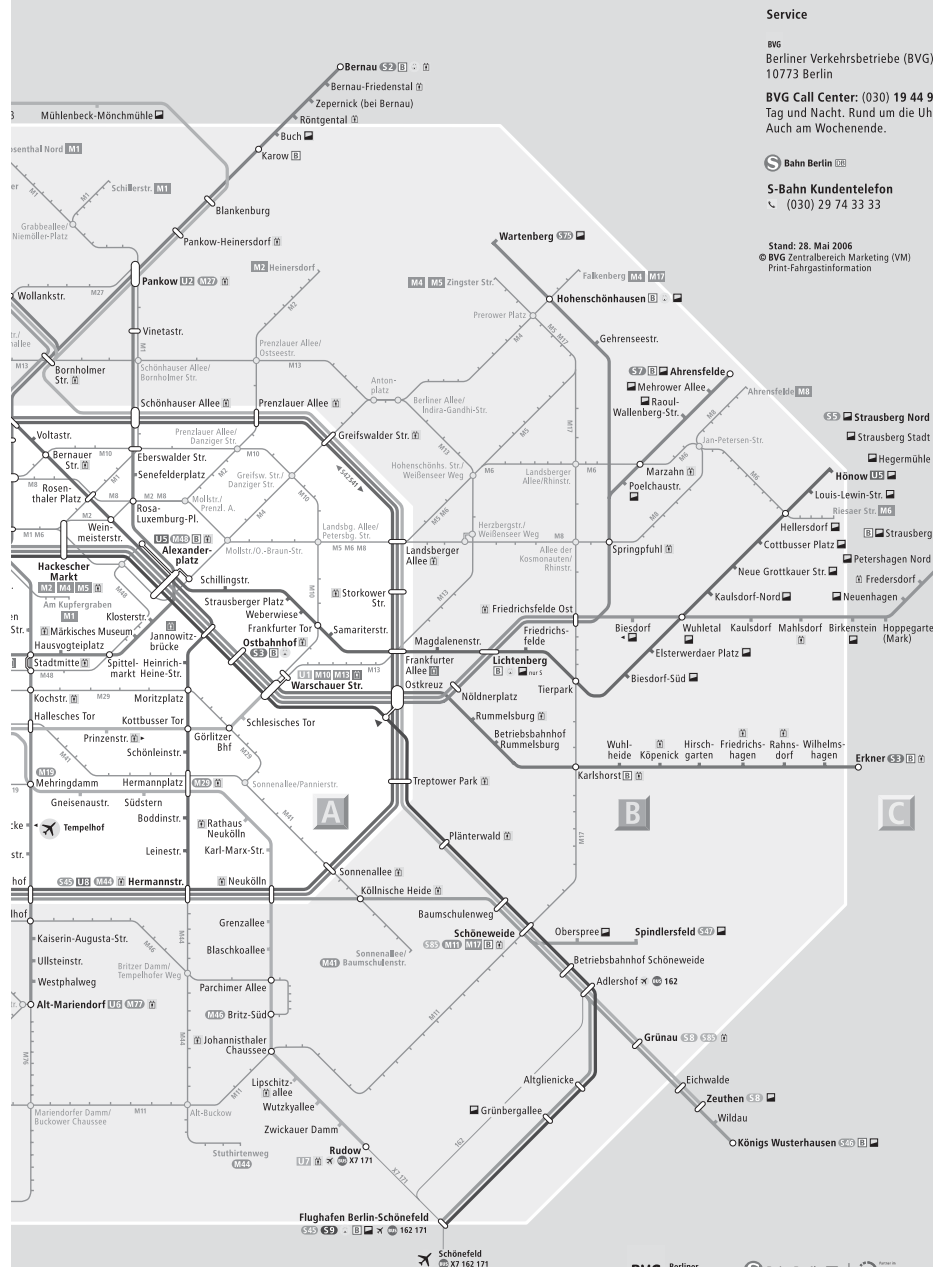
Legende

- S+U-Bahn-Linie
- Metrotram-MetroBus-Linie
- Bus-Anbindung zum Flughafen
- Umsteigemöglichkeit
- Halt nur in Pfeilrichtung
- Fernbahnhof
- Regionalbahnhof
- ZOB Zentraler Omnibusbahnhof
- Barrierefrei durch Berlin
- Barrierefreier Zugang, S+U Aufzüge
- Barrierefreier Zugang/Umsteigebahnhof, nur S Aufzug
- Barrierefreier Zugang/Umsteigebahnhof, nur U Aufzug
- S+U Zugang über Rampe



Haltestellen in Brandenburg

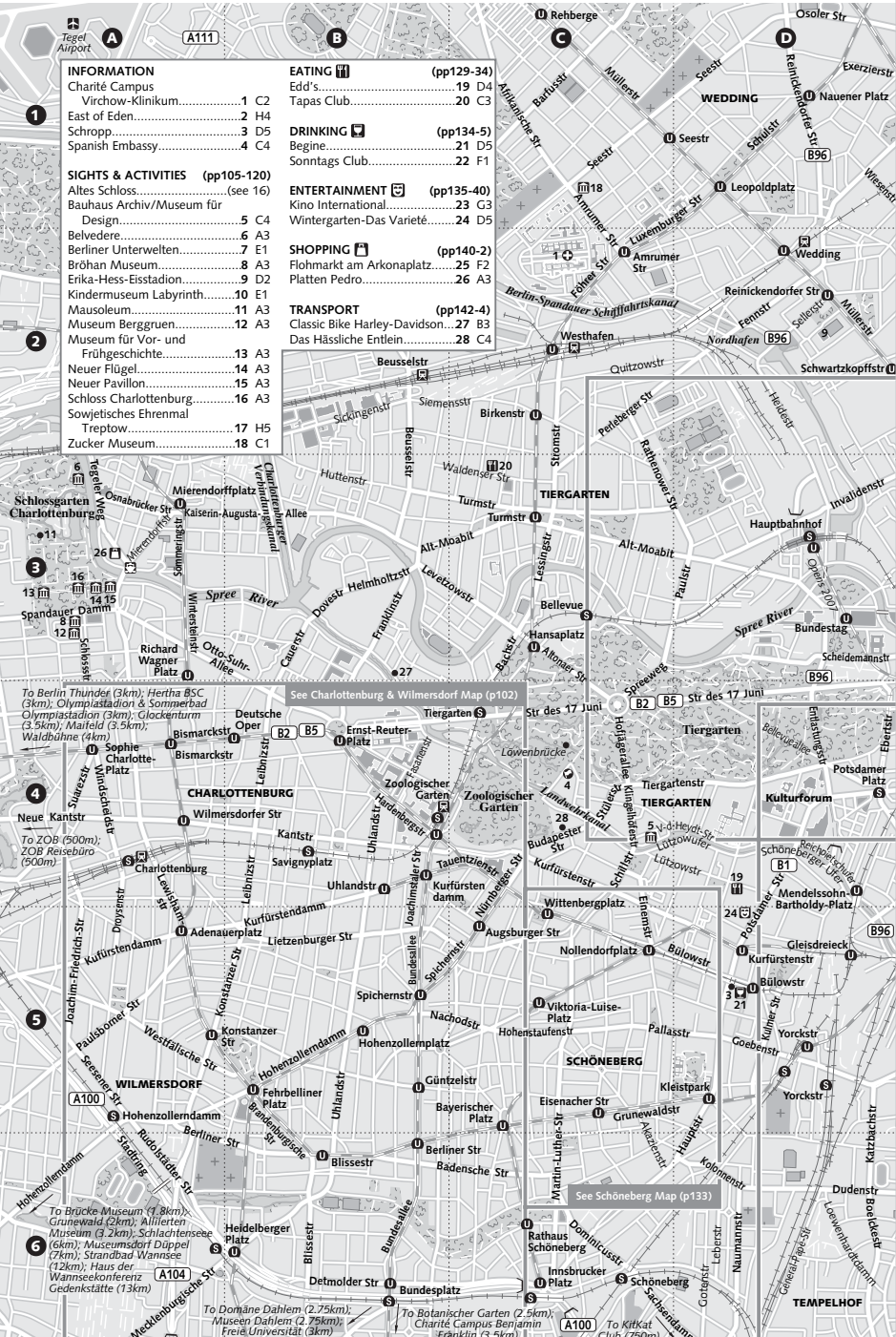
www.bvg.de



Service

- BVG Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe (BVG) 10773 Berlin
- BVG Call Center: (030) 19 44 9 Tag und Nacht. Rund um die Uhr Auch am Wochenende.
- S-Bahn Berlin
- S-Bahn Kundentelefon (030) 29 74 33 33
- Stand: 28. Mai 2006
- BVG Zentralbereich Marketing (VM) Print-Fahrgastinformation

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entire Sony Center (Map pp100–1) at Potsdamer Platz is a free public hotspot zone. Internet cafés listed below offer high-speed access and let you surf, email, chat and download, print and scan files, burn CDs and fax documents. Some also have wi-fi access.

**Al Hamra** (Map p103; ☎ 4285 0095; Raumerstrasse 16; per 15min €1; ☎ 10am-at least midnight) Surfing goes exotic with water pipes and cocktails.

**easyInternetcafé** (per hr from €2); Alexanderplatz (Map p98; Rathausstrasse 5, above Dunkin' Donuts; ☎ 6.30am-midnight Sun-Thu, 6.30am-1am Fri & Sat); Charlottenburg (Map p102; Kurfürstendamm 224; ☎ 6.30am-2am); Potsdamer Platz (Map pp100-1; Potsdamer Strasse 2, Sony Center, above Dunkin' Donuts; ☎ 6am-midnight Sun-Thu, 6am-1.30am Fri & Sat)

**Fat Tire Bike Tours Office** (Map p98; ☎ 2404 7991; Panoramastrasse 1a; all-you-can-surf €1.99; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm) Below TV Tower.

**Surf & Sushi** (Map p98; ☎ 2838 4898; Oranienburger Strasse 17; per 30min €1; ☎ from noon, from 1pm Sun) Berlin's only 'wired' sushi bar.

## Internet Resources

**Berlin.de** (www.berlin.de) Official Berlin government site with information on culture, transport, economy, politics etc (in English and German).

**berlinfo.com** (www.berlinfo.com) English-language site packed with interesting topics, though not all up-to-date.

**Berlin Hidden Places** (www.berlin-hidden-places.de) Lots of good ideas for getting off the tourist track.

**Berlin Tourism** (www.berlin-tourist-information.de) This excellent, information-packed site maintained by Berlin's official tourist office also lets you book rooms and tickets (in English, German and nine other languages).

## Laundry

Berlin has plenty of places to wash your smalls.

**Schnell und Sauber** (washing €3-3.50, dryer per 10min €0.50; ☎ 6am-11pm) Charlottenburg (Map p102; Uhlandstrasse 53); Kreuzberg (Map pp100-1; Bergmannstrasse 109); Mitte (Map p98; Torstrasse 115) The dominant chain of laundrettes. The latter even doubles as a cosy café with internet access.

## Left Luggage

Most central railway stations, including Friedrichstrasse, Zoo and Ostbahnhof, have coin lockers that cost €1 to €2 for 24 hours. Some also have left-luggage offices charging €2 per item per day. The new Hauptbahnhof has

only a left-luggage office. The central bus station ZOB also has a left-luggage station, as does Tegel airport. Schönefeld and Tempelhof airports have lockers only.

## Libraries

**Amerika Gedenkbibliothek** (America Memorial Library; Map pp100-1; ☎ 9022 6401; Blücherplatz 1)

**Berliner Stadtbibliothek** (Map p98; ☎ 9022 6401; Breite Strasse 30-36)

## Media

For entertainment listings magazines, see p135.

**Berliner Zeitung** Left-leaning German-language daily most widely read in the eastern districts.

**Der Tagesspiegel** Local German-language daily with centre-right political orientation, solid news and foreign section, and decent cultural coverage.

**Ex-Berliner** English-language magazine for expats and visitors, with listings and articles about the city and its people.

**Tageszeitung (taz)** Appeals to an intellectual crowd with its unapologetically pink-leaning news analysis and reporting.

## Medical Services

The US and UK consulates can provide lists of English-speaking doctors. Listed here are hospitals with 24-hour emergency rooms.

**Charité Campus Benjamin Franklin** (☎ 844 50; Hindenburgdamm 30; ☎ Botanischer Garten) In the Steglitz district in southern Berlin.

**Charité Campus Mitte** (Map p98; ☎ 450 50; Schumannstrasse 20-21) The most central major hospital.

**Charité Campus Virchow-Klinikum** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 450 50; Augustenburger Platz 1) In the Wedding district in northern Berlin.

**Zahnklinik Medeco** (Dental Clinic; Map pp100-1; ☎ 2309 5960; Stresemannstrasse 121; ☎ 7am-9pm) Call or check Yellow Pages for additional branches.

## Money

**American Express** (Map p98; ☎ 2045 5721; Friedrichstrasse 172; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat)

**Cash Express** (Map p98; ☎ 2045 5096; Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun)

**Reisebank** Bahnhof Zoo (Map p102; ☎ 881 7117; ☎ 7.30am-10pm); Hauptbahnhof (Map p98; ☎ 2045 3761; ☎ 8am-10pm); Ostbahnhof (Map pp100-1; ☎ 296 4393; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun)

## Post

Post offices abound throughout Berlin.

**Post office** (Map p102; Joachimstaler Strasse 7; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat)

## ALL ABOARD! BERLIN FROM BUS 100 & 200

One of the best bargains in Berlin is a self-guided city tour aboard a public double-decker bus. Both bus 100 and 200 follow routes taking in nearly every major sight in the central city for the modest price of €2.10, the standard single BVG (Berlin's transport authority) ticket. You can even get off as often as you wish within the two hours of its validity. If you plan on exploring all day, the *Tageskarte* (Day Pass) for €5.80 is your best bet.

Bus 100 travels from Bahnhof Zoo to Alexanderplatz passing by such landmarks as the Gedächtniskirche, Tiergarten with the Siegestsäule, the Reichstag, the Brandenburger Tor and Unter den Linden.

Bus 200 also starts at Bahnhof Zoo but takes a more southerly route via the Kulturforum and Potsdamer Platz before travelling on to Unter den Linden and as far east as the Jewish cemetery (Map pp96–7) in Weissensee.

Without interruptions the one-way journey takes about 30 minutes on bus 100 and 45 minutes on bus 200 in normal traffic. There's no commentary, so pick up a map and information leaflet from the BVG information kiosk (Map p102) outside Bahnhof Zoo. Note that both bus lines are targeted by pickpockets, so keep a close eye on your belongings.

## Tourist Information

**Berlin Tourismus Marketing** (BTM; www.berlin-tourist-information.de) operates five tourist offices (Berlin Infostores) and a **call centre** (☎ 250 025; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun) whose multilingual staff can book tickets and rooms. When they're closed, you can listen to recorded information or order brochures. From April to October extended hours are possible.

**Berlin Infostore Brandenburger Tor** (Map p98; south wing; ☎ 10am-6pm)

**Berlin Infostore Fernsehturm** (Map p98; ground level TV Tower; ☎ 10am-6pm)

**Berlin Infostore Hauptbahnhof** (Map p98; Invalidenstrasse exit; ☎ 8am-10pm)

**Berlin Infostore Neues Kranzler Eck** (Map p102; Kurfürstendamm 23; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun)

**Berlin Infostore Pavillon am Reichstag** (Map p98; Scheidemannstrasse, outside Reichstag; ☎ 8am-8pm Apr-Oct, 10am-6pm Nov-Mar)

**Euraide** (Map p102; www.euraide.de; Bahnhof Zoo; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-6pm daily Jun-Oct, 8am-noon & 1-4.45pm Mon-Fri Nov-May) Behind the Reisezentrum, this helpful office sells and validates rail passes and provides advice and information on trains, lodging, tours and other travel-related subjects, in English.

## Travel Agencies

**Darpol** (Map p102; ☎ 342 0074; Kaiser-Friedrich-Strasse 19) Poland specialist.

**Sputnik Travel** (Map p98; ☎ 2030 2246; Friedrichstrasse 176) Russia specialist.

**STA Travel** Charlottenburg (Map p102; ☎ 310 0040; Hardenbergstrasse 9); Mitte (Map p98; ☎ 2016 5063; Dorotheenstrasse 30); Prenzlauer Berg (Map p103; ☎ 2859

8264; Gleimstrasse 28) Student and youth oriented; issues ISIC cards.

**Ungarn Tours** (Map p98; ☎ 247 8296; Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse 9) Hungary specialist.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

By all accounts, Berlin is among the safest and most tolerant of European capitals. Walking alone at night is not usually dangerous, although of course there's always safety in numbers as in any urban setting.

Despite some bad press, racially motivated attacks are actually quite infrequent in Berlin. Having said that, while people of any skin colour should be safe in the central districts, prejudice towards 'foreign-looking people', especially nonwhites, runs comparatively high in some of the economically depressed eastern districts (especially Lichtenberg, Marzahn-Hellersdorf and parts of Pankow). Since there's very little to see or do in these areas, there's really no reason to go there anyway, so our best advice is to avoid them altogether.

Most U- and S-Bahn stations are equipped with electronic information and emergency devices labelled 'SOS/Notruf/Information' and are indicated by a large red button. If you require emergency assistance simply push the 'SOS' button. The Information button allows you to speak directly with the stationmaster.

## SIGHTS

Each of Berlin's districts has its own appeal, but must-see sights concentrate in Mitte and Tiergarten. The Jewish Museum and Checkpoint Charlie in Kreuzberg and Schloss

Charlottenburg also rank high on the list of major attractions. Of the outer districts, the prettiest is leafy Zehlendorf with fabulous museums, lush parks and lakes. For GDR-era relics, head to the eastern districts.

## Mitte

Mitte is the glamorous heart of Berlin, a high-octane cocktail of culture, commerce and history. Packed with blockbuster sights, this is likely where you'll concentrate your time, where you come to play and learn, to admire and marvel, to be astounded and bewildered.

## BRANDENBURGER TOR & PARISER PLATZ

A symbol of division during the Cold War, the recently restored landmark **Brandenburger Tor** (Brandenburg Gate; Map p98) now epitomises German reunification. The 1791 structure by Carl Gotthard Langhans is the only surviving one of 18 city gates. The Quadriga sculpture, a horse-drawn chariot piloted by the winged goddess of victory, perches triumphantly on top. In the south wing is a Berlin Infostore (p105).

The gate stands sentinel over **Pariser Platz** (Map p98), an elegant square once again framed by embassies and bank buildings as it was during its 19th-century heyday as the 'emperor's reception hall'. Pop inside the **DZ Bank** (Map p98) for a look at the outlandish conference room US-based architect Frank Gehry created in the atrium. Next door, the new US Embassy is taking shape and is expected to open in 2008.

Another landmark on Pariser Platz is the faithfully rebuilt **Hotel Adlon** (now called the Adlon Hotel Kempinski, p126). The *grande dame* of Berlin caravanserais, it has sheltered Charlie Chaplin, Greta Garbo, Bill Clinton and many other celebrity guests. Remember Michael Jackson dangling his baby out the window? It happened at the Adlon.

## HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

One of Berlin's newest landmarks, the **Memorial to the Murdered European Jews** (Map p98; colloquially known as the Holocaust Memorial) by American architect Peter Eisenmann consists of 2711 concrete stelae spread across a huge field like an abstract cemetery. You're free to access this maze at any point and make your individual journey through it. Also visit the excellent, if heart-wrenching, **Ort der**

**Information** (information centre; Map p98; ☎ 7407 2929; www.holocaust-mahnmal.de; admission free; ☹ 10am-8pm) below the memorial. It presents a graphic timeline of Jewish persecution during the Third Reich and rooms documenting the fate of individuals and families.

## HITLER'S BUNKER

In a strange twist, it wasn't far from the Holocaust Memorial where Hitler spent his final days ensconced in his bomb-proof bunker (Map p98). Here he married Eva Braun on 29 April 1945, then shot her, then himself, the following day. The site itself is now a parking lot, but since June 2006 a German-English explanatory panel provides a brief chronology of events at the bunker during the final days of WWII along with a diagram of the bunker network, technical data on how it was constructed and what happened to it after the war. It also addresses concerns about the place becoming a place of pilgrimage for neo-Nazis. Look for it in the area where In den Ministertgärten meets Gertrud-Kolmar-Strasse.

## UNTER DEN LINDEN

Berlin's most splendid boulevard (Map p98) extends for about 1.5km east of the Brandenburger Tor. First up on your right is the hulking **Russian embassy** (Map p98; Unter den Linden 63-65), a white marble behemoth built in pompous Stalin-era 'wedding cake' style. Further on, the **Deutsche Guggenheim** (Map p98; ☎ 202 0930; www.deutsche-guggenheim.de; Unter den Linden 13-15; adult/concession/family €4/3/8, free Mon; ☹ 11am-8pm Fri-Wed, 11am-10pm Thu) is a not terribly imposing gallery presenting international contemporary artists of some renown, such as Eduardo Chillida or Georg Baselitz.

Opposite, the **Alte Staatsbibliothek** (Old National Library; Map p98; Unter den Linden 8) has amassed an astonishing archive since its founding in 1661, including the original sheet music of Beethoven's 9th Symphony. Next up is the **Humboldt Universität** (Map p98), Berlin's oldest university where Marx and Engels studied and the Brothers Grimm and Albert Einstein taught. It occupies the palace of Prince Heinrich, brother of King Frederick the Great, whose pompous **equestrian statue** stands on Unter den Linden outside the university.

It was Frederick who created the ensemble of stately structures framing **Bebelplatz** (Map p98), the site of the first big official Nazi book-burning in May 1933. A simple but poignant

memorial by Micha Ullmann consisting of an underground library with empty bookshelves commemorates this event. Surrounding the square are the baroque **Alte Königliche Bibliothek** (Old Royal Library; Map p98; 1780), now part of the university; the **Staatsoper Unter den Linden** (State Opera; 1743, p139); and the domed **St Hedwigskirche** (Map p98; 1783), partly modelled on Rome's Pantheon and Berlin's only Catholic church until 1854.

Just east of here, the perkily turreted **Friedrichswerdersche Kirche** (☎ 2090 5577; Werderscher Markt; admission free; ☹ 10am-6pm) shelters 19th-century sculptures and an exhibit on the life and accomplishments of Karl Friedrich Schinkel.

For more Schinkel, return to Unter den Linden and the neoclassical **Neue Wache** (Map p98; admission free; ☹ 10am-6pm). Originally a Prussian guardhouse, it is now a memorial to the 'victims of war and tyranny'. Käthe Kollwitz's emotional sculpture *Mother and her Dead Son* dominates the austere room.

The pink building next door is the baroque **Zeughaus** (Map p98), a former armoury whose glass-covered central courtyard features 22 baroque mask sculptures of dying warriors by Andreas Schlüter. Since June 2006, the building has again been home of the **Deutsches Historisches Museum** (German Historical Museum; Map p98; ☎ 2030 4444; www.dhm.de; Unter den Linden 2; adult/under 18yr €4/free; ☹ 10am-6pm), which chronicles 2000 years of German history. Intriguing objects include a full medieval body armour for horse and rider and a big globe that originally stood in Hitler's chancellery with bullet holes where Germany should be. All panelling is in German and English and audio-guides are available for €3.

Temporary exhibits occupy the museum's modern extension, the so-called **IM PEI BAU** (Map p98) named after its architect. It's a truly striking space, starkly geometric, yet imbued with a sense of lightness achieved through an airy atrium and generous use of glass.

## GENDARMENMARKT

Once a thriving marketplace, Gendarmenmarkt (Map p98) is Berlin's most graceful square. The twin churches of **Deutscher Dom** and **Französischer Dom** frame Schinkel's **Konzerthaus** (p139) to form a superbly harmonious architectural trio. Plenty of luxury hotels and fancy restaurants are nearby.

Inside the **Deutscher Dom** (Map p98) is a free but hopelessly academic exhibit on German

parliamentarianism that has bored thousands of school children to tears. The **Französischer Dom** (Map p98) was built for the French Huguenots who fled to Berlin following their expulsion from France in 1685. Their story is chronicled in the **Hugenottenmuseum** (Map p98; ☎ 229 1760; adult/concession/family €2/1/3.50; ☹ noon-5pm Tue-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun), located in the tower, which unfortunately is currently closed for restoration.

## MUSEUMSINSEL

East of the Zeughaus, the sculpture-studded **Schlossbrücke** (Palace Bridge; Map p98) leads to the little Spree island where Berlin's settlement began in the 13th century. On its northern half, Museumsinsel (Museum Island) is a treasure-trove of art, sculptures and objects spread across four grand old museums with a fifth one, the Neues Museum (New Museum), under reconstruction. Collectively they became a Unesco World Heritage Site in 1999.

Separate tickets are available for each museum or you can buy a day pass valid at all four for €12/6. Admission is free if you're under 16 and for everyone during the last four hours on Thursday.

## Alte Nationalgalerie

A sensitively restored Greek-temple building by August Stüler, the **Alte Nationalgalerie** (Old National Gallery; Map p98; ☎ 2090 5577; Bodestrasse 1-3; adult/concession €8/4; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-10pm Thu) is an elegant setting for an exquisite collection of 19th-century European art. Highlights include the mystical landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich and works by Monet and Renoir. The elegant rotunda presents the emotionally charged sculptures of Reinhold Begas, while the marble stairwell is decorated with Otto Geyers' patriotic frieze of German greats.

## Pergamon Museum

If you only have time for one museum while in Berlin, make it the **Pergamon Museum** (Map p98; ☎ 2090 5555; Am Kupfergraben; adult/concession incl audio-guide €8/4; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-10pm Thu). A feast of classical Greek, Babylonian, Roman, Islamic and Middle Eastern art and architecture, it will amaze and enlighten you. The three sections (Collection of Classical Antiquities, Museum of Near Eastern Antiquities and Museum of Islamic Art) are all worth seeing at leisure, but if you're pressed

for time, make a beeline to the following key exhibits.

The museum's namesake and crowd magnet is the **Pergamon Altar** (165 BC) from today's Turkey. It's a gargantuan raised marble shrine surrounded by a vivid frieze of the gods doing battle with the giants. The next room features the immense **Market Gate of Miletus** from the 2nd century, a masterpiece of Roman architecture. Passing through it leads you straight into another culture and century: Babylon during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 BC). Top billing here goes to the brilliant **Ishtar Gate**, sheathed in glazed bricks glistening in a luminous cobalt blue and ochre. The striding lions, horses, dragons and unicorns are so striking that you can almost hear the roaring and fanfare.

Upstairs in the Islamic collection, top billing goes to the fortresslike 8th-century **Caliph's palace** from Mshatta in today's Jordan and the **Aleppo Room** from 17th-century Syria with its richly wood-panelled walls.

### Altes Museum

For more art and sculpture from ancient Rome and Greece head to the **Altes Museum** (Map p98; ☎ 2090 5577; Am Lustgarten; adult/concession €8/4; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue, Wed & Fri–Sun, 10am–10pm Thu). To meet the museum's current 'star', however, venture upstairs where the famous bust of Nefertiti, she of the long graceful neck and stunning good looks, is the undisputed highlight of the **Egyptian Museum**. Selections from this famous collection are housed here until the completion of the Neues Museum, possibly in 2009.

### Bodemuseum

This **museum** (Map p98; ☎ 2090 5555; Monbijoubrücke; adult/concession €8/4; ☎ 10am–6pm Fri–Wed, 10am–10pm Thu), in a neobaroque edifice by Ernst von Ihne, reopened in October 2006 after an ambitious €153 million renovation. The magnificently restored rooms shelter one of Germany's largest collections of sculptures from the Middle Ages onward, fine examples of Christian and Byzantine art from the 3rd to the 19th centuries and a precious collection of ancient coins. Kids can enjoy the children's museum.

### Berliner Dom

Serenading Museumsinsel is the great 1905 neo-Renaissance **Berliner Dom** (Berlin Cathedral; Map p98; ☎ 202 690; Am Lustgarten; adult/concession

under 14yr €5/3/free; ☎ church & crypt 9am–8pm Mon–Sat, noon–8pm Sun Apr–Sep, to 7pm Oct–Mar, viewing gallery 9am–8pm Apr–Sep, 9am–5pm Oct–Mar), the former court church of the royal Hohenzollern family, members of whom are buried in its crypt. There are some pretty good views from the upper viewing gallery and concerts, guided tours and readings year-round.

### SCHLOSSPLATZ

Nothing of today's Schlossplatz (Map p98) evokes memory of the magnificent edifice that stood here from 1451 to 1951: the Berliner Stadtschloss, for centuries the primary residence of the Hohenzollern kings. Despite international protests, the GDR government razed the barely war-damaged palace in 1951 and, 25 years later, replaced it with the **Palast der Republik** (Palace of the Republic; Map p98), a functional, multipurpose structure used for meetings of the GDR parliament as well as for cultural events. Alas, the GDR 'palace' will soon be relegated to the history books as well.

After more than a decade of heated debate, demolition of this concrete, steel and orange glass monstrosity finally began in January 2006. The current plan foresees a rebuilding of the historic palace shell with a modern interior that might house a museum, a hotel, a library or some other institution. Given Berlin's empty coffers, it's anyone's guess when reconstruction might actually take place. Meanwhile, have a look at the scale model in the **Berliner Schloss Infocenter** (Map p98; ☎ 2067 3093; Hausvogteiplatz 3; admission free; ☎ 9.30am–6pm).

### ALEXANDERPLATZ & AROUND

Eastern Berlin's main commercial hub, Alexanderplatz (Map p98) – 'Alex' for short – was named in honour of Tsar Alexander I on his 1805 visit to Berlin. Today it's light years away from the low-life district Alfred Döblin called 'the quivering heart of a cosmopolitan city' in his 1929 novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

Major construction in recent years has tempered the socialist look the square received after WWII. The **Galeria Kaufhof** (Map p98) department store got a total makeover and now sports a sleek travertine-and-glass skin and a glass-domed light court. Nearby, the protected 1929 **Berolinahaus** (Map p98) by Peter Behrens has been restored as a clothing

store. And not far away, in an area bounded by Alexanderstrasse, Dircksenstrasse and Grunerstrasse, the new **Alexa** (Map p98) megamall is taking shape with an opening date set for early 2007.

The main sight around Alexanderplatz is the **Fernsehturm** (TV Tower; Map p98; ☎ 242 3333; adult/child €7.50/3.50; ☎ 9am–midnight Mar–Oct, 10am–midnight Nov–Feb), at 368m Berlin's tallest structure. If it's a clear day and the queue isn't too long, it's worth paying for the elevator ride to the top. In sunlight, the steel sphere below the antenna produces the reflection of a giant cross – a source of embarrassment for the secular-minded GDR honchos who built the tower in 1969. West Berliners gleefully dubbed the phenomenon 'the Pope's revenge'.

Dwarfed by the TV Tower is the nearby brick **Marienkirche** (Map p98; ☎ 242 4467; Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse 8; admission free; ☎ 10am–6pm Apr–Oct, 10am–4pm Nov–Mar), Berlin's second-oldest church, built in 1270. Inside, turn your attention to the alabaster pulpit by Andreas Schlüter and the Dance of Death fresco, still an amazing work of art despite being badly faded. Outside is the epic **Neptunbrunnen** (Neptune Fountain; 1891; Map p98) by Reinhold Begas; the female figures symbolise the rivers Rhine, Elbe, Oder and Weichsel.

North of here, across Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse, **Sealife Berlin** (Map p98; ☎ 992 800; Spandauer Strasse 3; adult/child/student €13.50/10/12.60; ☎ 10am–7pm Apr–Aug, 10am–6pm Sep–Mar) is an entertaining if pricey aquarium that takes you on a virtual journey along the Spree, Havel and Elbe Rivers into the frigid waters of the North Atlantic. Visits conclude with an ultra-slow lift ride through the **AquaDom**, a 16m-tall cylindrical aquarium teeming with tropical fish. It's in the lobby of the Radisson SAS Hotel (p126) from where you could sneak a free preview.

In the same complex, the Dom Aquaree, the new **DDR Museum Berlin** (Map p98; ☎ 030-847 123 731; Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse 1; adult/concession €5/3; ☎ 10am–8pm Sun–Fri, 10am–10pm Sat), offers a nostalgic journey through daily life in the GDR. On display are mostly now-extinct brands and products, such as Narva light bulbs, Jamboree bubble gum and hilarious old radios. You can even get behind the wheel of a Trabi, the GDR-era automobile.

Back south across the street looms the 1860 **Rotes Rathaus** (Red Town Hall; Map p98; ☎ 902 60;

Rathausstrasse 15; admission free; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri), the office of Berlin's mayor. The moniker 'red', by the way, was inspired by the colour of the brick façade and not the political leanings of its occupants.

Just behind the town hall is the twee **Nikolaiviertel** (Nicholas Quarter; Map p98), a fairly successful attempt by GDR architects to re-create Berlin's medieval birthplace. The result is a maze of narrow cobbled lanes lined with historic buildings, some original, most reconstructed. Lording it over the quarter are the twin spires of the 1230 **Nikolaikirche** (Map p98; ☎ 2472 4529; admission by donation; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue & Thu–Sun, noon–8pm Wed), Berlin's oldest church. Inside are lavish baroque epitaphs and an exhibition on the church's role in local history.

To get a grasp on how the tiny trading village of Berlin-Cölln evolved into today's metropolis, visit the **Märkisches Museum** (March of Brandenburg Museum; Map p98; ☎ 3086 6215; Am Köllnischen Park 5; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue & Thu–Sun, noon–8pm Wed). Rooms are organised by theme rather than chronology. An armoury, a magnificent Guild Hall and a collection of religious sculptures are among the items representing medieval times.

The three **brown bears** in the Köllnischer Park (Map p98) just south of the museum are the city's official mascots. They're named Thilo, Maxi and Schnute and can usually be seen from 8am to 5pm April to September and 9am to 3pm October to March.

### SCHUEUNENVIERTEL

North of Alexanderplatz, the Scheunenviertel (Map p98) is one of Berlin's liveliest areas, teeming with bars, restaurants and nightclubs, especially around Hackescher Markt and along Oranienburger Strasse and its side streets. Alte Schönhauser Strasse and Neue Schönhauser Strasse are hip shopping streets, while Auguststrasse has become a gallery mile.

Since reunification the quarter has also reprised its historical role as the centre of Jewish life, with the gleaming gold dome of the **Neue Synagoge** (Map p98) on Oranienburger Strasse as its most visible symbol. Built in Moorish-Byzantine style, the 1866 original seated 3200 and was Germany's largest synagogue. During the 1938 Kristallnacht pogroms, a local police chief prevented Nazi thugs from setting it on fire, an act of courage commemorated by a

plaque. It was eventually desecrated anyway but not destroyed until hit by bombs in 1943.

The rebuilt version is primarily a museum and information centre called **Centrum Judaicum** (Map p98; ☎ 8802 8477; Oranienburger Strasse 28-30; adult/concession €3/2; ☹ 10am-8pm Sun & Mon, 10am-6pm Tue-Thu, 10am-5pm Fri Apr-Sep, reduced hours Oct-Mar) with displays on the building's history and architecture and the lives of the people who worshipped here. The dome is accessible from April to September (€1.50).

The crumbling ruin just up the street is the **Kunsthaus Tacheles** (Map p98; ☎ 282 6185; Oranienburger Strasse 54-56), a one-time department store that became an artists' squat after reunification and has since evolved into an alternative art and cultural centre. Some of the anarchic edge is gone, but it's still a chaotic, graffiti-covered warren of artists' studios, galleries, a cinema, café and beer garden.

The Scheunenviertel is famous for its interlinked courtyard complexes that have been beautifully restored and filled with cafés, boutiques and entertainment venues. The best known is the **Hackesche Höfe** (Map p98); the nicest of its eight courtyards is Hof 1 (court 1) whose façades are emblazoned with colourful Art Nouveau tiles. Next door, the **Rosenhöfe** (Map p98) is really just a single courtyard that owes its whimsical quality to a sunken rose garden and tendril-like metal balustrades.

Nearby, between Sophienstrasse and Gipsstrasse, is the quiet and dignified **Sophie-Gips-Höfe** (Map p98) with artistic light installations. The nicest complex for our money, though, is the breezy **Heckmannhöfe** (Map p98) between Oranienburger Strasse and Auguststrasse, where a fountain and small playground invite lingering.

Back next to the Hackesche Höfe is the **Museum Blindenwerkstatt Otto Weidt** (Map p98; ☎ 2859 9407; Rosenthaler Strasse 39; admission €1.50; ☹ noon-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat & Sun), a small exhibit about a broom and brush maker who saved many of his blind and deaf Jewish workers from the Nazi death camps. The same building also houses the **Anne Frank Zentrum** (Map p98; ☎ 3087 2988; Rosenthaler Strasse 39; adult/concession/family €3.50/2/6; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), which tells the story of the German-Jewish girl famous for her diary written while hiding from the Nazis in Amsterdam.

#### ORANIENBURGER TOR AREA

Oranienburger Strasse eventually merges with Friedrichstrasse at Oranienburger Tor (Map

p98). The area south of here has traditionally been Berlin's premier theatre district. Major venues include the flashy Friedrichstadtpalast (p136), the well-respected Deutsches Theater (p140) and the Berliner Ensemble (p140), founded by Bertolt Brecht in the 1950s.

Brecht, in fact, lived just a short walk north of Oranienburger Tor in what is now the **Brecht-Weigel Gedenkstätte** (Brecht-Weigel Memorial House; Map p98; ☎ 283 057 044; Chausseestrasse 125; tours adult/concession €3/1.50; ☹ tours half-hourly 10-11.30am Tue, Wed & Fri, 10am-noon & 5-6.30pm Thu, 9.30am-1.30pm Sat & hourly 11am-6pm Sun). A half-hour tour takes in Brecht's relatively modest office, large library and tiny bedroom where he died in 1956. Downstairs are the cluttered quarters of his actress wife Helene Weigel who lived here until her death in 1971. Call ahead about English-language tours. The basement restaurant serves Austrian food based on Weigel's recipes (mains €7 to €15).

The couple is buried in the adjacent **Dorotheenstädtischer Friedhof** (Map p98; ☹ 8am-sunset), the cemetery with the greatest concentration of celebrity corpses in Berlin. German greats buried here include the architect Schinkel, the philosopher Hegel and the writer Heinrich Mann.

North of here is the Humboldt University's **Museum für Naturkunde** (Natural History Museum; Map p98; ☎ 2093 8591; Invalidenstrasse 43; adult/concession/family €3.50/2/7; ☹ 9.30am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun), a vast repository where star exhibits include a gigantic brachiosaurus skeleton, meteorites from Mars and the largest piece of amber ever found. Note that some sections may be closed due to a renovation expected to be completed some time in 2007.

Andy Warhol's smiling Mao, Anselm Kiefer's expressionist sculpture *Mohn und Gedächtnis*, Joseph Beuys' provocative installations – they're all part of the collection of the **Hamburger Bahnhof** (Map p98; ☎ 3978 3439; Invalidenstrasse 50-51; adult/under 16yr/concession €8/free/4, last 4hr Thu free; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun), Berlin's premier contemporary art museum. It's housed in a late-neoclassical train station centred on a vaulted hall with the loftiness of a Gothic cathedral. In 2004, the museum expanded into the adjacent Rieckhallen, a series of austere warehouses.

#### Tiergarten

Named after the sprawling urban park, the Tiergarten district received the lion's share of

new construction and harbours two of Berlin's most headline-grabbing megadevelopments: the Regierungsviertel (Government Quarter) and Potsdamer Platz, both tourist magnets of the first rank. In May of 2006, Berlin's first-ever central train station, the sparkling Hauptbahnhof, opened in northern Tiergarten.

#### POTSDAMER PLATZ

A showcase of urban renewal, Potsdamer Platz (Map pp100-1) is perhaps the most visible symbol of the 'New Berlin'. The historical Potsdamer Platz was a busy traffic hub that became synonymous with metropolitan life and entertainment in the early 20th century. In 1924, Europe's first (hand-operated) traffic light was installed here, a replica of which was recently hoisted in the same spot. WWII sucked all life out of the area, which soon plunged into a coma, bisected by the Wall until reunification.

In the 1990s, the city tapped an international cast of star architects, including Renzo Piano, Arata Isozaki, Rafael Moneo, Richard Rogers and Helmut Jahn, to design 'Potsdamer Platz – The Sequel'. Hamstrung by city-imposed building guidelines, the result is hardly avant-garde, but it's nevertheless a pleasant and above all human-scale cityscape.

Potsdamer Platz is divided into three sections: **DaimlerCity**, home to a large mall and lots of public art, including Jeff Koons' Balloon Flower on Marlene-Dietrich-Platz; the flashy **Sony Center** with its central plaza canopied by a glass roof whose supporting beams emanate like bicycle spokes; and the **Beisheim Center**, which was inspired by classic American skyscraper design.

Berliners and visitors have by and large embraced the development with its mix of cinemas, restaurants, bars, public spaces and shops. For a look at it all from above, take what is billed as the world's fastest elevator to the **Panorama Observation Deck** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2529 4372; www.panoramapunkt.de; Potsdamer Platz 1; adult/concession €3.50/2.50; ☹ 11am-8pm, last admission 7.30pm, closed Mon Nov-Mar).

A multimedia journey through German film history and a behind-the-scenes look at special effects are what await visitors to the **Filmuseum Berlin** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 300 9030; Potsdamer Strasse 2; adult/concession/family €6/4.50/12; ☹ 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-8pm Thu). Themed galleries zero in on pioneers and

early divas, Fritz Lang's silent epic *Metropolis*, Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*, and Marlene Dietrich. Tickets also include admission to the new **Fernsehmuseum** (Museum of TV; Map pp100-1) upstairs, which presents a romp through German TV back to the earliest image experiments in the 1920s.

Fans of 20th-century abstract, conceptual and minimalist art should pop into the **DaimlerChrysler Contemporary** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2594 1420; Weinhaus Huth, Alte Potsdamer Strasse 5; admission free; ☹ 11am-6pm), a quiet and minimalist gallery space in the only surviving historic structure on Potsdamer Platz. Ring the bell to be buzzed in.

#### GOVERNMENT QUARTER

Berlin's government quarter snuggles into the Spreebogen, a horseshoe-shaped bend of the Spree River. Its historic anchor is the 1894 **Reichstag** (Map p98; Platz der Republik 1), since 1999 home to the German parliament, the Bundestag, following a total makeover by Lord Norman Foster. Its most striking contemporary feature is the glistering glass dome. A trip on the **lift** (admission free; ☹ 8am-midnight, last entry 10pm) and up a spiralling ramp to the top is a highlight of any Berlin visit, as much for the 360-degree panorama as for the close-ups of the dome and the mirror-clad funnel at its centre. Come early or expect to queue.

The Reichstag has been the setting of numerous milestones in German history. After WWI, Philipp Scheidemann proclaimed the German Republic from one of its windows. The Reichstag fire on the night of 27 February 1933 allowed Hitler to blame the communists and seize power. A dozen years later, the victorious Soviets nearly obliterated the building. Restoration – without the dome – wasn't finished until 1972. At midnight on 2 October 1990 the reunification of Germany was enacted here. In summer 1995, the artist Christo and his wife, Jeanne-Claude, wrapped the edifice in fabric for two weeks. Lord Norman set to work shortly thereafter.

Opposite the Reichstag, the **Bundeskanzleramt** (Federal Chancellery; Map p98; Willy-Brandt-Strasse 1) is a sparkling, modern design by Axel Schultes. A central white cube containing the chancellor's office and residence is flanked by two long office blocks, giving the compound an 'H' shape if viewed from above. For the best perspective, take a stroll along the paved **river promenade** paralleling the Spree.

### TIERGARTEN PARK

Berlin's 'green lung' (Map p98) bristles with huge shady trees, groomed paths, woody groves, lakes and meadows and is great for a jog, picnic or simply drifting around. At 167 hectares, it is one of the world's largest city parks, sweeping westward from Brandenburger Tor all the way to Bahnhof Zoo in Charlottenburg.

On the park's northern edge, the **Haus der Kulturen der Welt** (House of World Cultures; Map p98; ☎ 397 870; John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10; admission varies; ☎ 10am-9pm Tue-Sun) was the American contribution to a 1957 architectural exhibition. Thanks to its gravity-defying parabolic roof, Berliners have nicknamed it 'pregnant oyster'. A congress hall by design, it's now a cultural centre with lectures, exhibits and concerts from around the world. Under renovation, it will reopen in September 2007. Meanwhile, chime concerts still ring out at noon and 6pm daily from the 68-bell **carillon** just east of the hall.

**Strasse des 17 Juni**, named after the date of the 1953 workers' uprising in East Berlin, cuts east-west through the park. Along here, near the Brandenburger Tor, the **Sowjetisches Ehrenmal** (Soviet War Memorial; Map p98) commemorates the Red Army soldiers who died in the Battle of Berlin. The reddish-brown marble was allegedly scavenged from Hitler's chancellery.

Further west looms the landmark **Siegessäule** (Victory Column; Map p98; ☎ 391 2961; adult/concession €2.20/1.50; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-7pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5.30pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar), which commemorates successful 19th-century Prussian military exploits. The gilded lady on top stands 8.3m tall and predictably represents the goddess of victory, although locals irreverently call her 'Gold-Else'. And yes, you can climb to the top, but the views are only so-so. The column has become a symbol of Berlin's gay community (the largest of Berlin's gay publications is named after it). The park around here is a cruising zone, especially around the Löwenbrücke.

North of the column, **Schloss Bellevue** (Map p98), a white neoclassical palace from 1785, is the official residence of the German president.

### SOUTH OF TIERGARTEN PARK

The Diplomatic Quarter south of the Tiergarten is home to several spectacular new

embassy buildings. Stand-outs include the **Nordic embassies** (Map p98; Rauchstrasse 1), a joint complex of the Scandinavian countries distinguished by a shimmering turquoise façade, and the **Mexican embassy** (Map p98; Klingelhofstrasse 27), a boldly modern concrete and glass edifice.

Just south of here is the striking silhouette of the **Bauhaus Archiv/Museum für Gestaltung** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 254 0020; Klingelhofstrasse 14; adult/concession €6/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Mon), which documents the enormous influence the Bauhaus School (1919-33; p212) exerted on all aspects of modern architecture and design. The collection includes everything from study notes to workshop pieces to photographs, models and blueprints by such important Bauhaus members as Klee, Kandinsky, Schlemmer and Feininger.

Further east is the **Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand** (Map p98; ☎ 2699 5000; Stauffenbergstrasse 13-14; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9am-8pm Thu, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) with an exhibit detailing German resistance efforts against the Nazis. It's in the very rooms where high-ranking officers led by Graf von Stauffenberg plotted the ill-fated assassination attempt on Hitler on 20 July 1944. He and his co-conspirators were shot in the courtyard right after the failed coup.

### KULTURFORUM

This cluster of museums and concert venues (Map pp100-1) off the southeastern edge of Tiergarten park was master-planned in the 1950s by Hans Scharoun, one of the era's premier architects. A day pass to all museums mentioned in this section is €12/6 (adult/concession). Admission is free if you're under 16 and for all during the last four hours on Thursday.

The first of the Kulturforum museums to be completed was the **Neue Nationalgalerie** (New National Gallery; Map pp100-1; ☎ 266 2651; Potsdamer Strasse 50; adult/concession €8/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue & Wed, 10am-10pm Thu-Sun), a major repository of visual art by 20th-century European artists until 1960. All major genres are represented: cubism (Picasso, Gris Leger), surrealism (Dali, Miró, Max Ernst), new objectivity (Otto Dix, George Grosz), Bauhaus (Klee, Kandinsky) and, above all, German expressionism (Kirchner, Nolde, Schmitt-Rottluff). The gallery is housed in a 1968 glass-and-steel 'temple' by Mies van der Rohe.

If you only have time for one art museum, make it the **Gemäldegalerie** (Picture Gallery; Map pp100-1; ☎ 266 2951; Matthäikirchplatz; adult/concession incl audio-guide €8/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-10pm Thu). Set in a glorious building, it has a star-studded collection of European paintings from the 13th to the 18th centuries. The roll-call of artists includes Cranach, Dürer, Rubens, Holbein, Botticelli, Raphael, Titian, Watteau, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Goya and Velázquez. The world's largest Rembrandt collection is also here.

Nearby, the cavernous **Kunstgewerbe Museum** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 266 2951; adult/concession €8/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun) brims with decorative objects from the Middle Ages to the present, from gem-encrusted reliquaries to modern appliances. Don't miss the Chinese Room from the Graneri Palace in Turin, Italy and Carlo Bugatti's crazy suite of furniture.

Across the plaza, the **Kupferstichkabinett** (Museum of Prints & Drawings; Map pp100-1; ☎ 266 2951; Matthäikirchplatz; adult/concession €8/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun) has one of the world's largest and finest collections of art on paper, including exceptional works by Dürer, Rembrandt, Picasso and other top practitioners.

The honey-coloured building east of here is Berlin's premier classical concert venue, the Hans Scharoun-designed **Philharmonie** (p139; 1961) with otherworldly acoustics achieved through a complicated layout of three pentagonal levels twisting and angling upward around a central orchestra pit. It's the home of the world-class Berliner Philharmoniker orchestra. Scharoun also designed the adjacent **Kammermusiksaal** (Chamber Music Hall; 1987; Map pp100-1), the 1978 **Neue Staatsbibliothek** (New National Library; Map pp100-1; ☎ 2660; Potsdamer Strasse 33; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat) across Potsdamer Strasse, and the **Musikinstrumenten-Museum** (Musical Instruments Museum; Map pp100-1; ☎ 2548 1178; Tiergartenstrasse 1; adult/concession €8/4; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue, Wed & Fri, 9am-10pm Thu, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun). The latter counts some fun items among its vast collection, including a glass harmonica invented by Ben Franklin, a flute played by Frederick the Great, Johann Sebastian Bach's cembalo and a Mighty Wurlitzer, an organ with more buttons and keys than a troop of Beefeater guards. It is cranked up at noon on Saturday.

### Kreuzberg

South of Mitte, Kreuzberg (Map pp100-1) has a split personality. Its eastern end, bordering the Spree River, has preserved some of the counter-cultural vibe that drew scores of students, punks, hippies and others in search of an alternative lifestyle here long before reunification. Some of the edginess has since worn off, but the area still teems with non-sense bars, clubs and alternative cinemas. This is also the hub of Berlin's Turkish community with a colourful market held along the Maybachufer on Tuesday and Friday afternoons.

Kreuzberg's western half around Viktoriapark has tended toward the upmarket in recent years. Its main strip, Bergmannstrasse, has excellent cafés, boutiques and bars. Northern Kreuzberg feels more like an extension of Mitte and harbours the district's heavy-weight sights: the Jewish Museum and Checkpoint Charlie.

For a cool view over the city, you can sway 150m above ground in a hot-air balloon (that's tethered safely to the ground) with **Berlin Hi-Flyer** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 01805-708 708; www.air-service-berlin.de; nr Wilhelmstrasse & Zimmerstrasse; adult/concession €19/10; ☎ 10am-10pm Sun-Thu, 10am-12.30am Fri & Sat Mar-Nov, 11am-6pm Sun-Thu, 11am-7pm Fri & Sat Dec-Feb, weather permitting).

### JÜDISCHES MUSEUM

The history of German Jews and their contributions to culture, art, science and other fields are creatively chronicled at the sprawling **Jüdisches Museum** (Jewish Museum; Map pp100-1; ☎ 2599 3300; www.jmberlin.de; Lindenstrasse 9-14; adult/concession/family €5/2.50/10; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon, 10am-8pm Tue-Sun), one of Berlin's must-do sights. It's an engaging presentation with listening stations, videos, documents 'hidden' in drawers and other multimedia devices.

Only one section directly deals with the Holocaust, but its horrors are poignantly reflected by the museum's architecture. Designed by Daniel Libeskind, the building serves as a metaphor for the tortured history of the Jewish people. Zinc-clad walls rise skyward in a sharply angled zigzag ground plan that's an abstract interpretation of a star. Instead of windows, irregular gashes pierce the gleaming facade.

Tickets include same- or next-day admission to the Museum Blindenwerkstatt Otto Weidt (p110).

### BERLINISCHE GALERIE

Artworks created in Berlin since the late 19th century are the focus of the **Berlinische Galerie** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 7890 2600; Alte Jakobstrasse 124-128; adult/concession €5/4; 🕒 10am-6pm) in a spectacularly converted glass warehouse near the Jewish Museum. Two floors linked by two intersecting floating stairways cover all major artistic movements from Berlin Secessionism (Lesser Ury, Max Liebermann) to New Objectivity (Otto Dix, George Grosz) and contemporary art by Salomé and Rainer Fetting.

### CHECKPOINT CHARLIE

A potent symbol of the Cold War, Checkpoint Charlie (Map pp100-1) was the main gateway for Allies, other non-Germans and diplomats between the two Berlins from 1961 to 1990. The crossing has been partly reconstructed with a US Army guardhouse and a copy of the famous sign warning 'You are now leaving the American sector'.

The original is now next door at the private **Haus am Checkpoint Charlie** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 253 7250; www.mauermuseum.de; Friedrichstrasse 43-45; adult/concession €9.50/5.50; 🕒 9am-10pm), a popular if cluttered museum reporting mostly on the history and horror of the Berlin Wall. The exhibit is strongest when documenting the courage and ingenuity displayed by some GDR citizens in escaping to the West using hot-air balloons, tunnels, concealed compartments in cars and even a one-man submarine.

### TOPOGRAPHIE DES TERRORS & AROUND

In the wasteland along Niederkirchner Strasse once stood some of the most feared institutions of the Third Reich: the Gestapo headquarters, the SS central command, the SS Security Service and, after 1939, the Reich Security Main Office. In place of the buildings there is now a harrowing open-air exhibit called **Topographie des Terrors** (Topography of Terror; Map pp100-1; ☎ 2548 6703; Niederkirchnerstrasse 8; admission free; 🕒 10am-8pm May-Sep, 10am-dusk Oct-Apr). It's an excellent primer on the Third Reich with particular focus on the brutal institutions that wielded power from this site. A free English-language audio-guide is available from the information kiosk. Some images may be too graphic for children.

The palatial building overlooking the grounds is the **Martin-Gropius-Bau** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 254 860; Niederkirchner Strasse 7; admission varies; 🕒 hours vary), now used for travelling shows

of international stature. Designed by the great-uncle of Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, it's an Italian Renaissance-style cube adorned with mosaics and terracotta reliefs. Across the street is the **Abgeordnetenhaus** (Map pp100-1), the seat of Berlin's state parliament.

### DEUTSCHES TECHNIKMUSEUM

Fantastic for kids, the giant **Deutsches Technikmuseum** (German Museum of Technology; Map pp100-1; ☎ 902 540; www.dtm.de; Trebbiner Strasse 9; adult/concession €4.50/2.50; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) is a vast treasure trove that counts the world's first computer, an entire hall of vintage locomotives and new exhibits on aviation and navigation among its top attractions. At the adjacent **Spectrum science centre** (Map pp100-1; enter from Möckernstrasse 26; admission included) you can participate in some 250 experiments and get the low-down on such things as why the sky is blue or how a battery works.

### Charlottenburg

Until reunification, this upmarket district was the glittering centre of West Berlin, an intense cauldron of restaurants, bars, boutiques and snazzy hotels. Things have definitely quieted down since the *Wende* (change) when the wave of attention swapped over to Mitte. Theatres are closing, Nefertiti and her entourage from the Egyptian museum have moved to the Altes Museum and even Bahnhof Zoo has been demoted (for now) to a regional train station since the opening of the sleek new Hauptbahnhof.

But Charlottenburg's main draws are in no danger of disappearing. Shopaholics can still get their fix on Kurfürstendamm, 'royal' groupies continue to delight in Schloss Charlottenburg and there's some bold new architecture (most notably Helmut Jahn's **Neues Kranzler Eck** (an office and shopping complex; Map p102) and museums to keep things dynamic and interesting.

### SCHLOSS CHARLOTTENBURG

Schloss Charlottenburg (Map pp96-7) is an exquisite baroque palace and one of the few remaining sites in Berlin reflecting the one-time grandeur of the royal Hohenzollern clan. It was commissioned by Elector Friedrich III (later King Friedrich I) as a summer residence for his wife, Sophie-Charlotte. Reconstruction

became a priority after WWII and when it was finished Andreas Schlüter's epic **Reiterdenkmal des Grossen Kurfürsten** (1699), which shows the Great Elector on horseback, also returned to the front courtyard.

Schloss Charlottenburg is on Spandauer Damm, about 3km northwest of Bahnhof Zoo. Each of the palace buildings charges separate admission, but the combination ticket (adult/concession €7/5) is good for one-time admission on a single day to all sections except the lower floor of the Altes Schloss. Seeing the entire complex takes a full day. Arrive early on weekends and in summer to avoid the worst crowds.

The palace's central – and oldest – section is the **Altes Schloss** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 3209 1440; www.spsg.de; guided tour & upper fl adult/concession €8/5, upper fl only €2/1.50; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 11am-5pm Nov-Mar). On the lower floor are the baroque living quarters of Friedrich I, which must be visited on a 50-minute tour (in German only, but free English pamphlets are available). Each room is an extravaganza in stucco, brocade and overall opulence. Highlights include the Oak Gallery, a wood-panelled festival hall draped in family portraits; the lovely Oval Hall with views of the gardens; the Belgian-tapestry-filled Audience Chamber; Friedrich I's bedchamber, with the first-ever bathroom

### THE BERLIN WALL

Shortly after midnight of 13 August 1961 construction began on a barrier that would divide Berlin for 28 years. The Berlin Wall was a desperate measure by a GDR government on the verge of economic and political collapse to stem the exodus of its own people: 2.6 million of them had left for the West since 1949.

Euphemistically called 'Anti-Fascist Protection Barrier', this grim symbol of oppression stretched for 160km, turning West Berlin into an island of democracy within a sea of socialism. Continually reinforced and refined over time, its cold concrete slabs backed up against a 'death zone' of barbed wire, mines, attack dogs and watchtowers staffed by trigger-happy border guards.

More than 5000 people attempted an escape, but only about 1600 made it across; most were captured and 191 were killed. The full extent of the system's cruelty became blatantly clear on 17 August 1962 when 18-year-old Peter Fechtner was shot during his attempt to flee and was then left to bleed to death while the East German guards looked on.

At the end of the Cold War this potent symbol was eagerly dismantled. Memento seekers chiselled away much of it and entire sections ended up in museums around the world. Most of it, though, was unceremoniously recycled for use in road construction. Today little more than 1.5km of the Wall is left, but throughout Berlin segments, memorial sites, museums and signs commemorate this horrifying but important chapter in German history. Besides the places mentioned below, the **Haus am Checkpoint Charlie** (opposite) also chronicles this period.

### East Side Gallery

This is the longest, best-preserved and most interesting stretch of Wall and the one to see if you're pressed for time. Paralleling the Spree (Map pp100-1), the 1300m-section was turned into an open-air gallery by international artists in 1990. The better works are located near the Ostbahnhof end.

### Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer

The fascinating if horrifying history of the Berlin Wall is the theme of the **Gedenkstätte Berliner Mauer** (Map p98; ☎ 464 1030; Bernauer Strasse 111; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar), a memorial site that combines a documentation centre, a bizarre art installation and a chapel. Plans to expand the centre were approved in 2006.

### Wall Victims Memorial

Just south of the Reichstag, on the eastern end of Scheidemannstrasse, is this sad memorial (Map p98) to the 191 people who died trying to scale the Wall – the last only nine months before it crumbled.

in a baroque palace; and the fabulous Porcelain Chamber, smothered top to bottom in Chinese and Japanese blueware.

Before or after the tour, you're free to head upstairs to the apartment of Friedrich Wilhelm IV. It's filled with paintings, vases, tapestries, weapons, Meissen porcelain and other items essential to a royal lifestyle.

The reign of Friedrich the Great saw the addition, in 1746, of a new wing, the **Neuer Flügel** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 3209 1440; adult/concession incl audio-guide €5/4; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 11am-5pm Nov-Mar) by Knobelsdorff. Here you'll find the palace's most beautiful rooms, including the confection-like White Hall, the Golden Gallery (a rococo fantasy of mirrors and gilding) and the Concert Room. To the right of the staircase are the comparatively austere Winterkammern (Winter Chambers) of Friedrich Wilhelm II. You're free to explore on your own, but it's worth following the two audio-tours included in the admission price.

In the former palace theatre, the **Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte** (Museum of Pre- & Early History; Map pp96-7; ☎ 3267 4840; adult/under 16yr/concession €3/free/1.50, last 4hr Thu free; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) sheds light on the cultural evolution of Europe and parts of Asia from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages. Pride of place goes to the Trojan antiquities (some originals, some replicas) unearthed by Heinrich Schliemann in 1870. A combined ticket for same-day admission to Museum Berggruen and Museum für Fotografie/Helmut Newton Sammlung costs €6/3 (adult/concession).

A stroll through the sprawling **Schlossgarten Charlottenburg** (palace garden; Map pp96-7; admission free) makes for a nice respite from all that sightseeing, although there's still more of it right in the park. The 1824 **Neuer Pavillon** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 3209 1443; adult/concession €2/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), a small summer palace designed by Schinkel, houses paintings by early-19th-century Berlin artists alongside furnishings, porcelain and sculpture from the same period. The pint-size rococo **Belvedere** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 3209 1445; adult/concession €2/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, noon-4pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) is an elegant backdrop for the porcelain masterpieces by the royal manufacturer KPM. The beloved Queen Luise, her husband King Friedrich Wilhelm III and Emperor Wilhelm I and his wife are among those resting in the neoclassical **Mausoleum** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 3209 1446; admission €1; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct).

## SCHLOSS AREA MUSEUMS

Across from the Schloss, the **Museum Berggruen** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 326 9580; Schlossstrasse 1; adult/under 16yr/concession €6/free/3, last 4hr Thu free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is a delicacy for fans of classical modern art. Picasso is particularly well presented with more than a hundred paintings, drawings and sculptures from all his major creative phases, but there are also some nice pieces by Klee, Matisse and Giacometti. The ticket for this museum is also valid for same-day admission to Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte and Museum für Fotografie/Helmut Newton Sammlung.

Art Nouveau, Art Deco and Functionalism take center stage at the adjacent **Bröhan Museum** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 3269 0600; Schlossstrasse 1a; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). Downstairs, you can wander past outstanding period rooms by such famous designers as Hector Guimard, Émile Ruhlmann and Peter Behrens, while upstairs the emphasis is on works by Berlin Secession painters.

## KURFÜRSTENDAMM & AROUND

The 3.5km-long Kurfürstendamm (Ku'damm for short) is a ribbon of commerce that started as a bridle path to the royal hunting palace in the Grunewald forest. In the 1880s, Bismarck had it widened, paved and lined with fancy residential buildings.

On Breitscheidplatz, its eastern terminus, the landmark **Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche** (Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church; 1895; Map p102) stands quiet and dignified amid the roar. Allied bombs left only the husk of the west tower intact; it now contains the **Gedenkhalle** (Memorial Hall; Map p102; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat) whose original ceiling mosaics and marble reliefs hint at the church's prewar opulence. The adjacent octagonal **hall of worship** (☎ 9am-7pm), added in 1961, has intensely midnight-blue windows and a giant golden Jesus floating above the altar.

Northeast of the church, an exotic Elephant Gate marks the entrance to the **Berliner Zoo** (Map p102; ☎ 254 010; Budapest Strasse; ☎ 9am-6.30pm mid-Mar-mid-Oct, 9am-5pm mid-Oct-mid-Mar), Germany's oldest and most visited animal park. Some 14,000 furry, feathered and flippered creatures from all continents, 1500 species total, make their home here. Perennial crowd pleasers include cheeky orang-utans, endangered rhinos, playful penguins and the giant panda Bao Bao. The adjacent **Aquarium** (Map p102; Budapest

Strasse 32; adult/student/child €11/5.50/8, zoo & aquarium €16.50/8.50/13; ☎ 9am-6pm) has three floors of fish, amphibians, reptiles and insects, including the famous crocodile hall. There's a second entrance to the zoo on Hardenbergplatz.

At the nearby **Erotik Museum** (Map p102; ☎ 8862 0666; Joachimstaler Strasse 4; adult/concession €5/4, over 18yr only; ☎ 9am-midnight) displays from wacky to sophisticated, raunchy to romantic tell the story of physical pleasure through the ages and around the world. It's the brainchild of Beate Uhse, Germany's late sex-toy marketing queen.

For another dose of eroticism, head to the newish **Museum für Fotografie/Helmut Newton Sammlung** (Map p102; ☎ 3186 4825; Jebensstrasse 2; adult/under 16yr/concession €6/free/3, last 4hr Thu free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-10pm Thu), a repository for the photographs of Berlin-born Helmut Newton, the late *enfant terrible* of fashion photography. Besides presenting a selection of his works, including his famous female nudes, the exhibit is also a bit of a shrine to the man, displaying his cameras, his partially recreated Monte Carlo office and his library. Your ticket is also valid for same-day admission to Museum Berggruen and Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte.

Appealing to a different kind of sensibility is the exquisite **Käthe-Kollwitz-Museum** (Map p102; ☎ 882 5210; www.kaethe-kollwitz.de; Fasanenstrasse 24; adult/concession €5/2.50; ☎ 11am-6pm Wed-Mon), which presents the graphics, sculptures, lithographs, woodcuts and drawings of one of Germany's greatest woman artists. Highlights include the haunting *Ein Weberaufstand* (A Weavers' Revolt, 1897) and the woodcut series *Krieg* (War, 1922-23). English-language audio-guides cost an additional €3.

Further west on Ku'damm, the **Story of Berlin** (Map p102; ☎ 8872 0100; www.story-of-berlin.de; Kurfürstendamm 207-208; adult/concession/family €9.30/7.50/21; ☎ 10am-8pm, last admission 6pm) presents city history with a high-tech twist. You'll be outfitted with space-age headsets whose narration (in English or German) magically activates as you enter each of the 20 exhibition rooms. The Cold War period comes creepily to life during a tour of a still fully functional atomic bunker beneath the building.

## OLYMPIASTADION

Built for the 1936 Olympic Games, the **Olympiastadion** (Olympic Stadium; ☎ 2500 2322; www.olympiastadion-berlin.de; adult/concession €3/2, tours €6/5;

☎ 10am-7pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar on nonevent days; ☎ ② Olympiastadion) recently underwent a four-year, €290 million revamp that created a high-tech facility with snazzy VIP boxes and new-millennium-worthy sound, lighting and projection systems. The most dazzling improvement, though, is the new oval roof sheltering nearly all 74,400 seats. A spiderweb of glass, steel and fibre-glass membrane, it beautifully softens the monumental bulk of Werner March's original coliseum-like structure. The stadium is used for soccer, track and other sporting events; in July 2006 Italy beat France in the FIFA World Cup final here.

The **Maifeld**, a vast field west of the stadium, was used for Nazi mass rallies. Soaring above the grounds is the 77m-high **Glockenturm** (Clock Tower; ☎ 305 8123; adult/concession €3.50/1.50; ☎ 9am-6pm; ☎ Pichelsberg), which offers views over the stadium, the city and the Havel River. Admission includes entry to a new exhibit about the history of the grounds and the 1936 Olympic Games in particular. Northwest of here, the **Waldbühne** (☎ 2308 8230; ☎ Pichelsberg) is a lovely outdoor amphitheatre used for summer concerts, film screenings and other cultural events.

## Southwestern Berlin

Much of Berlin's southwest is covered by forest, rivers and lakes. Besides the **Freie Universität** and the **Botanischer Garten** (☎ 8385 0027; Königin-Luise-Strasse 6-8; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 9am-dusk; ☎ Botanischer Garten), you'll find several excellent museums here.

## MUSEEN DAHLEM

This enormous **museum complex** (☎ 830 1438; Lanstrasse 8; adult/under 16yr concession/ €6/free/3, last 4hr Thu free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Dahlem Dorf) combines four extraordinary collections under one roof. The **Ethnologisches Museum** (Museum of Ethnology) has one of the world's largest, most prestigious collections of pre-industrial, non-European art and objects. Budget at least two hours to explore its labyrinth of halls – it's an eye-opening journey of discovery that'll fly by in no time. The Africa exhibit is particularly impressive with its wealth of masks, ornaments, vases, musical instruments and other objects of ceremonial and everyday life. The South Seas hall, meanwhile, impresses with its cult objects, outriggers and other vessels from New Guinea, Tonga and other islands.

Also here is the **Museum für Indische Kunst** (Museum of Indian Art), which presents two millennia of art from India, Southeast Asia and Central Asia. The most prized items are exquisite terracottas, stone sculptures and bronzes as well as wall paintings and sculptures scavenged from Buddhist cave temples along the Silk Route.

The **Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst** (Museum of East Asian Art) has a similar array of objects, including great lacquerware and jade objects, from China, Japan and Korea. Highlights include a Japanese tearoom and a 16th-century Chinese Imperial throne.

In April 2005, the **Museum Europäischer Kulturen** (Museum of European Cultures) also moved into the complex. It collects objects from daily life from throughout Europe starting with the 18th century.

Admission also includes the **JuniorMuseum** (enter at Arnimallee 23; ☎ 1-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun), where touch-intensive and interactive changing exhibits help broaden kids' horizons.

#### ALLIERTENMUSEUM

Housed in a former cinema for US troops, the **AlliiertenMuseum** (Allied Museum; ☎ 818 1990; Clayallee 135; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Thu-Tue; ☎ Oskar-Helene-Heim, then any bus north on Clayallee) is an engaging multimedia exhibit that documents the history and challenges faced by the Western Allies during the Cold War. The original guard cabin from Checkpoint Charlie stands in the courtyard, as does a small section of the Wall and a GDR guard tower. Inside, highlights include exhibits on the Berlin Airlift and the partly reconstructed Berlin Spy Tunnel, built by US and British intelligence agents to tap into the central Soviet phone system.

#### BRÜCKE MUSEUM

In 1905 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Erich Heckel and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner founded the artist group Die Brücke in Dresden. Its members rejected the traditional art that was taught in academies and instead experimented with bright, emotional colours and warped perspectives. A small but fine collection of the group's experimental art works can be viewed at the **Brücke Museum** (☎ 831 2029; Bussardsteig 9; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed-Mon; ☎ Oskar-Helene-Heim, then bus 115 to Pücklerstrasse).

#### HAUS DER WANNSEEKONFERENZ GEDENKSTÄTTE

In January 1942, a group of elite Nazi officials met in a stately villa on Wannsee lake to discuss the so-called 'Final Solution' – the systematic deportation and annihilation of European Jews. The same building now houses the memorial **Haus der Wannseekonferenz Gedenkstätte** (☎ 805 0010; www.ghwk.de; Am Grossen Wannsee 56-58; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm; ☎ Wannsee, then bus 114 to Jugenderholungsheim). You can stand in the fateful room where discussions took place, study the minutes of the meeting and look at photographs of the Nazi thugs. English-language pamphlets are available.

#### Eastern Berlin

The outlying eastern districts are a prime destination for East German history buffs, but otherwise they're a Petri dish of discontent that has spawned large numbers of both neo-Nazis and neo-communists.

In Lichtenberg, the one-time Stasi headquarters now houses the so-called **Stasi Museum** (☎ 553 6854; Ruschestr. 103, House 1; adult/concession €3.50/3; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Magdalenenstrasse). You can walk around the surprisingly bland and functional office of longtime Stasi chief Erich Mielke, once the most feared man in the GDR. Marvel at primitive yet cunning surveillance devices and snicker at kitschy communist trinkets (Lenin paperweight, anyone?). Explanation panelling is in German only, but an English-language booklet is available for €3.

Victims of Stasi persecution often ended up at a fearsome prison, now a memorial site called **Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen** (☎ 9860 8230; Genslerstrasse 66; tour adult/concession €3/1, free on Mon; ☎ tours 11am & 1pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 11am, 1pm & 3pm Tue & Thu, hourly 10am-4pm Sat & Sun), now a memorial site. Tours of the complex, sometimes led by former prisoners, reveal the full extent of the terror and cruelty perpetrated here upon thousands of people, many of them utterly innocent. Call ahead for tours in English. To get here, take tram M5 to Freienwalder Strasse, followed by a 10-minute walk along Freienwalder Strasse.

Southeast of here, the **Museum Berlin-Karlshorst** (☎ 5015 0810; Zwieseler Strasse 4; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun; ☎ Karlshorst) served as the Soviet army headquarters in the waning days of WWII. German commanders signed

the unconditional surrender of the Wehrmacht on 8 May 1945. A joint Russian-German exhibit commemorates this fateful day and the events leading up to it with documents, photographs, uniforms and various knickknacks. The museum is about a 10- to 15-minute walk from the Karlshorst S-Bahn station; take the Treskowallee exit, then turn right onto Rheinsteinstrasse.

At the heart of Treptower Park, the gargantuan **Sowjetisches Ehrenmal Treptow** (Soviet War Memorial; Map pp96-7; ☎ 24hr) stands on the graves of 5000 Soviet soldiers killed in the Battle of Berlin. It attests both to the immensity of the wartime losses and to the overblown self-importance of the Stalinist state. Enter the park from Pushkinallee.

#### ACTIVITIES

##### Cycling

The German bicycle club **ADFC** (Map p98; ☎ 448 4724; Brunnenstrasse 28; ☎ noon-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) publishes an excellent guide showing all the bike routes throughout Berlin. It's available at their office/shop and also in bookshops and bike stores.

Bike-hire outfits charge €10 to €25 per day or €35 to €85 per week, depending on the

model. A minimum cash deposit (around €30) and/or ID is required.

**Fahrradstation** (☎ information & reservations 0180-510 8000) Charlottenburg (Map p102; ☎ 9395 2757; Goethestrasse 46; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat); Friedrichstrasse (Map p98; ☎ 2045 4500; Dorotheenstrasse 30; ☎ 10am-7pm daily Mar-Oct, 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Nov-Feb); Kreuzberg (Map pp100-1; ☎ 215 1566; Bergmannstrasse 9; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat); Scheunenviertel (Map p98; ☎ 2859 9661; Auguststrasse 29a; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat)

**Fat Tire Bike Tours** (Map p98; ☎ 2404 7991; Panoramastrasse 1a, below TV Tower; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm)

**Pedal Power** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 7899 1339; Grossbeerenstrasse 53; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat)

**Prenzlberger Orange Bikes** (Map p103; ☎ 442 8122; Kollwitzstrasse 35; per day €5; ☎ 2.30-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat) Run by a youth group.

##### Ice Skating

Berlin's municipal indoor ice rinks are usually open from October to March. The cost is €3.30/1.60 for an adult/child per two-hour session, plus €2.50 to €5 to hire skates. Call for specific hours, although 9am to 9pm is a good general guideline.

#### MY FAVOURITE HIDDEN BERLIN PLACES

Henrik Tidefjärd, creator of the Gastro-Rallye (p123) and owner of **Berlinagenten** (www.berlinagenten.de), which specialises in customised urban insider tours, reveals his favourite spots in his adopted home town:

- Berlin is a truly electric city full of creative people, crazy parties and historical spots. It's magnetic, interesting and filled with unique discoveries. I'm a true traveller and I think no other city has such a diversity of lifestyles, cultural life and environments. It's hard to believe it all exists in one single city. Ah Berlin, I love you!
- I love to eat in either hidden private dining locations or in stylish trendy restaurants. The **Tapas Club** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 0177-302 8412; Waldenser Strasse 4) and its delicacies are a bit of both and fulfil most of my expectations.
- If I feel in the mood for a thrilling and crazy night out, I head for legendary hot spot **Panoramabar** (p138). The doorman will tell you if you fit in...
- Schlesische Strasse** (Map pp100-1) is another tip for rather new experiences. Different kinds of alternative bars, lounges, clubs, shops à la Berliner Style attract a laid-back scene. I'm especially fond of the Club der Visionäre (p134) in the summer, because I can chill out on the river pontoons outdoors and soak up the real living culture.
- The medieval town of **Werder** (Map p93), 45 minutes away from Berlin by train, is my absolute favourite place for relaxing off the beaten track. Situated on an island (!) in the river delta, this place is a true treasure for romantic walks along picturesque streets and for dining on fish in one of the restaurants along the quay.



**Erika-Hess-Eisstadion** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 200 945 551; Müllerstrasse 185)

**Horst-Dohm-Eisstadion** (Map p102; ☎ 823 4060; Fritz-Wildung-Strasse 9)

## Running

There are great running terrains in Berlin's many parks. By far the most popular jogging ground is the Tiergarten (Map p98), although the Grunewald in Wilmersdorf/Zehlendorf is even prettier. The trip around the scenic Schlachtensee (in Grunewald) is 5km. The park of Schloss Charlottenburg (Map pp96-7) is also good for a nice, easy trot.

## Swimming

Berlin has lots of indoor and outdoor public pools. Opening hours vary widely by day, time and pool, so call ahead before setting out. Many facilities also have saunas, which generally cost between €10 and €15.

**Badeschiff** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 533 2030; Eichenstrasse 4; admission €3; ☎ 8am-midnight) This 'only-in-Berlin' lifestyle pool, converted from an old container boat, actually floats on the Spree itself, offering fab views across to the Oberbaumbrücke and eastern bank. A sandy area and wooden decks invite lounging and there's a bar as well. In summer it often fills to capacity by early afternoon. In winter it's covered and heated and a sauna is added.

**Sommerbad Olympiastadion** (☎ 3006 3440; Osttor, Olympischer Platz; adult/concession €4/2.50; ☎ 8am-8pm May-Sep; 🚿 🚿 Olympiastadion) Do your laps in the 50m pool built for the 1936 Olympic athletes.

**Stadtbad Charlottenburg** (Map p102; ☎ Alte Halle 3438 3860, Neue Halle 3438 3865; Krumme Strasse 10; adult/concession €4/2.50; ☎ 8am-8pm) Alte Halle is a beautiful Art Nouveau pool with colourful tiles and popular with gay men on nude bathing nights; Neue Halle is modern with a 50m lap pool and sauna.

**Strandbad Wannsee** (☎ 803 5612; Wannseebadweg 25, Zehlendorf; adult/concession €4/2.50; ☎ 8am-8pm May-Sep; 🚿 🚿 Nikolassee, then bus 513) Possibly Europe's largest lakeside lido with 1km of sandy beach and plenty of infrastructure.

## WALKING TOUR

This meander takes in all of central Berlin's blockbuster sights, plus some fabulous hidden corners. From Potsdamer Platz it winds through the Government Quarter to Unter den Linden into historic Berlin, ending in the Scheunenviertel. Along the way, you'll be treated to great views, tremendous architecture, interesting nosh spots and plenty of places you might recognise from the history books.

### WALK FACTS

**Start** Potsdamer Platz (🚶 🚶) Unter den Linden

**Finish** Hackesche Höfe (🚶 🚶) Hackescher Markt

**Distance** 9km

**Duration** From three to four hours without museums, all day with some museums

Kick off your tour at **Potsdamer Platz (1)** (p111), Berlin's newest quarter and a showcase of contemporary architecture. Check out the short section of the **Berlin Wall (2)** at the top of Stresemannstrasse, the public art in **DaimlerCity (3)**; (p111) and the tented plaza at the **Sony Center (4)**; (p111). Continue north on Ebertstrasse to the gargantuan **Holocaust Memorial (5)**; (p106) where you should wander among the concrete blocks for the full visual and emotional impact and also check out the underground exhibit. Next, get your camera ready for the majestic **Brandenburger Tor (6)**; (Brandenburg Gate; p106), the ultimate symbol of German reunification. It anchors **Pariser Platz (7)**; (p106), a harmoniously proportioned square where you should pop into the **DZ Bank (8)** and gawk at Frank Gehry's outrageous atrium. Continue north on Ebertstrasse past the moving **Wall Victims Memorial (9)**; (p115), which honours those who died trying to escape the clutches of the GDR. The hulking **Reichstag (10)**; (p111), where the German parliament meets, looms nearby.

Walk north to the **Paul-Löbe-Haus (11)**, where members of parliament keep their offices, then west on Paul-Löbe-Allee to the **Bundeskanzleramt (12)**; (p111), the office and residence of the German chancellor. Head north across Otto-von-Bismarck-Allee to the **Spreebogenpark (13)** from where you can easily spot the sweeping glass roof of the shiny new **Hauptbahnhof (14)** across the Spree River.

Heading back from the station, follow the promenade along the Spree River east past the **Marie-Elisabeth-Lüders-Haus (15)**, home of the parliamentary library, to Luisenstrasse. Cross the bridge, which offers good views back to the Reichstag. Continuing south on Luisenstrasse soon takes you to **Unter den Linden (16)**; (p106), Berlin's grand historic boulevard. Turn left and on your right you'll spy the **Russische Botschaft (17)**; (Russian Embassy; p106), a monumental confection in white marble.

Hook a right onto Friedrichstrasse to get to the **Friedrichstadtpassagen**, a trio of spectacularly designed – on the inside, anyway – shopping complexes called 'quartiers', which are linked by a subterranean walkway. Inside the **Galeries Lafayette (18)**; (p140), check out architect Jean Nouvel's glass funnel that reflects light like some mutated hologram. Next door, **Quartier 206 (19)** is a stunning Art Deco-inspired symphony in glass and marble beneath a tented glass roof. **Quartier 205 (20)** offers upscale fast-food options for fighting off hunger pangs.

For a dose of Cold War history, carry on along Friedrichstrasse for another 500m to the site of **Checkpoint Charlie (21)**; (p114), the most famous ex-border crossing between East and West Berlin. The nearby **Haus am Checkpoint Charlie (22)**; (p114) has good exhibits about the history of the Berlin Wall and the people who escaped across it.

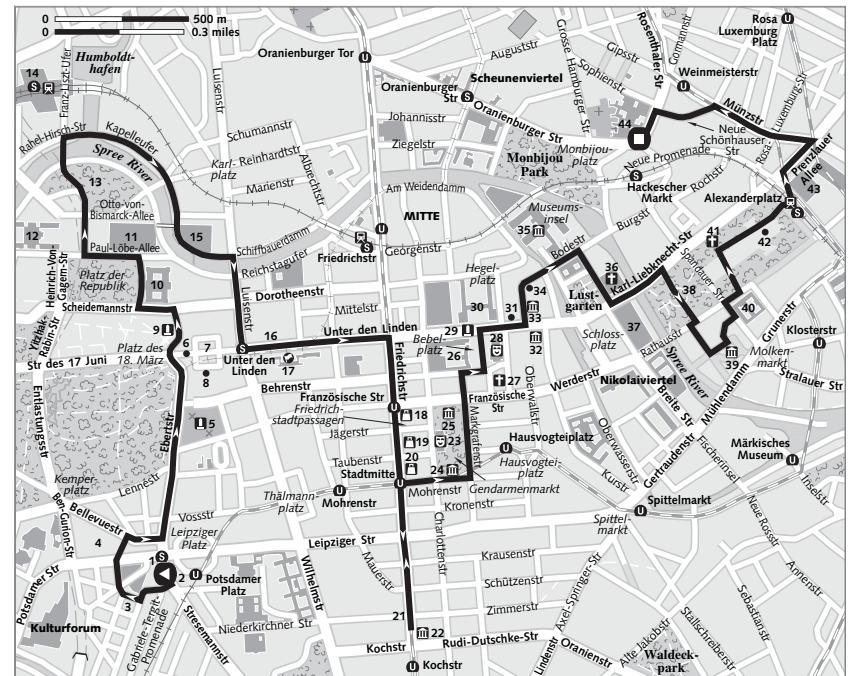
Otherwise proceed from Quartier 205 by turning left on Mohrenstrasse to get to **Gendarmenmarkt (p107)**, Berlin's most beautiful square, which is anchored by Schinkel's **Konzerthaus (23)**; (p139) and the sumptuous

towers of the **Deutscher Dom (24)**; (p107) and the **Französischer Dom (25)**; (p107).

Walk north on Markgrafenstrasse, then east on Behrenstrasse to **Bebelplatz (p106)**, site of the infamous Nazi book burnings in 1933. A trio of stately 18th-century buildings orbits this handsome square: the **Alte Königliche Bibliothek (26)**; (p107), the **St-Hedwigskirche (27)**; (p107) and the **Staatsoper Unter den Linden (28)**; (p139). Nearby is the epic **Reiterdenkmal Friedrich des Grossen (29)**, an equestrian monument of the king who financed this lovely ensemble.

On the north side of Unter den Linden are the **Humboldt Universität (30)**; (p106) and, a bit further east, Schinkel's **Neue Wache (31)**; (p107). Across the street is the **Kronprinzenpalais (32)**, a one-time royal palace, while the pink building opposite is the **Deutsches Historisches Museum (33)**; (p107). Also check out the **IM Pei Bau (34)**; (p107), the new wing designed by, duh, IM Pei.

Continue on to Bodestrasse, then head east and cross the bridge to the **Museuminsel (p107)**, a cluster of world-class repositories



of art and sculpture. If you have only time for one, make it the **Pergamon Museum** (35; p107).

Looming before you is the city's magnificent cathedral, the **Berliner Dom** (36; p108), the burial place of many Hohenzollern royals. Across from the cathedral once stood the hideous GDR-era **Palast der Republik** (37; p108).

Behind the ex-'palace', turn right for the **Marx-Engels-Forum** (38), walking past the statue of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to the **Nikolaiviertel** (Nikolai Quarter; p109), where Berlin was founded in the 13th century. Wander among the cutesy, cobbled lanes, perhaps popping into the Gothic **Nikolaikirche** (39; p109) for its free historical exhibit and ornate epitaphs.

Make your way towards the **Rotes Rathaus** (40; p109), home of the city government, to the **Marienkirche** (41; p109), Berlin's oldest still operating church filled with artistic treasures. Continue east, perhaps catching a ride up the **Fernsehturm** (42; p109), to **Alexanderplatz** (43; p108), once the commercial heart of communist Berlin.

From here follow Münzstrasse to the **Scheunenviertel** (p109), Berlin's historic Jewish quarter and now among the most vibrant parts of town, with great eating, shopping and nightlife. Turn left on Neue Schönhauser Strasse, which is lined with fun boutiques, and left again on Rosenthaler Strasse to get to the **Hackesche Höfe** (44; p110), a beautifully restored series of courtyards filled with cafés, shops and entertainment venues. Our tour concludes here.

## BERLIN FOR CHILDREN

Believe it or not, Berlin is tailor-made for tots. Kids love animals, of course, making the huge **Berliner Zoo & Aquarium** (p116), with its giant pandas, cuddly koalas and fearsome crocodiles, a sure winner. Dinosaur fans should stop in at the **Museum für Naturkunde** (p110) for close-ups of the largest dino skeleton on display anywhere. The **Spectrum science centre** (p114) has hundreds of interactive stations where kids can find answers to the mysteries of the universe.

In the southwestern suburb of Zehlendorf is the **Domäne Dahlem** (☎ 666 3000; Königin-Luise-Strasse 49; adult/concession €2/1, Wed free; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Mon; 📍 Dahlem-Dorf), an outdoor museum that illustrates the daily working life on a 17th-century farm. You'll be transported back

even further in time at the **Museumsdorf Düppel** (☎ 802 6671; Clauerstrasse 11; adult/concession €2/1; 🕒 3-7pm Thu, 10am-5pm Sun Apr-Oct; 📍 Zehlendorf, then bus 115), a re-created medieval village with Sunday demonstrations of old-time crafts.

Younger kids especially enjoy the **Kindermuseum Labyrinth** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 4930 8901; Osloer Strasse 12; adult/child/family €4/3.50/10; 🕒 1-6pm Tue-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun; 📍 Osloer Strasse, Pankstrasse), a sort of educational playground where tots can fancy themselves a pirate, princess or boat captain.

Another fun diversion is the antics of **Cabu-wazi** (☎ 530 0040; www.cabu-wazi.de in German), a non-profit circus troupe of children aged 10 to 17 performing at various venues around town. Traditional puppetry and marionettes play to crowds of all ages at **Puppentheater Firlefanz** (Map p98; ☎ 283 3560; Sophienstrasse 10), next to the Hackesche Höfe.

Parks and imaginative playgrounds abound in all neighbourhoods, but especially in Prenzlauer Berg (Map p103), the district most popular with young families. On hot summer days, a few hours spent at a public outdoor pool (p120) or on a lakeside beach will go a long way towards keeping toddlers' tempers cool.

It's fine to bring your kids along to all but the fanciest restaurants, but if you're up for a romantic night for two, try the following babysitter services or ask at your hotel for a referral:

**Aufgepasst** (☎ 851 3723; www.aufgepasst.de) English-speaking babysitters, nannies and day care.

**Asterix** (☎ 8459 1604) For 24-hour babysitting.

**Kinder-Hotel** (Map p98; ☎ 4171 6928; www.kinder-insel.de; Eichendorffstrasse 17) For 24-hour day care in 12 languages. Fees are €10 per hour, €60 overnight (14 hours) and €100 for 24 hours.

## TOURS

### Bus Tours

Most sightseeing tours operate on the 'hop on, hop off' principle, taking in the major sights on two-hour loops (without getting off) with commentary – sometimes taped, sometimes live – in several languages. Buses depart every 15 minutes (less frequently from November to March) between 10am and 5pm or 6pm daily. Besides the main departure points mentioned here, you can start your tour at any of the other stops around town. Tickets cost about €20 for adults and €10 or €15 for children and are sold on the bus. For full details, call, check

the websites or look for flyers in hotel lobbies and at the tourist offices.

**BBS Berliner Bären Stadtrundfahrt** (☎ 3519 5270; www.bbsberlin.de) Tours start at the corner of Kurfürstendamm and Rankestrasse (Map p102) and on Alexanderplatz (p98), opposite the Park Inn Hotel.

**Berolina Sightseeing** (Map p102; ☎ 8856 8030; www.berolina-berlin.com) Starts at Kurfürstendamm 220.

**BVG** (Map p102; ☎ 683 8910) Tours originate at Kurfürstendamm 225.

**BVG Top Tour** (Map p102; ☎ 2562 6570; adult/child 6-14yr €20/15) Open-top double-decker buses with live German and English commentary. Route starts at Kurfürstendamm 19.

**Severin + Kühn** (Map p102; ☎ 880 4190; www.severin-kuehn-berlin.de) Board at Kurfürstendamm 216.

**Tempelhofer Reisen** (☎ 752 4057; www.tempelhofer.de) Starts at Kurfürstendamm 231 (Map p102) and Unter den Linden 14 (Map p98).

### Cruises

A lovely way to tour Berlin, especially on a sunny day, is from the deck of a boat cruising the city's rivers, canals and lakes. Tours range from one-hour spins around Museumsinsel taking in the historic sights (from €5) to longer trips into the green suburbs (from €12) and dinner cruises. Narration is usually in English and German. Food and drinks are sold on board, or bring along a picnic. Small children travel for free, while those under 14 and seniors can expect a 50% discount. The season runs roughly from April to October. Our maps indicate embarkation points which are served by one of the following companies.

**Berliner Wassertaxi** (☎ 6588 0203; www.berliner-wassertaxi.de)

**Reederei Bruno Winkler** (☎ 349 0011; www.reederei-winkler.de)

**Reederei Riedel** (☎ 693 4646; www.reederei-riedel.de)

**Stern und Kreis Schifffahrt** (☎ 536 3600; www.sternundkreis.de)

### Walking Tours

Several companies offer scheduled guided English-language tours of Berlin led by well-informed and sharp-witted guides eager to answer your questions. Look for their flyers in hostels, hotels and the tourist offices.

**Brewer's Berlin Tours** (☎ 2248 7435, 0177-388 1537; www.brewersberlin.de; tours €10-12) Founded by Terry Brewer, an ex-intelligence officer and official guide to the Allied Forces, this is the tour company offering the legendary

All Day Berlin marathon which runs eight hours or more. Nightlife tours are available also. If you want to meet the man himself, book a 'Tuesdays with Terry' tour. Tours meet outside the Australian Ice Cream Shop at the corner of Friedrichstrasse and Georgenstrasse (Map p98).

**Insider Tour** (☎ 692 3149; www.insidertour.com; tours €10-12, bike tour incl bike €22, discounts for students, under 26yr, seniors & WelcomeCard holders) For an excellent introduction to the city's major sights, join the Famous Insider Tour. In summer, this well-established company also runs the always intriguing Third Reich and Iron Curtain tours, a pub crawl and the Berlin by Bike tour. Tours meet outside McDonalds on Hardenbergplatz (Map p102) and outside CoffeeMamas below the S-Bahn station Hackescher Markt (Map p98).

**New Berlin Tours** (☎ 0179-973 0397; www.newberlin-tours.com; general tour free, speciality tours adult/student €10/8) This outfit offers free city tours, but the guides work for tips, so don't be stingy. Bike tours are free also; bikes rent for €7. Fee-based speciality tours cover Berlin's Nazi and Communist past and the Mitte pub scene. Pick up is at Dunkin' Donuts on Hardenbergplatz (Map p102) and Starbucks on Pariser Platz (Map p98).

**Original Berlin Walks** (☎ 301 9194; www.berlinwalks.com; tours €12-15, discounts if under 26yr or with WelcomeCard, free if under 14yr) This long-standing company offers a thorough general introduction to the city daily or twice daily on its Discover Berlin Walk. The Infamous Third Reich Sites, Jewish Life in Berlin, Potsdam, and Sachsenhausen concentration camp tours run on a more limited schedule. Meet your guide by the taxi rank on Hardenbergplatz (Map p102) or at Häagen-Dazs opposite S-Bahn station Hackescher Markt (Map p98).

### Other

For information about tours of the underbelly of Berlin and the Trabi Safari, see the boxed text, p124.

Foodies wanting an instant inside scoop on the city's culinary and lifestyle scenes should book a **Gastro-Rallye** (☎ 4372 0701; www.berlinagenten.com; tours from €59, incl food & drink). During this entertaining evening of hopping around some of Berlin's hippest restaurants, you'll enjoy one course at each stop while being peppered with insider tips, history and insights. Book at least one day in advance.

## QUIRKY BERLIN

Sure, Berlin wouldn't be the same without the Pergamon, Reichstag and Unter den Linden, but the city also has plenty in store for those tired of the lemming routine. Catch that authentic GDR vibe while venturing into the city's 'wild east' behind the wheel of your own Trabi on a **Trabi Safari** (☎ 2759 2273) or explore Berlin's dark and dank underbelly with **Berliner Unterwelten** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 4991 0518; www.berliner-unterwelten.de; adult/concession €9/7) on a tour of two WWII-era underground bunkers built around U-Bahn station Gesundbrunnen.

Even Berlin's museum scene gets into the bizarre business with such entries as the **Zucker Museum** (Sugar Museum; Map pp96-7; ☎ 3142 7574; Amrumer Strasse 32), dedicated to the sweeter things in life. Punk fans might like to head to the private **Ramones Museum** (Map pp100-1; www.ramonesmuseum.com; Solmstrasse 30; admission free; ☎ noon-6pm Sat & Sun), where you can admire Marky Ramone's drumsticks, Johnny Ramone's jeans and other flotsam and jetsam. Across town, you'll need a strong stomach to deal with the grizzly pathology collection of the **Berliner Medizinhistorisches Museum** (Medical History Museum; Map p98; ☎ 450 536 122; Schumannstrasse 20-21; adult/concession/family €4/2/8; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, 10am-7pm Wed), which includes two-headed babies and cancer-stricken lungs.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Berlin is very much a party town, and almost every weekend sees some form of event, anniversary or celebration. Check www.berlin.de/eventkalender/btm for complete listings or contact the tourist offices. The following is just a small sampling:

**Internationale Filmfestspiele** (☎ 259 200; www.berlinale.de) Better known as Berlinale, this film festival is Germany's answer to Cannes and no less prestigious; held in February.

**Internationale Tourismusborse** (☎ 303 80; www.itb-berlin.com) The world's largest travel show with up to 10,000 global exhibitors; held in March and open to the public at the weekend.

**Festtage in der Staatsoper** (☎ 203 540; www.staatsoper-berlin.org) Ten days of gala concerts and operas drawing renowned conductors, soloists and orchestras; held in April.

**Theatertreffen Berlin** (☎ 2548 9269; www.theatertreffen-berlin.de) Three weeks of new productions by emerging and established German-language ensembles from Germany, Austria and Switzerland; held in May.

**Karneval der Kulturen** (☎ 622 2024; www.karneval-berlin.de) Lively street festival with a parade of flamboyantly costumed people dancing and playing music, sometimes on floats, in late May/early June.

**Christopher Street Day** (☎ 0177-277 3176; www.csd-berlin.de) Berlin's biggest gay parade with outrageous costumes, techno music and naked torsos guaranteed; held in late June.

**Love Parade** (☎ 284 620; www.loveparade.net) This on-off-and-on-again techno event may have peaked long ago, attracting only 250,000 (down from one million) ravers in 2006; held in mid-July.

**Berlin Marathon** (www.berlin-marathon.com) The best street race in the country, with a route that takes it past a lot of people's front doors; held in September.

**Jazzfest Berlin** (☎ 2548 9279; www.jazzfest-berlin.de) Top-rated jazz festival with performances held at venues throughout the city in November.

**Christmas Markets** Held daily from late November to around Christmas Eve at locations around Berlin, including Breitscheidplatz (Map p102), Alexanderplatz (Map p98) and outside the Opernpalais (Map p98) on Unter den Linden.

## SLEEPING

Berlin is usually busiest between May and September when room reservations are a good idea. Rooms can be booked through the Berlin Infostores (p105), although only at partner hotels (which includes many of the properties listed here). This is a free service and they even have a best-price guarantee.

Berlin's hospitality scene continues to expand. Every international chain from Best Western to Ritz-Carlton has opened flagship houses in the German capital, while the new hostels keep upping the ante in terms of comfort levels and facilities on offer. Privately-run midrange places, meanwhile, have been forced to modernise or risk falling by the wayside. There's also a new crop of designer and boutique hotels with such *Zeitgeist*-capturing features as in-room bathtubs, lobby-lounges and custom furniture. A subgroup typical of Berlin are the so-called *Kunsthoteles* (art hotels), which are designed by artists and/or liberally sprinkled with original art.

Berlin's excellent public transportation system puts you within easy reach of everything, no matter where you unpack your suitcase. However, if you enjoy being within walking distance of the trophy sights, find a place in Mitte or Tiergarten, although you'll pay a premium for the privilege. Charlottenburg and Wilmersdorf generally offer better value and the greatest concentration of mid-range abodes. This is where traditional Old Berlin *pensions* rub shoulders with urban-hipster temples. Lodging options are thinner on the ground in Kreuzberg, Friedrichshain (where your euro will stretch furthest) and, inexplicably, also in lovely and fairly central Prenzlauer Berg.

Unless mentioned otherwise, rates listed here include breakfast.

## Mitte & Prenzlauer Berg BUDGET

**Baxpax Downtown** (Map p98; ☎ 2787 4880; www.baxpax-downtown.de; Ziegelstrasse 28; dm €15-22, s €25-45, d €43-88, apt €75-120; ☎ ☎) This hostel takes budget hospitality to a whole new level with modern rooms as well as such party zones as a rooftop terrace with wading pool, a leafy courtyard and an in-house club. Most rooms have en suite bathrooms as well as TV, telephone and internet access.

**Circus Hostel Weinbergsweg** (Map p98; ☎ 2839 1433; www.circus-berlin.de; Weinbergsweg 1a; dm €15-20, s/d/tr without bathroom €32/48/60, s/d with bathroom €45/60, linen €2, 2-/4-person apt with 2-night minimum €75/130; ☎ ☎) This hostel consistently fires on all cylinders. Clean, cheerfully painted rooms, plenty of showers and helpful staff are just a few factors that give this place an edge. Stay in dorms, private rooms or a penthouse apartment with kitchen and terrace. The downstairs café with free wi-fi serves breakfast, drinks and small meals, and the basement bar has different activities nightly. It's fully wheelchair accessible.

**Citystay Hostel** (Map p98; ☎ 2362 4031; www.citystay.de; Rosenstrasse 16; dm €15-18, s/d €34/48, linen €2.50; ☎ ☎) This newcomer quickly made its mark with travellers, and for three good reasons: location, service and design. Modern and sophisticated, it's loaded with mod-cons, including top security, quality mattresses, a lift and restaurant-bar with courtyard tables. Bus About (p142) stops outside.

**Lette'm Sleep** (Map p103; ☎ 4473 3623; www.backpackers.de; Lettestrasse 7; dm €15-19, d without bathroom

€48, apt €66; ☎ ☎) This hostel is as hostels used to be: low-key, low-tech, welcoming and equipped with a kitchen-lounge for meeting fellow travellers. It's right on hip Helmholtzplatz, perfect for plunging into Berlin's swirling nightlife vortex.

**Acksel Haus** (Map p103; ☎ 4433 7633; www.ackselhaus.de; Belforter Strasse 21; apt €66-160) This charismatic place has 10 apartments (most sleeping two, some up to four people, with full kitchen) decked out in unique décor ranging from romantic (with four-poster bed) to exotic (with African sculptures) and nautical (lots of blue). The nicest ones overlook the flowery garden. Nice café and wi-fi throughout.

Also recommended:

**East Seven Hostel** (Map p103; ☎ 9362 2240; www.eastseven.de; Schwedter Strasse 7; dm €12-19, s €28-30, d €40-44; ☎ ☎) Friendly, familial and fun hostel with great kitchen and idyllic back garden.

**Circus Hostel Rosa-Luxemburg-Strasse** (Map p98; ☎ 2839 1433; www.circus-berlin.de; Rosa-Luxemburg-Strasse 39; dm €15-20, s/d/tr without bathroom €32/48/60, s/d with bathroom €45/60, 2-/4-person apt €75/130, linen €2; ☎ ☎) The sister location of the Circus Hostel Weinbergsweg offers many of the same comfort factors and a fine street-level café-bar reception area.

**Heart of Gold Hostel** (Map p98; ☎ 2900 3300; www.heartofgold-hostel.de; Johannistrasse 11; dm €17-19, s/d €40/56; ☎ ☎) Spacey, central hostel with *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* theme.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel Adele** (Map p103; ☎ 4432 4350; www.adele-hotel.de; Greifswalder Strasse 227; s/d €80/120; ☎ ☎) Tucked between a chic coffee shop and a bistro-lounge, this is a designer hotel with street cred. Retire to rooms brimming with exquisite detail: diaphanous curtains, leather headboards, sensuous faux fur blankets, lacquered furniture. Even the sleeky Italian bathrooms are oh-so-stylish.

**Myer's Hotel** (Map p103; ☎ 440 140; www.myershotel.de; Metzger Strasse 26; s €85-140, d €110-155; ☎ ☎) This 41-room boutique hotel combines the elegance of your rich uncle's mansion, the cheerful warmth of your parents' home and the casual comforts of your best friend's pad. Unwinding spots include the 24-hour lobby bar, a ruby-walled tearoom, the gallery lounge and a bucolic garden.

**Honigmond Garden Hotel** (Map p98; ☎ 2844 5577; www.honigmond-berlin.de; Invalidenstrasse 122; s €90-115, d €110-165; ☎ ☎) Never mind the busy thoroughfare: this 20-room guesthouse is an

enchanting retreat where antique-filled rooms overlook an idyllic garden with koi pond. The clubby lounge with internet access, an honour bar and magazines is tailor-made for gathering with other guests.

**Künstlerheim Luise** (Map p98; ☎ 284 480; www.kuenstlerheim-luise.de; Luisenstrasse 19; s €80-95, d €120-140, breakfast €8; (P) ☒) At this 'gallery with rooms' you can sleep in a bed built for giants (room 107), in the company of astronaut suits (room 310) or many other fantasy environments designed by artists who receive royalties for each overnight stay. Art fans on a budget should ask about the smaller rooms without bathroom. The website has pictures.

**Arcotel Velvet** (Map p98; ☎ 278 7530; www.arcotel.at; Oranienburger Strasse 52; r €110-220, ste €150-450, breakfast €15; (P) ☒) This sassy new kid in town wows you with edgy custom design, from the chill street-level lounge to the swank penthouse suites. Rooms feature a plethora of mould-breaking perks, including high-tech window vents and blackout blinds perfect for sleeping off that hangover.

**Radisson SAS Hotel** (Map p98; ☎ 238 280; www.radissonsas.com; Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse 3; r €140-380, ste €230-380, breakfast €21; (P) ☒) At this swish contender you will quite literally 'sleep with the fishes', thanks to the AquaDom (p109), a 25m-high aquarium in the lobby. Overall, the streamlined design scheme radiates urban poshness rarely found in chain hotels. This also extends to the two restaurants and the hipper-than-thou Aqua Lounge. Free wi-fi.

#### TOP END

**Wallstreet Park Plaza** (Map p98; ☎ 847 1170; Wallstrasse 23-24; r €190-220, ste €250-300, breakfast €15; (P) ☒) Coins embedded in the floor, clever dollar-bill carpets and a gold-and-silver-hued bar: this stylish newcomer takes the stock-exchange theme seriously. To help you ink that deal, you'll find all the latest communication devices, including free DSL, at your fingertips. Special promotional rates dip as low as €84: be sure to ask.

**Dorint Sofitel Am Gendarmenmarkt** (Map p98; ☎ 203 750; www.dorint.de/berlin-gendarmenmarkt; Charlottenstrasse 50-52; s €230-250, d €260-280, breakfast €23; (P) ☒) This cocoon of quiet sophistication couples the flair of a small boutique hotel with the amenities of a 'hotel de luxe'. After a day of turf pounding, relax in the stress-melting spa before retiring to your stylish room, which, like

the rest of the place, is a sensory interplay of marble, glass and light.

**Adlon Hotel Kempinski** (Map p98; ☎ 226 10; www.hotel-adlon.de; Unter den Linden 77; s €320-440, d €370-490, breakfast €32; (P) ☒) Berlin's most high-profile defender of the grand tradition has been a celebrity magnet since first opening its portals in 1907. With front-row vistas of the Brandenburger Tor, top-notch rooms and off-the-charts service, it leaves no desire unfulfilled.

#### Tiergarten

**Mandala Hotel** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 590 050 000; www.themandala.de; Potsdamer Strasse 3; ste €140-450, breakfast €21; (P) ☒) How 'suite' it is to be staying at this discrete retreat, a place of casual sophistication and unfussy ambience. Six sizes of suites are available, each outfitted for maximum comfort and ideal working conditions in case you're all business. Bonuses: a Michelin-star restaurant and snazzy hotel bar.

**Grand Hyatt** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2553 1234; www.berlin.grand.hyatt.com; Marlene-Dietrich-Platz 2; s €230-305, d €260-345, breakfast €24; (P) ☒) Madonna, Gwyneth Paltrow and Marilyn Manson are among the celebs who've slept, dined and partied at this stomping ground of the rich and famous. And no wonder: the moment you step into the lavish, cedar-clad lobby, you sense that it's luxury all the way from here to the breathtaking rooftop pool.

#### Kreuzberg & Friedrichshain

##### BUDGET

**Odyssee Globetrotter Hostel** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2900 0081; www.globetrotterhostel.de; Grünberger Strasse 23; dm €13-19, s/d without bathroom €35/45, d with shower €52, incl linen, breakfast €3; ☒) This hostel puts the 'fun' in funky and is a great base for making an in-depth study of Friedrichshain's nightlife. Its young and energetic owners constantly dream up new ways to keep their guests happy and entertained. The artily decorated rooms are clean and have lockers.

**Meininger City Hostels** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6663 6100, toll-free 0800-634-6464; www.meininger-hostels.de; Hallesches Ufer 30 & Tempelhofer Ufer 10; dm €13.50-25, s/d/tr €49/66/87, all incl linen & breakfast; (P) ☒) Occupying two buildings separated by a busy road, the canal and the U-Bahn tracks (which run above-ground here), Meininger offers modern rooms with private bathrooms and a comfort level rivalling basic hotels. Freebies include linen, towels, lockers and breakfast,

but party types are probably better off elsewhere. Check-in is at the Hallesches Ufer building.

**Eastern Comfort Hostelboat** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6676 3806; www.eastern-comfort.com; Mühlenstrasse 73-77; dm €17-19, s €32-58, d €50-72, breakfast €3; ☒) Berlin's first floating hostel is moored in the Spree River right by the East Side Gallery (p115), close to the entertainment districts of Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg. Cabins are carpeted and trimmed in wood but pretty snug. The '70s-inspired top deck lounge is great for chilling with a beer at sunset.

**Riverside Lodge Hostel** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6951 5510; www.riverside-lodge.de; Hobrechtstrasse 43; dm €17-22, d €52, linen €2.50, breakfast €3.50; ☒) This sweet little 12-bed hostel is as warm and welcoming as an old friend's hug, thanks to its wonderful owners, Jutta and Liane. Both avid travellers, they have created a cosy retreat where you can enjoy free coffee, tea and fruit, surf the web and burn CDs and rent bikes or canoes. In the large dorm, beds can be curtained off for extra privacy.

**Hotel 26** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 297 7780; www.hotel26-berlin.de; Grünberger Strasse 26; s €50-80, d €70-100; (P) ☒) This modern hotel decked out in cheery citrus colours may seem sparse and no-nonsense, but it has a lot going on that doesn't immediately meet the eye, including an eco-friendly approach to hospitality. Rooms are nonsmoking and the breakfast is entirely organic.

##### MIDRANGE

**Upstalsboom Hotel** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 293 750; www.upstalsboom-berlin.de; Gubener Strasse 42; s €85-150, d €100-165; (P) ☒) If this modern and well-kept hotel feels like a breath of fresh air, it may be because it's the Berlin branch of a small chain of German seaside resorts. Rooms have a clean, uncluttered look and come in four sizes. An unexpected spot is the lavender-scented rooftop garden. Rates include bicycle rentals and access to sauna, solarium and fitness area.

**Hotel Riehmers Hofgarten** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 7809 8800; www.riehmers-hofgarten.de; Yorkstrasse 83; s €98-108, d €125-140; ☒) Near Viktoriapark, this intimate 20-room hotel is part of a protected 1891 building complex with a lush inner courtyard certain to delight romantics. Large double French doors lead to mostly spacious, high-ceilinged rooms that are modern but not stark. Gourmet restaurant.

#### Charlottenburg & Wilmersdorf

##### BUDGET

**A&O Hotel Am Zoo** (Map p102; ☎ 297 7810; www.aohotel.com; Joachimstaler Strasse 1-3; dm €10-17, linen €3, s/tw incl linen from €30/34, breakfast €5; ☒) Opposite Zoo station, this is a convivial, international place with a big communal room and a fun bar right next to the train tracks. Dorms and rooms are bright with neat laminate flooring, metal-frame beds and large lockable cabinets.

**Hotel-Pension Korfu II** (Map p102; ☎ 212 4790; www.hp-korfu.de; Rankstrasse 35; s €53-80, d €67-100, breakfast €6; ☒) Opposite the Gedächtniskirche, this is a great bargain base for exploring Berlin. The pleasantly bright, carpeted rooms sport high ceilings, Scandinavian-style furniture and more amenities than one would expect for the price, including cable TV, telephone, hairdryer and in-room safe.

**Hotel-Pension München** (Map p102; ☎ 857 9120; www.hotel-pension-muenchen-in-berlin.de; Güntzelstrasse 62; s €55-60, d €70-80, apt €75-105; ☒) This pension is filled with works by Berlin-based artists and your gracious hostess, Renate Prasse. Furnishings, though, are mostly of the Ikea persuasion, the chrome-and-leather Marcel Breuer chairs in the lobby notwithstanding. For extra legroom and pretty Mediterranean style, book the studio apartment with kitchen.

**Hotel Bogota** (Map p102; ☎ 881 5001; www.hotelbogota.de; Schlieterstrasse 45; s with/without bathroom €72/44, d €98/69; (P) ☒) This rambling, slightly eccentric place feels like a cross between a friendly pension and a fading grand hotel, all at prices even the cash-strapped can afford. Room sizes and amenities vary greatly, so inspect before deciding.

##### MIDRANGE

**Hotel-Pension Funk** (Map p102; ☎ 882 7193; www.hotel-pensionfunk.de; Fasanenstrasse 69; s €52-82, d €82-112) Once the home of Danish silent-movie siren Asta Nielsen, this charismatic pension transports you back to the glamour and decadence of the 1920s. Filled with antiques and old-time accoutrements, it's also incredibly good value and often booked to bulging.

**Hotel Art Nouveau** (Map p102; ☎ 327 7440; www.hotelartnouveau.de; Leibnizstrasse 59; s/d/ste €95/120/175; (P) ☒) A rickety *belle époque* lift drops you off at one of Berlin's finest boutique pensions. Its rooms (all nonsmoking) neither skimp on space nor on charisma and offer a unique blend of youthful flair and tradition. The

honour bar is handy for feeding late-night cravings. Great freebies, too: wi-fi, tea and coffee.

**Hotel-Pension Dittberner** (Map p102; ☎ 884 6950; www.hotel-dittberner.de; Wielandstrasse 26; s €67-87, d €95-120) It's hard not to be charmed by this traditional 3rd-floor *pension* and its friendly owner, Frau Lange. The soaring ceilings, plush oriental rugs and armloads of paintings and lithographs ooze genuine Old Berlin flair. Direct-dial phones and free wi-fi and DSL make keeping in touch with home a snap.

**Hotel Askanischer Hof** (Map p102; ☎ 881 8033; www.askanischer-hof.de; Kurfürstendamm 53; s €95-120, d €107-165; ☎ ☑) In a city that likes to teeter on the cutting edge, this charismatic 17-room hotel catapults you back to the Roaring Twenties. It's a quiet oasis of antiques, lacy curtains, frilly chandeliers and fading oriental rugs. Its quaint charms have long been a magnet for celebs, including David Bowie and Helmut Newton.

**Ku'damm 101** (Map p102; ☎ 520 0550; www.kudamm101.com; Kurfürstendamm 101; s €100-138, d €120-145, breakfast €13; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This sassy lifestyle hotel gets minimalism right. Pillars punctuate the lobby and rooms, which are dressed in cool colours and edgy furniture by young German designers. Breakfast is a liberal buffet spread above the rooftops of Berlin. Only downside: the less than central location.

**Louisa's Place** (Map p102; ☎ 631 030; www.louisas.place.de; Kurfürstendamm 160; ste €120-250, breakfast €18; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Louisa's is a discrete deluxe hide-away perfect for people tired of anonymous big-city hotels. Few properties put more emphasis on customising guest services. They'll even send you a pre-arrival questionnaire asking for your likes and dislikes. Suites here are huge, the spa heavenly and the library regal.

**Hecker's Hotel** (Map p102; ☎ 889 00; www.heckers-hotel.de; Grolmannstrasse 35; s €125-250, d €140-280; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Flaunting a subdued urban feel,

this private boutique hotel has a neat ice-blue backlit bar; over-sized, elegant rooms, some with walk-in closets and thoughtful touches such as complimentary mineral water. The hotel's ultimate trump card, though, is its three themed suites: cool Bauhaus, cosy Tuscany and exotic Colonial.

**Hotel Bleibtreu** (Map p102; ☎ 884 740; www.bleibtreu.de; Bleibtreustrasse 31; s €120-220, d €130-230, breakfast €15; ☎ ☎ ☎) The Bleibtreu flaunts an edgy, urban feel tempered by the warmth of Italian design and the ample use of natural, eco-friendly materials. Subtlety is king here. In fact, from the street it doesn't even look like a hotel, tucked away as it is behind a flower shop, a bar and a deli.

#### TOP END

**Hotel Q!** (Map p102; ☎ 810 0660; www.look-hotels.com; Knesebeckstrasse 67; s €150-170, d €170-190, studios & penthouse €190-290; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) With its sleek, boundary-pushing look, Hotel Q! pulls in style-conscious hipsters and even such gossip mag royalty as Brad Pitt and Drew Barrymore. Corners are eschewed, from the tunnel-like crimson lobby to the risqué rooms where you could literally slide from tub to bed.

**Brandenburger Hof** (Map p102; ☎ 214 050; www.brandenburger-hof.com; Eiselebener Strasse 14; s €170-260, d €245-295, ste €345-515; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) In an amazing feat of stylistic alchemy, this intimate grand hotel blends Prussian elegance with Italian dolce vita, Zen influences and edgy Bauhaus. Every detail speaks of refinement here, from the glass-tented indoor piazza wrapped around a petite garden to the Michelin-starred restaurant and the airy and spacious rooms.

#### Long-Term Rentals

If you're planning to stay in Berlin for a month or longer, consider renting a room or an apartment through a *Mitwohonzentrale*

(flat-sharing agency), which matches people willing to let their digs to those needing a temporary home. Accommodation can be anything from rooms in shared student flats to furnished apartments. Agencies to try: **Erste Mitwohonzentrale** (Map p102; ☎ 324 3031; www.mitwohn.com; Sybelstrasse 53)

**HomeCompany** (Map p102; ☎ 194 45; www.homecompany.de; Joachimstaler Strasse 17)

**Room with a Loo** (Map p103; ☎ 4737 2964; www.roomwithaloo.com; Jablonskistrasse 3) English-speaking.

#### EATING

Foodies find lots to like about Berlin these days. Once considered a culinary wasteland, getting good grub in the city is no longer a challenge. Wherever you look, clever young chefs, many brimming with ideas collected abroad, give the cuisine scene an adventurous edge. Quality is up, waaay up.

These days, Berlin is absorbing international food trends faster than a sponge on Benzedrine. One of the latest waves is 'wellness' food, which translates into any dish that's light, healthy and uses fresh ingredients. Vietnamese restaurants are all the rage, while pan-Asian restaurants have become so ubiquitous that one almost wishes someone would invent a vaccine. Meanwhile, vegetarians will be happy to discover that asking for tofu, tempeh and seitan no longer earns blank stares from clueless servers.

One of life's little luxuries is a leisurely breakfast and Berliners have just about perfected the art, especially on Sundays when many cafés dish out lavish buffets. Another favourite guilty pleasure – and Berlin tradition – is the *Currywurst* (see boxed text, p130). If there ever was a fast food with cult status, this humble sausage is it. The *Döner* (doner kebab), invented here some 20-odd years ago by a Turkish immigrant, comes a close second, though.

Thankfully, eating out is not a budget-buster in Berlin. It's easy to fill up remarkably well for just a few euros, and even the gourmet restaurants dole out great value. Many places now offer a weekday 'business lunch', which usually includes an appetiser, main course and drink for a fixed price.

#### Mitte & Prenzlauer Berg

##### BUDGET

**Schlemmerbuffet Zach** (Map p98; ☎ 283 2153; Torstrasse 125; dishes €1.50-7; ☎ 24hr) If there was an award

for best doner, this clean and friendly *Imbiss* (food stall) would be a serious contender. Portions are huge, the veal or chicken perfectly slivered, the bread toasted to perfection, the salads fresh and the yoghurt sauce garlicky.

**Dada Falafel** (Map p98; ☎ 2759 6927; Liniestrassen 132; meals €3-4; ☎ 10am-2am) This tiny takeaway makes scrumptious falafel and shwarma sandwiches. One bite and you're hooked, we swear.

**W-Imbiss** (Map p103; ☎ 4849 2657; Kastanienallee 49; dishes €4-10) Culinary performance artist Gordon W makes progressive fusion nosh, including his famous 'naan pizzas'. To truly understand his genius, though, order the daily special, usually some fish marinated in 'top-secret' spices. For a vitamin high, slug down a fresh apple-wheat grass cocktail.

**Monsieur Vuong** (Map p98; ☎ 3087 2643; Alte Schönhauser Strasse 46; mains €6.50) Despite its pepper-red walls and beautiful dishware, this bustling noshery only looks expensive. The Vietnamese fare – soups and two or three main courses daily – is uniformly delicious, as are the fresh fruit cocktails and the exotic teas. No reservations, so come in the afternoon or be prepared to queue.

Other recommendations:

**Konnopke Imbiss** (Map p103; ☎ 442 7765; Schönhauser Allee 44a; sausages €1.50; ☎ 5.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, noon-6.30pm Sat) Legendary *Currywurst* kitchen.

**Piccola Italia** (Map p98; ☎ 283 5843; Oranienburger Strasse 6; dishes €1.50-7; ☎ 11am-1am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat) Tasty and generously topped take-away pizza.

##### MIDRANGE

**Sasaya** (Map p103; ☎ 4471 7721; Lychener Strasse 50; mains €5-25; ☎ noon-3pm & 6-10.30pm Thu-Tue) The space is minimalist, the Japanese food is not. Everything we tried had perfect pitch – sushi to salads, tempura to fish. Tables fill quickly with Japanese expats and plugged-in locals, so make reservations.

**Good Time** (Map p98; ☎ 2804 6015; Chausseestrasse 1; mains €6-17) Take a trip to Thailand without packing your bags at this warm and friendly restaurant. Some dishes have Indonesian inflections (satay chicken and the like) but it's the fragrant coconut-based curries that steal the show.

**Ishin Imbiss** (Map p98; ☎ 2067 4829; Mittelstrasse 24; meals €6.50-16.50; ☎ 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat) This big sushi parlour has cafeteria charm but never mind: you're here for the high quality

#### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Propeller Island City Lodge** (Map p102; ☎ 8am-noon 891 9016, noon-8pm 0163-256-5909; www.propeller-island.de; Albrecht-Achilles-Strasse 58; r €65-180, breakfast €7; ☎) It is only fitting that Berlin's most original hotel takes its name from a novel by the master of imagination, Jules Verne. Each of its 32 rooms is a journey to a unique, surreal and slightly wicked world spawned by the vision of artist-composer-owner Lars Stroschen who designed and crafted every accessory and piece of furniture. To be stranded on Propeller Island means waking up on the ceiling (in the Upside-Down Room), in a prison cell (Freedom Room) or inside a kaleidoscope (Mirror Room). This is no conventional hotel, so don't expect pillow treats or other trappings.

and the generous portions. The free hot green tea is a welcome bonus.

**Vino e Libri** (Map p98; ☎ 4405 8471; Torstrasse 99; mains €8-16; ☎ dinner) Two of civilization's greatest assets – wine and books – form the name, décor and soul of this family-run *ristorante*. The pizza is excellent but chef Bruno truly shines when it comes to experimental flavour combinations. Strawberry salmon and tagliatelle with wild boar in a chocolate-based sauce are surprisingly delicious.

**Gugelhof** (Map p103; ☎ 442 9229; Knaackstrasse 37; mains €8-14; ☎ dinner Mon-Fri, 10am-midnight Sat & Sun) This unpretentious place is a favourite among Berlin politicians, and not just since Bill Clinton popped by a few years ago. The menu features classic Alsatian soul food, including hearty *choucrouste* (a sauerkraut-based stew), cheese fondue and *flammekuche* (a pizza-like dish).

**Zoe** (Map p98; ☎ 2404 5635; Rochstrasse 1; mains €8.50-16; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Fri, 6pm-midnight Sat & Sun) Dressed in virginal white, Zoe seems to be

a study in minimalism, but fortunately plenty of creativity flows out of the kitchen with its duelling chefs. One's in charge of Mediterranean, the other of Asian dishes; the results are exquisite in both cases.

**Mao Thai** (Map p103; ☎ 441 9261; Wörther Strasse 30; mains €8.50-20; ☎) If you love Thai food, your tastebuds will do cartwheels at this sophisticated Siam outpost. The duck is a signature dish, but even simple pad thai noodles demonstrate great complexity.

#### TOP END

**Mandala Suites** (Map p98; ☎ 202 920; Friedrichstrasse 185-190; breakfast buffet incl drinks €20; ☎ 6.30am-11am Mon-Fri, 7am-noon Sat & Sun) Like froth on a cappuccino, this breakfast sky-lounge floats above the rooftops of Berlin. Atop the stylish sister property of the Mandala Hotel (p126), it's a discrete retreat for lovers of aesthetics and gourmets. Views are memorable, reservations essential.

#### GETTING VERSED IN WURST

Its aroma catches your nose like a crisp left hook. It's been ravenously gobbled up by chancellors, Madonna and George W and even been celebrated in popular song. 'It', of course, is the humble *Currywurst*, the iconic treat that's as much a part of Berlin's cultural tapestry as the Brandenburg Tor.

To the uncouth or uninitiated, we're talking about a smallish fried or grilled wiener sliced into bite-sized ringlets, swimming in a spicy tomato sauce, dusted with curry powder and served on a flimsy paper plate with a plastic toothpick for stabbing. The wurst itself is subtly spiced and served with or without its crunchy epidermis.

The people of Hamburg might disagree, but Berliners know that their city is the true birthplace of this beloved calorie bomb. The first sausage started its triumphal course to snack stands across the nation from the steaming *Imbiss* (food stall) of Herta Heuwer on 4 September, 1949. These days, *Currywursts* are so ubiquitous in the German capital that they're even sold by roving street vendors with steaming minikitchens strapped around their bellies.

What exactly went into Herta's sauce will never be known; in 1999 she took the secret to her grave. Her contribution to culinary history has garnered her a plaque at Kantstrasse 101 (Map p102) where her *Imbiss* once stood. And as if to cement Berlin's claim to being the German *Currywurst* capital, the **Deutsches Currywurst Museum** (Map p102; ☎ 8871 8630; www.currywurstmuseum.de; Kurfürstendamm 46) should have opened by the time you're reading this. Call for opening hours and admission prices.

There's always a healthy debate about where to find the best dog in town, but we're going to stick our necks out and share our very own top-three list:

- Konnopke Imbiss (p129)
- Witty's (p133)
- Curry 36 (opposite)

PS: Check out *Best of the Wurst* (2004), a hilarious short film made by a Korean-American woman about her quest to get to know Berlin and its people one sausage at a time. See it for free on **iFilm** (www.ifilm.com).

**Borchardt** (Map p98; ☎ 8188 6262; Französische Strasse 47; mains €15-30, 3-course menu €46) This Mitte institution is on the speed dial of politicians, actors and other power-crowd types. This generally makes for top-notch people-watching in the dining hall, which has ceilings as lofty as the chef's ambitions. The Wiener schnitzel – thin, juicy and huge – is reputedly among the best in town.

**Margaux** (Map p98; ☎ 2265 2611; Unter den Linden 78; mains €28-45; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Sat) It took culinary wunderkind Michael Hoffman only one year to tow the Michelin testers with his 'cuisine avantgarde classique'. Expect first-rate ingredients, refined flavours and artistic presentation, all set against lush back-lit onyx walls.

#### Tiergarten

**Joseph Roth Diele** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2636 9884; Potsdamer Strasse 75; dishes €4-7; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Fri) Named after an Austrian Jewish writer forced into exile by the Nazis, this quirky retreat time-warps you back to the 1920s when Roth used to live next door. Come here for coffee, cakes or home-cooked meals.

**Schleusenkrug** (Map p102; ☎ 313 9909; Müller-Breslau-Strasse at Tiergarten locks; breakfasts & mains €4.50-10; ☎ 10am-11pm) This classic beer garden by a Landwehrkanal lock gets punters from morn' to midnight. People from all walks of life share pints of Pils, grilled meats and exotic treats.

**Edd's** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 215 5294; Lützowstrasse 81; mains €8-22; ☎ 11.30am-3pm & 6pm-midnight Tue-Fri, 5pm-midnight Sat, 2pm-midnight Sun) Edd's grandma used to cook for Thai royals and the man himself has regaled Berlin foodies for over three decades with such palate-pleasers as twice-roasted duck, chicken steamed in banana leaves and curries that are like culinary poetry. Reservations are essential.

#### Kreuzberg & Friedrichshain BUDGET

**Curry 36** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 251 7368; Mehringdamm 36; snacks €1.50-5; ☎ 9am-3am) Don't let the prosaic name deter you: this *Imbiss* makes some of the best *Currywurst* in town.

**Henne** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 614 7730; Leuschnerdamm 25; ½ chicken €6; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun) At this Berlin institution the name is the menu: roast chicken it is, take it or leave it. It's a concept that's been cult since 1907, so who are we to argue? Garden seating in summer. Reservations recommended.

#### BERLIN'S BEST...

- Asian – Edd's (left)
- Breakfast – Tomasa (p133)
- Celebrity Spotting – Margaux (left)
- Doner – Schlemmerbuffet Zach (p129)
- German – Engelbecken (p132)
- Gourmet – Die Quadriga (p132)
- Italian – Vino e Libri (opposite)
- Sushi – Sasaya (p129)
- View – Mandala Suites (opposite)

**Arabi** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2977 1995; Krossener Strasse 19; mains €4-8; ☎ 10am-midnight) Candlelight, exotic décor and *shishas* (water pipes) characterise this welcoming refuge. You can sample the free sesame-seed dip while perusing the menu. The €9 appetiser platter easily feeds two. During crunch times, the youthful service can be a bit challenged.

**Il Casolare** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6950 6610; Grimmstrasse 30; pizzas €4.50-7.50) The staff often has a serious case of attitude but here's why it's worth putting up with: the canal-side setting and the pizza – thin, crispy, cheap and wagon-wheel-sized.

#### MIDRANGE

**Morgenland** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 611 3191; Skalitzer Strasse 35; mains €5-12; ☎ 10am-1am) This café is a breakfast institution, especially on Sunday when they dish out a smorgasbord of a buffet (€9; reservations advised). Otherwise the food's pan-European – pasta to lamb to fried fish.

**Papaya** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2977 1231; Krossener Strasse 11; mains €6.50-14.50) At this bustling eatery, you can watch the chefs stirring up delicious hangover preventions in the open kitchen. Perkily spiced *tom ka* soups, tangy pad thai noodles, toothsome Thai basil chicken and other classics are all freshly prepared for loyal fans.

**Café Jacques** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 694 1048; Maybach ufer 8; mains €7.50-15; ☎ dinner) Flattering candlelight, good wine, world music and delicious Mediterranean supper choices – listed on a blackboard – make this easy-going café a fine choice. The couscous is excellent.

**Miseria & Nobilitá** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2904 9249; Kopernikusstrasse 16; mains €10-20; ☎ dinner) When

Eduardo Scarpetti penned the comedy *Pov-erty and Nobility* in 1888, he didn't know that, over a century later, it would inspire the name of this popular family-run trattoria. You'll definitely feel more king than pauper here when digging into the deftly prepared southern Italian compositions.

**Austria** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 694 4440; Bergmannstrasse 30; mains €13-18; ☎ dinner) This place looks like a hunting lodge designed in Hollywood, and the Wiener schnitzel (€16.50) – thin, tender, huge – are indeed worthy of an Oscar. Thursday's traditional suckling pig special brings out the devotees in droves.

## TOP END

**Bar Centrale** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 786 2989; Yorkstrasse 82; appetisers & pastas €7-14, mains €15-20) Creative Italian (not a pizza in sight) is the name of the game here. Most of the imagination goes into the antipasto menu, which may feature grilled calamari, truffled foie gras or tuna carpaccio. Hungry yet?

**Horváth** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6128 9992; Paul-Lincke-Ufer 44a; three-course menu €30, mains €18-24; ☎ 6pm-midnight Tue-Sun) Eastern Kreuzberg may feel more grunge than gourmet, but this food temple is all about culinary flights of fancy: caramelised potato soup with frogs legs, or Barbary duck with shitake mushrooms are typical entries. For the whole enchilada order the 10-course small-plate menu (€60).

## Charlottenburg & Wilmersdorf

### BUDGET

**Lon Men Noodle House** (Map p102; ☎ 3151 9678; Kantstrasse 33; soups €2.50-6.50) This tiny and unassuming Taiwanese kitchen churns out authentic broths paired with thin or wide rice noodles and vegetables, meats or wontons. Most are pretty spicy but you could ask the cooks to lay off the heat.

**Franziskushof Laden** (Map p102; ☎ 8867 5176; Mommsenstrasse 63; mains €3-5; ☎ 11am-3pm Mon-Fri) This lunch hotspot *cum* butcher shop is the fundraising outpost of a Franciscan-run farming monastery in Brandenburg. All home-style German meals are made with organic meats and produce grown right on the farm.

**Schwarzes Café** (Map p102; ☎ 313 8038; Kantstrasse 148; dishes €4.50-9; ☎ 24hr) Not many cafés have shown as much staying power as this rambling multifloor icon, founded in 1978 by 15 women. It's great for a bite, a beer or breakfast no matter where the hands of the

clock are. The toilets are a hoot, the little garden idyllic

### MIDRANGE

**Moon Thai** (Map p102; ☎ 3180 9743; Kantstrasse 32; mains €6.50-14) Orange walls accented with Thai art create feel-good ambience at this family affair serving a huge repertoire of classic dishes. Anything with duck is excellent and even the seitan dishes struck their stuff when paired with fresh vegetables and bold spices.

**Engelbecken** (Map p102; ☎ 615 2810; Witzlebenstrasse 31; mains €8-16; ☎ 4pm-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-midnight Sun) It's no Munich beer hall, but this corner restaurant still lays on the Bavarian charisma with a trowel. The menu features all the usual suspects: *Weisswurst* (veal sausage) with chewy pretzels, roast pork with dumplings and red cabbage, apple strudel with custard... All meats are hormone-free.

**Café Wintergarten im Literaturhaus** (Map p102; ☎ 882 5414; Fasanenstrasse 23; mains €8-16; ☎ 9.30am-midnight) Bookworms, artists and shoppers gather at this lovely Art Nouveau villa with graceful stucco-ornamented ceilings. When the weather plays along, the idyllic garden is ideal for breakfast, a light lunch or afternoon coffee.

**Jules Verne** (Map p102; ☎ 3180 9410; Schlüterstrasse 61; breakfasts €4-10, 2-course lunches €5.50-8, dinner mains €8.50-17; ☎ 8am-1am) Jules Verne was a well-travelled man, so it's only fitting that a restaurant bearing his name would feature a global menu. French *flammekuche*, Austrian schnitzel and North African couscous are all perennial bestsellers. Breakfast is served until 3pm.

**Mar y Sol** (Map p102; ☎ 313 2593; Savignyplatz 5; tapas €2-4, mains €10-18; ☎ dinner) Grab a table on the fountain-studded patio and feel yourself transported to Seville while munching on *manchecho* (cheese), bacon-wrapped dates, Serrano ham, garlic prawns and other taste-bud-tickling tapas.

Other recommendations:

**Mr Hai & Friends** (Map p102; ☎ 3759 1200; Savignyplatz 1; mains €8-16; ☎ 11am-1am) Stylish Vietnamese restaurant where dishes are veritable flavour bombs.

**Gabriel's** (Map p102; ☎ 882 6138; Fasanenstrasse 79; mains €10-17, buffet €18) Berlin's only glatt kosher restaurant, inside the Jewish Community House.

### TOP END

**Die Quadriga** (Map p102; ☎ 2140 5650; Eislebener Strasse 14, inside Brandenburger Hof Hotel; menus €55-115; ☎ dinner Mon-Fri) This intimate dining shrine is a



highlight on any gourmet quest. Michelin-starred chef Bobby Bräuer turns only the finest ingredients into gimmick-free meals. The wine list features the 850 best German wines. Reservations required.

## Schöneberg

### BUDGET

**Dolce Pizza** (Map p133; ☎ 2005 1585; Maassenstrasse 6; pizza €1.50-10) Lines can be long for what many believe is the best take-away pizza in town. The affiliated ice-cream parlour next door ain't bad either.

**Witty's** (Map p133; ☎ 853 7055; Wittenbergplatz; snacks €2-4; ☎ 11am-1am) If there is such as thing as healthy fast food, you'll probably find it at this 'doggeria' serving only certified organic sausages.

**Hisar** (Map pp100-1; street level S-Bahnhof Yorkstrasse; dishes €2.50-5; ☎ 9am-midnight) It's off-the-beaten track, but tried-and-true Hisar is, hands-down, one of the best doner kebab stands in town. You'll be glad you made the pilgrimage.

**Habibi** (Map p133; Winterfeldtplatz 24 & Akazienstrasse 9; snacks €2.50-5; ☎ 10am-3am) This small

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chain is the granddaddy of Berlin's falafel and shwarma circuit. Its late hours make it handy for restoring balance to the brain after an extended bar-hop. Fresh carrot juice provides an extra energy jolt.

### MIDRANGE

**Tim's Canadian Deli** (Map p133; ☎ 2175 6960; Maassenstrasse 14; mains €5-13; ☎ 9am-1am) When the sun's out, there are few better places than this corner café's outdoor tables facing Winterfeldtplatz. Burgers, bagels, baked goods and other feel-good food keep the cash register ringing as do the good-value lunches (€5).

**Trattoria à Muntagnola** (Map p133; ☎ 211 6642; Fuggerstrasse 27; pizza & pasta €5.50-11.50, mains €15-20; ☎ dinner) The owners hail from the deep Italian south whose sun-baked hills have spawned a rustic cuisine with feisty flavours. Olive oil, wine, prosciutto, even sorrel and fennel are imported straight from the Boot and turned into pizzas, pastas and mouth-watering meat dishes.

Other recommendations:

**Ousies** (Map p133; ☎ 216 7957; Grunewaldstrasse 16; dishes €3.50-14; ☎ dinner) Bubbly and kitsch-free ouzeria, the Greek spin on the tapas bar. Reservations advised.

**Tomasa** (Map p102; ☎ 213 2345; Motzstrasse 60; breakfast €5-15) Original branch of a small breakfast/brunch emporium with unusual selections, big portions and pleasantly unobtrusive service.

## TOP END

**Storch** (Map p133; ☎ 784 2059; Wartburgstrasse 54; mains €14-20; ☺ dinner) The wooden floors are worn smooth from legions of patrons hungry for crusty *flammekuche*, stuffed goose, wild-boar ragout or other robust mains. Owner Volker Hauptvogel – whose mellow demeanour belies his punk-rock past – is often around to greet patrons with disarming charm.

## DRINKING

As you'd expect from the capital of beer-obsessed Germany, Berlin elevates drinking culture to a fine art, offering everything from spit-and-sawdust *Kneipen* (pubs) to shiny cocktail lounges. The emphasis is on style, atmosphere and inspiration, and some proprietors have gone to extraordinary lengths to come up with unique concepts. That said, you'll quickly be struck by the overwhelming prevalence of the colour red!

## Mitte &amp; Prenzlauer Berg

**Prater** (Map p103; ☎ 448 5688; Kastanienallee 7-9; ☺ from 4pm Mon-Fri, from noon Sat, from 10am Sun) Berlin's oldest beer garden is also one of the prettiest and is great for quaffing away beneath the chestnut trees. The complex includes a small *Volksbühne* stage, a cocktail bar, an old-fashioned restaurant and the popular Bastard club.

**Razzia in Budapest** (Map p103; ☎ 4862 3620; Oderberger Strasse 38) Prenzlauer Berg meets Kreuzberg: this hip joint fuses retro sophistication with more than a touch of kitsch, tasselled lamp shades, electro DJs, all without the pretense. A true Mitte gem.

**Rote Lotte** (Map p103; ☎ 0172-318 6868; Oderberger Strasse 38) Grandma's living room has gone hip at Lotte, right next to Razzia. The plush retro velvet sofas orbiting little wooden tables make great conversation pits.

**Kakao** (Map p103; ☎ 4862 3423; Duncckerstrasse 10; ☺ from noon) If chocolate is the elixir of the gods (according to the Aztecs), then this laid-back lounge must be heaven. Soothing browns create a suitable backdrop for all sorts of libations, from hot chocolate to chocolate-infused rum to chocolate-flavoured cocktails.

**Windhorst** (Map p98; ☎ 2045 0070; Dorotheenstrasse 65) This is a small, smart bar of the classic American model helmed by a man who knows how to shake those cocktails. The range of house specials is impressive.

**Reingold** (Map p98; ☎ 2838 7676; Novalisstrasse 11) Inside the metal cocoon flutters the butterfly heart of a beautifully opulent 1930s glamour lounge where deep house and Latin sounds dominate the decks.

## Kreuzberg &amp; Friedrichshain

**Freischwimmer** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6107 4309; Vor dem Schlesischen Tor 2; ☺ from noon in summer, from 6pm in winter) In fine weather, there are few more idyllic places for a beer or a bite than this rustic former boathouse right on a canal.

**Club der Visionäre** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6951 8944; Am Flutgraben 1; ☺ from 4pm Mon-Fri, from noon Sat & Sun) Across from Freischwimmer, this place is also good for quaffing and catching some rays at the same time. On Sunday it hosts one of the best after-parties in town.

**Wüргеengel** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 615 5560; Dresdner Strasse 122) The 'Exterminating Angel' pays homage to the 1962 Luis Buñuel movie, its dramatic blood-red velvet décor reminiscent of a *belle époque* brothel. The place is crammed the second the adjacent Babylon cinema closes.

**Sanatorium 23** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 4202 1193; Frankfurter Allee 23; ☺ from 2pm) The look is Oriental-meets-pop-art-in-hospital, the vibe is relaxed and friendly, the DJs know their dubplates and the long, low seating is quite literally made for lounging. Very, very cool.

**Ankerklause** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 693 5649; Kottbusser Damm 104) Ahoy there: this nautical Neukölln favourite occupies an old glass-panelled harbour-master's house above the Landwehrkanal, and still packs 'em in at all hours.

**Golgotha** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 785 2453; Dudenstrasse 48-64; ☺ Apr-Oct) The pilgrimage to this beer garden in Viktoriapark is a beloved summer ritual. Relax with beers and grilled snacks, then make a night of it on the dance floor.

**Spindler & Klatt** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6956 6775; Köpenicker Strasse 16-17) This stunning club-restaurant takes the age-old concept of the converted warehouse and adds the unthinkable: discreet sophistication. Wispy drapes, riverside terrace, Asian fusion food and a dash of Oriental style – late nights have never been so chic.

**Heinz Minki** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6953 3766; Vor dem Schlesischen Tor 3; ☺ from noon Tue-Sun) Colourful lights and old trees give this riverside beer garden a romantic vibe. On colder days, retire inside to the bar (open nights only) or the upstairs restaurants (Friday to Sunday).

**Tabou Tiki Room** (Map pp100-1; Maybachufer 39; ☺ Tue-Sun) This silly bar-club has enough Polynesian props to restage *South Pacific*, exotic music (sci-fi jazz, Hawaiian swing, rock'n'roll, country...) and drinks with little umbrellas.

**Stereo 33** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 9599 9433; Krossener Strasse 24; ☺ Mon-Sat) Modern, minimalist design, well-schooled DJs and bargain sushi all add to the appeal of this sleek bar in Friedrichshain.

**Dachkammer** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 296 1673; Simon-Dach-Strasse 39) This split personality place pairs a casual downstairs pub with a fantastically convincing 1950s flashback in the multiroom cocktail bar.

## Charlottenburg &amp; Schöneberg

**Galerie Bremer** (Map p102; ☎ 881 4908; Fasanenstrasse 37) Former proprietor Rudolf van der Lak sadly passed away in 2006, but the living-room-sized, very grown-up bar he presided over for 50 years is still worth a visit. It's behind a prestigious gallery.

**Gainsbourg** (Map p102; ☎ 313 7464; Savignyplatz 5) This cramped, American-style bar speaks to a 30-something intellectual crowd, and might well have appealed to Serge himself. Relax in the warmly lit interior while sipping one of the award-winning (and copyrighted) cocktails.

**Green Door** (Map p133; ☎ 215 2515; Winterfeldtstrasse 50) Only the door is green at this shoebox-sized bar tended by capable mixologists. Inside, you'll sip your drinks surrounded by vanilla walls and chocolate leather sofas. Ring the bell.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Being entertained is what Berliners do best – even the most steadfast workaholic will have a life outside the office. The party scene is one of the most diverse in Europe, constantly spawning new trends and providing platforms for infinite experimentation in music, fashion and design. The most cutting-edge clubs tend to be in bizarre locations – old breweries, vaults, swimming pools, postal offices and warehouses. Electronics still dominates, but the sound spectrum now ranges from drum 'n' bass, house and trance to punk, Latin and African.

Berlin also has plenty in store for fans of highbrow pursuits. Despite serious budget shortfalls, the city sustains three (!) world-

class opera houses. Mainstream, offbeat and fringe theatre are all thriving, as are cabaret and variety shows. And in a city that hosts its own international film festival, there are cinemas aplenty, from slick multiplexes to scruffy art houses.

## Listings

**Zitty** ([www.zitty.de](http://www.zitty.de)) and the more mainstream **Tip** ([www.tip-berlin.de](http://www.tip-berlin.de)) are the best of the biweekly German-language listings magazines. Of the freebie mags, *Uncle Sally's*, *030* and *Fresh* are recommended.

## Tickets

Credit-card bookings by telephone or online through a venue's box office are still not commonplace in Berlin. Most will take reservations over the phone but make you show up in person to pay for and pick up your tickets. If this is too much hassle, an alternative is to buy tickets through an agency, although this will add a service charge of up to 15% to the ticket price.

**Berlin Infostores** (p105) All Berlin Infostores sell tickets to events in person, by phone and online. Discounts of up to 50% are available for select same-day performances.

**Hekticket** ([www.hekticket.de](http://www.hekticket.de)) Alexanderplatz (Map p98; ☎ 2431 2431; Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse 12; ☺ noon-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat); Bahnhof Zoo (Map p102; ☎ 230 9930; Hardenbergstrasse 29a; ☺ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun)

**Hekticket Last Minute** (☎ 230 9930) Discounted tickets after 4pm for select performances that night.

**Theaterkasse Centrum** (Map p102; ☎ 882 7611; Meinekestrasse 25)

## Cabaret &amp; Varieté

The light, lively and lavish variety shows of the Golden Twenties have been undergoing a sweeping revival in Berlin. Get ready for an evening of dancing and singing, jugglers, acrobats and other entertainers. These 'cabarets' should not be confused with 'Kabarett', which are political and satirical shows with monologues and short skits.

**Bar Jeder Vernunft** (Map p102; ☎ 883 1582; [www.bar-jeder-vernunft.de](http://www.bar-jeder-vernunft.de); Schaperstrasse 24) The elegant Art Nouveau tent makes a perfectly nostalgic setting for the sophisticated cabaret, comedy and chanson acts for which this place is famous. There's a free piano bar after the main show and a lovely beer garden in summer. It's at the back of the parking lot.



## GAY & LESBIAN BERLIN

Berlin's legendary liberalism has spawned one of the world's biggest gay and lesbian scenes. Anything goes in 'Homopolis' – and we mean anything – from the high-brow to the hands-on, the bourgeois to the bizarre, the mainstream to the flamboyant.

Berlin's emergence as a gay mecca was kick-started by sexual scientist Magnus Hirschfeld who, in 1897, founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in the city, which paved the way for gay liberation. The 1920s were especially wild and wacky, a demimonde that drew and inspired writers like Christopher Isherwood until the Nazis put an end to the fun in 1933. Postwar recovery came slowly, but by the 1970s the scene was firmly re-established, at least in the western city. Since 2001, Berlin has been governed by an openly gay mayor, Klaus Wowereit, who outed himself by saying 'I'm gay, and that's a good thing', which has since become a popular slogan in the community. To learn more about Berlin's queer history, visit the nonprofit **Schwules Museum** (Gay Museum; Map pp100-1; ☎ 693 1172; Mehringdamm 61; adult/concession €5/3; ♿ 2-6pm Wed-Mon), which is exhibition space, research centre and community hub all rolled into one.

Berlin doesn't have a dedicated 'gay ghetto', although established bar and club scenes are along Motzstrasse and Fuggerstrasse in Schöneberg (Map p133), Schönhauser Allee and Gleimstrasse in Prenzlauer Berg (Map p103) and Mehringdamm in Kreuzberg (Map pp100-1). In early June, huge crowds turn out for the **Schwul-Lesbisches Strassenfest** (Gay-Lesbian Street Fair) in Schöneberg, which basically serves as a warm-up for **Christopher Street Day** (p124) later that month.

The freebie **Siegessäule** ([www.siegessaule.de](http://www.siegessaule.de)) is the Berlin bible for all things gay and lesbian. *Sejgej* magazine is strictly for men.

For advice and information, gay men can turn to **Mann-O-Meter** (Map p133; ☎ 216 8008; Bülowstrasse 106) or the **Schwulenberatung** (Gay Advice Hotline; ☎ 194 46). For lesbians, there's the **Lesbenberatung** (☎ 215 2000). Brochures and other information are also available at the Berlin Infostores (p105) and at [www.berlin-tourist-information.de](http://www.berlin-tourist-information.de).

## Mitte & Prenzlauer Berg

**Kino International** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 2475 6011; Karl-Marx-Allee 33) With its camp cavalcade of glass chandeliers, glitter curtains and parquet floor, this GDR-era cinema is a show in itself. Monday is 'MonGay' with homo-themed classics, imports and previews. The Chicks De Luxe ([www.chicksunited.de](http://www.chicksunited.de)) lesbian party also packs the place.

**Schall und Rauch** (Map p103; ☎ 443 3970; Gleimstrasse 23) A bistro by day, this trendy gay place morphs into a chic cocktail bar when the moon gets high. The Sunday brunch (€7) has cult status.

**Sonntags Club** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 449 7590; Greifenhagener Strasse 28) This friendly, relaxed, lesbigay café-bar project is open to all and holds frequent events. There is also a piano just begging to have its ivories tickled.

**Gate Sauna** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 229 9430; Wilhelmstrasse 81; admission €14; ♿ 11am-7am Mon-Thu, 24hr Fri-Sun) This is one of the biggest and most active gay saunas with a bar, restaurant and video room, cabins and a swing (no, not the kind for the kiddies).

**Chamäleon Variété** (Map p98; ☎ 282 7118; [www.chamaeleon-variete.de](http://www.chamaeleon-variete.de); Hackesche Höfe) This intimate club presents variety shows (think comedy, juggling acts and singing) often in a sassy and unconventional fashion.

**Wintergarten-Das Variété** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 2500 8888; [www.wintergarten-berlin.de](http://www.wintergarten-berlin.de); Potsdamer Strasse 96) Come here for vaudeville shows that have been updated for the 21st century, all performed in a glitzy theatre with a starry-sky ceiling. The crowd's tourist-heavy, but the shows can be quite fun.

**Friedrichstadtpalast** (Map p98; ☎ 2326 2326; [www.friedrichstadtpalast.de](http://www.friedrichstadtpalast.de); Friedrichstrasse 107) With 2000 seats, this is the largest revue theatre in Europe with Vegas-style productions featuring leggy showgirls and an excellent in-house orchestra.

**Blue Man Group** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 01805-4444) This group's whimsical show, which has been performing to capacity crowds in the Theater am Potsdamer Platz, should have moved to its own permanent home in the former Imax theatre across Marlene-Dietrich-Platz by spring 2007.

## Kreuzberg & Friedrichshain

**Melitta Sundström** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 692 4414; Mehringdamm 61; ♿ from 10am) A great place for breakfast or a coffee and chat while the sun's up, this place turns cruisy after dark, especially at weekends when drag queens and party lions invade to liquor up before moving on to the SchwuZ disco at the back.

**Himmelreich** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 7072 8306; Simon-Dach-Strasse 36) Proving all those stereotypes about gays having good taste, this smart red-hued cocktail bar makes most of the competition look like a straight guy's bedsit.

**Sofia** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 0163-283 2519; Wrangelstrasse 93) Sofia apparently started life as a kebab shop, but its new incarnation is rather more pleasing, offering comfy seats, moulded waterfall-effect décor and posters of one Ms Loren. Thanks to the chirpy owners it's become a favoured, though by no means exclusive, lesbigay hangout.

**SO36** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6140 1306; Oranienstrasse 190) The 'Esso' is Kreuzberg's punk heart and also hosts Gayhane, a monthly 'homoriental' party with Turkish and German pop, transvestites and belly dancing.

**Roses** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 615 7570; Oranienstrasse 187; ♿ from 9pm) Kitschy yet pretty, Roses has been a Kreuzberg fixture for over 10 years and still draws patrons in party mode with its strong drinks and seductively plush setting.

## Schöneberg

**Connection** (Map p133; ☎ 218 1432; Fuggerstrasse 33; ♿ Fri & Sat) This well-established gay disco is one of the most popular boozing and cruising spots in town with three floors of men-only action, a mirrored dance floor and blaring techno.

**Tom's Bar** (Map p133; ☎ 213 4570; Motzstrasse 19) Tom's is another main stop on the party circuit. Its dark cavernous bar is a serious pick-up joint, and there's an active cellar as well. If you're OFB – out for business – don't get here before midnight. Men only.

**Hafen** (Map p133; ☎ 211 4118; Motzstrasse 19) A permanent fixture on the good-time gay circuit, the 'Harbour' pulls in all kinds of guys and gals with its friendly free-for-all vibe. It's also a popular warm-up venue for those heading to hardcore cruising dens such as Tom's Bar and Mutschmanns.

**So & So** (Map p133; ☎ 2145 9766; Fuggerstrasse 35) Drinking here is the next-best thing to drinking inside a lava lamp: expect trippy projections, cool DJs and strong cocktails. Less try-hard butch than the raucous places opposite, and so low-key you'll barely notice it's at least nominally a gay bar.

**Xenon** (Map p133; ☎ 782 8850; Kolonnenstrasse 5-6) Built in 1909, the city's second-oldest movie theatre is dedicated entirely to lesbigay cinema, with lots of juicy imports and themed seasons.

**Beginne** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 215 1414; Potsdamer Strasse 139) This men-free zone has a radical 'herstory': it started out as a militant feminist squat in the 1980s, and now puts on concerts, readings, films and events with an intellectual bent.

## Cinemas

Going to the movies is pretty pricey, with Saturday-night tickets at the multiplexes fetching up to €11. Almost all cinemas also add a sneaky *Überlängezuschlag* (overrun supplement) of €0.50 to €1 for films longer than 90 minutes. Seeing a show on a *Kinotag* (film day, usually Monday to Wednesday) or before 5pm can save up to 50%. Indie neighbourhood theatres are usually cheaper. In summer, watching movies al fresco in a *Freiluftkino* (outdoor cinema) is a venerable tradition.

Movies that are screened in their original language are denoted in listings by the acronym 'OF' (*Originalfassung*) or 'OV' (*Originalversion*); those with German subtitles are marked 'OmU' (*Original mit Untertiteln*).

The venues in the following list all screen English-language films, but do also check the recommended listings magazines for additional options.

**Arsenal** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2695 5100; Filmhaus, Potsdamer Strasse 2, Sony Center) Nonmainstream fare from around the world.

**Babylon** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6160 9693; Dresdener Strasse 126) Broad-appeal art house.

**Cinestar im Sony Center** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2606 6260; www.cinestar.de; Potsdamer Strasse 4) Hollywood blockbusters, all in English, all the time.

**Eiszeit** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 611 6016; Zeughofstrasse 20) Obscure, alternative and experimental films.

**Intimes** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2966 4633; Niederbarnimstrasse 15) Off-beat releases and cult classics.

## Clubs

Doors open at 10pm or 11pm, but nothing really happens until midnight.

**Berghain/Panoramabar** (Map pp100-1; Am Wriezener Bahnhof; ☎ Fri & Sat) When this hugely successful postindustrial techno-electro outpost is fully open on Saturday night it really is a sight and a half: there are three levels of concrete, speakers and partitions, full of hidden corners (including some dark rooms) and packed out with the most mixed crowd you'll find in all of Berlin. Panoramabar, which is upstairs, became an instant fixture within days of opening.

**Watergate** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6128 0394; Falckensteinstrasse 49a; ☎ Fri & Sat) Watergate has a fantastic location with a lounge overlooking the Spree and a floating terrace actually on it, opposite the colour-changing logo of the Universal Music building.

**Kaffee Burger** (Map p98; ☎ 2804 6495; Torstrasse 60; ☎ daily) Indie, rock and punk parties and gigs are often preceded by literature and poetry readings at this place famous for writer Wladimir Kaminer's legendary *Russendisko* (Russian Disco).

**Maria am Ufer** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2123 8190; Stralauer Platz 33-34; ☎ Fri & Sat) The DJs playing here are invariably among the best in their field, whether it's breakbeat, down-tempo or some other strand of electronica. Occasional live concerts on weekdays.

**Sage Club** (Map p98; ☎ 278 9830; Köpenicker Strasse 76; ☎ Thu-Sun) The door policy is pretty tight here, but it's worth braving the goons just to see the amazing garden area (with pool) and four dance floors (with fire-breathing dragons). Different sounds nightly, rock to R&B to house.

**Knaack Club** (Map p103; ☎ 442 7060; Greifswalder Strasse 224; ☎ Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat) Part venue, part club, this 1953-vintage warren is known for its popular rock, punk and indie concerts, but the regular five-floor dance parties are pretty good too.

**Delicious Doughnuts** (Map p98; ☎ 2809 9279; Rosenthaler Strasse 9; ☎ Thu-Sat) A tasty slice of Mitte nightlife, Doughnuts has perfected the cosy velvet lounge look and is a friendly place with a small but lively dance floor, table football and a tendency to stay open well into daylight hours.

Also recommended:

**ICON** (Map p103; ☎ 4849 2878; Cantianstrasse 15; ☎ Tue, Fri & Sat) Top location for seriously heavy-duty drum 'n' bass.

**SO36** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6140 1306; Oranienstrasse 190; ☎ daily) Punk palace with relentlessly offbeat live concerts and theme nights (p137).

**KitKat Club** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 7889 9704; Bessemerstrasse 2-14; ☎ Thu-Sun) Be brave, be bold, be naked at Berlin's original den of decadence. Most parties are open to all comers, subject to the erotic dress code (check the website for details).

## Culture Centres

Cultural centres are an integral part of Berlin's entertainment scene. These multi-use venues impose few limits on their stages – on any given night you might find cinema, dance, live music, theatre, art, literature or even circus acts.

**Kunsthau Tacheles** (Map p98; ☎ 282 6185; www.tacheles.de; Oranienburger Strasse 54-56) Behind the postatomic shell is an active offbeat venue with dance, jazz, movies, cabaret, readings, workshops, artist studios and galleries, and a cinema.

**Kulturbrauerei** (Map p103; ☎ 443 150; www.kulturbrauerei.de; Schönhauser Allee 36-39) The red-brick buildings of this 19th-century brewery are now a cultural powerhouse with a small village worth of venues, from concert and theatre halls to restaurants, nightclubs, galleries and a multiscreen cinema.

**Insel der Jugend** (☎ 5360 8020; www.insel-berlin.net; Alt-Treptow 6; bus 265 to Rathaus Treptow) The Island of Youth is a former GDR youth club housed in a mock medieval castle on an island in the Spree. There's something for everybody, from workshops to live rock concerts, open-air cinema (June to September) and dance parties of all musical stripes.

**Pfefferberg** (Map p103; ☎ 4438 3342; www.pfefferberg.de; Schönhauser Allee 176) Also converted from a brewery, Pfefferberg is rougher and more alternative than the Kulturbrauerei, promoting a lot of cross-cultural and antifascist projects. Nice beer garden. In 2007 the Vitra Design Museum was expected to open on its grounds.

**Tesla** (Map p98; ☎ 2474 9777; www.tesla-berlin.de; Klosterstrasse 68-70) Renamed from Podewil, this self-styled 'laboratory' for multimedia art devotes itself to highly experimental projects. As well as concerts, exhibitions and workshops, regular radiotesla productions explore the mysteries of the airwaves.

## Live Music

### CLASSICAL & OPERA

**Philharmonie** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 2548 8132; www.berliner-philharmoniker.de; Herbert-Von-Karajan-Strasse 1; tickets €7-120) This justly famous concert hall has supreme acoustics and not a bad seat in the house.

**Konzerthaus** (Map p98; ☎ 203 090; www.konzerthaus.de; Gendarmenmarkt; tickets €13-43) Another of Berlin's top classical venues, the Schinkel-designed Konzerthaus counts the Berliner Sinfonie-Orchester as its 'house band' but others, such as the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, perform here as well.

**Staatsoper Unter den Linden** (Map p98; ☎ 2035 4555; www.staatsoper-berlin.org; Unter den Linden 7; tickets €8-120) Led by Daniel Barenboim, Berlin's oldest and most gorgeous opera house presents opera from four centuries along with classical and modern ballet, including high-calibre visiting troupes.

**Deutsche Oper Berlin** (Map p102; ☎ 343 8401; www.deutscheoperberlin.de; Bismarckstrasse 35; tickets €12-112) Berlin's largest opera house may look unsightly but its musical supremacy is seldom questioned, and the arrival of first-ever female boss Kirsten Harms looks set to shake off a slightly stuffy image.

**Komische Oper** (Map p98; ☎ 4799 7400; www.komische-oper-berlin.de; Behrenstrasse 55-57; tickets €8-93) Musical theatre, light opera, operetta and dance are the domain of this high-profile venue with its plush interior. All productions are sung in German. The box office is on Unter den Linden 41.

### JAZZ

**A-Trane** (Map p102; ☎ 313 2550; www.a-trane.de; Bleibtreustrasse 1) There's not a bad seat in this intimate place with round cocktail tables and a small stage. The talent is invariably top-class and everyone's usually standing by the end of the show.

**Quasimodo** (Map p102; ☎ 312 8086; www.quasimodo.de; Kantstrasse 12a) Underneath the Delphi cinema, Berlin's oldest jazz club consistently attracts high-calibre national and interna-

tional acts. Its petite size puts you close to the stage but the low ceiling, black walls and smoky air can be just a tad claustrophobic.

**B-flat** (Map p98; ☎ 283 3123; www.b-flat-berlin.de; Rosenthaler Strasse 13) Modern jazz in all its variants dominates the programme here, with increasing doses of world, Latin and other beats. Wednesday is acoustic night (free entry) and Sunday is tango, while the film lounge takes over one Thursday a month.

**Junction Bar** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 694 6602; www.junction-bar.de; Gneisenaustrasse 18) Check your lungs at the door when entering this groovy, smoke-filled cellar where you'll be showered by everything from traditional jazz to jazz-rap, along with blues, soul and funk. After the show, DJs keep the sounds coming. The upstairs bar serves snacks.

## Sport

**Hertha BSC** (☎ 01805-189 200, 300 9280; www.herthabsc.de; Olympiastadion; 📍 Olympiastadion) Berlin's long-standing Bundesliga (National League) football (soccer) team plays home games at the Olympic Stadium. Tickets are usually available on game-day and start at €10.

**Alba Berlin** (Map p103; Am Falkplatz; ☎ 01805-300 777; www.albaBerlin.de; tickets €7.50-32) Berlin's top basketball team competes hard on a European level and has a solid winning record. Home games take place at the Max-Schmeling-Halle.

**Berlin Thunder** (☎ 3006 4400; www.berlin-thunder.de; Olympiastadion; tickets €8-31.50; 📍 Olympiastadion) American football is gaining popularity, largely thanks to Thunder's storming record – the team consistently tops the league and has two Euro Bowls to its name.

**EHC Eisbären** (☎ 9718 4040; www.eisbaeren.de; Sportforum Berlin, Steffenstrasse, Hohenschönhausen; tickets €15-30; 📍 Hohenschönhausen) Fervent ice-hockey fans ensure that every home game of the Polar Bears practically explodes with atmosphere, especially since the team became national champion in 2005 and 2006.

## Theatre

Berlin has more than 100 theatres. The main drama drags are Friedrichstrasse and the Kurfürstendamm, but every district has its own set of smaller stages. Many theatres are dark on Monday and from mid-July to late August. Tickets are often available on the day of performance and best purchased directly from the theatre's box office.

Discounts of up to 50% for students and seniors are common.

**Admiralspalast** (Map p98; ☎ 4799 7499; www.admiralspalast.de; Friedrichstrasse 101-102) A major party palace during the Roaring Twenties, the Admiralspalast reopened in August 2006 with a production of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* led by Campino of German band Die Toten Hosen as Mack the Knife. In keeping with the original venue, the restored complex harbours not only a theatre but also galleries, a night club, a café and even a mineral-water-fed swimming pool.

**Deutsches Theater** (Map p98; ☎ 2844 1225; www.deutschetheater.de; Schumannstrasse 13a) This historic theatre achieved its greatest acclaim under Max Reinhardt who directed it from 1905 to 1933. From classic plays to experimental works by contemporary authors, it makes for a stimulating repertory.

**Berliner Ensemble** (Map p98; ☎ 2840 8155; www.berliner-ensemble.de; Bertolt-Brecht-Platz 1) Brecht's former theatre has a lavish interior and presents works by him and other European 20th-century playwrights, with the occasional Shakespeare thrown into the mix.

**Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz** (Map p98; ☎ 2406 5777; www.volksbuehne-berlin.de; Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz) Nonconformist, radical and provocative: performances here are not for those squeamish about blood and nudity.

**Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz** (Map p102; ☎ 890 020; www.schaubuehne.de; Kurfürstendamm 153) West Berlin owes any cutting-edge theatrical credentials to this former 1920s cinema, rescued from bland obscurity under the forceful leadership of choreographer Sasha Waltz and director Thomas Ostermeier.

**Friends of Italian Opera** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 691 1211; Fidicinstrasse 40) Despite the name, this is actually Berlin's most established English-language theatre. Visiting troupes from the US, UK, Canada and other countries supplement the in-house productions.

## SHOPPING

Berlin may not traditionally rank among the world's great shopping cities but, frankly, that's quite an outdated perception. Fact is, Berlin is a great place to shop and prices tend to be lower than in many other European capitals.

The closest the German capital comes to having an Oxford Street-type retail spine is Kurfürstendamm and its extension, Tau-

entzienstrasse. Both are lined with many of the chain stores you already know from the high street back home (H&M, Mango, Esprit), with a few German shops thrown into the mix.

But mostly, shopping in Berlin means venturing into the neighbourhoods, each with its own flair, identity and mix of stores calibrated to the needs, tastes and pockets of locals. Go to posh Charlottenburg for international couture and to Kreuzberg for second-hand fashions. In Mitte, ritzy Friedrichstrasse has cosmopolitan flair, while the Scheunenviertel and Prenzlauer Berg are hotbeds of hip local designers. Schönberg has the big KaDeWe department store and side streets lined with speciality boutiques. Note that many stores, especially smaller ones, do not accept credit cards.

## Department Stores & Malls

**KaDeWe** (Kaufhaus des Westens; Map p133; ☎ 212 10; Tauentzienstrasse 21) Shopaholics will get their fix at this amazing eight-floor department store, the largest in Europe after London's Harrods. It sells just about everything from yarn to washing machines, but if you're pushed for time, make sure you at least hurry up to the gourmet food hall on the 6th floor – it's legendary.

**Galleries Lafayette** (Map p98; ☎ 209 480; Friedrichstrasse 76) The Berlin branch of the exquisite French emporium is centred on a glass cone shimmering with kaleidoscopic intensity. Head upstairs for designer wear, downstairs to the gourmet food hall.

**Potsdamer Platz Arkaden** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 255 9270; Alte Potsdamer Strasse) This is a good all-purpose indoor mall filled with mainstream chains, supermarkets, fast-food eateries and one of Berlin's best ice cream parlours upstairs.

## Farmers' Markets

**Winterfeldtmarkt** (Map p133; Winterfeldtplatz; ☎ 8am-2pm Wed, 8am-4pm Sat) Spending Saturdays at this upscale farmers' market is a ritual for many Berliners. Do as they do and cap off your fruit-and-veggie shopping spree with coffee or breakfast in a local café.

**Turkish Market** (Map pp100-1; Maybachufer; ☎ noon-6.30pm Tue & Fri) Olives, feta spreads, loaves of fresh bread and fruit and vegetables galore, all at bargain prices, are what you'll find at this colourful canal-side market.

## A PLATFORM FOR DESIGN

Creativity is king in Berlin, a city where individualism trumps conformity. Jörg Wichmann and Theresa Meirer have tapped into this dynamism and created a showcase for about 140 home-grown designers with **Berlinomat** (☎ 4208 1445; Frankfurter Allee 89; ☎ 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat; ☎ ☎ Frankfurter Allee), a mini-department store tucked in among the Stalinist behemoths of Frankfurter Allee. In halogen-flooded, snowy-white rooms, they present the latest visions from a pool of about 140 creatives working in fashion, accessories, furniture and jewellery. Don't expect stodgy couture: Berlin fashion, accessories, furniture and jewellery are down-to-earth, slightly irreverent, with a fresh edge you won't find in Paris or Milan. A selection from the Berlinomat designers is also available on the top floor of Galleries Lafayette (opposite). To bone up on who's who in the Berlin fashion scene, get a copy of the English/German 'trend shopping guide' called *Designpole Berlin*. It's available at bookstores, Berlinomat and at Berlin Infostores.

## Flea Markets

**Flohmarkt am Mauerpark** (Map p103; Bernauer Strasse 63, Mauerpark; ☎ 10am-5pm Sun) It's getting more commercial, but for now most of the vendors are simply locals cleaning out their closets, which keeps prices low, often ridiculously so. The outdoor café and 'beach' bar are welcome refuelling pits.

**Flohmarkt am Arkonaplatz** (Map pp96-7; Arkonaplatz; ☎ 10am-5pm Sun) A short walk from Mauerpark, this smallish flea market feeds the retro frenzy with groovy furniture, accessories, clothing, vinyl and books from the 1960s and '70s.

**Flohmarkt Strasse des 17 Juni** (Map p102; ☎ 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) West of the Tiergarten S-Bahn station, this big market is a tourist favourite, making bargains as rare as tulips in Tonga. Still, good Berlin memorabilia, plus grandma's furniture and jewellery make it a fun browse.

## Galleries

Berlin has about 300 commercial galleries located in courtyards, patrician villas, old warehouses or factories, or in spacious, elegant collections of rooms on major boulevards. You'll find concentrations of them along Ku'damm and Fasanenstrasse in Charlottenburg (Map p102), as well as on Auguststrasse in Mitte (Map p98).

For a comprehensive and up-to-date overview, pick up a copy of *Berlin Artery – Der Kunstführer* (€2.50; in both German and English) available at newsstands, bookshops and some museums.

## Made in Berlin

**Bonbonmacherei** (Map p98; ☎ 4405 5243; Oranienburger Strasse 32, Heckmann-Höfe) The lost art of

handmade sweets has been lovingly revived in this little basement store cum kitchen where candy-makers Katja and Hjalmar produce everything from tangy sour drops to green leaf-shaped *Maiblätter* (May leaves).

**Harry Lehmann** (Map p102; ☎ 324 3582; Kantstrasse 106) Time seems frozen at this endearingly old-fashioned perfume maker. Scents are kept in big-bellied jars and then syphoned into smaller flasks and sold by weight with prices starting at just €3 for 10g.

**Tausche** (Map p103; ☎ 4020 1770; www.tausche-berlin.de; Raumerstrasse 8) Tausche makes messenger-style bags that are practical, durable, stylish and kitted out with exchangeable logo flaps that zip on and off in seconds.

**Thatchers** (Map p98; ☎ 2462 7751; Hof IV, Hackesche Höfe) These local design veterans specialise in making professional women look good in clothing that's feminine but not fussy, sexy but not vulgar, and always well tailored. Also at Kastanienallee 21 (Map p103).

**Yoshiharu Ito** (Map p98; ☎ 4404 4490; Rosa-Luxemburg-Strasse 5) This Tokyo-trained couture designer puts a personal spin on classic cuts. Men's clothing is his main strength, but his women's line is turning heads as well.

## Music

**Mr Dead & Mrs Free** (Map p133; ☎ 215 1449; Bülowstrasse 5) This Berlin institution has an eclectic assortment of rock, pop, country, indie, alternative, even jazz, soul and blues, much of it UK and US imports. Vinyl rules, but there are also a few CDs.

**Platten Pedro** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 344 1875; Tegeler Weg 102) Vinyl purists happily make the trip out to this cutish store packed to the rafters with vintage albums, from pop to punk to polka – and not a CD in sight!

**Scratch Records** (Map pp100-1; ☎ 6981 7591; Zossener Strasse 31) Come here to flick through a small but choice selection of soul, funk, electro, R&B, soundtracks and jazz on vinyl (in back) and CD (in front), much of it hard-to-find imports.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

Berlin has two main airports; the general information number for both is ☎ 0180-500 0186 (www.berlin-airport.de). Tegel (TXL; Map pp96-7) is about 8km north-west of the city centre and primarily serves destinations within Germany and Western Europe. Direct flights on Delta and Continental from New York also land here. Schönefeld (SXF; Map p93), some 22km southeast of the centre, handles mostly flights to/from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia.

Many major international airlines serve one or both of Berlin's airports as do discount carriers Ryan Air, easyJet, Air Berlin and German Wings. For airline contact information, see p755.

A third airport, Tempelhof (THF; Map pp96-7), was expected to cease operation in 2007. However, it has received prior reprieves, so it's anyone's guess what will actually happen.

### Bus

Berlin's central bus station, **ZOB** (Masurenallee 4-6), is actually not particularly central but about 4km west of Bahnhof Zoo, right by the Funkturm radio tower in western Charlottenburg. To get there, take the U2 to Kaiserdamm or the S41, S42, S45, S46 or S47 to Messe Nord/ICC.

Tickets are available from the **ZOB Reisebüro** (☎ 301 0380; Masurenallee 4-6; ☎ 6am-9pm Mon-Fri, 6am-3pm Sat & Sun), although many in-town travel agencies also sell them. The main operator is **BerlinLinienBus** (☎ 861 9331; www.berlinlinienbus.de) with departures for destinations throughout Germany and Europe. **Gulliver's** (☎ 311 0211; www.gullivers.de) also has an extensive route system.

Backpacker-oriented hop-on, hop-off service **Bus About** (☎ in UK 020 7950 1661; www.busabout.com) stops at the Citystay Hostel (p125) in Mitte.

### Car & Motorcycle

The A10 ring road links Berlin with other German and foreign cities, including the A11 to Szczecin (Stettin) in Poland; the A12 to

Frankfurt am der Oder; the A13 to Dresden; the A9 to Leipzig, Nuremberg and Munich; the A2 to Hanover and the Ruhrgebiet cities; and the A24 to Hamburg.

### RIDE-SHARE SERVICES

Berlin has several *Mitfahrzentralen* (ride-share agencies; p759), which typically charge €15 for shared rides to Hamburg, €31 to Frankfurt and €29 to Munich. The people answering the phone in these offices usually speak English well.

**CityNetz Mitfahrzentrale** (Map p102; ☎ 194 44; www.mfz-citynetz.de; Joachimstaler Strasse 17; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun)

**Shuttlenet** (Map p102; ☎ 194 20; www.shuttlenet.de/berlin; Hardenbergplatz 14; ☎ 8am-8pm)

### Train

Berlin is well connected by train to other German cities, as well as to popular European destinations, including Prague, Warsaw and Amsterdam.

In May 2006, Berlin's spectacular new Hauptbahnhof (main train station; Map p98) opened just north of the government quarter. The futuristic glass hall hemmed in by two office buildings is among Europe's largest and most modern railway hubs. National and international long-distance trains departing in all directions are joined by S-Bahn trains.

The U-Bahn and north- and southbound trains depart below-ground, while east- and westbound trains, as well as the S-Bahn, run from the upper platforms. There are plenty of shops, which stay open until 10pm.

While all long-distance trains converge at the Hauptbahnhof, some may also stop at other Berlin stations such as Spandau, Ostbahnhof and Lichtenberg. Bahnhof Zoo, meanwhile, has been demoted to a regional train station (although this may change again).

Hauptbahnhof predictably has the best infrastructure with left-luggage offices, coin lockers, car rental agencies, currency exchange offices and plenty of shops and fast-food restaurants. The other stations, though smaller, have many of the same facilities.

## GETTING AROUND

### To/From the Airport

#### SCHÖNEFELD

Schönefeld airport (Map p93) is served twice hourly by the AirportExpress train, with departures from Bahnhof Zoo (30 minutes),

Friedrichstrasse (23 minutes), Alexanderplatz (20 minutes) and Ostbahnhof (15 minutes). Note that these are regular regional Regionalexpress (RE) or Regionalbahn (RB) trains, although they are also designated as Airport-Express train in the timetable.

The S9 makes the trip from Alexanderplatz in 40 minutes and from Bahnhof Zoo in 50 minutes. The S45 is another alternative if you're headed somewhere outside the central city.

The Schönefeld train station is about 300m from the terminal; they're linked by a free shuttle bus every 10 minutes. Walking takes about five to 10 minutes.

Bus 171 and express bus X7 link the terminal directly with the U-Bahn station Rudow (U7) with connections to central Berlin.

The fare for any of these trips is €2.10.

A taxi from Schönefeld to central Berlin costs between €25 and €35.

### TEGEL

Tegel airport (Map pp96-7) is connected to Mitte by the JetExpressBus TXL, which makes the trip to/from Alexanderplatz via Unter den Linden and Hauptbahnhof in about 30 minutes. If you're heading to the western city centre, you're better off hopping aboard JetExpressBus X9, which takes you to Bahnhof Zoo in just under 20 minutes. Bus 109 is slower but handier if you need to go somewhere along the Kurfürstendamm.

Tegel is not directly served by U-Bahn. The nearest station is Jakob-Kaiser-Platz (U7), which is connected to the airport by bus 109.

The fare for any of these rides is a standard AB zone ticket for €2.10 (see p144).

The average taxi fare from Tegel is €15 to Bahnhof Zoo and €20 to Alexanderplatz.

### TEMPELHOF

Tempelhof airport (Map pp96-7) is served by the U6 (get off at Platz der Luftbrücke) for €2.10. A taxi to Bahnhof Zoo or Alexanderplatz costs between €10 and €15.

### Car & Motorcycle

Berlin is less congested than other capitals, making getting around by car comparatively easy.

Parking in garages is expensive (about €1 to €2 per hour), but often it'll be your only choice. Parking meters are rare but the 'pay and display' system is quite widespread. Free street

parking, while difficult to find in central areas, is usually available in the outer districts.

### CAR HIRE

All the major international chains maintain branches at the airports, major train stations and throughout town. Check the Yellow Pages (under *Autovermietung*) for local branches or call the central reservation numbers (see above).

Local independent outfits may have better prices and fewer restrictions on age or driving records, although you won't be driving the latest models.

**Das Hässliche Entlein** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 0180-343 3683; www.die-ente.de; Budapest Strasse 6) Daily rentals from €14, including full insurance, VAT and unlimited kilometres.

**Robben & Wientjes** (www.robben-wientjes.de) Kreuzberg (Map pp100-1; ☎ 616 770; Prinzenstrasse 90-91); Prenzlauer Berg (Map p103; ☎ 421 036; Prenzlauer Allee 96)

### MOTORCYCLE HIRE

If you get 'Harley Hunger', you can hire bikes from the following outfits. Daily rates are about €55 for the Sportster 883 and €115 for the Fat Boy.

**Classic Bike Harley-Davidson** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 616 7930; Salzufer 6)

**Rent-a-Harley** (Map p102; ☎ 882 4915; Lietzenburger Strasse 90)

### Public Transport

Berlin's public transport system is composed of buses, trams, the U-Bahn (subway trains), the S-Bahn (suburban trains), Regionalbahn (RB) and Regionalexpress (RE) trains and ferries.

The main operator, BVG, operates an **information kiosk** (Map p102; Hardenbergplatz; ☎ 6am-10pm) outside Zoo station. The staff hand out free route network maps and also sell tickets. For general and trip-planning information, call the 24-hour hotline on ☎ 194 49 or use the online function at www.bvg.de.

For information on S-Bahn, RE and RB connections, you can also visit the Reisezentrum (Travel Centre) at train stations, call ☎ 11861 or ☎ 0800-150 7090 or check www.bahn.de.

### BUYING & USING TICKETS

Bus drivers sell single tickets and day passes, but tickets for U- and S-Bahn trains and other multiple, weekly or monthly tickets must be

purchased before boarding. They're available from orange vending machines (with instructions in English) at any U- or S-Bahn station or from any kiosk or shop bearing the BVG logo.

Tickets must be stamped (validated) at station platform entrances. The on-the-spot fine for getting caught without a valid ticket is €40.

#### FARES & TICKETS

Berlin's metropolitan area is divided into three tariff zones – A, B and C. Tickets are available for zones AB, BC or ABC. Unless you're venturing to Potsdam or the very outer suburbs, you'll only need the AB ticket. For short trips, buy the *Kurzstreckenticket* for €1.20. It's good for three stops on the U- and S-Bahn or six on any bus or tram. The group day pass is valid for up to five people travelling together. Kids below age six travel for free. Children aged six to 14 qualify for reduced (*ermässigt*) rates.

Ticket type	AB	BC	ABC
single	€2.10	€2.30	€2.60
reduced single	€1.40	€1.60	€1.90
day pass	€5.80	€5.70	€6
group day pass	€14.80	€14.30	€15
7-day pass	€25.40	€26.20	€31.30

#### BUSES & TRAMS

Berlin's buses are rather slow, but being enconced on the upper level of a double-decker makes for some inexpensive sight-seeing – see the boxed text, p105.

Bus stops are marked with a large 'H' (for *Haltestelle*) and the name of the stop. The next stop is usually announced via a loudspeaker or digitally displayed. Push the button on the handrails if you want to get off. Night buses take over from about 12.30am to 4.30am, running at roughly 30-minute intervals. Normal fares apply.

Trams only operate in the eastern districts. The M10, N54, N55, N92 and N93 offer continuous service nightly.

#### S-BAHN & REGIONAL TRAINS

S-Bahn trains make fewer stops than U-Bahns and are therefore handy for longer distances, but they don't run as frequently. They operate from around 4am to 12.30am and throughout the night on Friday, Saturday and public holidays.

Destinations further afield are served by Regionalbahn (RB) and Regionalexpress (RE) trains. You'll need an ABC or Deutsche Bahn ticket to use these trains.

#### U-BAHN

The most efficient way to travel around Berlin is by U-Bahn, which operates from 4am until just after midnight, except at weekends and public holidays when service continues through the night on all lines but the U4. The next station is usually announced and also digitally displayed in newer carriages. Starting in 2007 a new U-Bahn line, the U55, is scheduled to begin service between the new Hauptbahnhof and Brandenburger Tor.

#### Taxi

You'll find taxi ranks at the airports, major train stations and throughout the city. Flag fall is €2.50, then it's €1.50 per kilometre up to 7km and €1 for each kilometre after that. Taxis can be ordered on ☎ 194 10, ☎ 0800-8001 1554 and ☎ 0800-222 2255.

For short trips, you can use the €3 flat rate, which entitles you to ride for up to 2km, but it's only available if you flag down a moving taxi and request this special rate (called *Kurzstreckentarif* – short trip rate – or €3 *Tarif*) before the driver has activated the meter. If you continue past 2km, regular rates apply.