

# Denis' Berlin Travel Guide

This document is intended for people visiting Berlin. It's an opinionated list of cool things to do, but it should be a good basis for most people.

Contributions welcome! Is something missing? Is something wrong? **Let me know!** (That means: leave a comment.)

This guide is meant to be complementary to the [Berlin Wikitravel guide](#). Don't expect my guide to provide you all the information you need when traveling to Berlin.

## Flying to Berlin

Try to fly to Tegel (TXL). TXL is a great airport because it is so small. It's also quite easy to get from TXL to the center of the city (and to my house!).

## Getting around by cycling

I recommend renting a bicycle. It's about €12 a day and you can get around easily. Some places to visit by bike:

- Cycle through Tiergarten
- Cycle along East Side Gallery (or you can do it on foot!)
- Cycle along the former Berlin Wall
- Cycle along Karl Marx Allee
- Cycle along Tempelhof Airport

## Getting about using public transportation

A day pass costs around €8 and gives you access to all methods of public transportation within the AB range (which is quite large). There's also a seven-day pass. Having the freedom to go anywhere by public transportation is awesome.

## Walking

Berlin has a bunch of nice, relaxing areas. Take a walk around the north side of Mitte, and especially in Prenzlauer Berg around Kollwitzplatz and the area around the water tower.

In general, Berlin is quite well-suited for walking, wherever you are.

## **Parks**

- Tiergarten
- Volkspark Humboldthain
- Volkspark am Weinberg
- Volkspark Friedrichshain
- Botanischer Garten

Tiergarten has some nice smaller areas in it, including the Bismarck Memorial, a small Soviet war memorial (there's a bigger one in Treptower Park), and the Beethoven-Haydn-Mozart memorial. I recommend cycling through the park!

## **Berliner Unterwelten**

Berliner Unterwelten organises tours in underground areas ranging from the former WW2 flak tower in Humboldthain to escape routes through the Berlin Wall. Greatly recommended! (Not suited for the claustrophobic.)

Tours in English are limited and you can only buy them on the day itself, so it is worth buying the tickets in the morning, even when you're only doing the tour in the afternoon.

## **Brandenburger Tor area**

The Reichstag dome is open to visitors and provides a nice view along with some history of Berlin and the Reichstag. Reservation is required, and it's in popular demand, so try to book at least two weeks in advance.

Other stuff to check out in this area:

- the Holocaust memorial
- Bebelplatz and the book burning memorial
- Potsdamer Platz along with the Sony Center
- Tiergarten (ideal to cycle through — see above)
- Gendarmenmarkt

## **Remains of the Berlin Wall**

- Berlin Wall memorial
- East side gallery

Checkpoint Charlie is boring and touristy.

# Museums

Berlin has a lot of museums.

- Alte Nationalgalerie
- Neue Nationalgalerie
- Pergamon-museum (has a reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate using original bricks)
- DDR-museum (quite touristy)
- Sammlung Boros (modern art in a former WW2 bunker)
- Bauhaus Museum (visit this if you are the artsy type)
- [Technology museum](#)

Some museums that are either more difficult or not as good:

- Stasi-museum (Surprisingly boring. It doesn't even make the Stasi look all that bad. Their cafeteria is the saddest one I've seen in a long time. They do have a nice collection of objects with embedded cameras though.)
- Topography of Terror: a museum dedicated to the cruelties of the SS . This is not an easy nor a happy museum, but nonetheless worth visiting.

Some museums that I haven't checked out yet, but might be worth it:

- [Game Science Center](#)
- [Science museum / Museum für Naturkunde](#) (with dinosaurs)
- Photography museum

# Eating and drinking

Food and drinks in Berlin are rather cheap. For €10 you can have quite a decent meal. Don't go too low though (avoid the €3 pizzas).

## Typically German/Berlin things

- Eat a Brezel
- Eat Currywurst
- Drink Apfelschorle (apple juice + sparkling water)
- Drink Club Mate (or Vodka Mate if you're partying)
- Drink Fritz Kola
- Drink Fassbrause

## Coffee

Berliners like their coffee.

- Bonanza Coffee Heroes
- The Barn
- Five Elephant
- Silo Coffee
- CK
- Godshot

## **Beer and other alcoholic drinks**

German beer is fairly bland in general, but there are places where they serve more special beer. There are even some great German microbreweries.

- Herman
- Vagabund
- John Muir (primary a cocktail bar)
- Hops & Barley
- The Black Lodge (if you like Twin Peaks, you must go there)
- Kaschk
- Hopfenreich
- Würgeengel (cocktails)

## **Breakfast**

Berliners like their breakfast big, and it's almost always big enough for brunch (even if they don't mention it). Sometimes, a single plate is enough as brunch for two.

Breakfast is often served until 4 PM. Did I say breakfast? I meant brunch.

- Engelberg
- Café Krone
- Glory Whole
- Gorki Park
- Cafe Morgenrot (vegetarian — try their brunch buffet)
- Strandbad Mitte
- Der Neue Weltempfänger

Recommended, but haven't tried yet:

- Café Tous Les Jours
- Morena (breakfast until 5pm)

## **Restaurants**

There are a bunch of good burger or burger-like places:

- The Bird

- Burgermeister
- Shiso Burger
- Muse
- Room 77
- Tommi's Burger Joint

Other places:

- Cocolo (ramen — **recommended**)
- W - Der Imbiss (vegan-friendly, but they have delicious salmon — no toilet)
- Babel (Lebanese)
- Il Due Forni (pizza — delicious pizza, noisy place, notoriously bad service<sup>1</sup>)
- Pasternak (Russian)
- Beakers
- María Bonita (Mexican — tiny, cute, no toilet)
- Chicago Williams (BBQ — if you like meat, you'll like this place)
- Yumcha Heroes (Chinese)
- Omoni (Japanese/Korean)
- Kopps (vegan, more upscale)
- Pizza Nostra
- Imbiss 204
- Si An
- Zula Hummus Café
- Yam Yam
- Sisal
- DUDU
- Cô Cô Bánh Mì (Vietnamese sandwiches)
- Gorki Park (Russian)
- Der Platzhirsch
- freysinn
- Massai (African, more upscale)
- La Bodeguita del Medio
- BiBim (Korean)
- Gangnam Pocha (Korean – you can grill your own food)
- VOLTA
- Sucre et Sel (French)
- Barcomi's Deli (service can be bad)
- Ständige Vertretung
- Tin Tan
- Schwarzer Hahn
- Mogg & Melzer (sandwiches, probably overpriced)
- Lava

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<sup>1</sup> I got shooed like a dog once. It was pretty humiliating.

- Gong Gan
- Altes Europa
- Lecker Song
- Frau mittenmang (more expensive)
- Adonis (looks crappy, but the food is quite good)
- Salt n Bone (especially if you like meat)
- Kimchi Princess

If you like kebab, you can go to *Mustafa's Gemüse Kebab* on Mehringdamm, but be prepared to queue for an utterly ridiculous amount of time (I waited for more than two hours).

You can have food in the restaurant at the top of the Fernsehturm at Alexanderplatz. I haven't been there myself, but it's a revolving restaurant! 60s style! What can possibly be bad about this!!!

For some quite fancy patisserie, you can go to [Du Bonheur](#) in Brunnenstraße.

Places that have been recommended but haven't check out yet:

- Dolores (Mexican)
- Masaniello (better pizza than Il Due Forni, marginally better service)
- Santa María (Mexican)
- Schwarzwaldstuben
- Oslo Kaffeebar
- Nola's am weinberg
- Lokal
- Café V (vegetarian and vegan)
- Chan (Viet, Thai food)
- Gorgonzola Club (Italian)
- Twinpigs
- Chutnify
- Transit (Indonesian tapas)

There are some nice street food places in Berlin too:

- Arkonaplatz around lunchtime on Fridays. They have a bunch of nice food stalls, including fish and pasta. The fish is great, and I quite like the Brötchen mit Leberkäse too. They're open even when it's cold, although you might not find a warm place to eat your food in the area.
- Bite Club (haven't checked it out yet myself)
- Honorary mention to Neue Heimat, who closed on September 13th, 2015. :(

## Second hand markets

- Mauerpark on Sunday: big, expensive, bad quality items, touristy
- Arkonaplatz on Sunday: small, cozy, still expensive, has some nice gems

Both of the second-hand markets above are quite close to each other, so I recommend visiting them both on the same day.

There's also the Hallentrödelmarkt in Treptow, but I haven't been there so I don't know how good it is. It's probably enough to just visit the Arkonaplatz second-hand market.

## Outside of Berlin

You can visit Potsdam. It's not very interesting, but the Park Sanssouci is nice. Sadly, all a bit too touristy. Filmpark Babelsberg is said to be nice, but I haven't visited it yet.

A colleague recommends the restaurant Der Butt in Potsdam. (By the way, *Butt* is the European flounder, a type of flatfish.)

## Other stuff

- Visit the Soviet war memorial
- Check out Kurfürstendamm + KaDeWe (department store)
- Check out Hackesche Markt + Hackesche Höfe
- Visit Teufelsberg (need a guided tour)
- Visit Spreepark, a former amusement park. You need a guided tour, although it's not entirely clear to me whether this is still possible after the [Spreepark fire in august](#) (in German). One of my friends said that a tour alongside the fence is still possible, but I highly doubt whether that's fun.
- Play Berlin-style Ping Pong at Dr. Pong
- Check out the modern architecture of the Regierungsviertel
- Visit the Zoo and/or the Tierpark!
- Visit the SoundCloud office! (You will have to ask me personally first.)
- Go up to the top of the TV tower (costs around €13 if I recall correctly). You can also make a reservation for the restaurant online; with a reservation, you don't have to join the queue for normal guests, which can be up to three hours long.
- Dong Xuan market for awesome food and mannequin shopping (and other useless crap)

Stuff that was recommended but haven't check out yet:

- [Clärchens Ballhaus](#)

## Trivia

You'll find a lot of **pink pipes** in the city. These are meant for draining construction areas, because Berlin is a swampy area, so they always run from a construction area to a river. The pink color was chosen to appeal to kids.

Easy to miss: on sidewalks, you can find **Stolpersteine**: cobblestone-sized plaques dedicated to victims of the Holocaust. Berlin has a few thousand of these stones.

## Important details

Have enough cash money in your wallet. Most restaurants don't accept cards. €100 is not a lot.

Tipping is usually around 10% of the original price. Waiters often ask you whether you want to pay together (*zusammen*) or split the bill (*getrennt*).

Waiters can be quite unfriendly in Berlin. That's normal. That doesn't mean they hate you. "Customer is king" doesn't really apply as much to Berlin.

Almost all shops are closed on sundays. There are night shops that are open on sundays though (called *Spätkauf*, or *Späti* for short).

Bring your student card! Students get great discounts, and the cards are checked rather carefully.