Berlin’s new cultural heart

Cultural stronghold and historical centre

Today, Berlin belongs to one of Europe’s leading centres of culture – and its heart beats strongest directly in the old historical city. For centuries, Berlin’s city centre has been home to a unique concentration of outstanding cultural institutions constructed on the ground where the medieval city of Berlin was founded. The modern Mitte district does not just boast the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Museum Island, but also two opera houses and six major theatres, as well as museums, innumerable galleries and arts venues. Now, this cultural ensemble is gaining a new dimension with many new major cultural projects located here, just a few minutes’ walk apart. You can find an overview of the main on-going and planned landmark projects below.

Overview of the main on-going and planned landmark projects

- March 2017: Pierre Boulez-Saal
  
  - Opened in March 2017, the new Pierre Boulez Saal is a major international concert hall.

  - Initiated by Daniel Barenboim, General Music Director of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden, the hall was developed by American architect Frank Gehry and with globally acclaimed acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota creating the impeccable acoustics.

  - Lined with light Canadian cedarwood, the Pierre-Boulez-Saal offers a flexible design allowing the auditorium’s seating as well as the stage to be arranged in
various constellations for a wide spectrum of events.

- The concert hall is also the public face of the Barenboim-Said Akademie, not only serving as its home venue but also a space where young musicians from conflict zones in the Middle East can practice under the guidance of their mentors.

- The elliptically-shaped hall regularly presents concerts and chamber music, with a range of works from contemporary composers to the classic Romantic repertoire. In addition, the Pierre-Boulez-Saal will provide a venue for lectures and conferences

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- **October 2017: Staatsoper Unter den Linden**

  - The Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Berlin’s first opera house, is the city’s most important heritage theatre building. Designed by architect Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff and built from 1741 to 1743, this neo-classical structure was Germany’s first free-standing opera house and, at the time, the largest in Europe.

  - In a seven-year programme concluding in 2017, the Staatsoper has now been extensively renovated and refurbished. Aside from installing completely new stage equipment, the aim was to add one second to the auditorium’s reverberation time – at the express wish of Daniel Barenboim, General Music Director of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden.

  - To make this wish a reality, the ceiling of the auditorium was raised significantly to create space for a ‘reverberation gallery’.

  - The reopening of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden is celebrated on 3 October 2017 with a performance of Robert Schumann’s Scenes from Goethe’s Faust

  - The regular programme including premières, new productions and classic revivals is launched on 7 December 2017, the 275th anniversary of the opening of the opera house.

  - Now the refurbished Staatsoper Unter den Linden not only boasts world-class acoustics, but in terms of stage technologies alone is one of the world’s leading opera houses.

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• **April 2018: Temporary Pergamon Altar exhibition**

  • With the Pergamon Museum restoration programme ongoing, the impressive Pergamon Altar is closed for visitors until 2019. Constructed specially to house the Altar, the Pergamon Museum is Berlin’s most popular museum, attracting over one million visitors a year. The restoration work for the entire project, which began in 2013, is presently scheduled for completion in 2025–2026.

  • From 2019, visitors can view part of the Pergamon Altar’s treasures at a temporary exhibition building directly opposite Museum Island. The exhibits are to include sculptural elements such as, for example, the Telephos frieze and statues in honour of kings and queens, and as well as some sculptural works from the roof of the altar.

  • Visitors can also enjoy a virtual 3D tour of the Altar based on the latest scholarly research, as well as a newly created fascinating 360-degree panorama by artist Yadegar Asisi. In cooperation with the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Asisi’s 360-degree panorama shows the ancient city of Pergamon in around 129 BC.

  • The temporary exhibition building will remain open until the Pergamon Altar’s restoration is completed in 2023.

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• **July 2019: James-Simon-Galerie**

  • The James-Simon-Galerie, designed by British architect David Chipperfield, forms the Museum Island’s new central entrance and visitor centre. The new visitor centre and entrance is constructed on a site which, well into the 1930s, was home to Berlin’s Central Customs Office.

  • Since July 2019 the impressive James-Simon-Galerie houses the central ticket office for all five museums on the Museum Island, as well as cloakrooms and facilities, cafés and a museum shop.

  • In addition, there will be dedicated rooms for special exhibitions and a lecture hall. In its function as a central entrance, the James-Simon-Galerie is also the starting point of the planned Archäologische Promenade (Archaeological Promenade)
leading to the separate museums. The design is also envisaged as providing a public meeting point in Berlin’s historical centre.

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• August 20, 2019: Haus Bastian - Zentrum für kulturelle Bildung

  • The Haus Bastian of Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin will open its doors on the Long Night of the Museums on 31 August 2019 when the new building will be inaugurated as a new centre for cultural education.

  • Since 2007, haus Bastian has been dedicated to modern and contemporary art as Galerie Bastian. The house at Kupfergraben was designed by David Chipperfield Architects.

  • In the future, museum visits will be prepared and followed up in Haus Bastian. This is also where pioneering educational concepts of Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin will be developed. Which of course includes the collections and exhibitions of the single involved museums and also includes the Humboldt Forum.

  • The family Bastian, as former owners, donated their gallery house to Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

• September 5, 2019: Opening of the new Futurium

  • The Futurium – Berlin’s centre for shaping the future – is open to all those who are interested in the future and want to take an active role in shaping it.

  • The unique building hosts an exhibition with vivid scenarios, an interactive hands-on laboratory, and an event forum as a place of dialogue all under one roof. It offers space for exciting discussions, debate, exploration, creative workshops and visionary ideas.

  • In spring 2018 The Futurium hosted a first temporary exhibition, before the final opening up to visitors for good on September 5 2019.

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• End of 2019: Start of construction of Museum of Modernism
• The Museum of Modernism will show the Nationalgalerie's collection, which is unique in the world.

• The concept and the museum building will be carried out by the Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron, who have already realised the Elbphilharmonie.

• The ground-breaking ceremony is currently scheduled for the end of 2019. The former completion in 2021 is now indicated as mid-2020s.

2020: Humboldt Forum at Berlin Palace

• The Humboldt Forum in the Berlin Palace, now reconstructed and originally home to the Prussian Hohenzollern rulers, creates a new centrum for community and happenings in the heart of the city.

• Inspired by Alexander von Humboldt’s universal idea, the Humboldt Forum forges a link between art, culture and science and provides a venue for a dialogue of world cultures.

• In future, the Humboldt Forum will house the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (SPK) museums of ethnology, Asian art and non-European cultures previously located in the Dahlem Museum Centre.

• The first floor of the Humboldt Forum is to show a Berlin exhibition, coproduced by Kulturprojekte Berlin and the Stadtmuseum Berlin Foundation, exploring the exchange between Berlin and the world. The exhibit area is 4000 m2 and will open step by step in 2020.

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2020: Laying of foundation stone House of One

• The House of One is a planned interfaith centre and place of worship at Petriplatz square for followers of three major monotheistic world religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

• This remarkable structure, financed by crowdfunding, is being designed by the Berlin architectural office Kühn Malvezzi. The House of One is to be built on the
foundations of the churches at Petriplatz square, not just at the heart of the city on an island in the River Spree, but also the founding site of the medieval city of Berlin-Cölln.

- Scheduled laying of foundation stone is in 2020. The House of One is a globally unique project, aiming to create a place for encounters where the coexistence of religions is lived peacefully.

More

- **2020: Start of construction Bauakademie**

  - Between 1832 and 1835, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, probably Berlin’s best-known architect, was commissioned to construct a Bauakademie to house a school of architecture to train master builders. Present plans now envisage rebuilding Schinkel’s original structure, which was torn down in 1962.

  - As yet, though, no final decision has been taken on whether to carefully follow the historical plans or adapt them to create a more modern building. The use of the building is also similarly open, with suggestions ranging from a museum of architecture to an architectural forum dedicated to sustainable building and urban planning.

  - A competition launched in early September 2017 aims to promote a discussion of the concept and ideas for the project, and is scheduled to reach a decision by spring 2018. Going forward, the plan is to hold an architectural competition from mid-2018, with the results ready to be presented in spring 2019.

- **Monument to Freedom and Unity in planning stage**

  - The National Monument to Freedom and Unity is planned to commemorate the Peaceful Revolution and German reunification in the years between 1989 and 1999. The competition for the monument was won by Milla & Partner in Stuttgart with a design created in cooperation with choreographer Sasha Waltz.
• Their aesthetically ambitious structure envisages a bowl-shaped platform, a social sculpture that visitors can not only stand on, but actually set in motion by acting together as a group.

• The Monument was scheduled to be opened in 2019 to mark the 30th anniversary celebrations of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Now the exact inauguration is uncertain. The site has already been chosen – on the Schloßfreiheit square at the Berlin Palace, where the Monument will be constructed on the existing plinth of the former equestrian statue of the German Emperor Wilhelm I.

• **2025: Flussbad**

• The Flussbad project aims to establish a large river swimming pool along a stretch of water from the Humboldt Forum to the Bode Museum.

• The project includes an extensive water purification system and ecological plant filters, as well as sets of open steps leading to the water.

• The result would be the Flussbad pool located in Berlin’s historic city centre where the Spree Canal runs past the Museum Island. Initiated by the non-profit Flussbad Berlin association, the project is supported by the Berlin Senate and the Federal Government.

• With Berlin’s Mitte district developing into the showpiece for the inner city, the Flussbad river pool, scheduled to open in 2025, would provide an attractive, lively public urban space for everyone to enjoy in the heart of the city.
This is what the Pergamonmuseum will look like.

Of course, the extension of the fourth wing of the Pergamonmuseum is also part of the Museum Island Master Plan. The architectural exhibits of Egypt, the Near East, Greece, Rome and the Islamic cultural area will be on display at this place. A special highlight will be the relocation of the Kalabsha Gate as the monumental entrance to the Pergamon Museum.

Berlin’s new cultural heart

Germany’s capital has always been popular for its wealth of culture, and especially for its historic Mitte district. Here, you can visit the Museum Island, two opera houses, six major theatres, as well as innumerable galleries and arts venues. At present, a series of new cultural projects are being created just a few minutes’ walk apart, lending this district a new quality.

1. Bauakademie
   2020 Construction start

2. Denkmal für Freiheit und Einheit
   in the planning stage

3. Humboldt Forum
   2019 Opening

4. House of One
   2019 Construction start

5. James-Simon-Galerie
   2019 Opening

6. 360°-Pergamon-Panorama
   2018 Opening

7. Futurium
   2019 Opening

8. Pierre Boulez Saal
   2017 Opening

9. Staatsoper Unter den Linden
   2017 Re-Opening

Berliner new cultural heart

Old house, new splendour: the reopening of the Staatsoper
After seven years’ restoration work, Staatsoper reopened its historic building on Unter den Linden with a gala celebration on 3 October 2017. When does the first season start in the new house? When was the building erected and why did it require restoration?

We have compiled the most important information and background about Berlin’s oldest opera house.

Read more

Research text: Berlin’s new cultural centre

Which construction projects besides the Staatsoper have already opened? Which are coming next? What will they deliver? We have assembled the details for you in our research text about Berlin’s new cultural centre.

Downloads

- Text Berlin’s new cultural heart [.pdf 662.16 KB]
- infographic Berlin’s new cultural heart [.jpg 207.37 KB]
Berlin, the city of art

Berlin, 26.4.2018
Art experts from all over the world are currently meeting at the "New York Times Art Leaders Network Berlin"

Read more

Temporärer Ausstellungsbau für Pergamonaltar

Berlin, 9.5.2018
Zum temporären Ausstellungsgebäude "Pergamon. Das Panorama"

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