



Berlin History – Down the centuries

Berlin's locations where history happened

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Since it was founded in the Middle Ages, Berlin has been at the heart of historical events – from the rise of Prussia and the founding of the German Empire to the construction of the Berlin Wall and German reunification. The decisions taken here shaped the fate of the country – and sometimes the entire world. The traces of the past across the city take visitors on an exciting journey through time. Today, Berlin's eventful history, past and present, is just as fascinating as it always has been.

A city in flux

In historical terms, Berlin is a young city. Founded in the thirteenth century as Berlin-Cölln, the settlement occupied a major strategic position in what was known as the March of Brandenburg. Soon, it developed into the region's leading trading and market town. In the early seventeenth century, Berlin was almost entirely destroyed in the Thirty Years War. Afterwards, Friedrich Wilhelm, Elector of Brandenburg and Duke of Prussia, revitalised the town to create a flourishing cultural and economic centre. The rulers who followed, later kings in and then of Prussia, developed the city as their royal residence. In 1871, with the founding of the German Empire, Berlin became the new capital, growing into a major metropolis with an international profile. In the Golden Twenties, the city's many attractions and vibrant night life drew thousands of visitors, as did the first major trade fairs held here. The Second World War left Berlin in ruins – the largest connected area of urban ruins in Germany. The city's post-war history was marked by crises culminating in the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Only after the Wall fell in 1989 could Germany's former and new capital again build on its old history. Since then, the city has been in a constant state of flux – which is why Berlin remains Berlin!

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A journey into the past

Berlin's museums offer a fascinating and informative insight into major and minor historical events, complete with facts and background knowledge. Here, you can take a trip into the past, exploring both world history and the daily life of bygone times. In the permanent and temporary exhibitions at the German Historical Museum (DHM), you can explore 2000 years of German history and everyday culture. The Brandenburg Gate Museum takes you across 300 years of history, presented in a spectacular multimedia show on 87 high-tech screens on 400 sq. metres of space. The permanent exhibition in the House of the Wannsee Conference looks at German history's dark chapter of the persecution of the Jewish population. The Allied Museum focuses on the history of the Western Allies in Berlin during the Berlin Airlift and the Cold War. The DDR Museum gives you a hands-on insight into history, with visitors enjoying a taste of life in East Germany by taking a seat in an original GDR living room or a simulated drive in a Trabi.

www.dhm.de, <https://brandenburgertor-museum.de>, <http://ghwk.de>, www.alliiertenmuseum.de/home.html, www.ddr-museum.de/de

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Commemoration and memorial sites

Lest we forget... The past is remembered at Berlin's many commemoration and memorial sites. Close to Brandenburg Gate, you can find the impressive Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. On an area of approx. 19,000 sq. metres, a series of 2,711 grey concrete slabs or "stelae" of different heights are arranged in rows. The Field of Stelae is supplemented by an underground Information Centre, which is also accessible by elevator. The Silent Heroes Memorial Center commemorates those people who helped persecuted Jews living underground in Germany during the Nazi regime. The exhibition is structured around the stories of ten individual fates. The Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime, which includes a moving film, makes an enduring statement against the exclusion and marginalisation of minorities. The Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial vividly recalls 44 years of political persecution in East Germany. Today, Bernauer Straße's Berlin Wall Memorial, with its monument to the victims of a divided Germany, the Chapel of Reconciliation and a Documentation Center, offers the best impression of the former border complex.

www.stiftung-denkmal.de/startseite.html, www.gedenkstaette-stille-helden.de, www.stiftung-hsh.de, www.berliner-mauer-gedenkstaette.de/de/

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The Golden Twenties – Still resonating today

Glamorous variety theatres, dance halls, and silent movies – the Berlin of the 1920s still resonates in many of today's events. You can find elegant cafés and cocktail bars renowned for their offbeat charm where guests dress in style with feather boas, suspenders and cigarette holders. The best-known 1920s party series is probably the legendary Bohème Sauvage events. In changing venues and with different themes, here you can dance into the small hours to the sounds of the Charleston and swing. Clärchens Ballhaus, one of Berlin's popular traditional venues, also regularly holds 1920s-style dance evenings. And if you're looking for the outfit to match, check out "Mimi – Textile Antiquitäten" or explore the second-hand treasures at "Bonnie und Kleid" in Kreuzberg. For the silent movie experience complete with live cinema organ accompaniment, visit the Babylon cinema, or if shows in the best variety tradition are more your thing, don't miss an evening at the Wintergarten Varieté.

www.boheme-sauvage.net/berlin.html, www.ballhaus.de/de/startseite.html, <http://mimi.berlin>, www.babylonberlin.de, www.wintergarten-berlin.de

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Discovering the former Berlin Wall

Berlin was a divided city for nearly 30 years – a city with a wall running through its very heart. Today, all across the city, you can find individual traces of the Wall, as well as remains and memorial sites. In much of inner city, the old route of the Berlin Wall is marked by a double row of cobblestones along streets and pavements. The East Side Gallery, which stretches 1.3 kilometres, is the longest surviving section of the hinterland Berlin Wall. Here, the Wall is now decorated with 101 images by artists from many different countries. The division of Germany and Berlin comes alive at Checkpoint Charlie, the former border crossing point, and the BlackBox Cold War exhibition just a few steps away. The permanent exhibition in the Tränenpalast (Palace of Tears) on Friedrichstraße offers an insight into the first-hand experiences of a divided Germany. You can also explore the former path of the Berlin Wall by bike. The Berlin Wall Trail passes all the key locations, from the East Side Gallery to Potsdamer Platz and Bernauer Straße. If you can plan in a few days, you can also bike around the entire Berlin Wall Trail – all 160 kilometres of it!

www.eastsidegallery-berlin.de, www.mauermuseum.de, www.hdg.de/traenenpalast/

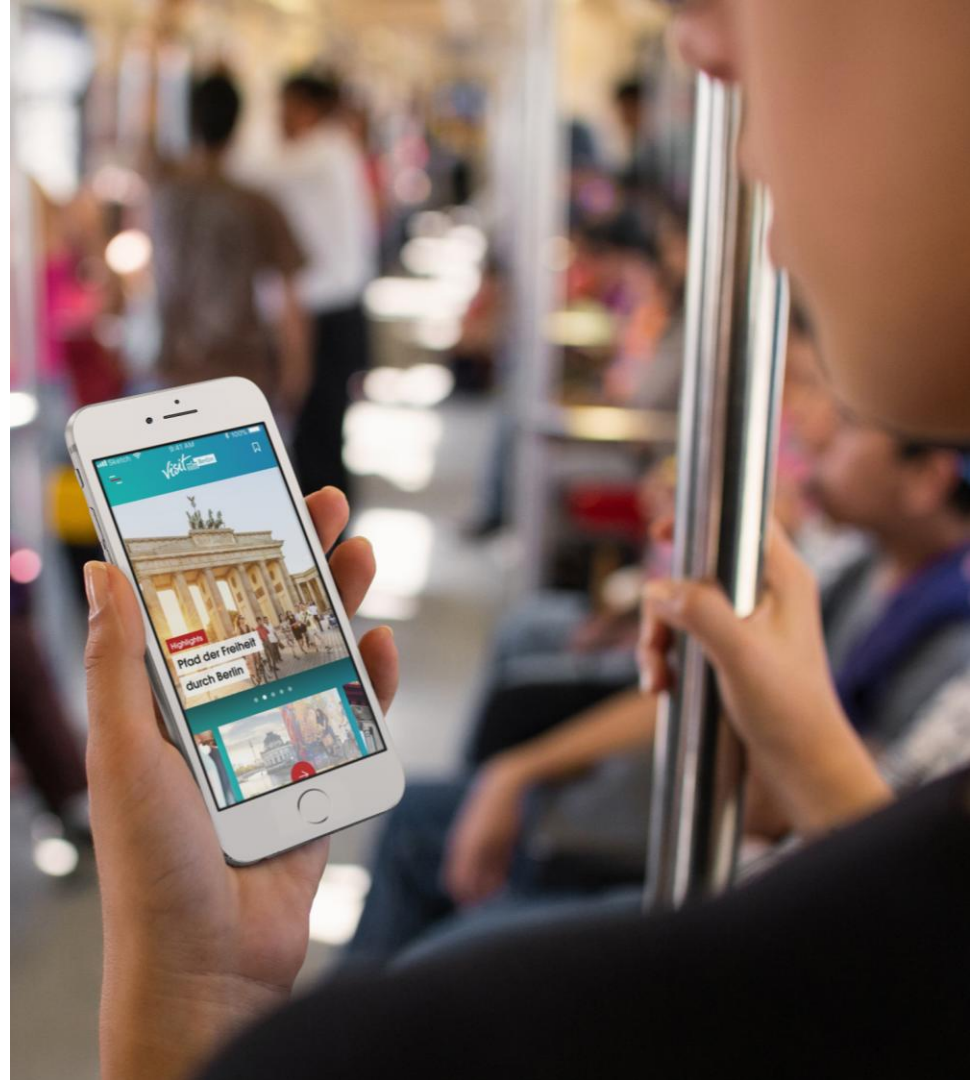
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More research information

Find more details and tips on Berlin's history here:

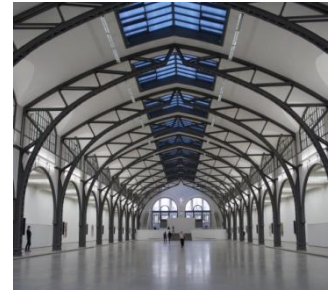
visitBerlin.de/en/berlins-history

Personal tips:

- › Berlin's memorials → visitBerlin.de/en/memorials-in-berlin
- › Berlin's history museums with facts and background → visitBerlin.de/en/history-museums
- › City tours: Jewish Berlin → visitBerlin.de/en/jewish-berlin-guided-tour
- › On the trail of the 1920s → visitBerlin.de/en/tracing-1920s-berlin
Spectacular series event: Babylon Berlin → visitBerlin.de/en/babylon-berlin
- › Memorials to the victims of the Third Reich → visitBerlin.de/en/third-reich-memorials
- › History of the Berlin Wall → visitBerlin.de/en/berlin-wall
- › Cycling the Berlin Wall Trail → visitBerlin.de/en/berlin-wall-bike-tour
- › Berlin's industrial heritage → visitBerlin.de/en/industrial-architecture
- › Berlin Modernism housing estates → visitBerlin.de/en/berlin-modernism-housing-estates
- › Explore Berlin from below → berliner-unterwelten.de
- › Berlin Story Bunker → berlinstory.de
- › Berliner Spurensuche Tours (in German) → berliner-spurensuche.de
- › Berlin's largest palace and gardens → spsg.de/schloesser-gaerten/objekt/schloss-charlottenburg-altes-schloss/

Pictures

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