

## Press Release

### **visitBerlin: 20 Years of Success Promoting Berlin as a Tourist and Convention Destination**

1993-2013: Quadruplication of number of guests and overnight stays

**Berlin, 23 August 2013** For 20 years, Berlin Tourismus & Kongress GmbH, in short *visitBerlin*, has been promoting the city as a destination for tourism and conventions. It is a real success story: With three million guests in 1993 and an estimated eleven million visitors by the end of 2013, the numbers have nearly quadrupled. Overnight stays have increased from seven million in 1993 to an estimated 26 million by the end of 2013. Berlin has established itself as one of the top 3 most popular cities to visit in Europe.

**The Governing Mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit commented:** "The twentieth anniversary of *visitBerlin* means two decades of successful work for Berlin. Today, our city is an attraction for visitors from around the world. According to the statistics, 20 guests come to our city every single minute. And we will once again set a new record this year, as can be seen in the most recent figures for the first half of 2013. We expect 26 million overnight stays by the end of the year. I would like to thank all the employees of *visitBerlin*. You are all doing an excellent job representing Berlin nationally and internationally as a cosmopolitan and exciting city. Furthermore the hospitality and gastronomy industries and all who participate in the Tourism Roundtable, deserve gratitude for their commitment. The travel industry has become one of the most important economic sectors in Berlin and continues to create many new jobs. We are also among the top 3 convention locations in the world. Congratulations, *visitBerlin*."

"*visitBerlin* is internationally recognised as one of the most successful organisations marketing for any city", says Michael Zehden, Chair of the *visitBerlin* Supervisory Board. "Colleagues in other cities are increasingly interested in learning more about our successful public-private partnership business model. This is because *visitBerlin* has managed to bring together partners from the hospitality, convention, airport and political sectors, as well as any relevant cultural, financial and economic institutions, to work together for Berlin."

Burkhard Kieker, CEO of *visitBerlin*, remarks: "Berlin's comeback as a leading world metropolis in the past twenty years is a story admired by many. This is the result of the high level of commitment shown by many entrepreneurs, visionaries and creative people. Guests from all over the world can experience high culture and subculture, a relaxed atmosphere and historical authenticity, all within a single city. Berlin is a city of tremendous change and freedom – and the best is yet to come."

**Convention Marketing in the Capital** The convention industry is a major economic driver for Berlin. Around 123,000 events a year are organised by the *visitBerlin* Berlin Convention Office (BCO), which has been marketing the German capital as a destination for meetings, conventions and incentives since 2001. Berlin has since developed into a leading conference destination in Europe and was

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ranked third in the world in the 2012 statistics issued by the prestigious ICCA (International Congress & Convention Association).

### **The *visitBerlin* Company**

The company was founded in 1993 as Berlin Tourismus Marketing GmbH and had five employees. Today, around 180 employees work for *visitBerlin* in the capital and in 39 countries on all continents and actively promote Berlin as a tourist and convention destination. *visitBerlin* represented the German capital at more than 300 events in 2012. Each year, around 1,200 international journalists are provided with support for their research trips to Berlin. The *visitBerlin.de* website provides information about the city in 13 languages. *visitBerlin* operates five Tourist Informations in Berlin itself and over a million people were assisted in 2012. In addition, the Berlin Service Center can be reached seven days a week via telephone and written inquiries.

### **A Look Back: Top Tourist Events of the Past 20 Years**

The wrapping of the Reichstag by the artist couple Christo was the first major tourist event to be supported and actively promoted by Berlin Tourismus Marketing GmbH. The wrapped Reichstag brought around five million visitors to the capital in 1995. Around 1.2 million visitors came to the MoMA in Berlin exhibition, sometimes waiting for up to nine hours to enter. In 2006, the images of the public viewing at the FIFA World Cup were broadcasted around the world and showed Berlin as a welcoming and cosmopolitan city. Two million visitors came to Berlin in 2009 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 2012, the city shared its 775th birthday celebration with Berliners and visitors alike.

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### ***visitBerlin***

"We know Berlin". This is the slogan that Berlin Tourismus & Kongress GmbH, operating under the trade name *visitBerlin*, has been using since 1993 to globally advertise for Berlin as a travel destination. *visitBerlin's* Berlin Convention Office markets the German capital as a congress metropolis. As a tour operator, the company offers a wide range of travel packages and also issues the official tourist ticket, the Berlin WelcomeCard. *visitBerlin* operates five Berlin Tourist Infos. The Berlin Service Center (Tel. 030-25 00 25) provides information on the complete spectrum of tourist services in Berlin. Information on the German capital is available in 13 different languages at *visitBerlin.com*.

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