

BERLIN TODAY IS A CITY in transition. Everywhere you turn, you see construction sites; the whine of drills and the pounding of jackhammers fill the air. A little more than five years ago, this transformation of the city was heralded by another sound — metal hammers on concrete as thousands of Berliners chipped away at the 30-mile barrier that had physically divided their city for almost three decades. Today *die Mauer* (the Wall) has almost totally disappeared, but Berlin's psychological, social and economic divisions may take longer to disappear.

Nevertheless, like a river breaking a dam and flowing back along its original course, Berlin is fast becoming a single city again. The famous Brandenburg Gate once more opens onto the magnificent tree-lined boulevard Unter den Linden rather than slap-bang into the Wall. Potsdamer Platz, which was turned into an arid no-man's land by the Wall, will soon be transformed into a bustling urban center that is expected to join the city's disparate halves. For the visitor, the attractions of this dynamic, if slightly schizophrenic, city are now doubled.

The East is an exciting crucible for the forces of change, home to some of Berlin's most beautiful architecture and most of the city's great cultural institutions including the Berliner Ensemble (Brecht's theater), the Deutsche Staatsoper and Komische Oper, and the fascinating cluster of museums in Museuminsel on the River Spree. An avant-garde art scene has blossomed, and a vibrant gay scene is thriving.

You'll get a good idea of the city's diversity from the Schöneberg, Charlottenburg, Tiergarten and Kreuzberg districts in the West and the Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg and Friedrichshain districts in the East. Make use of the excellent public-transportation network — the S-Bahn (surface) and U-Bahn (underground) trains, buses and trams (only in the east) — which covers the entire city. Tourist passes, valid for 24 hours or one week, give you unlimited travel on all trains, buses and trams. There are also two and an extensive night-bus system that

operate all night on weekends.

Schöneberg

Berlin's gay community, some 200,000 of the city's total population of 3.5 million, is as varied as that of New York. Many of the city's best-known gay establishments are bunched around Nollendorfplatz, Berlin's equivalent of Greenwich Village, in Schöneberg. Berlin's annual gay-pride events, the Christopher Street Day celebrations and the Love Parade, are held here as well.

Nollendorfplatz's gay history dates back to heady days of the Weimar Republic, a period immortalized by the film *Cabaret* and its source, Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* (a plaque at No. 17 Nollendorferstrasse marks where Isherwood lived in the early 1930s). On the wall of the Nollendorfplatz U-Bahn station, a pink-triangle memorial pays tribute to the bisexuals, gay men and lesbians who perished in the Holocaust. Mann-o-Meter, located nearby, is a central meeting place for *Schwules* (the German word for *queers*) and the best resource for information about the gay community.

Since Berliners stay up very late, many of the bars open only around 10 p.m., and the discos usually don't get going until well past midnight. To start the evening, check out the café-bars or bistros where Berliners socialize before hitting the late-nightspots: Lenz is a chic yuppie hang-out; Berlin Connection attracts a friendly mixed crowd; Andreas' Kneipe, near Wittenbergplatz, is an example of an old-fashioned

East side,

West side

GERARD RAYMOND

whirls us

around the town



**BERLIN
BEGINS AGAIN**

German tavern; and the popular Hafen may remind you of an East Village bar. Tom's Bar, once the focal point of Berlin's leather scene, is the busiest cruise bar in the area. New Action is the current hangout for leather/rubber/uniform enthusiasts and maintains a strict dress code. For your last stop on a Saturday night in Schöneberg, try the trendy disco-bar Connection.

Charlottenburg

The famous two-mile avenue Kurfürstendamm dominates the Charlottenburg district, to the west of Schöneberg. The Ku'damm, the capitalist showpiece of former West Berlin, is still a major tourist attraction with a slew of glittering shops, restaurants, cafés, hotels and movie theaters. The Ku'damm originates at Breitscheidplatz near Bahnhof Zoo, the city's main train station.

Check out the area surrounding the attractive Savignyplatz. There are several good restaurants in this chic residential neighborhood. And drop in at Prinz Eisenherz, the city's premier gay and lesbian bookstore. Also worth a visit is Schloss Charlottenburg, a baroque summer residence built for Queen Sophie Charlotte in 1695, and the Égyptisches Museum, renowned for its priceless bust of Nefertiti.

Tiergarten

The Tiergarten, Berlin's equivalent of Central Park, is an essential part of the city's gay culture. In fact, the park's principal landmark, the *Siegessäule*, a golden Winged Victory monument, has lent its name to the city's free publication for *Schwules*. The Institute for Sexual Science, founded by German gay-rights pioneer Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, was also located in the Tiergarten prior to its destruction

by the Nazis. Walk westward along the River Spree from the Kongreshalle, the oddly shaped conference hall Berliners call the Pregnant Oyster, and you'll see a small monument to Hirschfeld near Foster-Dulles-Allee.

Mitte

In Berlin Mitte, the city's central historic district, you'll find Berlin's tallest structure, the spindle-like

skyline. The building, scheduled to reopen this summer, retains the scars received during Kristallnacht, the Nazi's infamous 1938 pogrom, and from the Allied forces' bombing.

The Scheunenviertel became a magnet for young people when the Wall fell and an alternative arts community took root. At night the main drag, Oranienburgerstrasse, turns into the city's new red-light district and is one of Berlin's "in" places. The seedy but trendy café Obst and Gemüse is a popular hangout, and on the opposite side of the street, Tacheles, a derelict building, has become a dynamic avant-garde arts commune.

Nazi crimes against humanity are documented in the Topography of Terror museum on Stresemannstrasse, built on the former site of the Gestapo headquarters. An unusual subterranean installation of empty bookshelves in Bebelplatz (a/k/a Opernplatz), along Unter den Linden, marks the spot where more than 20,000 books were burned by Hitler's thugs in 1933.

Memories of the darkest days of the German Democratic Republic are preserved in Haus am Checkpoint Charlie, the Wall museum on Friedrichstrasse. Where the armed border guards once patrolled, you can now buy souvenir wall fragments for five deutsch mark (DM). The Palace of Tears, a glass customs hall outside the Friedrichstrasse U-Bahn station where East Berliners bade farewells to friends and relatives visiting from the West, is now a venue for films, concerts and art events.

Kreuzberg

Home to a large immigrant population of Turkish, Greek and Yugoslav "guest-workers," Kreuzberg is a symbol of Berlin's multiculturalism.



Schloss Sansoucci in Potsdam (top). The Grunderzeit Museum (above) contains the entire contents of one of Berlin's earliest gay bars.

Fernsehturm, or television tower, which dominates Alexanderplatz. Along Unter den Linden are magnificent 18th century edifices. The Altes Museum, Nationalgalerie, Bodesmuseum and Pergamon Museum are located on Museum Island nearby.

A visit to the Scheunenviertel is a must. A Jewish immigrant quarter before World War II, it is now one of the trendiest spots in Berlin. The crown jewel of the neighborhood is the New Synagogue; its newly restored blue-and-gold dome is a glorious addition to Berlin's eastern

A SMILE IS A 'FRAUEN' UPSIDE DOWN

Check out the lively Turkish market on Tuesday and Friday afternoons near Kotbusser Bridge. At the *schnell imbiss* (fast snack) stands throughout Berlin, Turkish kebabs and fallafel are regularly on the menu, along with traditional German meats.

In the late '70s and early '80s Kreuzberg was a haven for alternative culture and dissent in West Berlin. Berlin's gay museum, Schwules Museum, as

well as several gay bars and cafés are located here. (check out Café Anal for its outrageous décor). Today, Kreuzberg is rapidly gentrifying, and the students and nonconformists are gravitating toward Prenzlauer Berg in the East.

Prenzlauer Berg

The *szene* in Prenzlauer Berg is the most invigorating in Berlin, probably because it is also the newest. This northern working-class district was a nonconformist's refuge even during the Communist regime. So-called bad Socialists were kept here. Not surprisingly, the rumblings of dissent that helped bring down the Wall were first heard in Prenzlauer Berg (the local name). Electric heating and phones are still a bit of a luxury in many areas, but with the influx of young people, the area is rapidly developing. For a sense of the thriving Prenzlauer Berg gay scene, visit the café-bars Amsterdam, Stiller Don and Schall & Rauch.

Friedrichshain

There are two East German gay attractions in the neighboring district of Friedrichshain, the Volkspark and the disco Die Busche. The park was a well-known cruising grounds in the Communist days, when it was kept under sur-

veillance by the Stasi, the East German secret police. The area around the neo-baroque Märchenbrunnen, or Fairytale Fountain, which is decorated with statues of Grimms Brothers characters, is very popular with gay men. Fridays and Saturdays are the best nights at Die Busche. The tacky décor and the music will take you through a time warp into the '70s, but the spirit of revelry among the young Osis is irresistible.

Frightened at the prospect of encountering skin-heads and neo-Nazis during your visit? If you stay within the popular areas in and around the active gay scene, you aren't likely to be in any more danger here than in any other city.

However, many feel there is a growing intolerance for gays, foreigners and alternative cultures in the new Germany. The plight of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, Germany's most famous transvestite, whose extraordinary life was recently celebrated in Rosa von Prauhheim's movie, *I Am My Own Woman*, serves as a cautionary tale. Charlotte's Her unique collection of furniture and bric-a-brac from the late 19th century, including the entire contents of one of Berlin's earliest queer bars, is on display at her museum-residence in the East

Berlin suburb of Mahlsdorf. Charlotte weathered both the Nazis and the GDR regimes successfully, but after being attacked in her home a few years ago by a gang of neo-Nazis, she now feels unsafe in Germany. Von Mahlsdorf is planning to leave her homeland and open a new museum in Sweden, but you can still visit the Gründerzeit Museum on Sunday afternoons or on weekdays by appointment.

Finally, if you have the time, visit the Schloss Sanssouci in Potsdam, located 12 miles southwest of Berlin. The extravagant rococo castle was built between 1745 and 1747 for the Prussian King Friedrich II (Frederick the Great) who turned Sanssouci into a summer playground for his all-male coterie of friends (the name means *without a care* in French). As crown prince, Friedrich was forced to witness the execution of his closest friend (some say his lover) by command of his harsh disciplinarian father. Although he may not in fact have been gay, we should, nevertheless, honor Old Fritz for his timeless credo of tolerance: "Everyone should find bliss after their own fashion."



INFORMATION AND HELP

FOR MEN

Mann-O-Meter

5 Motzstrasse, Schöneberg
Phone: 216-80-08

Schwulenberatung

20a Kulmer Strasse, Schöneberg.
Phone: 215-90-00

FOR WOMEN

Feministisches Frauen-Gesundheits-Zentrum

51 Bamberger Strasse, Schöneberg.
Phone: 213-95-97

Lesbenberatung

20a Kulmer Strasse, Schöneberg.
Phone: 215-20-00

PUBLICATIONS

Checkpoint

An English language monthly with listings and articles; your best introduction to the cultural and social life of the city.

Berlin, Berlin

A new English/German quarterly published by the Berlin Tourist Board.

MagnusPlan:

Berlin für Schwule and Exklusiv für Sie and Sie: Stadtplan für Lesben

Invaluable maps of gay and lesbian Berlin available free at gay venues and bookshops.

Siegess Nüle

Free gay monthly in German published by Magnus, Germany's popular glossy gazette.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Pension Niebuhr

74 Niebuhrstrasse, Charlottenburg
Phone: 324-95-95; Fax: 324-80-21

Twelve rooms, doubles, singles, with/without attached bath, DM 95-170, (including breakfast). Nov.-Jan. half-price for people with HIV. Service is excellent and gay-friendly. Located in a quiet neighborhood, next door to the chic Savignyplatz.

Hotel Charlottenburger Hof

14 Stuttgarter Platz, Charlottenburg
Phone: 32-90-70; Fax: 323-37-23

Thirty rooms, doubles, singles, with/without attached bath, DM 70-140. Breakfast not included; you get a discount at the adjoining 24-hour Cafe Voltaire. Very centrally located near the Ku'damm, but the neighborhood is not particularly enticing.

Tom's House

10 Eisenacher Strasse, Schöneberg
Phone: 218-55-44; Fax: 213-44-64

Eight rooms, doubles, singles, DM 130-180, breakfast included. Located in a bustling gay neighborhood and catering primarily to a leather crowd. Tom of Finland actually slept here!

BARS & CAFES

Tom's Bar

19 Motzstrasse, Schöneberg
Phone: 213-45-70; open daily from 10 p.m.

Enormous, popular cruise bar with no-frills black décor and a back room in the cellar.

Knast

34 Fuggerstrasse, Schöneberg
Phone: 218-10-26
Open 9 p.m.-5 a.m. daily

The name means "prison" — you know what to expect.

Berlin Connection

19 Martin Luther Strasse, Schöneberg
Phone: 213-11-16; open daily 2 p.m.-2 a.m.

A friendly café-bar-bistro, an unpretentious place to meet up before hitting the bars and nightclubs.

Hafen

19 Motzstrasse, Schöneberg
Phone: 211-41-18, open daily from 8 p.m.

Very popular. The attractive crowd spills out onto the sidewalk in the summer. The name means "harbor."

New Action

35 Kleistrasse, Schöneberg
Phone: 211-77-02; Open daily from 7 p.m.

If leather is your scene, this is your bar; a strict leather/rubber/uniform dress code is enforced.

Lenz

3 Eisenacher Strasse, Schöneberg
Open daily from 8 p.m.

An upscale, trendy café-bar packed with fashionable hunks talking about Culture. Did someone say Chelsea?

Amsterdam

24 Gleimstrasse, Prenzlauer Berg
The latest addition to the rapidly growing gay venues in East Berlin.

Stiller Don

67 Erich-Weinert Strasse, Prenzlauer Berg
Open 6 p.m.-2 a.m..

One of the premiere East Berlin watering holes and part of a vibrant new gay scene.

Schall & Rauch

23 Gleimstrasse, Prenzlauer Berg
Phone: 0172-618-28-69
Open: Mon-Fri 5 p.m.-3 a.m.; Sat 11 a.m.-4 a.m.; Sun 8:30 p.m.-3 a.m.

One of the best café-bars in the East and a good place for brunch.

Cafe Anal

15 Muskauer Strasse, Kreuzberg
Phone: 618-70-64

Go visit for the outrageous décor, if not for its name! Mondays are for women only.

Anderes Ufer

157 Hauptstrasse, Schöneberg
Phone: 784-15-78;
open daily 11 a.m. to 2 a.m.

One of Berlin's best-known gay and lesbian bars. Well worth a visit at any time of day, friendly, intellectual crowd.

DISCOS

Connection

24 Welscherstrasse, Schöneberg
Phone: 218-14-32

Very popular disco, open Fri and Sat from 10 p.m. You get one drink free for the DM 10 price of admission.

You'll have lots of opportunities to make friends here as you wander through the multi-level complex: a disco, video arcades, a cruising gallery, a lounge to watch and be watched, and a store selling clothing and erotic accessories.

Die Busche

11-12 Mühlenstrasse, Friedrichshain
Wed and Sun 9:30 p.m.-5 a.m.; Fri and Sat 9:30 p.m. -6 a.m.

Berlin's biggest gaylesbian disco.

Turbine

46 Wiener Strasse, Kreuzberg
Tue-Thur 10 p.m.-5 a.m.; Fri and Sat 11 p.m.-8 a.m.; Sun midnight-4 a.m.

If you are into alternative music, this is your best bet.

E-Werk

43 Wilhelmstrasse, Mitte
Phone: 251-32-14. Fri and Sat from midnight

Check the gay press or call for info about the special gay events at this very popular hard-core techno house.

Club 90°

37 Dennewitzstrasse, Schöneberg
Check the gay press for special events at this disco.

Lipstick

5 Richard Wagner Platz, Charlottenburg
Wed, Fri and Sat from 10 p.m. for women only

SAUNAS

Of the many saunas in Berlin, your best bets are APOLLO and STEAM, both on Kurfürststrasse in Schöneberg; GATE, located near the Brandenburg Gate on Wilhelmstrasse; and, best of all, TREIBHAUS in Schönhauser Allee in East Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg. Berlin saunas get the biggest crowds between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m..

HEALTH & FITNESS

Apollo Sport Studio

150 Hauptstrasse
(Phone: 784-83-03)

Provides excellent gym facilities to a mostly gay clientele.

SWIMMING: You'll make many gay friends at STADTBAD CHARLOTTENBURG 9-10 Krummerstrasse (Phone: 34-30-32-41); SEZ-SPORT-UND-ERHOLUNGSZENTRUM, 77 Landsbergerallee in East Berlin's Friedrichshain (Phone: 42-28-35-05)

and STADTBAD WILMERSDORF, 80 Mecklenburgische Strasse.

During the summer head to the nudist beach at Wannsee, Strandbad Wannsee.

BOOKSHOPS

Prinz Eisenherz

52 Bleibtreutstrasse, Charlottenburg
Phone: 313-99-36; Open Mon-Fri 10 a.m.-6:30 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Galerie Janssen

45 Pariser Strasse, Wilmersdorf
Phone: 881-15-90; Open: Mon-Fri 11 a.m.-6:30 p.m., Sat 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

MISCELLANEOUS

Schwules Museum

61 Mehringdamm, Kreuzberg
Phone: 693-11-72

Berlin's gay museum, with archive, library and cafe.

Gründerzeitmuseum

333 Hultschiner Damm, Mahlsdorf
Phone: 527-83-29. Tours on Sun at 11 a.m. and noon. During the week by prior appointment.

Painstakingly preserved collection of turn-of-the-century furniture and bric-a-brac.

Berlins schönste Gay-Sauna
Trockensauna · Dampfsauna · HydroJet
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Treibhaus Sauna
Schönhauser Allee 132 · 10437 Berlin
Telefon 030- 448 45 03
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Freitag 15 Uhr bis Montag 6 Uhr
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