

With so little time and so much to see, you'll never be bored in this capital of culture

Berlin is a city that you have to visit at least four or five times before you can really say that you have seen the best of it. It's simply enormous and so packed full of history, shopping opportunities, wonderful restaurants, lively bars and quirky districts awaiting discovery that we get lost in its many distractions each time we go back.

In order to get your head around its vastness, we always find the best reference point is its large, central park, the Tiergarten. To the east of it are the districts of Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg, where most of the unmissable sights are to be found while to the south and west are the residential and commercial districts that would be found in the former West Berlin: Charlottenburg, Wilhelmsdorf and Schöneberg.

Other great starting points are the central tourist offices located at the Hauptbahnhof, the Brandenburg Gate and on Kurfürstendamm.

Past and present

Very little of what you could reasonably term old Berlin actually remains as the majority of the city was flattened during the last war, but in order to get a powerful sense of this dramatic past, start from Potsdamer Platz and follow the course of the former Berlin Wall to the Holocaust memorial. A visit inside is a harrowing experience, but one that everyone who had parents or grandparents who took part in this conflict should experience.

From here it's easy to continue to the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag, designed by Norman Foster. It's a great experience to climb up to the top of its impressive dome as the views of the city are truly spectacular, but the queues may put you off.

It's just a short hop from here to one of Berlin's loveliest squares, Gendarmenmarkt, which boasts not one but two cathedrals. Check with your hotel, as there are often seasonal markets

here that are always worth visiting, plus the city's biggest classical music festival is held here each July.

The Saturday market in Kollwitzplatz in trendy Prenzlauer Berg is also a must, if only to sample the famous currywurst.

Window shopping

Kurfürstendamm in old West Berlin is the city's main shopping hub – a huge avenue lined with global and local retailers, and peppered with restaurants and pavement cafés. It is also home to Berlin's most famous department store, KaDeWe.

We lost ourselves in this enormous lifestyle emporium on a rainy afternoon and can thoroughly recommend giving yourself at least a couple of hours here (and at least an hour of that in the food court), if only to chat away with the fabulous shop assistants – they're experts on everything!

Friedrichstrasse is also a shopper's paradise and home to many of the city's upmarket stores. It's also close to the Friedrichstadtpassagen, which basically consists of three inter-linked zones and 50 plus designer stores and restaurants.

Culture vulture

Museumsinsel or "Museum Island" is found in the river Spree and if cultural sights are your "thing", then there are few collections in Europe that will rival those found in its spectacular neo-classical buildings. The Old National Gallery, Bode Museum, Pergamon Museum and Old Museum are all worth exploring, but our favourite is the New Museum. Aptly named, as it only reopened last year (after a seven-year renovation), its star attraction is a magical bust of the Egyptian queen, Nefertiti.

Hotel Adlon Kempinski Berlin

The Hotel Adlon Kempinski is located in the very heart of Berlin. Its 304 guestrooms and 78 suites feature a loving attention to detail.

Due to its unique location, the Adlon is the perfect point from which to explore this vibrant city. It also offers a unique range of culinary experiences. Restaurant Quarré, which presents French cuisine in a Brasserie style is complemented by the two Michelin-Star-awarded Lorenz Adlon Esszimmer, the Italian restaurant Gabriele and the Asian-inspired Uma Restaurant. Both Quarré and Lorenz Adlon Esszimmer offer a breathtaking view of the famous Brandenburg Gate.

The Adlon Spa by Resense and the Adlon Pool and Gym area provide a haven of beauty and pure relaxation in the very heart of the German capital. Immerse yourself in a total sense of wellbeing amid an ambience of luxury and enjoy invigorating revitalisation before you set out to discover the numerous cultural attractions Berlin has to offer.