

Berliner Bär

Herzlich willkommen beim Berliner Bären. Wer so alt geworden und immer aktuell geliebt ist, hat es wahrlich verdient, dass man sich seiner Lebensgeschichte widmet. Weltweit ist er als das dominierende Berlin-Symbol bekannt und im Berliner Stadtbild ist er in allen Lebensbereichen nicht zu übersehen. 1993 zufällig auf seine Spuren gekommen, habe ich feststellen müssen, dass sehr wenig über seine Geschichte bekannt ist und auch Aktuelles nicht gesammelt und aufbereitet wird. Von den zwei Möglichkeiten, entweder sich über diesen Umstand zu ärgern oder ein würdiges Geschichtsbuch über unser treues Wappentier zu beginnen, habe ich die letztere gewählt und es nie bereut.

Ich fand Gleichgesinnte und seit November 1994 wird im Verein der Berliner Bärenfreunde e. V. aktiv die Geschichte unseres Berliner Bären erforscht, gepflegt und popularisiert. Wir tun dies in enger Zusammenarbeit mit dem Bezirksamt Mitte von Berlin, das sich von je her der Berliner Bärentradition verpflichtet fühlt, weil sie doch in seinem heutigen Verwaltungsgebiet, im alten Berliner Rathaus am Ufer der Spree, am 22. März 1280 begann.

Die nachstehenden Seiten sollen einen kleinen Eindruck über die vielen Seiten der Berliner Bärentradition und über die Tätigkeit des Vereins der Berliner Bärenfreunde vermitteln. Die Liebe zu unserer schönen Stadt mit ihren vielen Gesichtern ist das Motiv für die engagierte, ehrenamtliche Arbeit, die in den zehn Jahren unserer Vereinsgeschichte geleistet wurde.

Ich danke allen, die diese Arbeit aktiv unterstützt haben, insbesondere den Vorstandsmitgliedern Jürgen Bathe, dem Stellvertretenden Vorsitzenden, Ellen Haehling von Lanzenauer, unserer Schatzmeisterin, und Gisela Franke, unserer Schriftführerin.

Ein herzlicher Dank geht auch an meine Enkelin, Nicole Niehoff, aus Lübeck, die die folgenden Seiten liebevoll gestaltet hat.



Brandenburger Tor

The Brandenburg Gate is one of Berlin's most important monuments – a landmark and symbol all in one with over two hundred years of history. A former symbol of the divided city, it drew visitors who used to climb an observation platform in order to get a glimpse of the world behind the Iron Curtain, on the other side of the barren “death-strip” which separated east from west Berlin, geographically and politically. It was here that on June 12, 1987, Ronald Regan issued his stern command to his cold war adversary admonishing him with the words: “Mr. Gorbachov – tear down this wall!”. The speech delivered to West Berliners was also audible on the east side of the Gate and echoed President von Weizsacker's words which translate as: “The German question is open as long as the Brandenburg Gate is closed.”

When Germany was reunified following the fall of the Berlin in November 1989 the Brandenburg Gate quickly reinvented itself into the New Berlin's symbol of unity. It was officially opened to traffic on December 22, 1989 and 100,000 people came to celebrate the occasion. Unfortunately this also resulted in severe damage to the monument which needed to be restored and was only officially reopened on October 3, 2002.



The Brandenburg Gate was erected between 1788 and 1791 according to designs by Carl Gotthard Langhans whose vision was inspired by the Propyläen in Athens' Acropolis. Prussian sovereign Friedrich Wilhelm II was looking for a suitable architectural statement to enhance the approach into the Boulevard Unter den Linden. The classical sandstone work is one of the masterpieces of this era and is the only surviving one of 18 previous city portals. The Quadriga, a sculpture representing the Goddess of Victory, by Johan Gottfried Schadow which can be spotted from a long distance was erected on the Gate in 1793. From 1806 to 1814 the statue was held captive in France as a Napoleonic trophy during the years of France and Prussia's military rivalry for imperial domination.

During WWII the Brandenburg Gate was damaged but not destroyed by allied bombing. When visiting the monument and before crossing over to the other side, the Raum der Stille (Room of Silence) situated on the north wing provides a restful place for a short break. Two additional important landmarks just on the side of the Gate are the Pariser Platz with the Akademie der Künste (Academy of Arts) and the restored American embassy. The Platz des 18. März, commemorates with its date, the demonstrations during the 1848 revolutions for democracy.



Unter den Linden
Unter den Linden, a main east-west thoroughfare through the city of Berlin, earned its name from the rows of linden trees that were first planted there more than three-and-a-half centuries ago.



Statue of Friedrich Wilhelm

One statue still standing today is the impressive equestrian statue of Friedrich II. The massive bronze monument was created between 1839 and 1851 by Christian Daniel Rausch. After the war the statue relocated by the rulers of the GDR but now it has its place again at the center of Unter den Linden.



Berliner Rathaus

The division of the city ended with the fall of the Wall on 9 November 1989 and reunification; the last troops of the former occupying powers left the city by 1994. On 20 June 1991, the Bundestag decided that Berlin would be the new seat of Germany's parliament and federal government. During that same year, the Governing Mayor of Berlin moved with the Senate Chancellery from the Schöneberg Town Hall to the Berlin Town Hall in the Mitte borough. The House of Representatives, Berlin's state parliament, has convened its sessions in the building of the former Prussian state parliament since 1993.

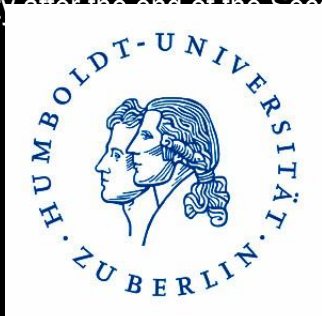


In a referendum on 22 October 1995, Berlin's constitution was approved with 75.1 percent of the votes cast. To a large extent, it represents a continuation of the Berlin constitution of 1950. Significant new elements include the strengthening of enforceable fundamental rights and additions to the state's goals (such as the right to employment, education, and adequate housing). Environmental conservation and the protection of privacy are also new constitutional issues. Citizen participation was enhanced with instruments of direct democracy like popular initiatives, petitions, and referendums. Berlin's constitutional court monitors compliance with the constitution.





Partly due to the influence of the natural scientist Alexander von Humboldt, the university pioneered the introduction of many new disciplines. The chemist August Wilhelm von Hofmann, the physicist Hermann von Helmholtz, the mathematicians Ernst Kummer, Leopold Kronecker, Karl Theodor Weierstrass (the "triple star of Mathematics") and the medical scientists Johannes Müller and Rudolf Virchow became known in their specialist areas far beyond the university in Berlin. Later, a total of 29 Nobel Prize winners did some of their scientific work at the university in Berlin, including Albert Einstein, Emil Fischer, Max Planck and Fritz Haber. And many famous people such as Heinrich Heine, Adelbert von Chamisso, Ludwig Feuerbach, Otto von Bismarck, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring, Alice Salomon, Karl Marx and Kurt Tucholsky were also enrolled at the "Alma mater" of Berlin. Heinrich Mann was the first honorary doctor of the university after the end of the Second World War.



Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

The university was founded in Berlin in 1810, and the foundation concept of Wilhelm von Humboldt gave it the title "Mother of all modern universities".

This concept envisaged a "Universitas litterarum" which would achieve a unity of teaching and research and provide students with an all-round humanist education. This concept spread throughout the world and gave rise to the foundation of many universities of the same type over the next century and a half.

The concept of the academic and statesman Wilhelm von Humboldt was influenced, among others, by the reform ideas of the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, the first vice chancellor of the university, and by the theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher.

From the outset, the university in Berlin had the four classical faculties of Law, Medicine, Philosophy and Theology. Its first academic term began with 256 students and 52 teaching staff. Professors such as Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (Philosophy), Karl Friedrich von Savigny (Law), August Boeckh (Classical Philology), Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland (Medicine) and Albrecht Daniel Thaer (Agriculture), shaped the profile of the individual faculties in accordance with Humboldt's concept.



Berliner Dom (Berlin Cathedral)

Lustgarten (Leisure Garden) Mitte; 1894-1905 by Julius Carl Raschdorff and Otto Raschdorff, Restored 1974-93

The Berliner Dom was constructed from 1893 to 1905 by Julius Carl and Otto Raschdorff as the high parish church, the cathedral and the state's most important Protestant church and to serve as the sepulcher of the Hohenzollern dynasty. A central structure under a great dome houses the ministry church; a small baptismal and wedding chapel adjoin this structure on the south. Originally, the memorial church rose up to the north, connected as an apse of the cathedral. Memorial tombs and opulent, empty coffins were exhibited here in tribute to significant members of the Hohenzollern dynasty. Until this section of the cathedral was removed in 1975-76, it provided access to the Hohenzollern crypt, which occupies nearly the entire basement of the cathedral. The main western façade was designed as an open vestibule to the leisure garden.

Four corner towers enclose the main cupola and combine to form a vibrant landscape with a characteristic silhouette in the midst of Berlin. Stylistically, the dome adheres to the eclectic forms of the peak of the Renaissance era and the Baroque period. Its architecture is oriented more toward the architecture of St. Peter's Cathedral, the mother church of the Catholic world, than to that of its predecessor. The old cathedral at the Leisure Garden had been constructed in accordance with Knobelsdorff's plans by Johann Boumann from 1747 to 1750 and was later redesigned by Schinkel from 1817 to 1822. After lengthy preliminary planning of the new structure, paying special attention to the designs of Schinkel and Stüler and the results of a competition in the year 1867 under King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, Julius Raschdorff presented the first official plans in 1885.



It was not until Wilhelm II took the throne that actual construction of the structure began. The best-known artists of the Wilhelmine era participated in developing this colossal building so representative of the preferences of its time. The outer dome structure, which was damaged extensively during the war, was rebuilt with a simplified cupola and spires between 1975 and 1982; the costly restoration of the interior was completed in 1993.

Apart from several valuable works of art including decorative exterior sculptures, mosaics, paintings, glass paintings and interior décor, it is the crypt, with its ninety sarcophagi and tombs of members of the house of Hohenzollern from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, which is of outstanding significance. Several of the most important sarcophagi, have been on exhibit in the main hall of the cathedral since 1993, among them the two opulent coffins of Friedrich I and his wife Sophie Charlotte, cast in gold-plated lead and tin in 1705 and 1713 according to the design of Andreas Schlüter.



The Alte National Galerie is one of the five museums forming the ensemble known as Berlin's Museum Island – a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Museum was built between 1866 and 1876 and restored in neoclassical style by Friedrich August Stüler in the style of a Greek temple. The Museum reopened to the public after a thorough restoration in 2001.

Alte Nationalgalerie

The Alte National Galerie (Old National Gallery) houses one of the most important collections of 19th century painting in Germany and includes masterpieces by Caspar David Friedrich, Adolph Menzel, Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, not to mention Auguste Renoir and Auguste Rodin. Amongst the most important highlights are K D Friedrich's "Der Mönch am Meer" (from 1810), Arnold Bröcklin's "Die Toteninsel" (1883), Adolph Menzel's "Flotenkonzert Friedrich des Großen in Sanssouci" (1852) and Edouard Manet's "Im Wintergarten" (1979).



Museumsinsel

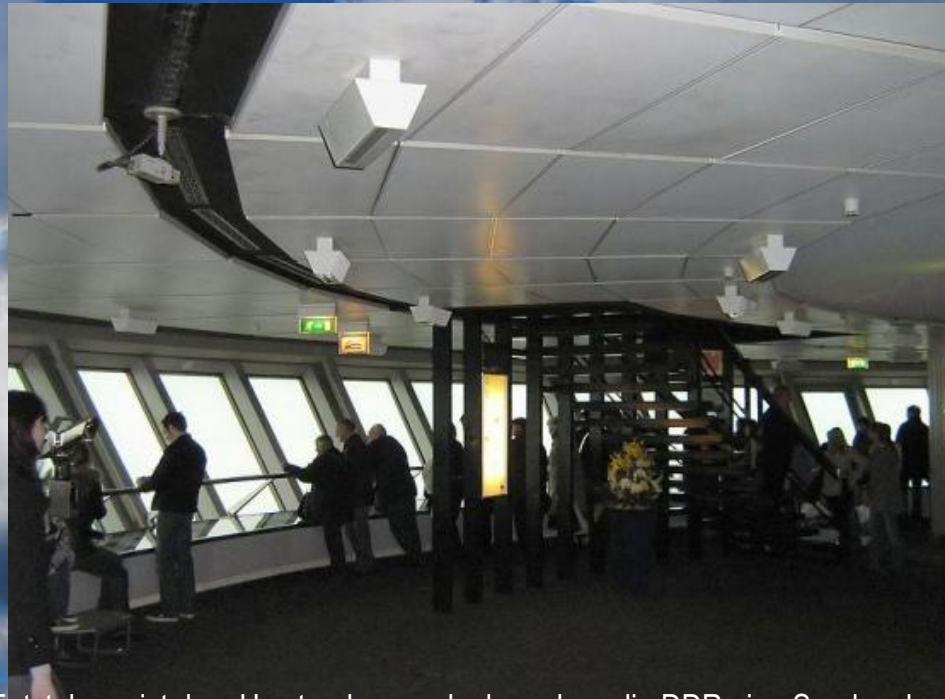
Mitten in Berlin, auf einer Insel in der Spree, befindet sich einer der herausragenden Museumskomplexe Europas: Die Museumsinsel, die seit 1999 zum Unesco-Weltkulturerbe gehört.

Im Laufe von 100 Jahren entstand bis 1930 ein Gebäude-Ensemble, an dem fünf Architekten beteiligt waren. Das Alte Museum von Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1825–30), dessen Gebäudefront den Lustgarten am Berliner Dom beherrscht, ist ein Meisterwerk klassizistischer Architektur. Der erste Museumsbau Berlins ist derzeit wegen Sanierungsarbeiten geschlossen.



Fernsehturm Berlin

Der Berliner Fernsehturm ist mit seinen 368 Metern das höchste Bauwerk in Deutschland und zugleich das markanteste Wahrzeichen Berlins. Touristen und Einheimische strömen in den Fernsehturm, um in der Turmkugel zu speisen oder auf dem Aussichtsdeck den Blick über Berlin zu genießen.



Seine Entstehung ist dem Umstand zu verdanken, dass die DDR eine Sendeanlage benötigte, die zugleich leistungsstark und landesweit ausstrahlen konnte. Nachdem sich der zuerst angedachte Standort in den Müggelbergen als Gefahrenquelle für den Flughafen Berlin-Schönefeld herausstellte, entschied der damalige SED-Parteichef Walter Ulbricht im Jahr 1964 persönlich den Fernsehturm am Alexanderplatz zu bauen. Schon im Spätsommer des gleichen Jahres begannen die Bauarbeiten und es sollten nur knapp vier Jahre vergehen bis der komplette Turm fertiggestellt wurde, im Oktober 1969 wurde er in Betrieb genommen.

Jährlich kommen rund eine Million Besucher aus aller Welt. Ziel ist die Aussichtsetage in 203 Meter Höhe, von wo man bei gutem Wetter bis zu 40 Kilometer weit gucken kann. Eine Etage darüber befindet sich das "Telecafé", das sich in einer halben Stunde einmal um die eigene Achse dreht. Es wird gern erzählt, die Berliner würden den Fernsehturm "Telespargel" nennen. Doch dieser von den DDR-Offiziellen gewünschte Spitzname setzte sich schon zu DDR-Zeiten nicht durch. Es kursierten aber vom Volk geschaffene Spitznamen wie „Imponierkeule“, „Protzstengel“ oder „St. Walter“ (SED-Parteichef Walter Ulbricht). In der Regel benutzen die Berliner aber die Bezeichnung Fernsehturm.



Schloss Charlottenburg

Built by Elector Friederich III in 1699 as a summer palace for his wife Sophie Charlotte, this regal estate, the largest palace in Berlin, is framed by a baroque-style garden. Inside, a collection of 18th century French paintings is the largest of its kind outside France. Visitors can see the Old Palace, with its baroque rooms, royal apartments, Chinese and Japanese porcelain collections and silverware chambers, as well as the New Wing, with its rococo splendor and fine furniture, added by Friederich the Great.

The complex was enlarged several times, adding a domed tower crowned with a statue of the goddess of happiness Fortuna, several wings, the Orangeries, the annex, and the Belvedere Teahouse, now a porcelain museum. Also worth noting is the mausoleum of Queen Louise, and the Schinkel pavilion, built as a summerhouse for King Friedrich Wilhelm II.

The palace was severely damaged in World War II, and rebuilt starting in the 1950's. Charlottenburg Palace's former theatre is now home to the Museum for Pre- and Early History, which boasts items from the famous Troy excavations carried out by Heinrich Schliemann in the 1800's. Tickets for each section are sold separately; gardens are open to the public for no charge; admission to the New Wing includes an audio guide.



Next door to the palace, the Kleine Orangerie restaurant has a sunny atrium and outdoor seating for pleasant weather, and provides a peaceful place to dine, enjoy high tea, or relax with an ice cream. Its larger sister building, the Grosse Orangerie, hosts classical music concerts from April to October; highlights from the 17th and 18th century are performed by an orchestra in baroque costume.



End