

GRAND DESIGNS

To discover Berlin is to discover a city with aesthetic appeal

Writer Vicki Williams



VIEW ON SUNSET IN BERLIN BY JAMES H. TOVEY AND DAVID H. HARRIS



1930s classicist architecture and modern opposite new additions. The stunning and whimsical interiors of the public areas were created and curated by the famous Spanish architect and designer, Patricia Urquiola. The gorgeous rooms have been designed by Spanish architectural office LVG Arquitectura, featuring bespoke furnishings and photography chosen by the hotel's owners, avid art collectors – all art on display is from their private collections with sculptures from noted artists of the genre. It is also home to a Michelin-starred restaurant and a Susanne Kaufmann Boutique SPA that uses only organic, natural products. www.das-stue.com

THIS PAGE: Das Stue achieves harmony between classicist architecture and modern additions

HOTEL ZOO

Another stunning transformation is Hotel Zoo, which re-opened just over a year ago after two years of renovation. Dating back to 1891,



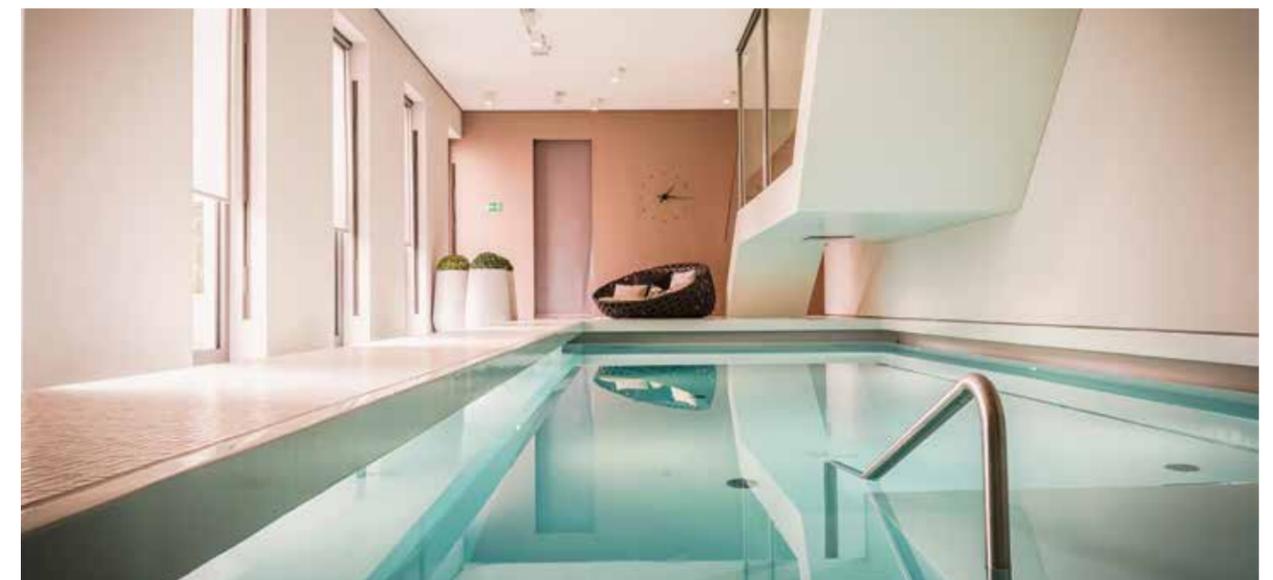
Berlin is a constantly evolving and dynamic capital city, with design at the forefront of change, be it high tech, cutting edge, cultural, artistic or experimental. This design DNA was officially recognised in 2006, when the German capital was officially designated a UNESCO City of Design, the first in the country to be included in the Creative Cities Network organised by UNESCO. The organisation described the city as “a true centre for the creative industries for both amateur and established creators alike. Berlin has demonstrated remarkable social, economic and cultural achievements in the field of design”.

The design-centric discoveries and experiences that await are as vast as the city itself. From top hotels to renovated industrial buildings teaming with creative offerings, from its museums and galleries, to its distinct neighbourhoods, Berlin is a city of design.

A DESIGN STAY

DAS STUE

One of the first opportunities to experience Berlin's personality is by staying at a design-driven hotel. Once the Danish embassy, the design-awarded Das Stue manages to achieve harmony between its





this former grand private residence first became a hotel in 1911, and by the 1950s was the favoured destination of the international film set. It has once again secured a preferred status of the discerning thanks to the designer Dayna Lee (who, for many years, worked as an art director and set director for the Hollywood movie industry), combining stylistic original elements with movie-set inspired additions. The glamorous bespoke rooms impress from the start, as does the entrance featuring a lengthy Diane von Fürstenberg designed carpet. www.hotelzoo.de



25HOURS HOTEL BIKINI BERLIN

A thoroughly modern offering is 25Hours Hotel Bikini Berlin which opened in 2014. Its playful, bright, industrial-chic interiors created by renowned furniture designer, Werner Aisslinger, capture both the urban culture and the green jungle-esque nature. One side represents the urban, dominated by modern materials and city views, and on the other nature (overlooking a zoo and the city's oldest public park, Tiergarten) with floor-to-ceiling windows, hanging sofas (and in-room hammocks), woods and warm tones. Its top-floor restaurant and bar, with rooftop terrace and great views, is popular with both locals and visitors. www.25hours-hotels.com

OLD IS NEW

The 25Hours Hotel is located in Bikini Berlin, Germany's first concept mall that combines retail spaces (including art and design

stores with works from local artists and marketplace-style setups) with restaurants, offices, a cinema, recreation areas, and its urban oasis, a 7,000sqm accessible green rooftop terrace. There are also pop-up stores and weekly events, such as guided architectural tours of the buildings and brunch with live jazz. Architecturally, it combines the original 1950s collection of listed buildings that have been given design makeovers, with juxtaposing new additions. www.bikiniberlin.de

Taking new life as a creative hub, is İMA Design Village, a former industrial building that is now a mixed-use, integrated lifestyle village that includes studios and showrooms home to artists and designers, events and recreation activities, and a popular cafe with design at its heart. There is also a hotel offering long and short-term stays. www.imavillage.com

Winner of awards that include most creative hotspot in the city, The Aufbau Haus – once a factory – has been reborn in stages. The first stage opened in 2011 and the most recent in 2015. It is a mix of retail and offices, focusing on the creative industries and arts, hip rooftop eateries and green terraces, as well as artistic and cultural events. www.aufbauhaus.de

For the ultimate in design collectibles, head to Zeitlos, which specialises in Bauhaus and Art Deco originals, including pieces from legendary designers Mies van der Rohe, Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Marcel Breuer. It also carries Streamline and Mid-Century designs, and there is a splendid range of expertly crafted replicas. www.zeitlosberlin.com

THIS PAGE: 25Hours Hotel Bikini Berlin marries urban culture and nature. OPPOSITE PAGE: Berlin Wall artistry; Hotel Zoo's movie-set inspired rooms

HISTORY AND ART

Berlin has an extensive number of museums and art galleries, from classic to contemporary, with offerings for all interests. For five museums in one location, go to Museum Island – an island in the middle of the Spree River in the central Mitte district, with each internationally renowned museum its own distinct focus. The buildings themselves are important architecturally and are collectively on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

Concentrating on Berlin-based artists who have achieved international standing is Haus am Waldsee, which covers a wide spectrum including visual arts, design, architecture, and sound and composition. It aims to create a dialogue between the artists, their works and visitors, so beyond exhibitions it also hosts children's openings, artists' talks and dinners, performances and classical music concerts. In what may be a progressive first, each Wednesday morning the venue conducts a yoga class amidst art – an opportunity to view the art from a different angle. There is



its architectural collection focuses on Berlin's architecture and urban design, as well as collections, such as the rather fascinating photography archive of the East Berlin Municipal Building Department. www.berlinischegalerie.de

Offering something completely different is Ehemalige Jüdische Mädchenschule, a listed building and former Jewish girls' school that, after restoration, has become an unusual multiplex of sophisticated art galleries, rotating exhibitions, restaurants, and a bar. It is also home to Museum The Kennedys, a comprehensive collection of Kennedy family photographs, personal documents and memorabilia. www.maedchenschule.org

EXPLORE WITH THE EXPERTS

To gain a deeper understanding of design in Berlin, explore with one of the specialised tour operators. GoArt! offers both group and individual themed tours lead by guides with in-depth insider knowledge focusing on art, architecture and fashion: for example Green Design, which explores the growing eco and sustainable side, and Highlights of Berlin's architecture (past and present). The company takes participants to fascinating galleries, museums, private collections, concept stores and buildings, beyond tourist hotspots. www.goart-berlin.de

Directing its focus on lifestyle, culinary and culture tours is Berlinagenten, which positions itself as a personal lifestyle guide, with insider knowledge being a key definer. On the culture side are tours such as Urban Architecture, Urban Insider, and Art Tours (of two key districts) led by passionate experts. www.berlinagenten.com

also a multi-sensory sculpture park by the Waldsee, and an audio guide to the Modernist architecture in its immediate neighbourhood is provided. www.hausamwaldsee.de

For art, photography and architecture under one roof, visit the Berlinische Galerie museum of modern art, with works dating from 1870 to the present day, and both local and international works. Its noted art collections include Dada Berlin, the Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) and the Eastern European avant-garde; and



THIS PAGE: Catwalk sass at Berlin Fashion Week. OPPOSITE PAGE: The Neue Nationalgalerie at the Kulturforum; Industrial-chic interiors at 25Hours Hotel Bikini Berlin



There is also Niche Berlin, which conducts personalised architecture and art tours off the beaten path, exploring hard-to-find innovative architecture and experimental, emerging art spaces. www.nicheberlin.de

BE YOUR OWN GUIDE

If you prefer to discover on your own, there is the free Berlin-App by visitBerlin. The app features more than 700 insider tips, plus information on each of Berlin's 12 distinct districts, including Hidden Places, Must-Sees, and of course, where to eat and drink. It can also be accessed offline. The visitBerlin website is also packed with information. www.visitberlin.de

For more insider tips *Exberliner*, an English-language monthly magazine has art, design and culture recommendations and feature articles. www.exberliner.com

DESIGN NEIGHBOURHOODS

Each of the 12 districts has an individual feel and attractions, with these two falling into the must-explore category.

Known as Berlin's beating heart is Mitte – home to a staggering number of heritage sites, iconic landmarks, museums and memorials. It is also an area of contrasts, with high-end shopping and flea markets, dining at all price points including Michelin-starred restaurants, swish cafes and eco fair trade coffee joints, and an extensive number and diverse range of art galleries.

Neukölln is the current hip residential district that is still in the transformative stage with new businesses and galleries constantly opening, and a good spot for seeing Gründerzeit architecture. There are art galleries doing exhibitions with just hours' advance notice, quirky shops and markets, and on-trend cafes and restaurants, such as Alaska. This vegan cafe and bar features a colourful and eclectic design and has been an instant hit with locals since opening in 2015, thanks in part to the delicious tapas that is served free with a drink, its culinary and musical pop-up events and its killer cocktails. www.alaskabar.de

UPCOMING EVENTS

There is a constant stream of events taking place throughout the year, including Berlin Graphic Days in January 2016, held twice a year with works from around 60 graphic artists, illustrators, street artists and screen printers, with many original items for sale.

Berlinale – International Film Festival (February 11–21 2016) is the city's most glamorous event, attracting the world's largest film festival audience. More than 400 films will be shown, many of which are world or European premieres. www.berlinale.de

THIS PAGE: 25Hours Hotel Bikini Berlin overlooks the Tiergarten