

Designs on Berlin



**The Berlin
sky line**

*Pictures by
Clare Wallace
and courtesy of
www.visitberlin.de*



The Reichstag

Named by Unesco as one of the most creative cities in the world,
Clare Wallace
explores Berlin.

Berlin had been on my travel wish list for some time.

I'd heard from my 'cool set' that this was the place to go with its avant garde modern architecture, a multitude of fantastic museums and decadent nightlife, plus a new wave of fashion designers hitting the streets.

And of course its fascinating history creating a stark and diverse contrast.

So what better time to go than the year of its 775th anniversary and who else better to go with than my father, who has a keen interest in its story and whose grandfather was also German. It was time to return to our roots.

Arriving on a Sunday night we headed to the city's salubrious central area of Mitte, previously known as the area of Regents, which is the oldest part of Berlin dating back to 1190.

In a quiet leafy residential street sits the Honigmond Restaurant Hotel, a beautiful colonial style boutique hotel restored from the original building in 1845.

We were warmly greeted and led to our 'charming rooms' complete with en suites, leather sofas and gilt framed oil paintings of old masters which also lined the corridor.

We had a lot to cover in our short break but the answer came in the help of the Berlin Welcome Card.

This ticket, once validated, takes you all over the city by bus, tube or tram and also gives you discounts on approximately 200 attractions such as museums, restaurants, theatres and tours as well as a handy guide book.



Plezenlauer Berg



Street art



Nikolai Quarter



The Brandenburg Gate

Travel facts

We flew with Germanwings (0906 20294 201918 www.germanwings.com) from Heathrow to Berlin Tegel Airport, 20 minutes from the city.

We stayed at the Honigmond Restaurant Hotel, 10115 Berlin-Mitte, Tieckstrasse 11 (+49 (0)30-28 44 55-0) which is affiliated with the Garden Hotel, 10155 Berlin-Mitte, Invalidenstrasse 122 (+49 (0)30-28 44 55 -77). Both at info@honigmond.de

We dined at Alpensteuck, Gartenstrasse 9, 10115 Berlin (www.alpenstueck.com) and Strandbad-Mitte, Kleine Hamburger Str. 16, 10117 Berlin (030 / 24 62 89 63 www.strandbad-mitte.de)

For more information on the Berlin Welcome Card with its discounts in co-operation with 200 partners and unlimited use of public transport, go to www.visitberlin.de/de/welcome-card

For any more tips and details, visit www.visitberlin.de and www.visitberlin.com

The transport system in this city is fantastic – no need for taxis as mostly transport is quick, efficient and runs all hours.

After a wonderful breakfast of savoury platters and fruits and yoghurts galore at the hotel, we took the tube to the bustling Friedrichstrasse with its amazing shops and theatres and up the wide Unter den Linden to the monumental Brandenburg gate.

Looking at the old photographs from 1945 in the Berlin museum it was incredible to see how it had been restored to its former glory.

After the obligatory photographs, we decided to take the traditional city bus tour where you can hop on and off at each stop of interest at your leisure.

For the next few hours we were given an architectural feast for the eyes, complete with commentary.

You name it we saw it, including The Reichstag, Alexanderplatz, the TV tower (where you can go up its incredible heights to see views over the city), Checkpoint

Charlie and so much more.

There was still a huge amount of building work taking place since the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 which is making this city more and more exciting and it struck us that for a young person it would be a wonderful place to grow up.

We then 'hopped off' at two stops – the impressive Hauptbahnhof, now Europe's biggest train station, and KaDeWe, the largest department store on the continent, which was beautifully laid out and had a food hall that in my mind was more than a match for Harrods.

The next day, to see the city from a different perspective, we rode the tram down to the river for an hour cruise which showed us more of the historic and contemporary architecture.

Another tram to the leafy boho chic area of Plezenlauer Berg took us to smaller trendy shops, restaurants and cafés.

Back to Alexanderplatz for a quick Currywurst on the hoof – Berliners favourite

curried sausage snack – and then we wound up at the vibrant Hackesche Höfe.

We potted around the tangle of cafés, an old-fashioned variety theatre, an art-house cinema and unique boutiques and shops, which are a platform for local designers.

Our last evening we treated ourselves to a meal at the recommended Alpensteuck restaurant with its modern and stylish decor and delicious mixture of south German and Austrian fare.

In Berlin there is something for every taste in the true sense of the word. The dining scene is constantly in motion as the city itself.

In this city of limitless possibilities, the attraction is simple – it's the diversity, the contrasts and the sheer inexhaustible potential of this capital city.

The mixture of history and Zeitgeist, broad spectrum of art, culture and music and shopping and the hip music, club, culture and creative scene, makes this a must for any visitor: