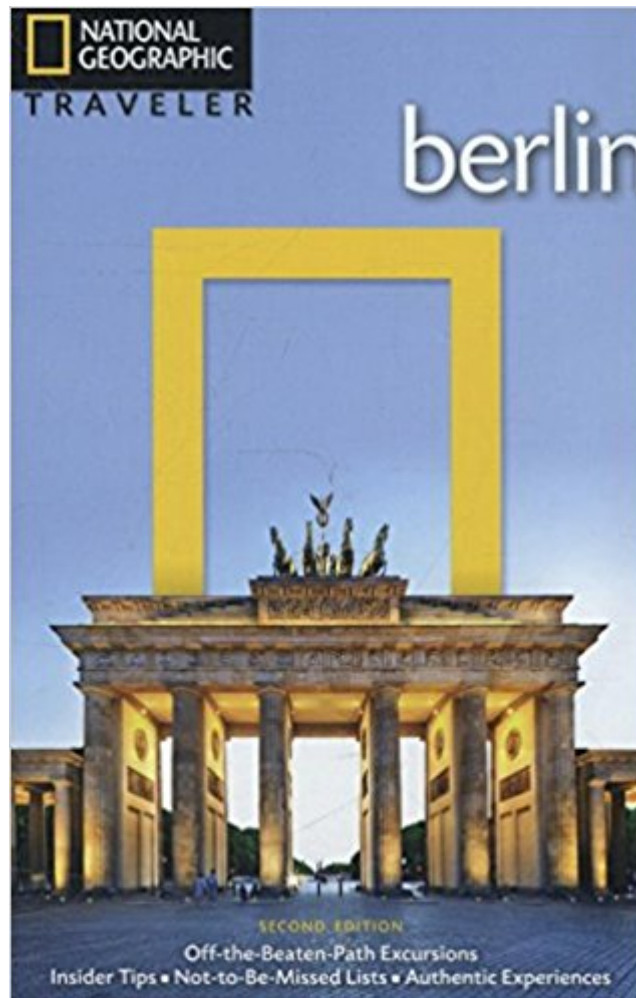




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# National Geographic Traveler: Berlin, 2nd Edition



## Synopsis

Germany's premier city, Berlin, is one of the fastest growing and intriguing in Europe. This guidebook, written by experienced travel writer Damien Simonis, expertly guides you through the varied land- and cityscapes that are today's Berlin. Illustrated with more than 120 vivid, up-to-date photographs and nearly 20 detailed, full-color maps, this second edition gives you every tool you need to plan a trip to the center of the new Europe, from the historic and massive Reichstag building in the town center to the complex of museums and gardens at the former royal palace in the west at Charlottenburg. Starting with a detailed introduction to Berlin's unique history, food, land, and culture--factors that have clearly shaped the distinctive *volksgeist* of the German people--the book then explores each of the neighborhoods that make up the city. Among the sights: the city's grand pastoral thoroughfare in the center of town, Unter Den Linden; the Forum of Culture, home of Berlin's concert hall and several excellent museums; the Tiergarten, the large central park that constitutes some of metropolis's extensive green space; the quiet woods, rivers, and lakelands of Berlin's far west; and the many world-class museums clustered on Museum Island in the east. In addition, an "Excursions" chapter steers you to the best day trips out of the city. Special features give comprehensive information on many diverse topics such as the story of the Berlin Wall; the city's Jewish community; and a look at Berlin's famous Christmas markets. The book also presents mapped, guided walks and tours through some of the city's most fascinating areas, including a walk through Red Berlin and a drive through the Mecklenburg lake district. Experiential sidebars--such as reliving the feel of pre-war Berlin at a silent-movie theater or visiting the city's famed museums when they're open all night--show you details on how to immerse yourself in Berlin's culture. In addition, a thorough Travelwise section provides recommendations for hotels and restaurants in all price ranges and in all areas. Whether you're visiting Kurfürstendamm, Berlin's main shopping street, revisiting history in front of the Brandenburg Gate, or strolling Frederick the Great's sumptuous palaces and gardens at Potsdam, *National Geographic Traveler: Berlin* has everything you need to make your trip a memorable one. The *National Geographic Traveler* series is aimed at active travelers who want authentic, enriching, cultural experiences and look to a guidebook for expert advice and insider tips from a trustworthy source. We offer ways for people to experience a place rather than just visit, and give the feel of each destination not easily found online.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

DAMIEN SIMONIS, raised in Sydney, Australia, has lived, studied, and worked all over Europe and the Middle East. In 1992 he started writing guidebooks and travel articles for publications in Australia, the U.K., and North America and hasn't stopped since. His wanderings have taken him from the Ukraine to Sudan, from the Alps to the Red Sea. Simonis had his first taste of foreign travel in Germany in the 1980s. Repeated study trips brought him back and he frequently visited Berlin at the height of the Cold War. Although he now lives in the warmer climes of Barcelona, Spain, his affection for Germany, and Berlin in particular, has never waned.

good traveling guide

Great book to guide us through Berlin

Great read. Terrific for flight en route!

I am doing this whole thing backwards. I got the book AFTER going to Berlin. National Geographic always does a great job of giving you more than facts and pretty pictures, it gives you a feel for the place, the culture, the history and how these combined to form the people. This book is no exception. It wasn't among the ones we'd gotten, studied, and discussed before the trip and I now wish it had. The first 50 pages on history, culture, and the current urban environment are particularly interesting. Last December, I was part of a group of 8 friends that went to Europe to see the Christmas Markets. Before going on a four-country river cruise, we spent 5 days (not

counting arrival/departure days) in Berlin and none of us especially enjoyed the experience. When we got back, everyone we spoke to thought we were crazy since they absolutely loved their trips to Berlin. So I started wondering if, indeed, we totally mismanaged the trip and missed out on wonderful things we might have loved. I got this book to see what we might have done differently. Disclaimer: while we were there, it was the coldest winter Berlin had had in 58 years. Maybe this did make our trip a little more cumbersome and getting around a little more difficult. Maybe this also might have made the Berliners we dealt with a little testier, short-tempered and downright rude at times. On the other hand, it was Christmas season and you would think that the land that invented the Christmas tree and so many other lovely traditions would be imbued with the spirit of the season. (As was the case in Nuremberg, our last stop before returning home). As I traipse through the book, I see that we actually did get a lot done in those five days. We only spent one day in Museum Island and found it hard to leave the Pergamon Museum which was the highlight of the trip—truly outstanding. We only had a couple of hours to peek into other nearby venues. We meant to go back, but the weather didn't allow it. We did visit Sans Souci, Potsdam, our first Christmas Markets at Schloss Charlottenburg and Gendarmenmarkt; we went to a huge department store called KaDeWe; we hired a guide and a private van for two days to drive us to all the major landmarks and historical sites; and later covered quite a bit of territory visiting memorials and churches walking during the day, and went to a classical concert at night. I am amazed at how much we did get done. We are a group of middle-aged, experienced travelers, yes, there were eight of us and that is a big group, but we are pretty civilized, well-behaved, and aware of tipping requirements. We had read a lot about the city and its history before going and had a decent respect and knowledge of what we were seeing and experiencing. We aren't used to being rushed, shushed, pushed, or ignored. Smiles, if any, were rare. I think that, the most beautiful and fascinating place on earth is made much more welcoming and pleasant with a little bit of human warmth. This is what we didn't find here and have found almost everywhere else regardless of language or culture. On retrospect, I think that this is the root of our discontent with the city. It is interesting but it is not charming. Peculiar things happened to us that we've never experienced before. For example, we went to a nice restaurant (recommended in one of our guidebooks), ordered separate appetizers, drinks, and desserts but wanted to share an entrée. We received the entrée with one set of cutlery. Apparently, we also needed to share the fork and knife since only one of each is provided with the main dish and we were not entitled to get two. This is just one incident and neither the oddest nor the funniest, just the one with the shortest explanation. There seem to be intransigent rules that an ordinary tourist isn't aware of, and no

tolerance or sense of humor or interest in human interaction or accommodation. It is the polar opposite of Italy and we couldn't help but wonder how the two countries managed during WWII. The book tells me we missed out on seeing Berlin by boat. This was probably not feasible under the circumstances, but I can see how it might be lovely and not to be missed during other times of the year. I don't think we would have enjoyed the bohemian art scene so I don't mind missing it; and we had been looking forward to touring Red Berlin but didn't find that the venues, exhibits, or what is left of The Wall, gave you much of an experience not even much to photograph. The contrast between the East and West sides of the city is obvious and somewhat disconcerting. We did miss out on the parks, which look lovely in the photographs and there are some other museums and cultural opportunities that we didn't take advantage of. I do wish we had gone to Dresden and Leipzig. Berlin and its environs do look like a fascinating place and, if I ever return I would fill in some of the gaps in our experience. The book does a great job in telling me what we missed. Maybe we didn't spend enough time, maybe we were too rushed, and maybe our expectations weren't realistic. But, thorough and informative as it is, the book still doesn't manage to spark a desire to return.

What I love about the National Geographic Traveler series of guidebooks is how each is focused on appreciating each location for what they are - these books are not focused on hitting each touristy spot as fast as you can or on shopping. The focus really lies on respecting the local customs and learning about the places you visit. This Berlin edition is no exception. The first 50 pages are devoted to the fascinating history of Berlin. If you're a history buff you likely won't find any new information here, but for someone with a passing interest I enjoyed reading and learning about its history. Not to mention, it really helps set the context of the place you're about to visit, and the book makes references to what you learn here throughout. The sections are ordered as follows: Unter den Linden & Potsdamer Platz; Central Berlin; Tiergarten & Around; Charlottenburg; Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain, & The East; Schöneberg to Kreuzberg; Spandau, Dahlem, & The West; and finally, a section on excursions. Each of these sections feature frequent, lush photos and full-color, easy to read maps. Last in the book is the information you typically find in a travel guidebook; how to get there, when to go, what to bring, and other miscellaneous information, hotels, and shopping. If you're someone who appreciates learning as much as possible about the lifestyles, people, and customs of every place you visit, this is a good guidebook for you.

I used to live in Germany before the wall came down. I haven't been able to afford to go back, but

this book is perhaps the next best thing. For a travel guide, it's a surprisingly good read. It's full of interesting history, short vignettes, pictures of various places discussed, along with glimpses into museums. It has a nice open up map in the front and the back. The one in the front shows the streets, and the one in the back shows the metro system. It also has several insets that are money saving tips to help you get the most bang for your buck, including a couple that point you towards coupons that you can print out or get to save even more money. As each attraction is discussed, there's a little money key that lets you know how expensive it is. There's also information about how you can file forms to get taxes that you pay back if you shop. There's other types of practical information too for travelers- such as how to access emergency services, including health care if you need it, where to turn to for help if you lose property, how to locate bathrooms, free wireless Internet access, I'd definitely carry this book along on my trip. It certainly seems to me like it will pay for itself in potential savings.

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