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How to Get the Best from Berlin: Practical Tips

Before You Leave

The Internet is your best resource. Visit first **www.berlin-tourist-information.de** and **www.potsdam.de** as well as the German National Tourist Office's site, **germany-tourism.de**. They have everything you need. From here your search engine will take you to the Web sites of most of the mentioned historic sites, theaters, individual districts, service organizations, government agencies, etc. **Rail pass** information is available at **www.raileurope.com**.

Visas, Passports, and Inoculations. Americans, Canadians, New Zealanders, and Australians staying less than 90 days require only a valid passport to enter Germany. A visitor's card will suffice for British citizens. No visa or inoculations are required unless you are coming from an infected area.

Youth Hostel Card. The German Youth Hostel Association is a member of the International Youth Hostel Federation, of which American Youth Hostels (HI-AYH) is the American representative. You will need an AYH membership card to stay in German youth hostels. To join AYH, it's easiest to telephone 310-495-1340 with your credit card. It's good to allow 10 to 14 mailing days for delivery. Express delivery is available. You can also get memberships for other people. You just need to supply each individual's name, permanent U. S. address, day-time phone, and date of birth. By Internet, access **www.hiayh.org**. In a hurry or don't want to use a credit card, purchase your membership at any of 500 sales agents around the country. Membership is free for those under 18, \$28 for adults, and \$18 for those over 54 (credit cards accepted). AYH membership is valid worldwide.

Driver's License. You must carry a valid driver's license from your country of origin to drive in Berlin. International driver's licenses are not required.

Passport Photos. When you think you will need passport-size photos for any reason, e.g., a student public transportation card, you can buy them from machines in Berlin.

Getting There

BY AIR

Until 1990, scheduled civil airline flights to Berlin from the West were restricted to Pan American, Air France, and British Airways. Now you have an alphabet soup of carriers from which to choose. With Tegel, Schönefeld, and (scheduled to be closed on October 31, 2008) Tempelhof Airports, Berlin presently has three commercial airports with arrivals of 8.6 million passengers in 2006. This number of arrivals makes Berlin airports the third busiest in Germany. They are administered by a joint holding company of Berlin and Brandenburg.

The first of the three airports in Berlin was Tempelhof, but then came the Berlin Blockade (see Chapter 10), and a larger airport, Tegel, had to be built. Four bulldozers and 19,000 Berliners, 40 percent of them women, worked round the clock for 30 cents an hour plus a hot meal every shift. In just three months, they made Tegel Airport operational.

With the construction of the Wall, the East had to have its own airport, so Schönefeld was expanded. Tegel is used primarily by international carriers, Schönefeld primarily by low cost carriers, and Tempelhof for domestic flights using smaller aircraft, which tolerate the shorter landing runway.

You want to arrive in Berlin as well rested and as economically as possible. Airline fares are crazy, so you should search out bargains when they happen to be offered. Check the small advertisements in the major Sunday newspaper travel sections for the cheap fares offered by consolidators, the so-called bucket shops. Summer is the most expensive time to fly, but discounts begin to appear in the fall and last—off and on—until spring.

The ideal flight to Berlin is a nonstop flight. Daily service on Delta Airlines began on May 2, 2005, between New York's JFK Airport and Berlin-Tegel, operating with 204-passenger Boeing 767-300 ES aircraft, and Continental Airlines' Berlin-New York/Newark flight began daily nonstop service on July 1, 2005, operating with 172-seat Boeing 757 aircraft, but unless you live in the New York area, you won't have the luxury of a nonstop flight. The associations between airlines such as the Star Alliance, One World, and Sky Team, such as between Lufthansa and United Airlines, British Air and American Airlines, and KLM and Delta Airlines, make it easier than ever for you to reach Berlin. If you happen to live in the New York area you are in luck. All others have a stop or change of planes somewhere, either in New York or Europe.

Most international carriers serve Berlin from their domestic hubs, but always check to see that the same terminal of the European airline's hub airport (London, Paris, Amsterdam, etc.) handles both your incoming flight and your departing flight for Berlin so you won't have to scurry long distances between terminals to connect.

Tegel Airport. Tegel Airport is not a mega-airport like Frankfurt's. It is constructed like a hexagonal doughnut with parking and taxi service in the middle. **Luggage carts** require a €1 or a US cents coin to release them. You recover your coin when you return your cart to a rack. International pictographs are used (the same as in the train stations), so finding your way around is not difficult. On a good sunny weekend, people wait in line to watch airplanes taking off and landing from the viewing platform on top.

Down the hallway behind the Airport Service Center (open daily 5 A.M. to 10:30 P.M.) near gate "0" you find the Berliner Bank, Tel. 417-85-40 (open daily 8 A.M. to 8 P.M.), the post office and post office ATM, the Tax Free cash back office for processing your duty-free refund (you must do this before checking in for your flight to a *non-EU country*), and luggage checking. ATMs (**Geldautomaten**) are located near gates 4, 11, and 15. Also on the main floor is the Papillon Café (open 7 A.M. to 11 P.M.), which is the name of the cafeteria between gates 4 and 5. The less expensive Libelle snack bar between gates 10 and 11 opens at 5:15 A.M. The beautiful, spacious Otto Lilienthal

Restaurant offers views and eye-catching patisseries, cakes, and confections. On the third floor, you can snack at the Take Off Café.

Up the steps to the mezzanine level overlooking the ground floor, you find the first- and business-class lounges of the many airlines.

Schönefeld Airport. While Tegel Airport is right near the center of Berlin, Schönefeld Airport, opened on October 6, 1960, with a 2.1-mile (3.8 kilometers) runway, is so far in the outskirts that it adds another unwanted leg to your long journey. Schönefeld is scheduled to become Berlin-Brandenburg International Airport by 2010.

Schönefeld is served by GermanRail's regional "Airport Express" line RB24 train that will carry you with few stops to the center of Berlin—Ostbahnhof, Friedrichstraße, Alexanderplatz, and Zoo train stations. S-Bahn trains (see below) serve additional stops along the way and therefore take longer. Tickets for both regional and S-Bahn trains are sold at the airport. Rail passes are valid on both. Alternately, you may take bus 171 from the airport to U-Bhf Rudow to join the U-Bahn network—and this will be your preferred way to the southern part of Berlin, Kreuzberg, and Tempelhof. Your Berlin Transit Authority bus ticket will also put you aboard Berlin's U-Bahn system.

Airport Hotels.

The **Novotel Berlin Airport** (not rated), Kurt-Schumacher-Damm 202, across from the highway entrance to Tegel, is Berlin's airport hotel. It offers free shuttle service between the airport and hotel between 5 A.M. and 11:30 P.M. It is not especially close to the airport, but then downtown Berlin is not far either. €49-127; breakfast buffet included.

Novotel Berlin Siemensstadt (not rated), Ohmstraße 4-6, lies next to highway A100/111 and only 2 miles (3 kilometers) from Tegel Airport.

Airport Transportation.

From Tegel: Taxis are readily available outside your gate, and prices to the center of Berlin compare favorably with charges at larger European airports because Berlin's center is not far, but Tegel is one of the few international airports where city buses are actually convenient. You can take advantage of this service. Taxis will cost about €15-17 plus luggage surcharge from Tegel Airport to Bahnhof Zoo while a bus for zones AB will cost adults €2.10 or less if you buy a day or multiday card

(see Banking and Changing Money, later in this chapter). It is quite convenient to use these city buses: Lines X9, 109, 128, and TXL.

Bus line X9 is an express route to Budapester Straße making stops only at Jakob-Kaiser-Platz (for line U7), Jungfernheide (for lines S45 and S46), and Zoo train station (for S-Bahn, long-distance trains, and lines U2 and U9).

Most visitors will use bus line 109: U-Bhf Jakob-Kaiser-Platz, S-Bhf Charlottenburg, U-Bhf Adenauerplatz, U-Bhf Kurfürstendamm, and Bahnhof Zoo. Buses on Line 109 make stops every few blocks, but Tegel Airport is not far from Berlin's center, about 25 minutes, depending on traffic, and the buses are convenient to ride. They are usually single-deckers. Most people have luggage, but there is space, and the bus is not overwhelmed with luggage.

Bus line 128 gives an alternate way to join Berlin's far-reaching public transportation network via lines U6, U8, and U9 (see How to Get Around, later in this chapter). Bus 128 then continues to U-Bhf Residenzstraße for line U8 and U-Bhf Osloer Straße for U8 and U9.

When you are heading into the Eastern city center, use JetExpressBus TXL, which links Tegel with the Hauptbahnhof, Alexanderplatz, and Prenzlauer Berg.

To buy your ticket for the airport bus use the automatic ticketing machines **Fahrausweise** by the bus stops. If the machines befuddle you, facing the outdoor bus stops, there is a BVG counter where an actual person will issue you a ticket. One-way fare is €2.10 for adults, less for ages 6 through 14, and don't forget an adult can bring up to three children free. You won't yet be ready for a day pass (see below), but you may want to buy a seven-day pass (see below).

When your destination is the Zoo train station, and you are traveling with luggage, it is easiest just to board bus X9 or 109 and remain aboard until you arrive in front of the Zoo train station. Along the way, however, there are certain stops where it is convenient for you to disembark and change to the U-Bahn system, especially at rush hour when your bus is standing bumper to bumper in traffic—but this involves schlepping your luggage. Your bus ticket is also valid for up to two hours on the S- and U-Bahn networks.

When traveling light, many people hop off at Jakob-Kaiser-Platz to

change to the West Berlin U-Bahn system via Line 7 west to Spandau or southeast to Charlottenburg, Schöneberg, Kreuzberg, and Rudow.

In reverse, going to the airport, you don't have to go to Zoo train station to board bus line X9 or 109, but you can use U-Bhf Jakob-Kaiser-Platz (line U7), Jungfernhede (U7), U-Bhf Kurt-Schumacher-Platz (U6), U-Bhf Residenzstraße (U8), or U-Bhf Osloer Straße (U8 and U9).

From Schönefeld: East Berlin's Schönefeld Airport lies so far from the core of Berlin and the hotels that a taxi ride will run you €23, but GermanRail's 1998 "Airport Express" RE4 and RE5 Regional Express trains take you easily to 2006's Hauptbahnhof, East Berlin's Ostbahnhof, Alexanderplatz, and Friedrichstraße train stations, and West Berlin's Zoo train station. Regional Bahn trains RB24 take you to Lichtenberg train station. Trains operate every 30 minutes between 4:30 A.M. and 11 P.M. You only require a €2.10 ticket. S-Bahn trains along the same line give you more stations to disembark, but of course take longer (see How to Get Around).

When you arrive by air at Schönefeld, a free shuttle bus takes you the 1,000 feet (300 meters) to the train station in about five minutes.

The Schönefeld train station is very large, with both S-Bahn and mainline connections built together. Ramps provide an easy way to cart luggage with wheels. A flower shop and fast-food fish snack outlet can be found here. The transverse hall is wide and clean. For departures, the airplane profile leads from the bus via ramp or steps, with the sign "Zum Flughafen." Across the tracks you can see the sign "Bahnhof Flughafen Berlin Schönefeld." You can use your S-Bahn ticket on the bus as well.

Mainline trains to Dresden, Prague, Hamburg, and Vienna call in the mainline station. The S-Bahn line S9 takes you all the way to Spandau with stops at Ostbahnhof, Alexanderplatz, Friedrichstraße, Hauptbahnhof, and Zoo. Line S45 is an easy way to Tempelhof, Südkreuz train station, Schöneberg, Bundesplatz (for U9), and the ICC Convention Center. Regional Express and Regional Bahn trains supplement the services to outlying villages. Buses and night buses complete the picture.

From Tempelhof: You would think the airport closest to the center of town, Tempelhof Airport, would have the best connections.

Wrong. There are bus services, to be sure (lines 104, 119, 184, and 341), that pull right up to the swinging doors to the airport, but the closest U-Bahn station (Platz der Luftbrücke, line U6) is a long walk with heavy luggage. A taxi will run you about €12.

BY TRAIN

Following the Wende, railway lines to Berlin were unified with astonishing speed and enormous outlays of money. InterCity Express (ICE), Inter City (IC), Regional (RE and RB), and Night (NZ and CNL) trains get you to and from Berlin over four mainlines.

- Via Hanover, ICE trains travel over the new high-speed line at 155 mph (250 km/h).

- In 2004, GermanRail opened its rebuilt Berlin-Hamburg high-speed line for 143 mph (230 km/h) ICE travel and since 2006 provides hourly service.

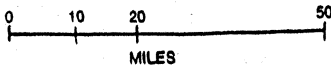
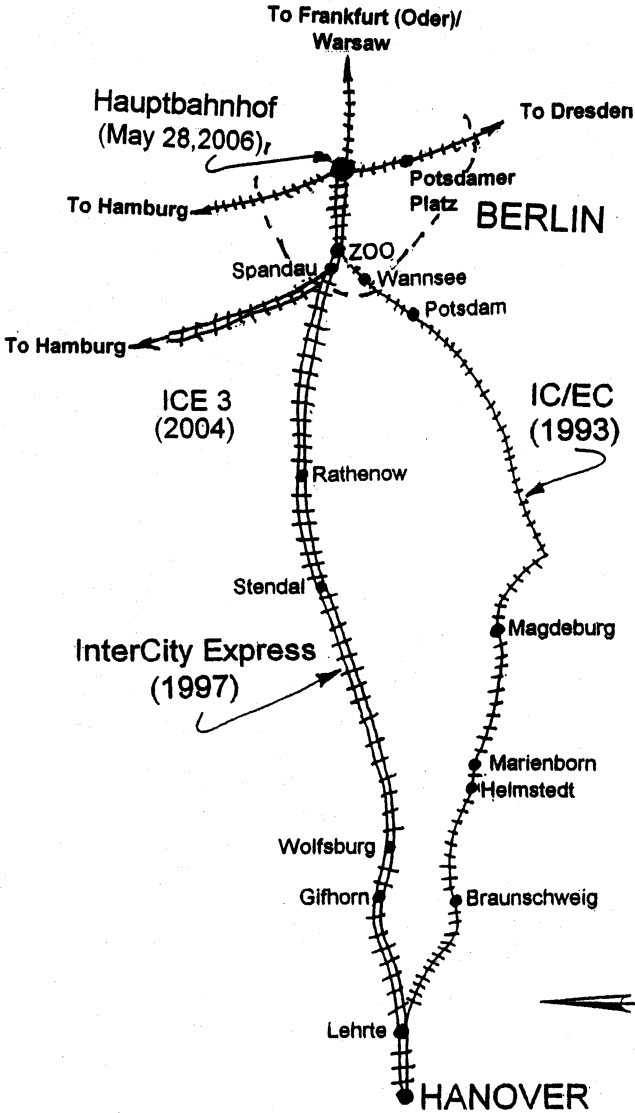
- In December 2007, direct ICE diesel services began between Berlin and Copenhagen, the first direct rail connection between the two capital cities in 10 years. The journey time between Berlin and Århus was reduced by more than half an hour, to less than seven hours.

- From the south, ICE trains follow the Munich-Leipzig-Berlin scenic route hourly since 2006, or alternately, passengers can use the high-speed Munich-Hanover route and change there for Berlin.

- The Berlin-Warszawa Express takes you to the Polish capital aboard rebranded, former GermanRail IC trains.

Train Stations. Using locomotives built in Newcastle, England, the first railroad company in Berlin opened its line to Potsdam, in 1838, from Berlin's first terminal, the Potsdamer Bahnhof, along a route landscaped by Lenné. Until 1877 each new railroad company entering Berlin built its separate terminus. In 1882, the kaiser ordered 11 stations connected by an east-west line across the city center on a still-standing, elevated brick viaduct, and this is what we know as the Stadtbahn today. From west to east, these stations were Charlottenburg, Savignyplatz, Zoologischer Garten, Tiergarten, Bellevue, Lehrter (renamed Hauptbahnhof),

HIGH-SPEED BERLIN



Friedrichstraße, Borse (renamed Marx-Engels-Platz and now Hackescher Markt), Alexanderplatz, Jannowitzbrücke, and Ostbahnhof (which has had five names in 156 years, depending on which way the political winds were blowing).

The 2006 **Hauptbahnhof** is your introduction to Berlin whether you arrive by train from Rome, Paris, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, or Munich. It is Europe's largest junction. More information can be found in Chapter 6, but keep in mind that whether you arrive by ticket or rail pass, you can change to any S-Bahn station in the city without an additional ticket.

Zoologischer Garten Regional train station, which everyone calls "Zoo," was formerly the terminus for high-speed trains from the West, but now the trains zip right through without stopping to Hauptbahnhof.

For the 750th anniversary of Berlin in 1987, **Bahnhof Zoo**, which now handles both Regional and S-Bahn trains on elevated platforms and U-Bahn trains in an underneath annex, was remodeled. The structure was cleaned, relighted, and modernized stage by stage. Escalators and a travel center were installed. The police cleaned out the homeless, the prostitutes, the alcoholics, and the drug dealers. It's a constant fight to keep them away; but generally the police and their police dogs prevail.

Because Zoo train station is the center of the Zoo complex, you can't fail to find any possible service or shop in the station itself or nearby. In the station itself you find a bookstore, snack opportunities of every sort, lockers, and a commercial hotel reservations office on the mezzanine charging a €5 service fee (open 10 A.M. to midnight).

The agent in the service center in the middle of the hall is available to answer quick questions only. The **Reisezentrum** is the place to go for train reservations and ticket purchases. For first-class ticket holders, including holders of first-class Eurail Products and GermanRail Passes, a special counter is open.

The toilets are called "McClean," and the troop of ladies responsible for the cleaning tries to live up to its reputation. To use them you will pay, except that men using only the urinals pay less and children relieve themselves without charge. Sooner or later in Berlin,

probably sooner, you will be confronted by one of Berlin's take-no-prisoners **Toilettenfrauen** (toilet women) who will demand a "tip." Grin and bear it. It's their profession, and they should be paid handsomely for working in such disgusting surroundings. It's also cheaper than in some neighboring countries.

Lockers in back of the station require a deposit. There you find the lost and found office (open Mon.-Fri. 10 A.M. to 5:30 P.M.). Luggage carts standing on the platform require you to insert a coin to release them. There are elevators in back that you will have to search for. You get your coin back when you return your cart to a stand.

Ostbahnhof was substantially enlarged and rebuilt at the time of the joining of East and West Germany. The timing was only coincidental. Naturally, the combined DB had to make further remodeling improvements. In 1998, when DB began using Ostbahnhof for main-line trains, only cosmetic changes had to be performed. There is no tourist office or post office, but Ostbahnhof has a **Reisezentrum** train information office, shops, fast food, and on the mezzanine a ReiseBank. The bank's ATM on the ground floor operates 24 hours.

Lichtenberg train station is a regional train station in the eastern part of the city. Lichtenberg's brick station building with a glass front has been enlarged. Near the front entrance you see the **Reisezentrum** (Train Information) (open daily 5:15 A.M. to 11 P.M.). You can make all reservations and buy tickets. Train departures are printed on yellow posters; arrivals on white.

Upstairs you find a McDonald's restaurant (open 5 A.M. to 1 A.M.) and a Bistro Restaurant. The McDonald's is routine. The Bistro is dark and gloomy. No one is eating, just drinking beer and wine.

Shops selling take-away provisions are on the lower (train) level. Between the platforms and the station hall there is a ramp that makes it easy to pull luggage to and from trains. From Lichtenberg you will have to change to one of the frequent S-Bahn trains on platform A to reach the center or western part of Berlin. The U-Bahn line also runs to Alexanderplatz but makes many stops throughout the eastern part of Berlin. Your train ticket is valid on the S-Bahn. There is an escalator up to S-Bahn platform A. Platforms A, B, and C are all open without covering, probably from damage during the War.

Train Ticketing. DB maintains ticketing offices in all mainline and regional stations such as Hauptbahnhof, Zoo, Friedrichstraße, Alexanderplatz, Lichtenberg, and Ostbahnhof. DB has a complicated system of determining fares depending on the number of days in advance you purchase your ticket, and DB also offers many special tariffs. There are two discount structures: Savings Fare 25 and Savings Fare 50, offering 25 percent and 50 percent off normal round-trip fares provided that passengers restrict themselves to a particular day and train and make a round-trip journey from the same station. You must buy Fare 25 at least three days in advance. It is only available for round trips. For Savings Fare 50, additional weekend restrictions apply. The return trip cannot be sooner than the following Sunday. Luckily, you can view your fare by going to www.bahn.de (click “Intl Guest”). After a one-time registration you can plan your trips and book tickets or seat reservations online. You can print them out yourself until ten minutes prior to departure or have them sent to your home, worldwide, free of charge. All you need is a valid credit card.

For normal train trips when you are under 26, **Wasteels Reisen** (Pestalozzistraße 106, Tel. 312-4061) is the place to head. They sell young people round-trip and one-way tickets from Berlin to more than 100 destinations in West Germany and 4,000 destinations in Europe and North Africa at rock-bottom prices. Round-trip tickets are valid for two months while one-way tickets are valid for four days. You can make as many stopovers en route as you please within the time limits.

Rail Passes. No train reservations are required in Germany, so with a rail pass, you may immediately board your train of choice.

GermanRail honors GermanRail, Eurail Select, Eurail Germany-Austria, Eurail Germany-Denmark, Eurail Germany-France, Eurail Germany-Switzerland, and Eurail Germany-Benelux passes as well as Eurail Global Passes. It’s more convenient and cheaper to buy them from your travel agent at home before your departure. You have six months to begin using them. If you change your mind and want to buy one in Berlin, go to the Reisezentrum in the Hauptbahnhof.

Prices for these passes in Berlin are set at 10 percent above the list price you pay to your travel agent at home, and the price you pay in Euros will vary depending on the fluctuation of the dollar versus the

Euro, but the dollar amount will always be more than you would have paid at home.

Eurail Global Passes. These passes are valid for unlimited travel throughout Germany as well as in 16 other European countries, not including Poland. When you travel extensively throughout Europe by train, they will save you time standing in lines to buy tickets. Bonuses in Germany include free steamer crossings north via Sassnitz to Trelleborg, Sweden (departing from Lichtenberg station), without going through Copenhagen; crossings to Hanko, Finland, via Rostock; Rhine and Mosel river cruises; plus reductions on some Europabuses and private railroads.

First-class Eurail Global Passes are available for 15 and 21 consecutive days, one, two, and three consecutive months. A discounted, first-class Eurail Saverpass covers two or more traveling together and is available for the same durations.

Eurail Flexipasses cover any 10 days of travel or any 15 days of travel of your choice within two months. Saver Flexipasses are the same, but less expensive for two people traveling together.

Travelers under 26 can travel on second-class Eurail Youthpasses for 15 or 21 days, one, two, or three months or a Youth Flexipass for either 10 or 15 days of choice within two months.

Eurail Selectpasses are customizable rail passes. Travelers select the number of days they plan to travel within two months and choose between any 3, 4, or 5 countries connected by train or ferry. The choice of countries includes all 17 Eurail Global Pass countries (including Germany) plus four additional country combinations extending into Eastern Europe. They are available for 5, 6, 8, or 10 days, first-class for adults, second-class for youth, and Saverpasses for two or more traveling together.

Two-Country Rail Passes. In addition, travelers can choose a two-country rail pass covering specifically either Germany and Benelux or Germany and Denmark. They are available for 5, 6, 8, or 10 days, first-class or second-class for adults, second-class for youth, and Saverpasses for two or more traveling together.

GermanRail Flexipasses. These are better buys than Eurail products when you plan to do all your train travel solely in Germany.

They are sold not only for first-class travel, but adults can save money buying them for second class and for those under 26 as well. The discounted pass for exactly two traveling together is called a Twinpass. Individual, Twin, and Youth passes are sold for your choice of exact number of days between 5 and 10 days of travel within a month. Bonuses are the same as for Eurail products, except that the ferry crossings to Scandinavia are excluded.

GermanRail BahnCard. You can buy a GermanRail BahnCard valid for 25 percent, 50 percent, or 100 percent off all regularly scheduled GermanRail trains throughout Germany. It is highly recommended and will pay for itself for those staying for extended periods and doing considerable train travel in Germany. It is valid for one year from date of validation.

Overnight Trains. The new generation of high-tech, high-convenience, tilting, and double-decked night trains provides you pampered service or even economic seats to Berlin. For travel from the West, CityNightLine and InterCity Night trains have nudged aside the older generation of overnight trains that still carry seemingly endless strings of sit-up carriages, sleeping cars, sleeperettes, and couchettes between Berlin and Eastern Europe. Russian trains from Berlin to Moscow, Kiev, and St. Petersburg consist of wide-bodied Russian sleeping carriages.

GermanRail's **InterCity Night (ICN)** trains are excellent. They actually consist of Spanish tilting carriages painted in GermanRail's InterCity Night blue livery with GermanRail embellishments. The trains tilt rounding curves and include lavish dining rooms for first-class passengers and bistros for those less affluent.

In addition to carriages that contain deluxe sleeping compartments, you can ride in second-class carriages fitted with 1996-designed couchettes or a GermanRail first, sleeperette seats which recline deeply—the equivalent of business class in air travel. Caterers provide food service from a trolley. The luggage car also carries bicycles for a nominal charge.

ICN's first-class, air-conditioned cabins contain their own private showers, wash basins, and toilets. You can book them either as a single or a double. The beds are aligned in the direction of travel. The

compartments are locked by key cards. The trains are opened two hours before departure and need not be vacated until 8:30 A.M.

ICNs are your best choice of night trains between Berlin and Munich, Dortmund, Essen, Dusseldorf, Cologne, or Bonn. Rail-pass holders pay less than half for cabins. You pay the equivalent of \$5 for a sleeperette seat or couchette when you make your reservation in Germany.

Ride the **CityNightLine** train named *Berlin* between Berlin and Zürich, Switzerland. CityNightLine gives you three choices, all with breakfast included. When you choose “Luxury” category “A,” you ride on the upper deck so that the additional panoramic windows expose the skyline; also, you have one or two wide beds, plus your own stall shower and private WC.

First-class rail-pass holders receive a discount of about one-third for the “A” accommodation. When you choose the lower cost “Comfort” category “B” compartments, you have one or two beds, one above the other, and a wash basin. Stewards can connect two “B2” cabins together for four-person, family travel (“B4”). Rail-pass (including second-class, Eurail Youthpass) holders pay slightly over half.

Budget category “C” passengers sleep in reclining, giant-sized seats designed to give you a feeling of seclusion by incorporating a canopy containing a personal reading lamp. Deposit your backpack and luggage in the storage space above you or between the seats. Your small continental breakfast is served on the fold-down table at your seat. Rail-pass holders, first or second class, pay about 20 percent of the normal fare.

Until midnight, you can party in CityNightLine’s Thousand-Stars Bar or you can dine in the small, white-tablecloth restaurant area of the lounge car.

BY CAR

The corridors formerly required for driving to Berlin are no longer applicable. The Autobahnen leading to Berlin are good, and you can make good time on them, but driving and parking in Berlin is another matter. In Berlin, it is wiser to leave your auto at your hotel and use public transportation.

BY BUS

German long-distance coach drivers don't like their coaches to be called "buses." It's a matter of status with them. We'll call them "buses." Regular, usually daily, buses run between Berlin and more than 200 German and western European destinations. Operated by **Berlin Linien Bus** (Berlin Lines), they are equipped with reclining seats for sleeping, WC, wardrobe, attendant, and catering service. The bus fares are slightly cheaper than rail prices, and there are reductions for passengers between 4 and 26 years and those over 60. Tickets can be purchased at all DER travel agencies, many other travel agents, and at the **Zentral Omnibus Bahnhof (ZOB)** (Central Bus Station), located across from the broadcasting tower (see Chapter 5) at Masurenallee 4-6. The station has ticketing, waiting rooms, and for arrivals, a hotel-reservations console. The ticket offices are open Mon.-Fri. 6 A.M. to 7:30 P.M., and Sat.-Sun. to 3 P.M. Use bus 104 or 149 to Messedamm stop.

Deutsche Touring is Germany's participant in the Europabus system. Deutsche Touring's Europabuses leave Berlin for such destinations as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, etc.

RIDE SHARING

In Berlin you may take advantage of a ride-sharing scheme coordinated by **Mitfahrzentrale** (Ride-Sharing Central) not only to and from other cities in Germany, but throughout Europe. Drivers and riders are put together by their offices, which are located in many U-Bahn stations throughout the city. When you have located a ride, you pay a fee to the Mitfahrzentrale and share the fuel costs with the driver (tell the agent at Mitfahrzentrale how much you can afford).

Offices are generally open daily 8 A.M. to 9 P.M., Sun. 10 A.M. to 6 P.M., and have their own telephone numbers. For Click 'n Drive, go to **Mitfahrzentrale.de** (in German) to register. Mitfahrzentrale.de connects drivers with riders 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Since 1998 the Web site has connected a half-million people monthly. Example costs include Berlin to Munich, €15-26, and Berlin to Hamburg, €10-12.

HITCHHIKING

Hitchhiking in Germany is subject to all the same cautions as elsewhere.

Berlin Information

You can hardly find anyone throughout the downtown area without a city map or at least a subway map.

Berlin Infostores are staffed by multilingual agents of the Berlin Tourist Office operated by Berlin Tourismus GmbH and are available to answer questions, provide all sorts of information, book tickets, reserve hotels for a charge of €3, and sell you all sorts of souvenirs. You will be able to pick up free, excellent brochures with German and English texts. These include “Architektur in Berlin,” “Museen in Berlin,” “Discovering Jewish Berlin,” “The Wall,” “Berlin Events,” and “Essen und Trinken in Berlin” (Eating and Drinking) as well as a city map. If you do not see the ones you want in a display rack, ask at the counter.

Infostores are located on Floor 0 at the north (Europaplatz 1) entrance to the Hauptbahnhof, open daily 10 A.M. to 10 P.M.; at the Neues Kranzler Eck, located in the passage at Kurfürstendamm 21, open daily 10 A.M. to 6 P.M.; in the south wing at the Brandenburg Gate, open daily 10 A.M. to 6 P.M.; and in the Berlin Pavilion across from the Reichstag on Scheidemannstraße, open daily 10 A.M. to 6 P.M.

All have extended opening hours from April 1 until October 31.

Public Transportation Information. For city transportation information, drop by the transportation authority’s compact **BVG kiosk on Hardenbergplatz** in front of Zoo station (open 6 A.M. to 10 P.M.). Personnel there are good at answering your how and how much questions and can give you free public transportation maps as well as sell you tickets. The larger BVG customer-service office in the Nordbahnhof has a good selection of free and for-sale brochures, and you get to sit down. The S-Bahn Berlin GmbH company operates eight separate service centers in the busier S-Bahn stations, including the Zoo, Friedrichstraße, and Ostbahnhof train stations (open daily 9 A.M. to 6 P.M.).

BVG's Web site (www.bvg.de) allows you to find your travel route by entering the addresses of departure or destination, or you can enter the names of bus stops or stations. The Web site also advises you of detours or construction sites, fares, city and network maps, timetables in PDF format, and a listing of events.

Women's Information. The **Fraueninfothek Berlin**, Leibnitzstraße 57 (near Kurfürstendamm), Tel. 324-50-78 (open Tue.-Fri. 10 A.M. to 8 P.M.; Sat. to 6 P.M.), provides free information for the female visitor to orient herself and discover Berlin from a woman's perspective. They make hotel reservations, recommend counseling centers sensitive to women's issues, sponsor city bus tours, and organize exhibitions.

City Maps. Simple maps of the city center appear in many free brochures. Bus and subway maps are free from all BVG offices and many kiosks. The Berlin Tourist Offices (see above) sell a useful city map, but to find your way in the suburbs or even smaller streets in the city center you will need to buy something more comprehensive. There are at least three makers of Berlin maps. The most popular one is the Falk Berlin map with patented folds only an origami master can unravel. There are also maps from Rand McNally/Hallweg, and ADAC, the German Automobile Club.

When to Visit

Good Times. The summer months of July and August are low season in Berlin because of a lag in business activity. It is an opportune time for a vacation traveler to come. December and January are also low season. Festivals and events with a special flavor can add to your enjoying Berlin. Some emphasize music, art, and theater in order to attract visitors interested in those events. Obtain details from the German National Tourist Office before you leave. In Berlin visit one of the Infostores and check the Berlin city magazines.

The Love Parade breaks the sound barrier every second weekend in July. The Berlin International Film Festival begins early in February. The colorful Berlin Carnival Costume Parade winds its way along Unter den Linden shortly before Ash Wednesday. Floats and parties mark Christopher Street Day between K'damm and the Victory Column late in June. The Berlin Marathon attracts visitors

and competitors from around the world late in September. German Unification Day is celebrated on October 3 in the streets surrounding the Brandenburg Gate, and at the end of November some 50 Christmas markets, **Weihnachtsmärkte**, usher in the Christmas spirit. Germany's largest dominates Spandau's Old Town, while the Opernpalais Unter den Linden is the site of a nostalgic fair. Up to 1 million Berliners and visitors gather at the Brandenburg Gate to ring in the New Year and witness the dramatic fireworks display.

Bad Times. It is best to avoid visiting Berlin during major congresses (conventions), when hotels are packed tighter with delegates than sardine cans with little fish. Overloading occurs during the International Tourism Market at the beginning of March and the International Consumer Electronics Exhibition at the end of August/beginning of September during odd years.

Public Holidays. Expect everything (except museums) to be closed on New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Day (May 1), Ascension Day, Day of German Unity (October 3), Day of Prayer and National Repentance (third Wednesday in October), Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and December 26.

Climate. One doesn't go to Berlin for the climate. Summers can be hotter than Cairo or there may be no summer at all. The warm days are splendid—outdoor cafés are packed until very late at night, and the whole city seems intent on getting a suntan that will last the year. Winters seem never to end, and fall comes earlier than you want. Summer features infrequent lightning and thundershowers but winter slugs you with frequent snowstorms, bitter cold, and an inversion which brings polluted air from the south. Spring is always sweet with the renewal of the earth's cycle, and fall can be grand with mists and changing colors, but summer's low-humidity, warm weather (July is the best month) and its long daylight hours let you fully savor the excitement of Berlin.

	Avg. Temp.		Avg. Precipitation	
Jan.	29 F	-1 C	2.2 in.	5.6 cm.
Feb.	32 F	0 C	1.6 in.	4.1 cm.
Mar.	41 F	4 C	1.2 in.	3.0 cm.

Apr.	48 F	9 C	1.6 in.	4.1 cm.
May	59 F	15 C	2.3 in.	5.8 cm.
June	65 F	18 C	2.9 in.	7.4 cm.
July	69 F	20 C	3.2 in.	8.1 cm.
Aug.	68 F	20 C	2.7 in.	6.9 cm.
Sept.	60 F	16 C	2.2 in.	5.6 cm.
Oct.	50 F	10 C	1.6 in.	4.1 cm.
Nov.	40 F	4 C	2.4 in.	6.1 cm.
Dec.	32 F	0 C	1.9 in.	4.8 cm.

These are averages. Temperatures can fluctuate widely from day to day.

Where to Stay

Finding a place to stay in Berlin after you arrive is not difficult. When you arrive at the Hauptbahnhof, proceed to the BERLIN Infostore (open daily 8 A.M. to 10 P.M.) at the north Europa Platz entrance to make your hotel arrangements for a fee of €3.

When you disembark from Bus 109 at the Zoo train station, the BERLIN Infostore (open daily 10 A.M. to 6 P.M.) located at the Neues Kranzler Eck, Kurfürstendamm 21, is a 15-minute walk away.

Hotels. The crop of hotels in Berlin is among the best in Europe. More than 85,200 hotel beds were available in March 2006, which means that Berlin has more hotel beds than New York City. Berlin's room rates compare very favorably with those of other top European cities. In 2003, the average room rate in a four- or five-star hotel in Berlin was quoted as €130 per night, compared to the price of rooms of similar quality at €300 in London, €212 in Paris, €201 in Rome, and €159 in Amsterdam. Because Berlin is a business destination, hotels have more free space on weekends and often offer discounts Fridays to Mondays. You can find hotels to suit every taste and budget. You will probably prefer to stay near the Kurfürstendamm in West Berlin, where there is currently a hotel boom, or near Unter den Linden or the Gendarmenmarkt in the East.

Berlin Tourist Information (www.berlin-tourist-information.de, Tel.+49-(0)30-25 00 25) can book more than 400 hotels and pensions

with prices ranging from €29 per person for a three-star hotel. Hotel ratings are assigned by the German Hotel and Restaurant Association, although some hotels have estimated their own category according to the same standards.

Pensions. The pension system is alive and in full flower in Berlin. Considerably less expensive than hotels, pensions offer convenient accommodations. They are usually small blocks of rooms located on the higher floors (with elevator) of a remodeled flat. Families or, traditionally, older ladies run them. Because the doors are locked at night, guests keep their own keys and come and go as they please. Inferior pensions have iffy plumbing, often with facilities down the hall, stuffy ventilation, etc. Good ones are just as good as hotel facilities.

It is difficult to book pensions from North America because such small properties cannot afford an international booking system—and well-located ones are usually full, anyway, with walk-ins. You do best asking for one at the Tourist Office when you arrive.

Rooms and Apartments. Finding private rooms and apartments for longer stays during the summer is less difficult than you would expect, more because many Berliners going on long vacations are reluctant to leave their valued apartments vacant and inviting to burglars than for the money involved.

Youth Hostels. Hostels are inexpensive dormitory-style accommodations for travelers of all ages. They provide separate facilities for males and females, fully equipped self-service kitchens, dining areas, and common rooms for relaxing and socializing.

Youth hostels in Berlin can be reserved up to six months in advance. Access www.jugendherberge.de/reserv.html.

Camping. Here is a selection of four camping sites of the **Deutscher Campingclub (DCC)** Gleisbergstraße 11, Tel. 218-60-71/72, Fax 213-44-16. Contact them for more information. All sites are equipped with sanitary facilities and stores. Arrive before 6 P.M. if possible. Before then preference is given to those under 27 and families. No overnights after 10 P.M.

Campingplatz Kladow, Krampnitzer Weg 111-17, Tel. 365-2797, Fax 365-12-45. (Open all year 6 A.M. to 1 P.M., and 3 P.M. to 10 P.M.) This is probably the best, in Spandau, near the former Wall. To get

there use U-Bhf Ruhleben, change to bus 135 to Krampnitzer Weg, and walk about a mile.

Campingplatz Dreilinden, Albrechts-Teerofen, Tel. 805-1201. (Open April 1 to Sept. 30, 6 A.M. to 1 P.M. and 3 P.M. to 6 P.M.) Close to the border in the southwest of the city, take a #118 bus (direction: Kohlhasenbrück) from U-Bhf Oskar-Helene-Heim. This site is one and a half miles from the nearest bus stop. Free showers and a small restaurant.

Campingplatz Kohlhasenbrück, Neue Kreisstraße 36, Tel. 805-17-37. (Open April 1 to Sept. 30, 7 A.M. to 1 P.M. and 3 P.M. to 9 P.M.) In Zehlendorf (see Chapter 10).

Camping am Krossinsee, Wernsdorfer Straße 45, in Köpenick. Tel. 675-86-87. (Open all year, 6 A.M. to 1 P.M. and 3 P.M. to 10 P.M.)

How to Get Around

In practice, most visitors find it most convenient to use the U-Bahn/S-Bahn/bus/streetcar system to get around. Bicycles are great—they make the city seem smaller—but few visitors bring them or even bother to rent them. Walking is tough because of the long distances.

But first a caution: Berlin is one of the few cities you will find where street numbers run in a circle. They start with 1, increase (very slowly) up one side of the street, and then continue to increase coming back the opposite side. Number 26 might be across the street from number 390. Few streets keep the same name for long distances. It will make your way easier if you check the signs you find on the street corners giving the numbers of the addresses in that block.

PARKING

You require a parking ticket in many areas of Berlin. Parking between 9 A.M. and 6 P.M. is usually subject to a charge. In some zones, the rates apply for longer, until midnight.

TAXIS

Taxis are the easiest and yet not an exorbitantly expensive way of

getting around the city. Nearly 6,630 taxis serve Berlin, driving customers everywhere they want to go. You can quickly order a taxi, free of charge, via the central taxi telephone number 0800-800 11 554. You can also hail taxis on the street or board them at taxi stands, which are marked by the letter **T** or the whole word **Taxi**.

According to Berlin Schnauze, all taxi drivers in the East are former Stasi (they wrote themselves licenses when they saw the end of the regime). The good thing about this is that you only have to give them your name and they already know your address.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation began in Berlin in 1847, when on January 1, the **Concessionirte Berliner Omnibus-Compagnie** began its first service over five routes with 120 horses. In Berlin you are able to ride **U-Bahn** (Subway), **S-Bahn** (Rapid Transit), and regional trains of the German railroads through and across Berlin. In the West, you find also single- and double-decker and articulated buses and, in the East, also streetcars.

One of the first things unified after the Wende was the Berlin transportation network. The separate transportation systems of the East and West were placed under a single administration and ticketing became valid on both.

Many of the subway stops now have escalators and many have elevators. Sixty-eight of the 160 U-Bahn stations and also nearly 50 of the S-Bahn stations have elevators, which are mainly used by parents pushing baby buggies, but are a boon for older and handicapped travelers. Too many visitors tote heavy suitcases up flights of stairs because they don't take the time to look for the signs indicating escalators or elevators. Modern stations consolidate exit, transit, and subway-transfer directions on simple station signs—sometimes suspended over the platforms—giving the station names and direction arrows with the names of the street exits, nearby attractions, and S- and U-Bahn connections. Make it a habit to always look at these directions when you step off your train. The station name is always painted on the wall beside the tracks (when there is a wall). Names

displayed on backlit plastic panels often give the line number and direction of the line served by station. There are usually local street maps in stations to help you find your way in the neighborhood. Look at the information (“i”) bulletin board.

In the 1930s, the citywide Berlin S-Bahn network was a world model, but it was severely torn apart by the war. The building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 sealed its fate as a cross-town transportation system. Separate East and West transportation authorities diverged as they tended to the separate regional transportation patterns of their riders.

Reacting to the Berlin Wall, West Berliners boycotted the S-Bahn in their part of the city because by four-power treaty it was run by the East German Railroads (DR). References to the S-Bahn were deleted from signs at Western U-Bahn stations and bus stops. Only 5 percent of West Berliners used it for transportation. It became an issue in the Berlin 1981 elections. On January 9, 1984, West Berlin transit authorities purchased operation of the S-Bahn in the West, and the number of travelers tripled from 50,000 to 150,000 daily. S-Bahn Berlin is now a member of the GermanRail Group and therefore honors rail passes valid in Germany.

At the Wende there were 239 miles (385 kilometers) of trains. The S-Bahn was split into 45 miles (72 kilometers) in the West, 107 miles (173 kilometers) in the East. The U-Bahn stretched 71 miles (114 kilometers) in the West, 16 miles (26 kilometers) in the East. Before the Wende it was only possible to interchange at the Friedrichstraße train station. In 2006, 375 million passengers used 16 S-Bahn lines running on 204 miles (329 kilometers) of track to 164 S-Bahn stations and there were 9 U-Bahn lines, running on 90 miles of track to 170 stations.

You can get almost anywhere in Berlin by using the excellent Bahn and bus system. The transportation authority, BVG, operates the largest public-transportation system in Germany. Anyone who has mastered getting around London or Paris will have no trouble in Berlin. By referring to the charts posted in all U- and S-Bahn stations—pasted to the walls of the trains themselves, available free from the BVG kiosk in front of station Zoo, and included in dozens of kinds of advertising material—you can move seamlessly (except for marching up and down stairs) from one line to another.

In 2005, 907 million passengers traveled by U-Bahn. The direction that the trains travel is always indicated by the name of the end station. All the U-Bahn lines put together form an interwoven fabric so that by changing from line to line at interchange stations you can get anywhere in Berlin. Superimposed on this is the S-Bahn system that adds another dimension. You can change from U-Bahn to S-Bahn with the same ticket, but getting from one place in Berlin to another takes more time than you expect. Berlin is big, but you can get to your destination with just one transfer from a U-Bahn train to an S-Bahn train and then to a bus or streetcar. Still, it takes a lot of time.

There really is no significant difference between U-Bahn and S-Bahn systems except that you must realize that they are separate networks with separate stations even though the station may have the same name. Many locations, in fact, have both U- and S-Bahn stations. You may have to go outside and walk a modest distance to get from one to another, but only S-Bahn trains serve some stations.

GermanRail's use of RE and RB trains (see below) extends the S-Bahn network using the same tracks.

Tickets and Passes. Berlin's public transportation has an amazingly simple ticketing system. Buses, streetcars, U-Bahn, S-Bahn, and regional trains within Berlin all share the same tickets.

Tickets are checked so seldom on the U- and S-Bahn trains that you are almost on an honor system in Berlin. The penalty for riding without a ticket is substantial, plus major hassling by guards, police, and police dogs.

You may buy your BVG tickets from agents at windows during the day when they are staffed, but it is more convenient to buy them from machines. To operate the machines, you first select the type of ticket you desire by pressing the indicated button. The fare required is then displayed. Drop the necessary coins into a slot or feed paper euro bills through the roller. Change is returned with your ticket.

Single-ride and seven-day tickets are always available from the blue machines at the entrances of all stations and bus stops, including those outside at the Tegel Airport. Day tickets are dispensed by some, but not all machines. A single two-hour ticket (**Fahrschein**) is delivered already time-stamped. Insert all others for time-stamping into one of the

orange automatic date/time/location validators at platform entrances.

Officially, Berlin is divided into three tariff zones: A, B, and C. In practice, you forget all this and buy a Day Card or a Seven-Day Ticket for zones AB. Rarely will you travel into zone C. The day cards are remarkably cheap compared to purchasing multiple single tickets.

Zone A covers everything you probably want to see and includes all of the main train stations. Zone B gets you to anywhere within the city limits, including the two outer airports, Tegel Airport and Schönefeld Airport. You can get as far as Potsdam by S-Bahn in zone C.

With any ticket, you can take, without extra charge, up to three children under seven years with you. Bicycles are allowed on U-Bahn trains from 9 A.M. to 2 P.M., after 5:30 P.M., and all day Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. There is a fare for bicycles, but buyers of some of the multiday cards below take their bicycles without additional charge. In all cases, children 6-14 pay lower fares (**Ermäßigen**).

A **Kurzstrecke** (short-distance) is the cheapest and least useful ticket. Enter "K" into the ticketing machine. The ticket costs adults €1.20, children €1.00, and covers only three stations by U- or S-Bahn or six stops with a regular bus or streetcar. Express buses count the stops bypassed toward your allowed total. A **Langstrecke** (long-distance) ticket costs adults €2.10, children €1.40, unless you travel between zones B and C, in which case it costs €2.40, children €1.70. It is valid for up to two hours in two zones so that you can change trains or buses in any direction, but not run an errand and return to your starting point. A **Ganzstrecke** (network) ticket costs €2.70, children €2.00, and is valid for two hours in all three zones.

A **Tageskarte** (Day Card) for zones AB, costing €6.10, children €4.40, valid until 3 A.M. the following day, is a bargain. With an adult ticket, in addition to your three children you can also take a bicycle, a baby buggy, and a dog. If you want to go for all three zones, pay €6.30.

Best transportation value of all is the **7-Tage-Karte** (7-day ticket) valid up to midnight on the seventh calendar day. Loan it to your companion when you aren't using it. For zones AB, it costs €25.40, and for zones BC it costs €26.20. Adding the third zone ups its cost to €31.30. Month cards are also available for ABC, €86.00; AB, €70.00; and BC, €71.00.

When you plan to only use the S-Bahn and not the U-Bahn, you can save yourself some cash by buying an S-Bahn card. A day card for zones AB costs only €5.00, but traveling by the S-Bahn makes it more attractive to speed into all three Berlin zones for only €5.40. You may purchase single tickets valid for one hour for €2.00 or for two hours for €2.60 and you can use both for round trips. A ten-day ticket will cost you €25-29.

The so-called **Berlin WelcomeCard** is one of the most popular city cards in Europe. It combines a ticket for unlimited rides on buses and trains with a coupon booklet that allows discounts of at least 25 percent with 150 cultural, tourist, and dining service providers. There are six versions available. Versions valid for 48 hours are available for zones AB (€16) or zones ABC (€17.50). Versions valid for 72 hours are available for zones AB (€21) or ABC (€24). They are valid for one person except the 72-hour ABC version, which allows travel for one adult and three children. The AB tickets are valid for travel in Berlin; ABC tickets take you as far as Potsdam.

The Berlin WelcomeCard Culture combines a 72-hour WelcomeCard with the three-day SchauLUST Museen Berlin pass, which provides free admission to some 70 museums and collections. Travel in zones AB costs €34; in zones ABC, €37. WelcomeCards are available at Berlin Infostores, all vending machines and sales points in the S-Bahn and BVG public transit system, Tegel Airport, and numerous hotels. When you buy the WelcomeCard Culture at a Berlin Infostore, you pay only €35 and save €2 compared to the single products.

S-Bahn. The term S-Bahn used for Berlin's suburban electric railroad system is an abbreviation of **Schnellbahn**, not of **Stadtbahn**. It's not true that all S-Bahn trains are old and rickety and run on square wheels. Some of those dating from 1927 might seem that way, but the 79 newer ET480, the 496 beautiful 1998 ET481, and the 130 2003 ET450s trains coast into the stations with doors that open with a press of the button instead of having to tear them apart like Hercules breaking chains.

Berlin's "Great Electrification" program of 1928 brought the fastest and most modern local transportation to Berlin. On June 11,

1928, electric trains rolled over the Stadtbahn. Most lines were electrified by 1930, with 1,013 electric trains replacing the steam trains. Transit time between Ostbahnhof and Charlottenburg decreased from 31 minutes by steam to 22 minutes by electric S-Bahn in 1928. At the turn of the millennium, it is still 22 minutes. The badge was a white **S** on a green background in 1928. It is still used today. Further lines were electrified in 1933, and a north-south connection across the city, mainly in a tunnel, was completed in 1939. Bombing raids in 1943 interrupted several lines, but most were repaired until the Red Army brought the system to a halt in April 1945. In order to keep the Soviets from using the tunnels, they were flooded.

Regional trains. DB provides regional train service as a supplement to the S-Bahn trains and takes you into Berlin's suburbs. Five Regional Express (RE) lines run through Berlin's heart. Board these lines, in addition to Hauptbahnhof, at Zoo, Ostbahnhof, Alexanderplatz and Friedrichstraße stations, which DB converted to regional train stations. A transportation ticket or pass covering zone C will cover the entire local network. Regional train departure times from Zoo station are shown on the mechanical departures board in the main hall. Trains on RE lines 4 and 5 run to the outlying East Berlin's Schönefeld Airport in only 31 minutes from Zoo. Understandably, DB calls these trains **AirportExpress** trains, but at the same time understands that travelers from the west usually arrive at Tegel Airport, where buses take them the short distance into town.

You can reach 110 stations in the surrounding state of Brandenburg from the capital city without changing trains, and without change you can travel all the way from Magdeburg to Cottbus via Berlin's stations. You will need separate tickets for those cities outside the Berlin metropolitan district.

Regional Express (RE) trains provide services up to 100 mph on trips averaging up to 31 miles at a minimum of two-hourly frequency. DB's new, red, double-decked regional trains are a pleasure to ride. Seating is comfortable. The air-conditioning purrs, and there are pull-down sunscreens and so much headroom in the upper deck that there is even room overhead for your luggage. On the lower deck, you can use the space provided for bicycles and baby carriages. It's a fine

regional train and, on Berlin's improved tracks, runs smooth as Schultheiss beer on tap.

Regional Bahn (RB) trains are locomotive hauled, but are shorter trains. They are slower and cost less to ride. They cover local services with an average length of 18.5 miles, speeds of up to 62 mph, and at least two-hourly frequency. They contain space for bicycles. Traveling in either a RE or RB train, although far short of riding in an ICE, is faster and more comfortable than traveling aboard an S-Bahn, but the trains call at far fewer stations.

U-Bahn. The Berlin U-Bahn network is one of the longest in the world. The first lines were opened in 1902 and included an elevated line on viaduct now part of Line U1. The initial system was completed in 1930, and construction did not start again until 1953. Since then, several lines have been newly built or extended in West Berlin, and all of the lines in the West were modernized and therefore have been more efficient than the older S-Bahn lines. For visitors, the U-Bahn network in the West is centered on Zoo station, but you may change between U-Bahn trains at any of the many hubs throughout the city. Use the maps posted in the trains. In the East, Alexanderplatz and Friedrichstraße are often used for changing. Lines U5 through U9 use the so-called "large profile" carriages, which are 14 inches (35 centimeters) wider than the "small profile" carriages of lines 1 through 4.

Buses. The transportation authority and almost no one else celebrated the 150th anniversary of buses in Berlin in 1997, not because the 1,426 double-decked, single-decked, and articulated ones aren't any good, because they are, but because Berliners take their far-reaching, on-time, and reliable bus network for granted. You can ride 161 bus lines stopping at 7,000 bus stops (one near you). West Berlin is one of the few places in the world outside the British Isles where a large number of the buses are double-decked (394). Bus lines are numbered with three digits. Only night buses with the prefix "N," express buses with the prefix "X," metro buses with the prefix "M," and streetcars in the East hold to two digits.

Given the time, you see more while traveling by bus than U-Bahn, and in fact many routes save you time by not requiring you to make U-Bahn changes. Once you get to know where you are and where you

are going, you can begin to use the Berlin bus system to your best advantage. On glassed-in bus-stop walls and in most U-Bahn stations you find large Berlin maps showing the bus routes. Once you get used to this back-up network, you will prefer using it for selected trips.

Bus stops are marked by a green **H** (for **Haltestelle**) on a yellow background. The newer ones have vertical, plastic picket signs with each of the regularly scheduled and night buses indicated and illuminated signs telling you how long you must wait. Older ones have attached metal tags with green numbers on yellow indicating regularly scheduled buses. The tan-on-orange As, Bs, and Cs indicate the tariff zone of the stop. A remarkable feature is that precise departure times for each route are posted at every stop and are rigidly observed. Buses keep closely to the posted timetables. The timetables also list the names of the stops the buses serve to help you determine which line to take. Those stops are usually so well indicated that you can generally read their names from inside the bus.

The buses themselves are outstanding. The comfortable Mannesman double-deckers are rarely so full that you can't sit in front upstairs and watch Berlin unfold before you. You enter the front and pay the driver if you don't already have a valid, already validated ticket. The front steps to the upper level can be considered "up only," and rear steps, "down only." There is no standing allowed upstairs.

The 1997 Mannesman double-deckers have **three** side doors with the stairs in the far back. This makes it convenient for those holding tickets to enter the back doors while those needing to buy tickets from the driver are forming a line at the front door. However, after 8 P.M. the driver locks the back doors and snarls at anyone trying to use them. You must enter the front door. Bummer.

Streetcars. Streetcars fill out the transportation network in the East the same way that buses do in the West. They are an effective way of getting to places located between S- and U-Bahn stations. They are very much a force in East Berlin, where you can ride 27 lines over more than 217 miles (361 kilometers). In May 1998, the Berlin Transport Authority retired the last of the original streetcars that the communist East German government had purchased in 1976 for use

in East Berlin. The driver on the final ceremony was the same now-veteran driver that had piloted the streetcar's inaugural run in 1976. These articulated vehicles were built by Tatra in Czechoslovakia and are referred to as the **Tatra-Bahnen**. In May 1997, the last of the 663 **alte Dame** (old lady) Tatra-Bahnen that were built subsequent to 1976 (until 1991) were overhauled to make the yellow "Oldies" more comfortable, safer, and quieter. Workers equipped them with new seats, leaf doors, and electronic safety devices. The Czech-built streetcars run with lightning speed and great efficiency past the cars on the now auto-clogged boulevards of East Berlin and connect where necessary with West Berlin's double-decked-bus network.

Electric streetcar history began in Berlin in 1879 when Dr. Werner von Siemens introduced the first electric streetcar at a trade show. The world's first electric streetcar went into service in Berlin on May 16, 1881. The line, about 1.2 miles (2 kilometers) long, ran from today's Lichterfelde-Ost station to the Kadettenanstalt. The 26 passengers (14 standing and 12 sitting) in the 16.4-foot (5 meters) by 6.6-foot (2 meters) streetcar sped through the city streets at 12 mph (20 km/h). After 1896 electrification gradually replaced horses, and the last horse-drawn streetcar was withdrawn on December 14, 1902. Streetcar traffic in West Berlin expired on October 2, 1967, when Line 55 ran for the last time to Zoo station. In the East, well-maintained and clean electric streetcars continued racing down the median strips getting you from Prenzlauer Berg to Köpenick. Look for the streetcar stops marked with **H** emblems. BVG tickets and passes are accepted.

Night Buses and Night Streetcars. Most subway and regular streetcar and bus lines stop running about 1-1:30 A.M. and don't start again until 4-5 A.M. (except Lines U12 and U9, which run 24 hours during the weekends). During this downtime the night bus system in the West and the night streetcar system in the East provide excellent half-hourly service from about 1 A.M. to 4 A.M. You can still get to your bed during the wee hours, no matter where you are staying, but it requires learning alternate networks. It often takes less time to get home via night bus than by connecting U-Bahn lines during the day. There is very light traffic. Night bus and streetcar maps are posted at only a few locations, but obtain a free **Nachtliniennetz** map at the BVG information office in front of Zoo station.

Your regular transportation ticket covers the nightlines, which spread from Spandau to Köpenick. The largest concentration is from Zoo station with service at least every half hour, more often on weekends and on the Ku'damm, Tauentzienstraße, and Mehringdamm lines. The **Nachtliniennetz** map gives you the exact departure times and routes.

AUTO RENTAL

For seeing and getting around Berlin, driving an automobile is a problem. You don't have to be crazy to drive in Berlin. You have to be prepared for terminal gridlock, construction delays, and detours that aren't on the map. These contribute to the fact that driving an automobile in Berlin is safer than anywhere else in Germany, based on 1997 traffic fatality figures. Parking downtown is almost as difficult as driving. Parking on 11 streets in the heart and historic centers of Berlin is reserved for residents displaying an appropriate sticker on their cars.

Only when you are traveling to an out-of-the-way village in the surroundings should you consider not using public transportation (city public transportation stretches from Potsdam to Schönefeld Airport). In this case, however, traffic fatality figures show a 12-fold increase.

If you decide to buck the system, car rentals are available at Tegel Airport from the following: Hertz, Avis, National, Europcar, Westfahling, and Sixt/Budget. To reach their collective office building at Tegel, exit the main airport building and descend the well-marked escalator. It's about a five-minute walk in the open air. Automobiles rented in Berlin may be driven to any west European country, except that Mercedes models are not allowed in Italy. Only Opels, Fords, Fiats, and Renaults may be driven into Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, and Romania. Entry is not allowed into the other Eastern and Baltic countries, including Greece and Finland.

Avis (Budapester Straße 41, Tel. 2-61-18-81), **Hertz** (Budapester Straße 39, Tel. 2-61-10-53), and **Europcar** (Kurfürstendamm 101-104, Tel. 2-35-06-40) pickup and drop-off garages are located in the street behind the Europa Center, convenient to the Crowne Plaza and Palace hotels. The Westfahling office is at Quitzowstraße 33 in the East (Tel. 396-4031).

ADAC, the German Automobile Club which offers emergency road service similarly to AAA in the United States, also offers automobile rentals for club members through Sixt in 10 offices including Tegel (Tel. 4-12-20-20). ADAC's office is at Bundesallee 29/30 (mobile Tel. 0-180-5-10-11-12, Fax 0-180-5-30-29-28).

BICYCLES

Berlin is an excellent city for riding bicycles with a well-organized bicycle path network totaling 480 miles (800 kilometers) in length. The heavy big-city traffic is not friendly to bicyclists, yet its congestion is the best reason to ride your bike. Nearly all major streets have an adjacent reddish bicycle path, which riders are obliged to use when marked with a blue bicycle sign. On a survey of 41 German cities with populations over 200,000, West Berlin ranked 14th for most bicycle-friendly city (Münster was first) and East Berlin ranked 28th. Berlin is so flat you will immediately notice the few hilly sections in Prenzlauer Berg and Kreuzberg and complain about the lack of marked bicycle lanes only in a few areas, but pedestrians are generally aware of the ting-a-ling sound of bicycle bells.

Letting you take your bicycle on U-Bahn, S-Bahn, and regional trains makes bicycling Berlin much easier. Note that during weekdays you can only take your bicycle aboard during the very early morning, between 9 A.M. and 2 P.M., and from 5:30 P.M. until the last train. When you take your bike, you have to buy it a ticket unless you have a card such as the seven-day card.

You can use the S-Bahn or regional train to travel to S-Bhf Wannsee and then over the Havelchausee to a lovely beach. Or you can take an S-Bahn train to S-Bhf Bernau or S-Bhf Konigswusterhausen deep in Berlin's surroundings and begin a bicycle tour through the green.

Of course you can rent a bicycle from any of the bicycle rental agencies listed below, but in Berlin, DB has organized a terrific system called **Call a Bike** that allows you to literally pick up a reconditioned, high-tech bicycle from anywhere you happen to be in the city center (almost). Locations include Potsdamer Platz (at the DB tower), Zoo, Hauptbahnhof, Wittenbergplatz (KaDeWa), Unter den

Linden, Kastanienallee (Prenzlauer Berg), Ernst-Reuter-Platz (Technical University), Oranienburger Strass, Hackescher Markt, K'damm, and Nollendorfplatz.

In 2006, 15,000 riders rented 1,650 silver-and-red bicycles 135,000 times. All one needs is a valid credit card and a cell (mobile) telephone. First, telephone (0) 700/05225522 to register your credit card and cell-phone number and receive a customer (Kunden) I. D. Alternately, go to www.callabike.de and complete the registration form. Your credit card will be immediately charged €5, and this will be deducted from your final bill.

Second, you will find one or more of the bicycles locked at any crossroads you happen to pass. Choose one, dial the telephone number in the red circle on the cover of the lock and enter the code in the lock display.

Third, return your bike to **any** major crossing and lock it safely, open the cover, press “ja,” check the receipt code number, and dial the coded phone number. You will be charged €0.08 per minute up to €15 maximum for 24 hours and €60 for four to seven days.

Berlin by Bike rental stations (open Mon.-Fri. 10 A.M. to 7 P.M., Sat. to 4 P.M., telephone +49 (0) 180-510 8000) are located at Dorotheenstraße 30 in Berlin Mitte, Bergmannstraße 9 in Kreuzberg, Auguststraße 29a in Mitte, and at Youth Hostel Berlin International, Kluckstraße 3 in the Tiergarten district.

The Allgemeiner Deutscher Fahrrad Club (ADFC) at Brunnenstr. 28 (Tel. (30) 448 47 24, open Mon.-Fri. noon to 8 P.M. and Sat. 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. is a useful source for information about the bicycles, travel guides, route descriptions, maps, and equipment. Also visit their Web site for downloadable PDF maps of several routes.

BICYCLE TAXIS

Bicycle taxis (velotaxis) are Berlin's most environmentally friendly alternative public-transportation mode, and you can hail one of the weird-looking contraptions anywhere on the busy streets. The 330-pound (150 kilogram) vehicles with pedals (but with electric motors that kick in at 6 mph) are as individual as a taxi and cheap

as a bus. Velotaxis cost €2.50 for the first kilometer and €1 for every additional kilometer, fresh air included. About 250 English-speaking drivers with drivers' licences will bike you anywhere you wish, provided the driver sees some chance of a return fare. An individual 30-minute Velotour, a very special form of sightseeing for visitors in Berlin, costs €7.50 (per person, paid at the Velotaxi). April to mid-October the 80 environmentally-friendly bicycle taxis cover four set routes, 1 P.M. to 7 P.M. The routes go from S-Bhf Friedrichstraße to Potsdamer Platz, from Friedrichstraße to Hackescher Markt, from Adenauerplatz to Wittenburgplatz, and from the Europa Center to the Brandenburg Gate. You can pat yourself on the back for being environmentally conscious. In 2005, an estimated 500,000 passengers traveled by this alternative transportation mode. The drivers pay €5 a day for the rental of the taxi and keep every euro they earn.

How to See Berlin

Visitors flock to Berlin from all over Europe for sightseeing and nightlife. You meet Italians, Dutch, and Scandinavians everywhere.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Buses, streetcars, S-Bahn, and U-Bahn trains (when they run above ground) provide an inexpensive way to see Berlin. The big yellow double-decker buses are your best bet because you have good views from the "lounge" on top above the driver, and you get closer to sights worth seeing so that you can get out to visit them. Stops are announced, but there are no sightseeing announcements. You should travel with guidebook and map handy for reference.

CITY TOURS

You can make city tours in conventional, air-conditioned buses with excellent rapid-fire narration in English and German, you can take a bicycle taxi or a walking tour, you can choose a sightseeing trip in a white-painted antique open-air vehicle driven by a person wearing a helmet reminding you of the Red Baron, or you can tour the

city in a panoramic train. If you want to learn about the things that make Berlin special, choose a standard or walking tour. If you want a lark, and the weather is good, choose a bicycle taxi or the Red Baron.

Several leading tour bus companies cooperate on clever hop-on, hop-off plans whereby for one price you can get on and off buses, which circle Berlin at a 15-minute or half-hourly interval. The tours are “auto guided” in seven languages. You get on and off wherever you please as often as you like. Keep in mind you can do all this on your own with a day ticket and this guidebook. You won’t have the audio commentary but you will have more time to visit sites that interest you.

The buses of **Berlin City Tour** circle every 30 minutes. Their main stop is at Kurfürstendamm 11, where you may buy your ticket (adults pay €13, seniors and students €11, those under 12 €8). When you board at any of the other stops, you buy your ticket from the driver. First departure from Ku’damm is at 10:30 A.M. and the last possible departure for a complete tour is at 4 P.M. The eight stops are at Potsdamer Platz, Checkpoint Charlie, Gendarmenmarkt, Rotes Rathaus for Alexanderplatz, the Lustgarten for Museum Island, Brandenburg Gate, and Hauptbahnhof for the Tiergarten and Government Quarter.

Berlin Sightseeing at Ku’damm 220 offers a similar hop-on, hop-off **City Circle Tour**, with departures every 15 minutes. Adults pay €20, children €10, and go farther than with the Berlin City Tour to 15 landmarks including the Jewish Museum and Charlottenburg Palace.

Top-Tour Berlin takes you on a hop-on, hop-off schedule through the city in—during the summer—an open-topped bus starting from the Café Kranzler near U-Kurfürstendamm so that you have the best possible view of Berlin’s sights. Tours, starting at 10 A.M., run at 25-minute intervals. The last tour is at 5 P.M.

On the **Zille-Express** you observe the hustle and bustle of Berlin from a 1920s-style vintage bus during the summer. They depart every 45 minutes from the “Hi-Flyer” at the corner of Wilhelmstraße and Zimmerstraße, with a stop at the Brandenburg Gate (10 A.M. to 6:40 P.M.). The circuit lasts 70 minutes with live commentary in English and German.

Panorama S-Bahn is a glassed S-Bahn train that leaves for one-hour tours through Berlin from the Ostbahnhof on Saturdays,

Sundays, and legal holidays at 11 A.M. and 12:20 P.M. You can book your tickets in advance on the Internet at www.s-bahn-berlin.de or any S-Bahn ticket office. The commentary is live and in German, but English is available on headphones. Fare costs €16 for adults; €9.50 for ages 4-13.

Walking tours. There are by now about two dozen tour organizers, including associations as well as private enterprises. The tours through the Scheunenviertel (see Chapter 4), covering Jewish history around the synagogue on Oranienburger Straße, became a part of the standard program long ago. Next to these classics, you can find a palette of specific themes: discover Berlin, Nazi Berlin, ecological Berlin, women's Berlin, gay and lesbian Berlin, particular districts, literature, film, theater, architecture, city planning, even fashion. The guides are often academics with intensive knowledge of the area, and most of them are enthusiastic. They have to be. No one is ever going to get rich running city theme tours. Most of the tours take between 90 minutes and three hours. There are discounts for seniors and students. You usually don't have to reserve them in advance; just show up with good walking shoes and a public-transportation ticket. Identify your guide at the meeting point by his or her badge.

On three walking tours, you receive a reduction using a Welcome Card. These are:

Berlin Walks, Harbigstraße 26, Tel./Fax 301-9194 (at 10 A.M. and 2:30 P.M.), lead you through Berlin in the English language: Discover Berlin, Infamous Third Reich Sites, and Jewish Life in Berlin. Meeting point: outside Zoo Station main entrance at top of taxi stand. You can get details and book at the Euraide office in Bahnhof Zoo.

Kulturbüro, Greifenhagener Straße 62, Tel. 444-09-36, offers extensive "city seductions" on theater history, literature, architecture, art, history, fashion, districts, and cemeteries, also outside the city to Grunewald, Babelsberg, and Sommerswalde.

StattReisen Berlin, Malplauetstraße 5 (Wedding), Tel. 455-30-28, Fax 45-80-00-03 (Mon.-Fri. 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.), offers an extensive program in English, Russian, or French: history, literature, film, theater, Fascism, Jewish Berlin, a stroll along the Wall, Pankow, and Tempelhof.

Banking and Changing Money

When you arrive by air or train from a non-euro country, the very first thing to do upon arrival is to change for local currency. ATMs (**Geldautomaten**) are your best bet for favorable exchange rates, and they are open after the banks close. Every traveler will benefit from carrying a bank credit card or ATM card for withdrawals or instant cash. These friendly devices will accept your Visa, MasterCard, or Plus or Cirrus network ATM card, depending on whether the machine's bank is affiliated with your home bank. It helps to carry two cards from different banks to increase your chances that one will be accepted. Some machines will read your card as being issued abroad and automatically give you directions in English. Some call you by name and then refuse the card you carry. Most require you to press the "English" button. Beware of any change office that is not a bank; in these storefronts, you can expect poorer rates and/or a heavy service charge no matter what the large posters claim.

The euro (€) is the official currency of twelve European countries, and in Berlin you receive coins from all of them. Every euro coin carries a common European face. On the reverse, each member state has decorated the coins with its own motifs. A French citizen will be able to buy a bratwurst in Berlin using a euro coin carrying the imprint of the king of Spain. Thus, the coins attract the attention of collectors. A Greek or Portuguese €1 coin will be more in demand in Berlin than a Dutch €1 coin. Finland mints €1 coins, but they are not in circulation in Finland, and thus they are primarily for collectors. The euro banknotes are identical, regardless of the country in which they are issued, and only differ according to denomination in size and color.

You want to use plastic whenever possible in the major hotels and restaurants to get the bank exchange rate, which is higher than you will receive by changing cash or traveler's checks, but their use otherwise is limited to a few book and music stores, so you will have to rely primarily on cash from ATMs or traveler's checks in Berlin.

Banks. Banks are generally open Mon.-Fri. 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. and 2 P.M. to 6 P.M., except Wed. afternoon and at 5 P.M. on Fri. The

ReiseBank in the Zoo train station (connected to the German Railroad) holds longer hours. It is open daily 7:30 A.M. to 10 P.M. The **Berliner Bank** at Tegel Airport is open Mon.-Sat. 6 A.M. to 10 P.M., Sun. to 9 P.M.

Banks in Berlin accept all kinds of traveler's checks, in dollars, euros, pounds sterling, and yen. They also level a service charge to cover their overhead and cheer their shareholders.

Buyers of dollar-denominated American Express traveler's checks may have their traveler's checks cashed without a service charge at an **American Express office**. American Express has two offices: one in the West and one in the East. In the West, visit Bayreuther Straße 37, Tel. 214-9830 (open Mon.-Fri. 9 A.M. to 6 P.M., Sat. 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Use U-Bhf Wittenburgplatz. In the East, use the office at Friedrichstraße 172, Tel. 201-7400 (open Mon.-Fri. 9 A.M. to 6 P.M., Sat. 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Use U-Bhf Französische Straße.

Thomas Cook office is at Friedrichstraße 56, on the corner of Leipzigerstraße (open Mon.-Fri. 9:30 A.M. to 6 P.M.). Tel. 2016-5916.

Shopping

According to a study by the Swiss Corporate Research Group, Berlin is Germany's most expensive large city, but cheap by comparison with other European and world metropolises. Costs in Berlin are half those in Hong Kong. Berlin is 58 in the rank of world cities. Düsseldorf is 62. München (Munich) is two places back. Frankfurt/Main is 66, and Hamburg 71. One doesn't shop in Berlin to save money, but to find specialty items one can't find at home at any price. If it exists, you can find it in Berlin. Prices include 14 percent **Mehrwertsteuer (MWS)** (value-added tax), which you can arrange to be refunded on substantial purchases taken out of Germany/Europe.

Cute items to bring home include stuffed toys (especially bears, the city's mascot). The German word for traditional stuffed bears is **Teddy**s. Kitchen gadgets are flashy. Bedding (especially feather-filled comforters) is beautiful. Model trains, tin soldiers, original art, and porcelain are popular.

Most shops are open Mon.-Fri. from 9 or 10 A.M. to 6 or 8 P.M.

and close earlier on Sat. at 2 P.M. Shops may open up to 10 Sundays per year—four of these dates are set by the Berlin Senate and two can be set by retailers on special occasions, such as anniversaries. In addition, shops may open on Advent Sundays from 1 P.M. to 8 P.M. Some 60 shops and grocery stores in the East, including Prenzlauer Berg and the Historical Center, that were open before the Wende have an exemption from the law and may remain open late.

You can perhaps best experience Berlin's **Herz mit Schnauze** ("a big heart and a big mouth") during shopping through Berlin's various markets. No matter how many new shopping centers spring up, the traditional markets have endured over the decades and have become increasingly popular with the opening of the Wall. Weekly markets, market halls, and flea markets make Berlin one of the most market-happy cities in Europe. No other place affords as much insight into the Berliner's true character.

During the first two weeks of August the major stores of Berlin normally have a summer sale, reducing prices as much as 80 percent (according to their advertisements).

Tax Free. You can save on VAT (value-added tax) by following these rules:

1. Articles should be purchased in shops displaying the Tax Free sign.

2. Ask for the Tax Free certificate in the shops.

3. Certificates must be stamped by the German Customs Authority prior to your departure to a non-European Union country. When departing from Tegel Airport, have them stamped before checking in. If you are going to another European Union country, you must have them stamped at your final European Union departure.

4. On presentation of your checks, you can receive cash at any of over 3,000 dispensing points at borders, airports, or on board ships in Europe. Alternately, the Tax Free shopping check can be mailed in the envelope listing the reimbursement points so they it can be cashed in by check or credit card.

Tegel Airport is one of the easiest places to claim your refund. Things couldn't be simpler. The office is located down the hallway behind the Service Center (Gate 0).

Cafés

Berlin overflows with cafés indoors and out. It has more than 2,000 restaurants, serving a variety of menus in all price ranges. Twenty of Berlin's restaurants rank in Germany's "best" 515, making it the best restaurant city in Germany. Munich places 18 and Hamburg 17. Prices always include tax and service charge unless specifically noted, but are unique in another way. Berliners don't tip according to percent. They tip by "feel." They feel that tipping is a reward for perfect service. It is customary always to leave the small (less than one Mark) coins from your change or (more commonly) to tell the waiter how much you are paying. For example, if the bill were to be €6.60, you would say, "Seven."

German food is an endangered species in Berlin. It is hard to find a Berlin specialty unless you like **Eisbein** (pig's knuckles) or **Kassler Rippchen** (smoked and pickled pork chops), which trace their origin to Friedrich the Great's imposition of compulsory salt purchase and Berliners needing to scrounge for uses for the mineral. **Aal** (eel) is another item almost no one in Berlin eats anymore. When you see the East Prussian specialty **Königsberger Klopse** (meatballs) on the menu think of it as the nickname for the fountain in front of the Europa Center. The blending of cultures and Berlin's position as a world city produced more international restaurants than German ones. The trend is toward south-of-the-Alps restaurants, soya, and lemon grass. Berliners returning after sun holidays have taken to pasta, cappuccino, and espresso. You find Greek, Turkish, Argentine, and Chinese restaurants in every other block in West Berlin. The best and most historic are listed in this guide by city section, but wherever you are, you will never have to search long for a café or restaurant.

Except in the most exclusive restaurants, it is not uncommon for strangers to share tables, so don't be surprised if a new face points to a chair at your table and asks, "**Ist das frei?**" ("Is anyone sitting there?") You can do the same.

Berliners say you should eat like a kaiser at breakfast, like a king at lunch, and like a beggar at dinner. Berlin's cooking has traditionally been very working class, and few restaurants of any quality serve

traditional Berlin fare. **Kassler Rippenspeer**, the Kassel spare rib, has nothing to do with the city of Kassel, but was created by the late master butcher Cassel, a Berliner. Hamburgers in Berlin used to be called **Bulletten** and were introduced by the Huguenots, but now Berliners have taken to the American word. **Berliners** are jelly donuts, **Doner Kebab** (meat on a skewer) was introduced by the Turks, and a **Molle** is a beer.

You can get an inexpensive sandwich on every other street corner. Berlin **Wurst** (sausages), which are not a specialty, compare poorly with sausages in other German cities. A steamed Bockwurst, Bratwurst, or Ketwurst comes with a shabby slice of white bread. A Currywurst shows its ethnic heritage.

Particularly popular in Berlin (especially in cafés after work) is **Eiskaffe**, which consists of strong Berlin coffee with one or two scoops of vanilla ice cream floated on top, sometimes sprinkled with chocolate chips and served in a goblet or a tall glass with a straw.

Living It Up

In Berlin, “culture” is a code word for “living it up.” Berlin’s **SchauLUST Museen Berlin Pass** (Happy-Viewing Museum Pass Berlin) covers more than 70 museums and collections including the important buildings of the Berlin State Museums such as the Pergamon Museum, Egyptian Museum, and Gemäldegalerie (Picture Gallery, the Berlin City Museums,) as well as the museums of the Berlin City Foundation, such as the German Technology Museum, and the Brücke Museum on three consecutive museum opening days for €15 for adults, €7 for students (temporary exhibitions not included).

Bars (Kneipen). **Kneipe** is a German word that you can loosely translate as “pub.” Berlin is very famous for its Kneipen. They say that on every corner you find five Kneipen.

Berlin is a beer city, and Schultheiss has captured most of the market. **Weißbier** (wheat beer) is always the favorite. Dark beer comes in second. Alcohol-free beer is growing in popularity. The Berliner Bürgerbräu brewery has introduced **Rotkehlchen** according to an old

recipe. Making up a small portion of Berliners' consumption, you can find special beers with flavors of cherry, raspberry, pear, and chili in Szene Kneipen. The Berlin specialty is to add extracts to make **Berliner Weiße mit Schuß** or **Weißbier mit Schußfarbstoff**, which is wheat beer colored red with a raspberry syrup or green with an elixir from **Waldmeister** (woodruff, a European flower). The colorings only slightly modify the taste. It is often served in a wide glass with a flat bottom. Berliner **Molle mit Korn** is a lager beer with a shot of north German Schnapps. In the East, a shot of vodka is a political statement. The green beer that catches your eye, Berliner Kindl Weiß, is **Alcohol frei**, like Klausthaler. It comes in green and red.

Discos. Discos abound, and everyone has their own favorite. Before midnight the crowd is mostly in their teens. Then the disk jockeys change, the music becomes harder, and an older crowd arrives. The walls of discos throb until 5 to 6 A.M. on weekends.

Movies. With everything else going on, it comes as a surprise that there are so many movie houses. In fact, Berlin has 10 percent of all of Germany's movie palaces. There are 165 movie houses and 526 screens ranging from large multiplexes on Potsdamer Platz and Schönhauser Allee to small theaters showing art and niche films. The International looks like the '60s and, as the official first-run movie house of the DDR, it still has a Honecker-Lounge, a club room, and a cocktail bar. The Nickelodeon offers babysitter service.

It was in Berlin, in 1895, that the Skladanowsky brothers invented their first rattling projector. On the day Marlene Dietrich left Berlin for her first job in Hollywood, the **Blue Angel** opened in the **Gloria Palast** (closed in 2004). Kevin Costner danced with wolves on the 21-by-46-foot (6.4 by 14 meters) screen, James Bond battled Gert Frobe's Goldfinger for 12 weeks under the eyes of 140,637 Berliners, and in 1957, the Trapp family brought 90,000 Wessis to tears. The **Zoo-Palast**, Kurfürstendamm 225/226, was named one of Berlin's landmarked buildings. It was built in 1895, transformed during Berlin's toughest year (1948) into **Kino im Kindl** ("KiKi"), and remodeled in 1951 to become one of Berlin's largest movie houses. Home to the Berlin Film Festival since then, it has been transformed into a tasteful multiplex which shows the latest Hollywood releases

on nine screens. The large theater, with its splendid architecture, gives you additional thrills with a laser show. The 1998 polished **Marmorhaus** (Marble House) on Ku'damm invites you in to while away the hours in four theaters or admire the completely refurbished lobby. You have no problem finding a movie theater anywhere in Berlin and especially in the Ku'damm area, where there are movie palaces on every block showing American, French, Italian, British, and German films. The **Hollywood**, which caters to the more demanding Ku'damm crowd, has added a second (smaller) theater.

One or more movie theaters showing American, German, French, Italian, and other foreign films are located in almost every block in the Kurfürstendamm area. Every neighborhood has more. Consult the local newspaper or events magazine for details. Open-air movies are popular in Berlin during the summer. The **Waldbühne** in Charlottenburg is the largest in Europe of this kind, but you will find others, including seats at the **Zitadelle** in Spandau. The courtyards of **Künstlerhau Bethanien** in Kreuzberg and the **Podewil** in the historic district also display movies on outdoor screens. Take your popcorn and picnic basket.

Theater. Berlin is a lively theater town. You find three opera houses in Berlin. The Osis rebuilt the beautiful one on Unter den Linden as well as **Komische Oper**. The Wessis built the Deutsche Oper Berlin in Charlottenburg. Berlin's 32 legitimate theaters offer something for everyone from serious dramas to comedies. Many of the most interesting are spotlighted in the current program available from German National Tourist Offices and Berlin Tourist Offices. Most are usually closed between the middle of July and the middle of August or the first of September, so theatergoers should time their visits around those dark days.

Most plays are spoken in the German language. Tickets are often sold out very early for many theater, concert, and opera performances, but try especially for tickets to the **West Berlin Philharmonic**, the **Unter den Linden Staatsoper**, and the **Schauspielhaus** on the Gendarmenmarkt. They will make more memorable your visit to Berlin.

Tickets for theaters and concerts can be obtained directly from the

theater box offices or at advance sales offices. At the latter, a service charge is added to the price of the ticket. You can reserve tickets before you leave through the Berlin Hotline or via several Internet providers such as the Koka Concert Ticket Office at www.icf.de/koka36.

At the German opera and state theaters, students with identification can buy tickets at half price a half hour before the performance (assuming there are still tickets available). Similarly, you can buy tickets at half price after 4 P.M. for rock-pop, musical, theater, cabaret, and the Olympic Stadium from Hekticket in the West at Kantstraße 54, Tel. 313-45-54 (use S-Bhf Savignyplatz or U-Bhf Wilmersdorfer Straße) and Kurfürstendamm 14, Tel. 242-6709 (use U-Bhf Kurfürstendamm) and in the East at Rathausstraße 1, Tel. 242-67-09 (use S- and U-Bhf Alexanderplatz); and “Karten von Heute” at Friedrichstraße 35, entrance at Kneifzange (use U-Bhf Friedrichstraße).

In Charlottenburg, buy your tickets at the Kant-Kasse, Krumme Straße 55, Tel. 313-4554; Theaterkarten-Service Laur, Hardenbergstraße 6, Tel. 312-70-41; or the Technical University Theaterkasse, Hardenbergstraße 34, Tel. 313-8017 (open Mon.-Fri. 10 A.M. to 6 P.M., Sat. to 1 P.M.); Theater Kasse City-Center, Kurfürstendamm 207-208, Tel. 881-78-87; or Theaterkasse Schöneberg, Akazienstraße 2, Tel. 781-21-06.

In the neighborhoods, visit Tele Card, Birkebuschstraße 14 (Steglitz), Tel. 834-40-73; Konzertkasse Lichtenrade, Bahnhofstraße 24, Tel. 744-70-02; Theaterkasse Reinickendorf, Residenzstraße 133, Tel. 495-51-14; or TK im Märkischen Zentrum (Reinickendorf), Senftenberger R. 1-3, Tel. 415-28-76.

In Potsdam, use Info-Laden & Ticket-Service in the Dutch Quarter, Tel. (0331) 270-91-50.

Museums. Visitors can spend weeks in Berlin’s 88 museums, but most are closed on Mondays. Some of the exceptions: Bauhaus Archiv, Brücke Museum, German Historical Museum, and Käthe Kollwitz Museum are open Mondays. Admission is free on the first Sunday of the month.

The **Staatliche Museen zu Berlin** (State Museums of Berlin) make an offer whereby you can visit as many of their museums

(and they have the cream of the Prussian collections) as you possibly can in three days with just the **Schaulust Museen Berlin Pass** (Happy-Viewing Museum Pass Berlin) costing €12. Covered are those on Museum Island (Pergamon Museum, Altes Museum); in Charlottenburg (Gallery of the Romanticists, Berggruen Collection); in the Cultural Forum (Paintings Gallery, Decorative Arts Museum, Music Instrument Museum, Engraving Museum, Art Library); in Dahlem (Indian Art Museum); and more (Hamburger Bahnhof, Schinkel Museum, Köpenick Museum of Decorative Arts).

Electricity, Temperature, and Time

Like most of Europe, Berlin operates on the metric system, degrees Celsius, 220 volts, and a television system incompatible with that in North America.

If you must bring anything electrical, it should have an adapter switch for 220 volts, and you'll need a plug adapter with prongs that push into the sockets, but battery power is your best bet because all size batteries are readily available in supermarkets and specialty shops. Audiotapes, especially in battery-powered units with earplugs, work just fine.

Converting degrees Celsius to degrees Fahrenheit is a snap. You multiply degrees Celsius by two, subtract 10 percent, and add 32. If it's 20 degrees, multiplying by two makes 40, less 10 percent is 36, plus 32 is 68 degrees Fahrenheit. Anything cooler than 20 degrees C might require a sweater. If it's 32 degrees C, times two is 64, less 6 is 58, plus 32 makes 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Time for the beach.

It is not unusual to express time using the 24-hour clock, but Berliners are no more punctual than Americans, and if you adapt to the 24-hour life, breakfast is eaten in the afternoon. Berlin lies on a latitude with the Aleutian Islands so the sun goes to bed late in the summer, but rises exceedingly early.

Young people seldom carry an umbrella in Berlin because it gets windy when it rains, but then, too, when it is warm they don't mind getting drenched to the skin in a sudden summer thundershower.

Health

Air pollution is not of major proportions during the summer in Berlin, but hay fever sufferers may be troubled. They should bring their medications. Air pollution from the burning of brown coal and the weather patterns blowing chemical industry effluent from the south is noticeable in the winter, when white snow doesn't stay white very long. Tap water, while not great tasting, is perfectly drinkable but some Berliners prefer bottled water; most Berliners prefer beer. Swimming in rivers and lakes is safe unless marked.

Sports

The DDR built two large and very complete **Recreational Centers** with swimming and nearly every activity that could interest anyone. One center is in Friedrichshain (see Chapter 4), the other in Köpenick. You can find very inexpensive **Sportjugendclubs (SJC)** (Youth Sport Clubs) in 10 districts: Hohenschonhausen, Köpenick, Kreuzberg, Lichtenberg, Marzahn, Pankow Buch, Prenzlauer Berg, Reinickendorf, Treptow, and Wedding. These sports centers for youth offer billiards, skateboarding, table tennis, basketball, and gymnasium as well as aerobic and dance classes. They organize weekend trips and bicycle tours.

Swimming is far and away the most popular sport in Berlin. The Berlin Swimming Authority is the largest in Europe. Yearly, 7.5 million people visit 63 swimming pools, of which 37 are indoors, 14 summer-only, and 12 open-air. In many districts (addresses are listed by city section) there are dozens of lake and river beaches that swarm with hundreds of thousands of visitors on sunny summer days. The several traditionally nude beaches don't raise eyebrows. In winter there are well-equipped indoor pools.

Beach Volleyball is played on the outdoor beaches such as the Wannsee. For information on organized tournaments contact the Volleyballverband Berlin, Tel. 300-061-82.

Bungee Jumping and Super-Swing. Certain events are arranged. For more information contact Super-Swing Freizeitanlagen, Tel. (0172) 311-00-31.

Golf. In many countries, there are public golf courses where anyone can play a round for an admission fee. In Germany, golf is the kind of sport where only club members are allowed to play. Twelve golf courses in and around Berlin relax this policy during the summer and open their doors to the public. Some 30,000 so-called Golf-Flights have been made available. For more information and bookings, Tel. 25-00-25.

Ice-/Roller-Skating You may visit the rinks in Charlottenburg, Neukolln, Steglitz, Wedding, and Wilmersdorf. Skate-boarders tend to congregate on the Matthäikirchplatz in the Cultural Forum (see Chapter 6), by the fountain next to the Memorial Church (Chapter 3), on the Spittelmarkt, and in the tunnel of the ICC (Chapter 5). **Ice-skating** is popular in the **Eissporthalle** in Charlottenburg.

Spectator sports include **Fußball** (soccer). The soccer club Hertha BSC has aroused excitement, recently advancing to the **Erste Bundesliga** (First Division). The Grand Old Dame of Berlin soccer is once again giving Germany's finest teams a run for their money and regularly drawing upwards of 50,000 rabid fans to the Olympic Stadium—more than the Munich or Dortmund clubs.

A few kilometers away, the **basketball** players of Alba Berlin are also keeping fans on the edges of their seats. Berliners have always loved a success story, and in 1995 the "Albatrosses" transformed Berlin into a bastion of basketball when they unexpectedly won the Kovac Cup.

Tennis is largely confined to private clubs with limited access. **Freizeitpark Tegel** (Tel. 434-6666) has courts. The Ladies German Open is held in May at the **Tennisclub Rot-Weiß** (Tel. 8-26-22-07; tickets 25-00-25). Every year the world's best female tennis athletes compete on the courts in Grunewald. Nine of the top 10 came in 1997.

Racing includes the **ADAC-Avus automobile races** in May, the **ADAC motorcycle races** in September, **trotter racing** at **Trabrennbahn Mariendorf** (Mariendorferdamm 222, Tel. 741-20-65), **Trabrennbahn Karlshorst** (Hermann-Duncker-Straße 129, Tel. 509-08-91), and **thoroughbred racing** at **Galopprennbahn Hoppegarten** (Goethestraße 1, Dahwitz Hoppegarten, Tel. 559-61-02), which is

outside of Berlin in Dahlewitz (use S-Bhf Hoppegarten). The **International Horse Show** is usually held in November. The six-day **bicycle race** in October is held in the Max Schmeling Stadium.

Fishing is permitted with a license. Apply to **Fischereiamt** (Havelchaussee 149-51, Tel. 305-2047).

Telephones, Faxes, E-Mails, and Post Office

Your cell (mobile) phone must be internationally capable for use in Berlin. Depending on the number of calls you make in Germany, you may save big by buying a German sim card. They are relatively inexpensive in Germany, but don't take them back home and use them there.

If, in your fantasy, you have ever wanted to telephone from a neon-pink telephone, you have your wish in Berlin. Deutsche Telekom's new marketing strategy has provided a pink motif to their telephone booths up to and including pink headsets.

Deutsche Telekom, the former monopoly, is still the Goliath of telephones in Germany. About 9,000 operators handle 500 million directory-assistance calls per year. For Telekom directory assistance press 11-833 for numbers within Germany or 11-834 for international numbers. Prices continue to decrease with improved technology and competition. The other telephone carriers are Telegate, Arcor, Otelo, and Viag-Intercom. For Telegate directory assistance, dial 11-880.

Berlin, like the rest of Europe, is divided into numerous five-digit **Postleitzahlen** (ZIP codes). You should use these to expedite delivery of your letter. Some yellow drop boxes are segregated according to the ZIP code of your addressee. You will normally use "**andere**" (other).

Berlin's telephone system is the most modern in Europe because they started from scratch installing the latest telephone technology in the former DDR. The area code for Berlin is 030, for Potsdam 0331. Drop the zero if you dial from abroad using the 49 country prefix. Don't be put off by the fact that telephone numbers have different numbers of digits. There is no standard length.

You find two kinds of pay phones, coin and **Kartentelefon**, which take telephone cards only—no coins. The card phones feature an

LCD readout either in English, French, or German. To display instructions in English you press a white button to select language. Twenty seconds before the telephone card is used up, the credit indicator lamp will flash and the signal will sound. To continue the call, press the green button and exchange the telephone card.

Telephone cards are available at post offices in two sizes: 60 **Einheiten** (pulse units), or 260 **Einheiten**. You can't get money back for an unused portion of a telephone card, but you might be able to sell it to a friend.

You will be much better off buying a telephone card at your very first opportunity. You won't need to worry about carrying coins for the pay phones, but the real advantage of buying a telephone card is that you usually won't have to wait as long because phone booths taking telephone cards are far more common than those taking coins.

Most post offices are able to send faxes. You will also find occasional fax/telephone booths where you can send a fax using your telephone card.

For e-mail, repair to one of Berlin's avant-garde cyber cafés, order a beverage, and settle in before you access the World Wide Web and the mysteries of German-language keyboards (the z's and the y's are reversed, and you usually have to use the Alt key to get to the ampersand). Good luck.

Internet-Café Hai Täck (High Tech), Brünnhildestraße 8, Tel. 85-96-1413, Fax 85-96-1415, www.haitaeck.de (open 11 A.M. to 1 A.M.) has 11 Internet stations, e-mail service, and AOL access. Use U- or S-Bhf Bundesplatz.

Alpha Internet Café Galerie, Dunckerstraße 72 (Prenzlauer Berg), Tel. 4-47-90-67 (open 3 P.M. to midnight) also has MS Office, Netscape, printers, and scanners.

Website Café, Joachimstraler Straße 41, Tel. 886-796-30, Fax 886-782-67, is Berlin's largest cyber café with 33 machines upstairs through a futuristic bar. Use U- or S-Zoo.

Amerika Gedenk-Bibliothek (Library), Blücherplatz 1, Tel. 90-22-61-05.

Cyberb@r KaDeWe, in KaDeWe department store,

Tauentzienstraße 21, Tel. 2-12-10. Use U-Bhf Wittenburgplatz.

Cyberb@r Zoo, Joachimstaler Straße 5-6, Tel. 88-02-40, www.mem.de/cyberbar/home.htm. Use U- or S-Bhf Zoo.

Loginn, Rosenthaler Straße 71, Tel. 28-59-81-17.

Netz-Werk, Sonntagsstraße 6, Tel. 29-49-06-54.

Pro-Markt KuDamm, Kurfürstendamm 207-208, Tel. 88-67-90-89.

Television and Radio

The unification of the Germanys caused serious problems combining television and radio programming. West Germany was structured so that each state had its own television channel, but East Germany had only one, the official East German network connected with the East German Post Office (which handled the technical matters and transmission and owned the cameras, etc.). Formerly there were two morning programs televised for children with the same name, one from West Berlin and one from Adlershof. Although the characters were the same, the programs were different. Schoolteachers in the East could determine (and report) which families watched Western television by asking their young pupils, "What was the story this morning?"

There are now more television channels available in Berlin than you can count. They include antenna, cable, and satellite. Cable includes BCC, CNN, SuperChannel, NBC, Eurosport, and MTV. Many broadcast 24 hours. The newspapers print complete guides and **Tip, the Berlin Magazine**, includes a two-week pullout TV guide. American videotapes and DVDs are incompatible and normally cannot be played on German sets, and Berlin videos and DVDs normally cannot be viewed back home.

Learning the German Language

There are several schools in Berlin that specialize in teaching the German language to foreigners. The **Goethe Institut** is as close to an authority on the German language as exists in Germany. Its Berlin building is located in an interesting neighborhood in the city's historical center across from a U-Bahn station. (Neue Schonhauser Str. 20, tel. 25 90 63).

Lost and Found

The lost and found (Fundbüro) office for the Berlin Transit Authority (BVG) is located at Potsdamer Straße 180/182, Tel. 19 44 9 (open Mon.-Thu. 9 A.M. to 6 P.M.; Fri. 9 A.M. to 2 P.M.). A service charge €1 or 2.50 will be charged, depending on the nature of the recovered item.

Central Lost and Found (Zentrales Fundbüro) is at Platz der Luftbrücke 6 in Tempelhof, Tel. 6995.

GermanRail Lost and Found (Fundbüro der Deutschen Bahn) is at Mittelstraße 20, Tel. 297-29-612, Fax 297-29-625 (open Mon., Wed., Thu. 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.; Tue. to 6 P.M.; Fri. 8 A.M. to noon).

Lost or stolen Eurail Global Passes can be replaced, providing you present a police report of the theft or loss, at the Reisezentrum in the main hall of Bahnhof Zoo.