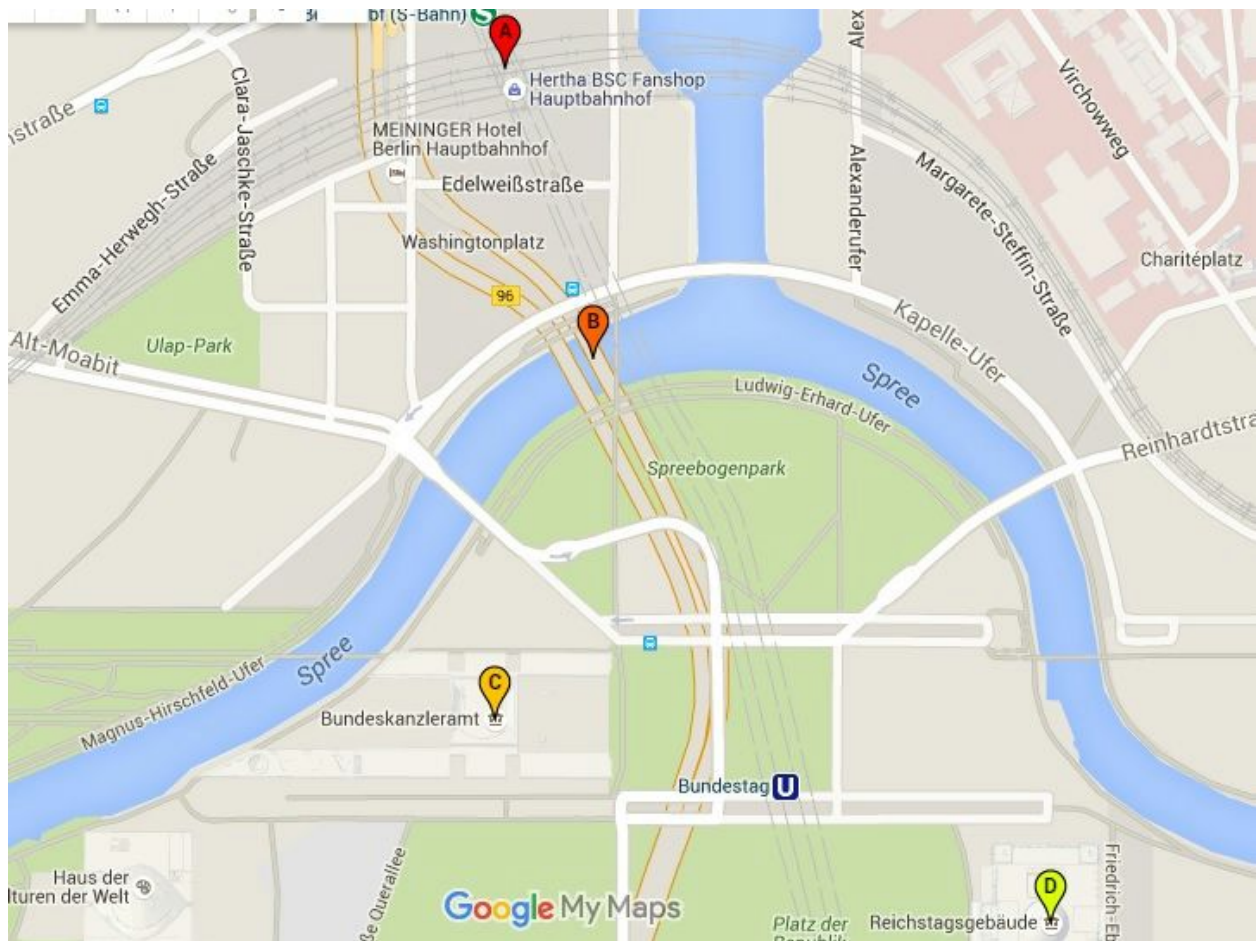


Things to see in Berlin Mitte (West)

If you can't join us for one of our guided Classic Berlin Tours, then please consider our self-guided version, or you could use this as a way to better understand what we will see and explore on the tour. This tour will take you about 90 minutes to 3 hours to complete, depending on how long you spend at each stop.

WARNING: This tour differs slightly from the route and content of the guided tour.

We recommend using this link to get U-bahn, S-bahn, walking, bike or any [directions to the Hauptbahnhof](#). Be sure to read our post on [how to navigate public transportation in Berlin](#). Click here for a [fully interactive map](#).





A - Berlin Central Station

The huge glass building from 2006 is Europe's biggest railroad junction – the elevated rails are for the East-West-connection and underground is North-South. Inside it looks more like a shopping mall with food court and this comes in handy, as Germany's rather strict rules about Sunday business hours do not apply to shops at railroad stations.



B - River Spree

Cross Washington Platz outside the station and Rahel-Hirsch-Straße, turn right and use the red bridge with the many sculptures, to cross the River Spree. Berlin has five rivers and several canals. In the city center of Berlin, the Spree is 44 km (27 ml) and its banks are very popular for recreation. Look at the beer garden "Capital Beach" on your left!



C - German Chancellery (Bundeskanzleramt)

Crossing the bridge, you already see the German Chancellery (Bundeskanzleramt) from 2001, where the German chancellor works. The building also has an official residence, but Angela Merkel doesn't use it. She pays the rent though. In the chancellery,

there are more than 300 offices, 13 winter gardens for the indoor climate and a combined heat and power plant in the basement. It's a green building. On the rooftop is a heliport. Turn right to the main entrance. The highest window on the left is the chancellor's office.

You just passed by the Swiss Embassy on your left, the only original pre-war building in the neighborhood. And the only one that is inhabited – by the Swiss ambassador and his or her family.



D - Reichstag Building + Platz der Republik

As you continue, you arrive at the large lawn in front of the Reichstag Building. This is the “Platz der Republik”, which is open to the public. The Reichstag is from 1894 and was damaged by a mysterious fire in February 1933, shortly after Hitler came to power. In the last days of the Second World War, the Soviet Army destroyed the building; the Swiss embassy was used as a command post. Situated in the West, the

Reichstag was reconstructed by the West German Parliament. As the allies did not allow the parliament to sit in Berlin, it was used as an information center, namely for school groups from West Germany. In 1995, the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude had the Reichstag wrapped in white fabric for two weeks, a lot of fun for the people of Berlin and their guests. After a renovation by the British architect Lord Norman Foster the Reichstag now has the iconic glass dome above the plenary session hall. The dome can be visited; 3 million visitors a year make the Reichstag the most visited parliament building in the world. Read our [full post on the Reichstag](#).



E - Tiergarten

Ahead is a park, [the Tiergarten](#). It's Berlin's most central park and is about 2 sq. km or 500 acres. For centuries, it was the exclusive hunting ground for the court and opened to the general public only in 1742 by the young king Frederic II, who would later become Frederic the Great. It's a great place of recreation with water features, statues and flower beds and it's right next to Germany's oldest zoo, the Berlin Zoologischer Garten. In the center

of a traffic circle you find the "Siegessäule", the victory column, commemorating three wars that led to the union of Germany in the German Empire in 1871. Right under the golden statue of Victoria, goddess of victory, there is an observation deck.



F - Brandenburg Gate

But now turn left along the lawn and the Reichstag and follow Scheidemannstraße, then turn right on Ebertstraße until you reach the Brandenburg Gate. It's from 1791 and was one of 18 gates of Berlin's 18th century city wall. During the wars against the French Emperor Napoleon I in the beginning of the 19th century, when many Germans fought not only the French invader, but also the fact that Germany was divided in many small fiefdoms, the

Brandenburg Gate, "dishonored" by Napoleon who had stolen the statue on top, the Quadriga, became a German national symbol. The biggest party after the wall fell was

here and still a lot of major events in the German capital are at the Brandenburg Gate.

Read our [full post on the Brandenburg Gate](#).



G - Pariser Platz

Go through the gate and you are on Pariser Platz, named for the French capital after Napoleon was defeated for good. All the buildings you find here were built in the 1990s or the 2000s, as the East German government had demolished what was left from the War. This was the forbidden zone close to the Berlin Wall. Here, the Wall separated the Brandenburg Gate (East) from the Reichstag

(West). Most of the new buildings represent what had been there before: the American and French embassies, the Academy of the Arts and the Hotel Adlon Kempinski.



H - Hotel Adlon Kempinski

The Hotel from the mid 1990s is a luxury hotel with many celebrities guests like Pierce Brosnan, Renée Zellweger or Michael Jackson who wanted to please his fans by showing them his baby boy but made them gasp as he bent out of the window of his suite. The original Adlon from 1907 was a place William II, the last German Emperor, preferred to his palace

and where in the 1920s guests like Marlene Dietrich and Charlie Chaplin enjoyed what Berlin had to offer.

I - Holocaust Memorial



Take a right, pass by the British Embassy, and turn right again and across Behrensstraße you already see the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the

Holocaust Memorial. Opened in 2005, it consists of 2,711 steles or concrete blocks where people can walk in between, the ground is uneven. According to the architect Peter Eisenmann, this number has no specific significance. Underground is an information center, a free-of-charge museum with information about other memorials and the holocaust. In one room, several European Jewish families are presented with their lives and photos and the date of their deportation. Thus, some of the often anonymous victims are presented as individuals. Read our [full post on the Holocaust Memorial](#).



J - Hitler's Bunker

Cross the memorial (or pass by on Cora-Berliner-Straße), cross Hannah-Ahrendt-Straße and follow Gertrud-Kolmar-Straße. Soon you'll see a parking lot on the left, with an information board. And usually you see tourist groups as this is the site of Hitler's bunker (J). In January 1945, Hitler moved in and spent most of his

time during the weeks until his suicide April 30 in his private rooms here. The two-storied bunker was extremely high-tech and comfortable compared to what ordinary people had as air raid shelters (if they had any). The movie "The Downfall" from 2004, based on historic research and the memories of one of Hitler's secretaries gives a pretty good idea of what was going on there.



K - Old Reich Chancellery

Take a left "An der Kolonnade", then right on Wilhelmstraße, turn left again and then you are on Voßstraße and you'll find another information board. The whole block was part of Hitler's official government building "The New Reich Chancellery" (the old Reich

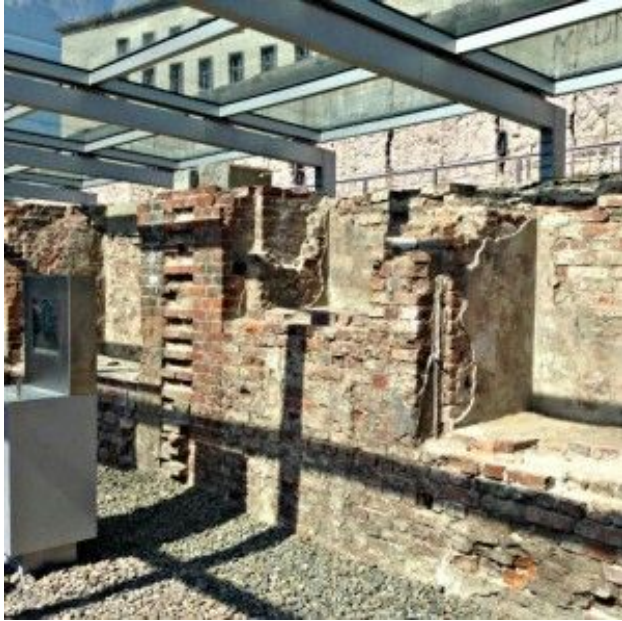
Chancellery, right next door felt to small and ordinary for Hitler). The building was made to impress, not to make sense. It was 421 m (1,263 ft.) long. Visitors had to walk 300 m (900 ft.) through galleries, passing huge mirrors and statues in almost empty rooms with high ceilings until they reached Hitler's office, with an enormous desk, a ceiling of 10 m (30 ft.) and a total of 400 sq. m (4,300 sq. ft.) – Hitler's two story-bunker had only 250 sq. m (2,700 sq. ft.). Both, the bunker and the Reich Chancellery were demolished after the war in order not to become sites of pilgrimage.



L - Potsdamer Platz

Continue on Voßstraße until you reach Ebertstraße, then turn left and you are on [Potsdamer Platz](#). Europe's busiest square before the war with one of the first stop lights from 1923 (there is a copy, looking like a green clock tower) was destroyed in the war and reconstructed only in the 1990s after reunification of Germany. You'll be standing in

the former death strip, the space between the two walls that formed the Berlin Wall. On your left is Leipziger Platz with a huge shopping mall on the site of a pre-war department store; the whole square was empty and part of the death strip. On your right you see the three parts of Potsdamer Platz: The white office towers and hotels of the so-called Beisheim Center (named after the investor) on the right, the glass building of Sony Center and the yellow, orange and red buildings of the "Daimler Benz Quarter", now belonging to a real estate company. In the Sony Center are museums (namely the Filmhaus for German cinematic history), cinemas, restaurants and the "Kaisersaal" a dining hall of an old hotel on the site, open only for private events. Since the year 2000, Potsdamer Platz is also the main venue for the Berlin International Film Festival. Read our [full post on Potsdamer Platz](#).



M - Topography of Terror

As Ebertstraße becomes Stresemannstraße, follow until you reach Niederkirchner Straße and turn left. Behind some trees you'll see a red building, that's Martin-Gropius-Bau, an exhibit space in former West Berlin and across the street a building with columns, the Berlin Parliament (Berlin is one of 16 German federal states) in former East Berlin. And straight, you see 200 m (600ft.) of Berlin Wall. Behind on the right is a gray building

with a lot of open space, the Topography of Terror. It's a documentation center on the site of the former SS, Gestapo and SD headquarters in a former hotel and school of arts and crafts. In the Third Reich, the SS, Hitler's most fanatic paramilitary group penetrated the regular police force and intelligence service inherited from the democratic Weimar Republic. The HQ had its own jail and underground interrogation cells. Today, there are a permanent exhibit, special exhibits and special tours for school groups. Across the street is a huge building, the German department of finance, built in 1936 as Ministry on Aviation and in 1949 the site where the East German state was founded.

N - Checkpoint Charlie



Proceed, cross Wilhelmstraße, pass by the captive balloon (the Berlin Hi-Flyer, an observation deck) and the GDR vintage cars, the "Trabis" and arrive at Checkpoint Charlie (N). The third American checkpoint is named after the third letter of the International Alphabet, Charlie for C. You'll see the copy of a 1960s guard house, actors posing as soldiers, souvenir stands and a lot of information about the checkpoint, the Wall and the

Cold War in Berlin. A couple of deliberate provocations by the East Germans led to the famous tank confrontation in October 1961, when American and Soviet tanks faced each other for 16 hours, then, after diplomatic negotiations, the tanks reclined. Checkpoint Charlie became the site where the Cold War actually happened. If you want more information, visit the “Haus am Checkpoint Charlie” a private museum on the site. Read our [full post on visiting Checkpoint Charlie](#).

This is the end of our self-guided tour. At Checkpoint Charlie, you find the U-Bahn (Kochstraße) and a bus.

This tour is complimentary with the [self-guided Berlin Mitte East Tour](#) as well as the [East Berlin Tour](#).