

(Tour about 9 km – one day trip)

Spring made us wait this year long enough. Gloomy weather, dark clouds and lots of rain dominated the early spring months. However, as of today everything is different. Finally Sunglasses out, umbrella put away. Today the summer has begun. Let's get out and enjoy the nature and have a nice walk. See the capital, experience people and absorb this stunning metropolis atmosphere. If you start the day with that enthusiasm, then the day can only get better.

9.00am: relexa hotel Berlin – Anhalter Strasse

After a hearty breakfast and a great tasting cup of coffee I am ready to start my day. First of all I have to decide, if I should go to Potsdamer Platz, which I have heard a lot. I go to reception and ask the young lady at the front desk for directions. She tells me, that it is not a problem, gives me a map and marks the 800m route on it. I need to turn left just outside the relexa hotel and follow the road for 200m towards Stresemannstrasse, where I then have to turn right. After that I only need to go straight ahead and after 700m I have reached the square.

9.10am: relexa hotel – Potsdamer square

The receptionist was right. After about 10 minutes walk I could spot the skyline from the Potsdamer square. Impressively, these skyscrapers that rise so powerful towards the sky. And so much you can discover here - incredible. Not just one, but two cinemas, a viewing platform with the fastest elevator in Europe, countless pubs, bars and restaurants, the Blue Man Group, the Lindenberg musical "Beyond the horizon", LEGOLAND, the Sony Centre and a huge shopping centre. Lets move on, before I spend my holiday money on the first day.

9.45am: Potsdamer square

I leave the Potsdamer square and make my way along the former **Berlin Wall** direction North. A small piece of the inner German border is still standing today as a reminder at the Northern entrance to the train station "Potsdamer Platz". Today unbelievable that this was once a wall, which divided not only a nation, but also friends and even families from each other. I'm glad I grew up in an united Germany and in peace.

10.00am: Potsdamer square - Ebertstrasse

The thoughts still on the separation of the German people, I follow **Ebertstrasse** further North. The **Brandenburg Gate**, with its **Quadriga** can be seen already from a distance, my next destination on the map. But before I reach the Brandenburg Gate, which is only 800m away from Potsdamer square, another part of German history takes over - Nazism.

10.05am: Along Ebertstrasse

I walk along Ebertstrasse and after 400m I come to the Hannah Arendt Strasse. On this corner is the **Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe**. It was designed by Peter Eisenman, who himself referred to the Holocaust Memorial as a "Place of no meaning", i.e. a place with no particular meaning. And in spite of Eisenman's statement, one can't help thinking about this piece of history and recognising the importance of this monumental memorial. Although one can't describe it, but you can feel it clearly. I remember, for example, when looking at the 2711 concrete slabs, the words of my old history teacher: "Only those who know the story, can change the future." I do not know if I can change the future, but I know that I do not want to make the same mistakes again. After all, people's laughter is always in the same language - it does not matter their skin colour, religion or sex.

10.40am: Holocaust Memorial - Ebertstrasse

The 930 square metre **Information Centre**, which adjoins the Holocaust Memorial is located in Cora-Berliner-Strasse 1. Today I do not visit this museum, instead, I cross the road and head direction Tiergarten. Opposite Hannah Arendt Strasse leads a footpath to the park in the centre of Berlin.

10.45am: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe - Eberstrasse

My new destination along this walk is the **Memorial to Homosexuals persecuted under Nazism**. A place in a city, where in 2013 Christopher Street Day took place for the 35th time and where the mayor says with pride: "I'm gay and that is a good thing." I suppose this place is worth a visit. The Berlin band "Die Aerzte" (the doctors) conclude this in their song: "Some men love men, some women love women - there's nothing to regret and nothing to be amazed of - that is just as normal as chewing gum."

11.00am: Embassy of the United States of America - Brandenburg Gate

From the **Memorial to Homosexuals persecuted under Nazism** I now make my way to the original destination: the Brandenburg Gate. Halfway from Potsdamer square I now pass the newly built Embassy of the United States of America.

11.05am: Brandenburg Gate

I have arrived at the **Brandenburg Gate** and I gaze at the imposing structure. An older man interrupts me and says with his Berlin dialect: "Young man, what are you staring at? If you keep staring at the tit for tat even more, it will come down." "Tit for tat?", I asked myself. But before I could quench my thirst for knowledge, the old man had disappeared again.

Awakened in my curiosity, I took my guide, and read that Berlin would call the Quadriga on the Brandenburg Gate a tit for tat as well. But why?

After Napoleon defeated Prussia in 1806, he arranged for the Quadriga to be brought to Paris to add this to the rest of the looted art exhibit. But before it arrived there, the German troops got the peace goddess still packed in boxes returned to Berlin in 1814. So the concept of tit for tat was born, and the Berlin residents referred to it still today. In this context, so my guide tells me, the former goddess of peace did become the war goddess of victory and the political status around the Brandenburg Gate began.

The only surviving former city gate, the Brandenburg Gate, has always been a political landmark in Berlin. Initially planned as a peace symbol by the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm II in 1788 with the goddess of peace, who rode the Quadriga. Then it became the war goddess of victory, by taking off the laurel wreath and replaced it with an iron cross and Prussian royal eagle in her hand. So the peace symbol became a war monument.

A war memorial, which was seriously damaged during the Second World War. From the original statue of Quadriga the horses head only remained. It is now on display in the Maerkischen Museum Berlin. Despite various arguments both parts of Berlin, West as well as East cooperated during restoration. With the construction of the Berlin Wall on 13th August 1961, the gate however, stood in the middle of the border area and the once peace monument standing in the middle of Berlin was an unreachable building for East and West Berlin residents. Only border guards and official guests of the GDR could take a close look at the Brandenburg Gate. The Brandenburg Gate was thus finally become a political issue and was a clear sign of the division of Germany, Europe and around the world.

Richard von Weizsaecker, German President during the Cold War, said in this connection: "As long as the Brandenburg Gate is closed, Germany is still up for questions." Also U.S. President Ronald Reagan demanded during his visit to Berlin, on 12th June 1987: "Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate, Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" And what was at that time still a bold dream, should already be a reality two years later. A wall that had, according to Walter Ulbricht, Chairman of the Council of State, no one intended to build, was finally torn down - Berlin was reunited.

11.30am: Brandenburg Gate – room of silence

With new knowledge about history, I wanted to continue my walk to the **Reichstag: the seat of the German Bundestag**, which I did spot earlier on. But before I walked through the Brandenburg Gate again from the direction Paris square, I read on a plaque "Room of Silence". A promise that I could hardly believe and therefore wanted to experience it. I could not imagine that it really should be a space of silence in this hectic and vibrant metropolis, but I was proven wrong. Berlin is always good for a surprise.

11.45am: Deutscher Reichstag - Reichstag Dom - roof terrace

Now I stand in front of the **German Reichstag**, on the Republic Square. It's a very impressive building, so much history and I am allowed to be here.

During 1884 to 1894 the building was designed by the architect Paul Wallot in Neo-Renaissance style in the district of Tiergarten (now belonging to the district Mitte). It housed both the Reichstag of the German Empire and the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic. Due to the Reichstag fire in 1933, and the effects of World War II the building was severely damaged, but in 1960 it was restored to its glory again and at the same time it was modernised. The building was redesigned between 1991-1999 once again fundamentally. The subsequently designed dome has become the most visited attraction and a symbol of Berlin. Visitors can enter the building through the West gate. After a security check you can take one of the two elevators up to the 24m high roof terrace (at the rear of the roof terrace is the small restaurant "beetle"). The dome measures 38m in diameter and has a height of 23.5m.

Roof terrace and visit to the dome

The roof terrace and the dome of the Reichstag building can be visited free of charge. Viewing is only possible by **advanced booking**. You can register as an individual or as a group. For a convenient booking you can always complete the form [online](#) or by **fax (+49 30 227-36436)**. When booking your visit you need to provide following information: **name, first name and date of birth**. Without correctly and completely filled out online form, the visitors service of the Bundestag may not process your booking. The dome is open daily from 8am until midnight, last admission is at 10pm.

Since I have **reserved the dome visit**, I take my time and climb up. I pass the security check quickly. You have to remember to carry a valid identity card. I go up with a lift and from the roof terrace I enjoy a wonderful view over Berlin. I imagine at night it must be beautiful too, when Berlin puts on the sea of lights. I drink a coffee, eat a snack, and watch the people strolling. A great feeling overcomes me. Here all nationalities meet - it is just wonderful.

12.45pm: Federal Chancellery - Paul Loebe house

After my snack I am ready for the new destination. My next stop will be the Paul Loebe house (a functional building of the German Parliament) and its fountains passing the Federal Chancellery. The Federal Chancellery has a seat in Berlin since 2001. As part of the relocation of the German government from Bonn to Berlin the office moved to the new building designed by Axel Schultes and Charlotte Frank. It is part of the "*Band des Bundes*" (band of the Federation) of the building group in Spreebogenpark, Willy-Brandt-Strasse 1, 10557 Berlin. After the groundbreaking ceremony on 4th February 1997, nearly four years of construction, the building was ready for occupation by the then Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder on 2nd May 2001, with that the government's move to Berlin was completed. It's a very impressive building - and once a year the Chancellor opens its doors to the public, when you have a chance to see this stunning building from inside.

Unfortunately today is not one of those days and I admire the building from outside. At least I now know exactly at what point the capital reporter is standing when delivering the evening news on television.

1pm: Berlin main train station

I am now heading direction Spreebogenpark and cross over the bridge towards the **main train station**. Again, a very impressive building awaits me.

The **Berlin Hauptbahnhof (main train station)** is the most important railway junctions of Berlin and the largest tower station in Europe. Judging by the number of travellers with about 300,000 passengers per day, Berlin main train station is Germany's fourth busiest train station after Hamburg, Frankfurt (Main) and Munich. On its area north of the river Spree stood already from 1868 to 1951 the Lehrter train station and from 1882-2002 Lehrter city railway station.

The striking building was designed by the architect Meinhard von Gerkan. Together with the train station a new north-south railway line was opened on 28th May 2006. It leads through the tunnel "North - South distance rail", which introduced with the so called "Pilzkonzzept" (mushroom concept) a new conversion and reorganisation system of rail passenger transport in Berlin. The Berlin main train station is mainly in the district of Moabit Berlin Mitte, on the northern edge of the government district. The two identical main entrances lead to the north to European Square and the Invalidenstrasse and to the south to Washington Square and the river Spree. The main train station was built as one of the first building of the urban development area "Lehrter". Gradually new buildings, mainly hotels, are developed here. In the main train station you can stroll, shop or simply watch the world go by.

For me there are too many people around, so I move on. Opposite the main train station there is a beautiful road (**Magnus-Hirschfeld-Ufer**), which leads exactly along the river Spree.

1.15pm: Magnus Hirschfeld Ufer – ZOLLPACKHOF - House of the world culture

Here it is beautiful. You can not believe that you are in the middle of Berlin. It's quiet and the river Spree reflects the sun light. I continue to go straight ahead along the river (**towards Schloss Bellevue**). To my left across the river I get another glimpse of the Chancellor's Office. It is impressive.

Tip: on the right is the beer garden **ZOLLPACKHOF** . Here you can eat well and get great value for money, and especially on the weekend you can listen to Live music. A moment later I see on the left a building that almost looks like a shell. This is the house of world cultures - or as the Berlin residents call it: "the pregnant oyster". **The House of World Culture (HKW)** is an exhibition space in Berlin for the international contemporary arts and a forum for current developments and seminars. It presents artistic productions from all over the world with particular attention to non-European cultures and societies. I follow the way straight ahead and I can already see over the treetops a golden statue. The sun light gets reflected from the golden top of the victory column, which is called lovingly by the Berlin people "Gold Else". To my right I discover a snake like building. These are the official residences of the Bundestag staff. Slowly the Magnus-Hirschfeld-Ufer ends on this side and I reach a bridge.

1.45pm: Schloss Bellevue - Magnus Hirschfeld Ufer - Helgolaender Ufer

I walk over the bridge and keep to the left. Straight ahead I spot the **Schloss Bellevue** (palace Bellevue).

Schloss Bellevue is located in Berlin's Tiergarten district and it is the first official residence of the German President. It is in the centre of the German capital on the northern edge of the large Tiergarten directly on the river Spree. The palace was built on behalf of the youngest brother of Frederick II, Ferdinand of Prussia, according to plans by Michael Philip Bouman in 1785-1786. The palace has been renovated and restored in 1986/1987 following these old plans. After many technical problems it was decided in 2004/2005 to sanitise and undergo a fundamental renewal of technical equipment. The presentation rooms reflect a 1980-ies style, where a cautious approach was tried on old forms of decoration, partly with new materials. Due to the fact, that this building is listed, two salons were to obtain the dark panelled interior of the 1950-ies. The former living quarters in Bellevue Palace have now been converted into an office building for the president's wife. The president can no longer live in the palace, but use an official residence in Berlin-Dahlem.

It is a beautiful white building, which is impressive, but still not "pretentious". Especially during May and June, it is surrounded by chestnut trees and their blossoms. I take some pictures and then head back a little way over the bridge (Spreeweg) - because I want to continue along the Magnus-Hirschfeld-Ufer.

Here I pass a small park and walk further along the Spree. Now I get to the shore of **Helgolaender Ufer**. It is a beautiful road - which one should pay more attention. In this street and on the opposite side of the river Spree on Helgoland Ufer are the oldest buildings of Berlin, which were not bombed during World War II. I reach again a little road, which I continue straight.

To my left is a small **restaurant ship PATIO**. A wonderful idyllic location and I think about to have a break here. Alternatively on the opposite side of the street is café Buchenwald. Here you get the best Baumkuchen (cake) of the city. This cafe supplied already in the old days the emperor. There is always something going on and it is not uncommon that one stands in a queue especially on the weekend leading up to the road....only to buy a piece of cake. Inside you get the feeling that time has stood still. Immediately I love this atmosphere and stop for a break.

2.45pm: Strasse der Erinnerung – Federal Ministry of home affairs (BMI)

After my short break, I would like to continue my walk and experience some more things. I go back direction restaurant ship and walk along the narrow path passing a playground. Here I enter the **Strasse der Erinnerung** (road of remembrance).

Strasse der Erinnerung is a public monument in the Spree bend in the Berlin district of Moabit. It consists of several sculptures with which the Ernst Freiberger Foundation honours individuals mainly from the first half of the 20th century, who have "extraordinary achievements and demonstrated high ethical standards in difficult times".

It is beautiful here and I also spot another piece of the Berlin Wall.

Immediately I pass the **Federal Ministry of home affairs**. The **Federal Ministry of home affairs** (BMI) is the Federal Ministry of the whole of Germany. It has its headquarters in the district of Moabit within Berlin Mitte. The second seat is located in Bonn city district Castell. Head of the Authority is the Minister of home affairs, who a member of the Federal Government is. The entire building reflect light and is build like a U-shape and in the middle is one large marble ball which plays in the water feature.

I walk further and discover left on the river Spree, the cruise liner "Aida" a wonderful cruise ship.

3.15pm: Lessing bridge – Stromstrasse – GRIPS Theatre – Berliner tea house

After a short walk I reach the next bridge (Lessing bridge / Stromstrasse). Here I climb up the stairs and keep to the left. The Lessingstrasse ends at an intersection (Altonaer Strasse). I keep again to the left, and then I am on the Altonaer Strasse. I walk pass the GRIPS Theatre and after about 400m I discover to my left side a park. It is the first part (English Garden) of the large Tiergarten. Since it is a bit sunny and I like to seek some shade, I enter it. In the midst of the park is a small white house surrounded by a lake - it is the Berlin teahouse. I decide spontaneously to make a stop here and watch people go by.

4pm: Altonaer Strasse - Victory Column

I walk through the park back to the Altona road and walk directly towards the Victory column. Especially in the later afternoon hours, the light is very flattering and one might think that the golden statue begins to dance a little.

The Victory column stands on the great star in the middle of the Tiergarten in Berlin. It was built in 1864-1873 as a national monument of the wars of unification, designed by Heinrich Strack. It is a listed building. The Column was commemorate in 1864 to the Prussian victory in the Danish- Prussian war. Within a few years two more victorious wars were added, the German War of 1866 against Austria and the German-French war of 1870/1871. Original three segments and the crowning bronze sculpture of Victoria were to remember these three victories. The Victory column was officially opened during a Sedan celebration on 2nd September 1873, the third anniversary of the victorious Battle of Sedan. The column was moved in 1938/1939 from the Royal Court to its present location, the Great Star. After the Second World War France requested to destroy the column, but the other Allies did not agree with this.

Inside, a spiral staircase with 285 steps lead up to the 50.66m high observation deck. From there one has a good view over the Tiergarten, Potsdamer square, the Brandenburg Gate and the surrounding areas. The total height of the Victory column, including the statue is 66.89m. The lawn around the Victory column is at 34m above sea level.

4.30pm: Victory column - Strasse des 17. Juni - Soviet War Memorial - Zoo - Brandenburg Gate

Slowly I head back to the hotel, but I still have some interesting things to see. I walk along the Strasse des 17. Juni. As I like it rather quiet, I decide to walk in the park parallel to the pedestrian walkway. Here it is shady and peaceful. The trees absorb the sounds of the busy street. It's beautiful here and I realise once again, that I have really underestimated Berlin. Rarely have I seen a city, which is so green, impressive, interesting and yet peaceful or if I wish exciting. Just before the Brandenburg Gate is on my left the **Soviet War Memorial**.

The **Soviet War Memorial in Tiergarten** is located in the district Tiergarten (Berlin Mitte) on the Strasse des 17. Juni. The memorial was built in 1945 to honor the dead soldiers of the Red Army during the Second World War. After the end of World War II, three Soviet war memorials were created by the Red Army in the suburbs of Berlin. They suppose to remember the approximately 80,000 soldiers who fell in the battle of Berlin. These memorials are not only monuments to the victory, but at the same time military cemeteries and thus Soviet war cemeteries in Germany. The central monument is in Treptower Park, one in the Schoenholzer Heide (Pankow, Schoenholzer Heide) and one war memorial in the Tiergarten.

4.50pm: Brandenburg Gate - Paris square – Unter den Linden

I am back at the **Brandenburg Gate**. I have chosen deliberately, to go that way - because I wanted to see it again. Alternatively, I could have taken the path through the large Tiergarten (**Ahornsteig**), this leads directly to Potsdamer square and the hotel.

But now I am here again and I just want to enjoy this building. I have arrived at **Paris square** and overlook the **hotel Adlon**. To finish my day, I treat myself to a little break and have a snack in the snack bar "Unter den Linden". There is always something going on. Young artists, musicians and also horse and carriage you can admire here.

5.30pm: Paris square – relexa hotel Berlin, Anhalter Strasse

In a good mood and a head full of new impressions I go through the Brandenburg Gate and let the thoughts drift through my mind. Cross the Ebertstrasse I head towards Potsdamer square and after a further 100m I arrive back at the relexa hotel Berlin.

I have seen much today, but I can't get enough of this city. I am going to relax a little and then I am ready for the Berlin night life.