

After Hours

The Brandenburg Gate ... a grand symbol of Berlin's history.



Side by side ... history and modernity co-exist in this city.



Busking, bikes and artwork ... integral parts of the vibrant scene.

Then we take Berlin

You'll need more than a long weekend to explore the dynamic and diverse cityscape that is Berlin.

WORDS AND PHOTOS VANESSA MURRAY

HISTORY and modernity sit side by side in any European city, but this is especially true for Berlin. On any given day, visitors can wonder at the grandeur of historical structures like the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag, gain insight into the devastating impact of World Wars I and II at numerous museums and memorials, and immerse themselves in the city's internationally renowned art and design scene.

Berlin is a cyclist's city, so we make like the locals and begin our day by renting bikes and cycling to the East Side Gallery, where a 1.3km-long memorial stretch of the art-strewn Berlin Wall still stands. Like Berlin itself, the East Side Gallery is a work in progress, and is repainted regularly by both local and international artists.

We meander through the charming and creative borough of Friedrichshain, stopping in at various small galleries to absorb the vibrant arts scene. We indulge in some

impulse art buying at Strychnin Gallery on Boxhagenstrasse (with sister galleries in New York and London), which the staff happily wrap and ship home for me.

Later we take the underground to the Bahnhof Zoo station (which inspired U2's song *Zoo Station*), and visit the Bauhaus Archive Museum of Design.

This boasts the world's most comprehensive collection of design objects from this seminal, clean-edged movement of 1919-1933, and is a must for all modern-design fans.

The next day, we dose up on history and art all over again, with a visit to the Jewish Museum in Kreuzberg, designed by Daniel Libeskind and opened in 2001. The

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gallery blurs the lines between architecture and sculpture, creating spaces that tell the story of the Jewish people in Germany. It's modern, unique and profoundly sobering, and we spend hours poring over the exhibits.

After a fortifying cup of coffee, it's off to the nearby Berlinische Galerie — an exhibition of Berlin-made art and design in a former glass warehouse. The work of up-and-coming local talent is shown alongside the permanent collection of famous Berliners such as illustrator and photographer Heinrich Zille and Dadaist painter George Grosz. A diverse array of film and music events is also on offer.

But Berlin is not all about history, or art and design. With 13 Michelin stars across

12 restaurants, Berlin is also a foodie's paradise.

We treat ourselves to dinner at Die Quadriga at the stunning Brandenburger Hof, a luxury five-star boutique hotel in Charlottenburg. Finnish-born chef Sauli Kempainen's seasonal Nordic menu is a delightful blend of modern and traditional flavours — my mouth still waters when I think of the truffle-infused veal and fresh vegetables I chose from the summer menu.

Another night we dine at the Clarchens Ballhaus in Kreuzberg. Here, locals take advantage of the long, mild summer nights by dining al fresco under trees strung with fairy lights, before heading inside to boogie to the zoot-suited blues band in the ballroom until the early hours.

There was only one thing lacking on our trip to Berlin, and that was time; with so much on the menu, it's a destination that deserves a very, very long weekend.

Ms Murray travelled courtesy of Lufthansa and Visit Berlin.

FACTFILE

Staying there: With more than 700 hotels in Berlin, you're spoilt for choice. Reside in five-star luxury as European royalty do at the Brandenburger Hof (rooms from \$235 for two per night, www.brandenburgerhof.com); tick the sustainability box at Scandic Hotels (children under 13 stay for free; rooms from \$118 per night, www.scandichotels.com), or channel your inner rock god and order a Gibson guitar to your room at Nhow, a music and lifestyle hotel in funky Friedrichshain (rooms from \$150 per night, www.nhow-hotels.com/berlin).

Practicalities: The currency in Germany is the Euro; ATMs are readily available in the city and credit cards are accepted in most places. In peak season (July-August), it pays to book accommodation well in advance. To make the most of your time, consider a guided tour.

More information:

- www.ballhaus.de
- www.bauhaus.de
- www.berlinischegalerie.de
- www.eastsidegallery.com
- www.jmberlin.de
- www.strychnin.com
- www.visitberlin.de