

# GLOBAL

## DESTINATIONS

*A Guide to the world of Hospitality and Tourism*



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Readers: Our Most Precious Asset

## Enchanting Berlin: For both Leisure and MICE



In spite of having been to Berlin several times, the city has always something new for us be it for tourism or hotels or conventions. Co-ordinating with my good friend Jordana Goldmann, Media Relations, visitBerlin we planned a schedule covering 3 hotels and a few new tourist spots as well as MICE and film tourism spread over 7 days.

Arriving into Berlin I checked into **Hilton Berlin**. What makes this hotel a favorite is its location – right on the historic square, the Gendarmenmarkt which is said to be the most beautiful public square in Berlin. There are several attractions in and around Gendarmenmarkt - Konzerthaus, Deutscher Dom, Französischer Dom (includes Huguenot Museum) etc. Another big advantage for me was the U station which is right in front of the hotel, making it convenient to move. As always visitBerlin was kind enough to provide me with their Welcome Card for public transport around Berlin – a must for every visitor.

Since I was offered the Junior Suite Domeview, I was able to do a Private Check-In at Hiltons Executive Lounge, located on the ground floor of the hotel. This elusive place, spread over 360 sq. meter, is available exclusively to Hilton Diamond Members and guests staying in executive rooms and suites. The lounge offers a wide selection of complimentary food, beverages including a breakfast buffet. It also has two dedicated meeting spaces with free use of WiFi and technical equipment upon request.

This hotel with 601 rooms was declared one of Europe's Leading City Hotel 2017. All guest rooms come with city or dome views.



My room had the stunning view of Gendarmenmarkt. But it's the meeting spaces that caught my attention. Designed to meet the needs of small to medium-sized groups the hotel has 15 flexible meeting rooms on one floor, grand ballroom with 400 parking spaces. The fully divisible ballroom holds up to 500 people and features an adjacent panoramic foyer. The foyer reveals breathtaking views on historic Gendarmenmarkt and offers space for exhibitions and receptions. Add to this a fully-equipped business center including secretarial services. Restaurant Beletage that offers space for up to 250 guests is ideal for a romantic wedding party. For health and fitness freaks the hotel has an 800 sq.mt. gym, steam room, sauna, spa and a 14 mt indoor pool. They also have a relaxation room equipped with heated water beds.

It was during my earlier visit that Christian Tänzler, Spokesman, Head of Media Relations, visitBerlin had insisted that a visit to the Berlin's WWII **Tempelhof Airport** is a must. So Jordana arranged a 2 hour tour. Spread over 300,000 square metres it was designed by Ernst Sagebiel in 1936. Called "the mother of all airports" Tempelhof has many hats including Germany's first aircrafts, quarters of WW II prisoners, a weapons production site, a famous film location, place for immigrants and now a venue for tourists as well as MICE.

Tempelhof is a public park and its grounds are used to host cultural and music events. Entry to the grounds is free but the airport building is accessible as part of a guided 2 hour walking tours highlighting interesting facts and parts of the huge building.



### Restaurant Bahadur

There is a never ending quest of finding a good Indian restaurant that has the perfect blend of spices and does justice to your tummy. This time I found three good Indian restaurants that I feel Indians should try out – spread over Berlin. **Restaurant Bahadur** is located in the calm



district of Berlin Wilmersdorf, Bahadur is quite different from a usual Berlin Indian restaurant as you can notice quite a bit of Indian touches on its walls. Chatting up with the youngster Gaurav Sharma who owns the restaurant he said it was established only in 2016 and has picked up well in 2 years. I had mixed food including veg samosa and then different dishes from the tandoor and then the Dal Makhni. They also have a thali which quite a few guests were relishing.



After the Second World War, the US Americans left their mark on the airport building including a basketball hall built above the former departure hall. Airport Tempelhof has become a symbol of freedom because of the airlift of 1948/49. A highlight of the tour is the view from the visitor terrace - you can see an imposing panorama of most of Berlin - a spectacular 360° view of Berlin, the Tempelhof field and the complex of buildings of Airport Tempelhof.

You also see the basement of the building, various bunkers, cellar vaults, the air raid shelters beneath, it's post-war importance during Berlin Air Lift etc. You can also explore parts of the tunnel system of the building from 1930s, which was unique for that time. Our guide shared several historical photos showcasing how the facility had been used before and during the war. It deserves to be listed as one of Berlin's Top 5 attractions. The place is steeped in history and simply fascinating – I loved it. Thanks Christian Tänzler.

In the evening I went to the **Chamäleon Theater** Circa's Peepshow. It was visually stunning with talented acrobatics showcasing athleticism and grace making it truly enjoyable. I got the front seat and enjoyed the intimate theater setting though felt a discomfort on the chairs towards the end of the show. It can be an excellent venue for after-show parties, employees or customers parties, champagne receptions along with an extraordinary evening programme. It can cater to audiences of up to 300 guests. As I walked out I overheard a person telling his partner that Chamäleon is his favourite theatre in Berlin.

The next day morning after a hearty breakfast and checking out of Hilton, I proceeded for a full day tour of Berlins famous **Designer Outlet**.

They had organized a car to transfer me and the driver was nice as he talked about Berlin showing the highlights as we travelled.

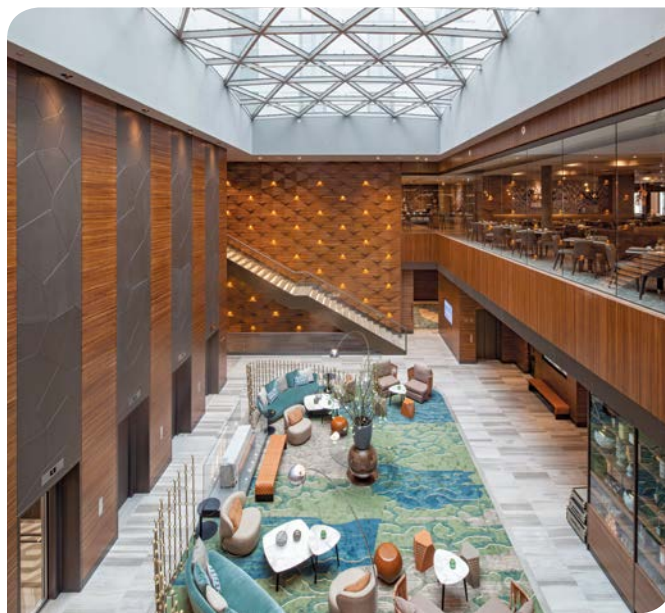
The Designer Outlet Berlin (DOB) in Wustermark is built in a village style with almost all prestigious brands. The best part of Designer Outlets is an all-year-reduced prices (30-70%) providing a unique



shopping destination for tourists. The DOB has 16,500 sq.mt of retail space (90 shops), as well as picturesque streets and squares. International brands, including Escada, Guess, Samsonite, Lindt, Hugo Boss, Lacoste, Stefanel, Marc O'Polo, Diesel, Replay, adidas, Nike etc are present. I found the Samsonite and the Lindt stores with attractive prices and options. Apart from shopping outlets there are a variety of restaurants and cafés and the unique Panda Kids Club, where kids can play under supervision.

After spending a couple of hours I caught up with Connie MacFarlane, Marketing Manager, DOB and Oliver Heuchert, Centre Manager, DOB to get more insights into the outlet and the group. "We are certainly preferred by many International guests. The largest group of taxfree shoppers are the Russians and the Chinese. Indias also love to shop and we are looking forward to attract them in huge numbers," said Oliver Heuchert. DOB comes under McArthurGlen Group, Europe's leading owner, developer and manager of designer outlets. "We have developed around 6.8 million sq ft of outlet space spread across 24 McArthurGlen Designer Outlets in 9 countries," said Oliver Heuchert.

In the evening the same car dropped me to my next hotel **Titanic Hotel Chaussee**. Check in took some time as surprisingly the hotel system was down. But that gave me time to appreciate the bright and spacious atrium lobby and the adjoining lobby bar. The



hotel has 376 rooms in three different categories - classic room, junior suite and Titanic suite.

The next day morning along with Robert Luft, Marketing Manager Conventions, visit Berlin and Jonas Höll, Marketing Manager, Titanic Hotels I proceeded to see the MICE spaces in the group's hotels.

The Titanic Convention Center in Chaussee has 2.500 sq.mt. suitable for conventions, exhibitions and conferences as well as dinner parties and weddings upto 1.500 persons. The main plenary room has a total seize of 1.400 sq.mt. and 7mt high ceilings with state-of-the-art A/V equipment. All 7 conference rooms are located on the first floor and can easily be reached from the main plenary room. The best part is the floor-to-ceiling windows that provide adequate natural daylight. The foyers and the restaurant

Alesta are located on the same level and offer space for outside events of up to 300 guests.

The other hotel - Titanic Gendarmenmarkt Berlin was once used as a warehouse by the Staatsoper. Today it is a beautiful hotel with 208 stylish rooms and suites and a 1.000 sq.mt. Befine Sports & Spa including an original Turkish hamam. The hotel has a magnificent 300 sq.mt. ballroom – ideal setting for of up to 250 people and 2 elegant meeting rooms with 50 m<sup>2</sup> each.

From there along with Robert we proceeded to **Brandenburger Tor Museum**. And what a location, right across the world famous

It can be an event location with 87 high-tech screens with 180 million pixels and a 38-channel surround sound. In addition, a 270° panoramic view, combined with innovative media technology, provides the best conditions for the screening of image films. “For event organisers it can be an incentive to visit and relax in our cafe enjoying the view of the Brandenburg Gate. Even ideal for college trips, excursions coming in Berlin” said Bernardus.

**The Tunnel** was our next stop - a modern and historical location and the only venue with the original location where the Wall was built and torn down. During the redevelopment of the



Brandenburg Gate and the right place to experience history come to life. “It literally makes you a time traveler as you get a multimedia experience of 300 year-old-history of the city of Berlin - the revolution, wars and peacetime, divided Germany, reunification and then the developments,” said Bernardus Manders, Team leader, Brandenburger Tor Museum. The multimedia show was really wonderful. After that as more through the exhibition with historical picture collection you get a deeper insight into the events.

Potsdamer Platz area, this impressive venue was also rebuilt, partly on the site of the historical walls. The Berlin Wall also divided Potsdamer Platz into an eastern and a western sector, thus meaning it became meaningless for over 28 years. Today its suited as a multifunctional location that is extremely flexible be it for Exhibition, long catwalks, Gala Dinner/Banquet. Conferences/ Workshops, Weddings etc. The rental space is up to 7000sq. mt with capacities from 10 – 2200 people along with suitable conference and dinner furniture.

## Buddha Republic



The Buddha Republic is on Kneesebeckstraße in Charlottenburg and as you enter you can sense why it's called so - adorned with Chinese lanterns, Buddhist fixtures, and Turkish paintings it looks pleasing and appealing. The owner Armand, who spent his earlier days in India especially Bangalore, Karnataka moved to Germany for his higher studies but as he was a foodie he decided to start a restaurant. You can sense his passion as it has been designed very tastefully. The authentic tandoori oven is an attraction. I tried the peanut chat which was excellent and the roasted papads. I left it to Armand to select suitable veg dishes and he made sure they were authentic in their infusion of Indian spices and flavours.



From there we proceeded to **Panoramapunkt** where I got the opportunity to ride on the fastest elevator in Europe (20 seconds to reach 24th floor - 103 metres above the city) and then enjoy breathtaking views of Berlin including the Brandenburg Gate, the Victory Column and Bellevue Palace. There's also an open-air exhibition "Views of Berlin" that showcase how this historic site has been completely transformed over the years. There's also a



Panoramacafé on the same floor and a roof terrace on the 25th floor. Panoramapunkt is also being promoted as an exclusive venue for conferences, presentations or company parties right from 20 to 500 people.

A short walk from there brought me to visit Berlin office where I met up with Christian Tänzler. I was again updated on the latest projects and statistics for Berlin from the tourism perspective.

My next visit was **Mercedesplatz** where I was fortunate to meet the dynamic Kerstin Harms, Cluster GM for tristar hotel group. She talked about the upcoming the Mercedes Platz which will be the heart of the new city district on the City East Side Berlin. Apart from numerous entertainment zones and office spaces it will also have three hotels - Hampton by Hilton Berlin, Holiday Inn Berlin and Hotel Indigo Berlin. Promising her that I will cover these hotels when I am in Berlin for ITB, I departed to my hotel.

The next day morning I moved to my next hotel located at



the other end of Berlin - **Azimut Hotel City South Berlin**. Irina Kim, Group Marketing & PR Director, Azimut Hotels Company organized the stay as they are looking at the Indian market in a big way. A 3-star hotel, an hour from the center of the city but close to international airport Schönefeld, it offers guests 156 comfortable rooms in three categories Standard, Superior and Junior Suite. For me the public transportation was ideal with the bus stop adjacent to the hotel. Next to the hotel lobby is a bar as well as a billiards table. They have a nice restaurant with a decent spread. The hotel has a fitness center and also offers options for conducting conferences, seminars, workshops and business meetings. It has two conference rooms with modern multimedia equipment and catering options can hold up to 50 people, plus there are three meeting rooms.

Next day after breakfast I met up with Jordana and my guide Karina Krawczyk at the Museum for Film and Television for a film tour showcasing **Berlin as a film city option**. The guide was superb as she took me around the most popular film locations explaining in detail along with photographs from her collection. We covered Potsdamer Platz – Wings of Desire (1986/87), Gleisdreieck – Bridge of Spies (2015), Gendarmenmarkt – In 80 days around the world (2004), Rotes Rathaus - Babylon Berlin TV series (2017), Bhf. Friedrichstr. – Unknown (2011)/ Run Lola Run (1998), Alexanderplatz – Don2-The king is back (2011)/ Berlin Alexanderplatz (1931).

## Calcutta Restaurant



Located in the Bleibtreustraße area, Calcutta is certainly one of Germany's oldest Indian restaurants. As I looked out for the restaurant, I found it was surrounded by Greek, Italian and several other eateries but found Calcutta packed with both Indian and non-Indian clientele. The owner Ashok Kachroo from Kashmir was there to receive me and I spend some quality time with him over a nice dinner. "Calcutta has been open since 1964 and I have been fortunate to have served several heads of Indian states including our PMs and Presidents. Thanks to our quality of food we are the preferred choice by Indian embassy," said a beaming Ashok Kachroo. They had organized an excellent menu with Indian curries, rotis, dal makhani for me and I was very impressed by the food quality, taste and service. The restaurant has a large variety of food from different parts of India. In addition to typical Indian rice and curry dishes, there are also various kebabs, nans, rotis and paranthas.

## 2019: Major events and attractions for tourists

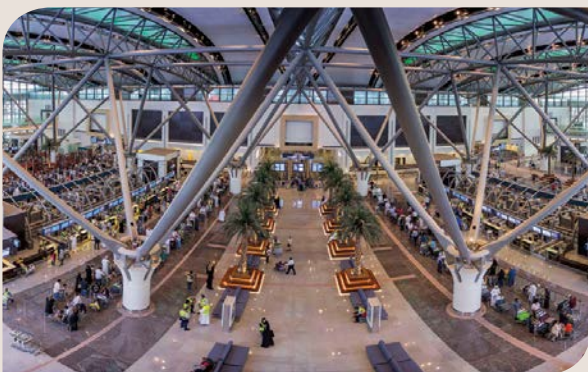
In an informative interaction with **Christian Tänzler, Head of Media Relations and official Spokesman visit Berlin** we got some interesting pointers that we would like to share with our readers

- There has been an excellent growth of foreign markets
- There is a lot of potential from India and overall development is on the positive
- 2019 will see lots of major events and attractions for tourists
- On November 9, 2019 we will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall and quite a few events are planned
- Alexander von Humboldt's 250th birthday will see the opening of The Humboldt Forum which is expected to become a leading European cultural center
- Berlin's Museum Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, an ensemble of five world-renowned museums will get a new facelift.
- The **Berlin WelcomeCard All Inclusive** has become quite successful and I am sure Indians will prefer it. This new card is different from Berlin's "WelcomeCard" that offers free transit and discounts at attractions while the new "All Inclusive" card offers you free entrance to over 30 Berlin attractions, free public transportation, a free 1-day hop-on-hop-off bus tour etc. Admission for many famous museums and top sights is already being paid for; also you get many discounts on various events and restaurants. And like the normal WelcomeCard it includes the underground (U-Bahn), city railway (S-Bahn), buses and trams.



## A wonderful experience - The Muscat Airport and Oman Air Lounge

*Having a heard a lot about the new airport and the new Oman Air lounge from Sunil VA, regional vice-president ISC, Oman Air, I decided to use the opportunity of my visit to Berlin to experience the airline, its new lounges and the new airport.*



As always Oman Air was kind enough to fly me business class and I decided to try out two sectors – Mumbai to Frankfurt and on return via Munich. On the way to Frankfurt transiting in Muscat for the first time I was able to use the boarding bridges to the airport (earlier passengers were brought to the terminal by bus and also taken to the aircraft by bus)

The new terminal is truly impressive. The airport features Omani-themed architecture and has been designed to save and conserve energy. The airport has lounges, an airport hotel, restaurants, and retail outlets and plenty of duty free shopping zones. Indians will love the Argan Gold that offers a range of Gold & Diamond Jewelry with designs from across the globe.

For gastronomy there are several outlets offering a variety of delicious Indian, Asian and Mediterranean street food items including KFC with signature combo meals and McDonald's. But my favourite is Spice Kitchen with plenty of Indian options. The Primeclass Lounge with a reinterpretation of Oman's traditional architecture and distinctive landscapes is exclusive for contracted airline passengers, who are travelling first or business class cabins and those who are willing to pay to access the Lounge. The Aerotel Muscat is an airport transit hotel providing travellers with the flexibility to only book hours that suit their needs. The Airport offers free WIFI services to all passengers. For medical emergency there's the primary Landside Medical Clinic.

### Oman Air Lounge

I experienced this amazing two storied lounge on both legs of my journey. There are two sections - the Business Class area is 2,300 sq. mt. with an overall capacity of 516 people and the First Class area is 430 sq. mt. for 100 people where you get a personal chef and limousine service from the lounge to the aircraft. The lounge apart from a wide array of F&B services including dining areas and bars has a luggage room, entertainment area, a smoking room, prayer rooms, business centre, kid's room, nap area, shower facilities and a wellness area.

