

By Dr Martin Chio

ICH FREUE MICH, BERLIN WIEDER ZU BESICHTIGEN*



Brandenburg Tor – where rulers, statesmen, military parades and civil demonstrations march through the pillars. This was built by Carl Langhans in 1791 and restored in 2002. It was modelled after temple porticos of ancient Athens, and forms the backdrop and focal point for significant events of the city.

It was with trepidation that I attended the SMA News Editorial Board dinner. I was looking forward to the truffle oil fries but was wary that the Editor would have stern words with me about the article I owed him; it was like being a trainee all over again, under supervisors with furrowed brows signalling displeasure about the journal article one had yet to complete. The Editor mentioned that he had always wanted to explore Berlin so I am duly obliging with a travel photologue since it is the end of the year and pictures are much easier on the eyes than reading.

I got bitten by the travel bug while on HMDB, my fellow college-mates at Goodenough travelled practically every weekend. I had previously limited myself to English-speaking countries but decided to be a bit more adventurous to venture to a 'true' foreign land.

I flew into Berlin via Frankfurt and arrived on a Sunday morning. On hindsight, that was a good move as traffic would have been impossible if it had been a weekday (or so the Russian taxi-driver told me). My base for three days was the Apartmenthaus Mitte which was fairly centrally located, and the sights were within walking distance.



Berlin Mauer (Berlin Wall), Postdamer Platz. The Berlin Wall was constructed on the night of 12 August 1961 and formed the border dividing East and West Berlin for nearly 30 years. The fall of the wall in November 1989 reunited the city and thereafter, Berlin became the capital of Germany in 1991.



Cupola structure of Sony Center designed by Helmut Jahn, Postdamer Platz. This was previously the hub of urban life in the 1920s. It became a wasteland after the Second World War. The last 10 years saw creative and imposing new landmarks being built. This is the current heart of the new metropolis.

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Holocaust-Denkmal – a memorial to the Jewish victims of Europe, by American architect Peter Eisenman. It was completed in 2005 and comprises 2,711 dark grey steles on a 19,000 square metre site symbolising the 6 million Jews who died between 1933 and 1945.



Octagonal lampost, Gendarmenmarkt. This square which resembles an Italian piazza houses the Schauspielhaus (theatre) and is flanked by the Deutscher and Französischer Dom (German & French cathedrals) which date back to the late 18th century. A statue of playwright Friedrich Schiller stands proudly in the middle of the square.



Berliner Dom (Berlin Cathedral) designed by Julius Raschdorf in 1905. It was re-opened in 1993 after 40 years of restoration and is the largest church in Berlin. The main nave is topped by a 279 feet high dome.



Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche (Kaiser William Memorial Church) – a church that was partially destroyed during the Second World War in the centre of Breitscheidplatz. This neo-Romanesque church was completed in 1895 and damaged in bombing raids in 1943. A new church designed by Egon Eiermann was built next to it in 1963. The vestibule of the church ruins houses a stunningly preserved collection of Hohenzollern mosaics.

I also managed to wander through the Pergamonmuseum (Pergamon Museum), the Gemäldegalerie and stroll down the Unter den Linden. A definite highlight of the trip was dinner at unsicht-Bar® Berlin but I will leave you to access the details of this at: http://www.unsicht-bar-berlin.de/unsicht-bar-berlin-v2/en/html/home_1_idea.html

Here's wishing one and all a peaceful and happy 2009! ■

** I look forward to visiting Berlin again!*

Martin aspires to be a food and travel photographer but is 'bonded' to serve for many years to come...