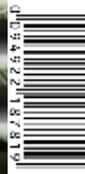


DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD

news

Essential travel intelligence

February 2011



BLACK TOMATO
Introducing Tom Marchant

EXPLORE MYANMAR
Cruising the Irrawaddy River

SAILING TURKEY
Set sail for the Turkish islands

Designer **Berlin**

Germany's **capital of cool** has something for everyone, from **über-trendy** bars and chic boutiques to stylish hotels and museums

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Making a statement
Berlin's independent
boutique hotels are
at the forefront of the
design revolution

Contributors

Alison Baycock

Alison Baycock is a business writer and journalist who loves to discover new places and cultures. She has written for a number of travel magazines, including *Holiday Villas & Cottages* and *Greece*.

Alison is based in Brighton, on the south coast of England. For this issue, she travels to Europe's design capital Berlin, where independent hotels and trendy boutiques are drawing style-conscious visitors from all over the world. Read her cover story on page 42.



Nick Walton

Nick Walton writes on travel for a number of publications from his base in Hong Kong. He has become a regular contributor to *Destinations of the World News* since his article on over-water bungalows appeared as the cover story in the October 2010 issue. This month found him cruising the Irrawaddy River in Myanmar on the *Road to Mandalay* – an Orient-Express cruiser that ploughs the waterways of Myanmar, giving visitors a taste of the hidden kingdom from the comfort of a five-star luxury vessel. Read his story on page 50.

Dorothy Waldman

As a native Texan who spent summers fishing and swimming in the Gulf of Mexico, Dorothy Waldman has enjoyed most of the oceans and seas around the world. Minus her Stetson, she now travels and writes about exotic ports of call, architecture, lifestyle and business. Dorothy relocated from Dubai to Istanbul last year and loves her new life on the crossroads of Asia and Europe. One of her favourite destinations is the Turkish Aegean, where she cruises on a private gulet every year. Read about her latest adventures on page 56.



Mary Gostelow

Mary Gostelow is one of the world's most prolific travellers and an authority on all things luxury. Mary says she spends at least 300 days a year on the road, but we think it's probably nearer to 360. She is editor-at-large of *WOW.travel*, the online magazine of kiwicollection.com, and founder and owner of the *Gostelow Report*, plus a regular contributor to *Destinations of the World News*. This month, Mary visits Japan (page 78) and offers a round-up of the latest luxury news from around the world in 'Mary says' (page 23).

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Norman Foster's iconic Reichstag dome



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DESIGNER BERLIN





The quirky boutiques, independent hotels and countless designers of Berlin have helped the city carve out a niche as a capital of style and design. **Alison Baycock** loses herself in a blur of colour and creativity



Out of the ordinary
Berlin is a hotbed for quirky and cool design like the eclectic Luxe 11 hotel (pictured left and above)



Berlin is said to be the only city in Europe with more museums than rainy days. It is also home to around 6,700 design companies, some of the coolest and most diverse nightspots in the world and no less than three UNESCO World Heritage sites, so it's not surprising that the German capital's own tourist organisation recommends that you catch up on your sleep before visiting.

Whatever you do in Berlin, though, you can be certain you'll do it in style. Take the Badeschiff bathing ship, for example; this floating swimming pool, bar and wellness complex on the River Spree is the epitome of Berlin cultural élan – quirky, clever, practical, modern and effortlessly hip.

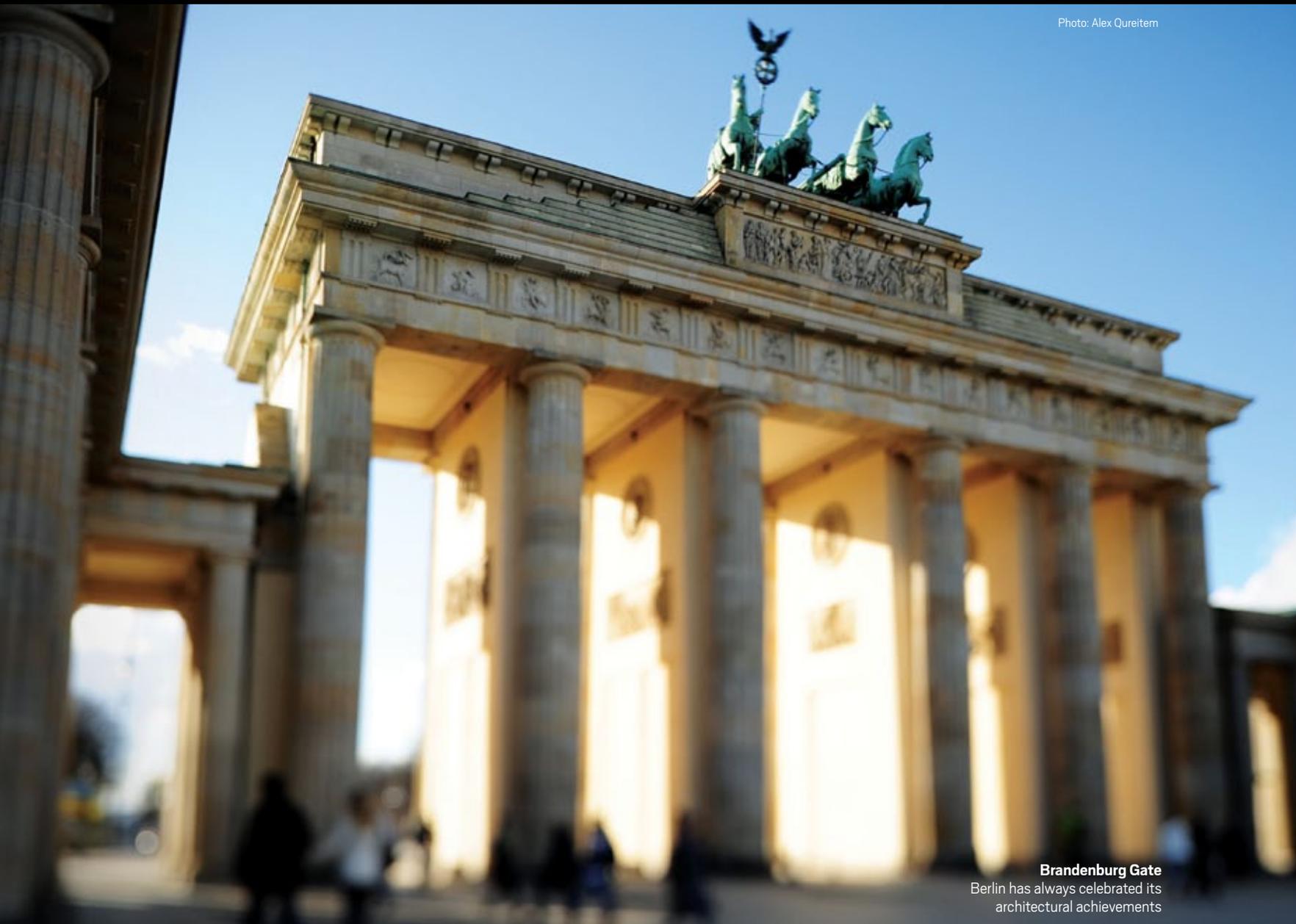
Created from a metal cargo container, its hammock-strewn wooden sun decks offer an intoxicating combination of DJs, cocktails and fresh air in summer. In the colder months, with the help of state-of-the-art covers, it transforms into a fully-fledged spa, complete with lounge and cooling platform.

It's hard to imagine a lifestyle accessory that merges inventiveness and function to such pleasing effect in another city – which is one of the reasons that Berlin was named UNESCO City of Design in 2006.

A magnet to the creative, an estimated 11,700 Berliners work in fashion, product and furniture design, architecture, photography and the visual arts. The city's design companies generate annual sales of around US\$1.9 billion and there are some 1,500 cultural events every day, so it is perhaps not surprising that it is such a vibrant place.

"Recent years have witnessed the evolution of a truly fascinating creative scene, distinguished by its versatility, unconventionality and quality," says senator and mayor Harald Wolf.

Tourism organisation Visit Berlin explains that creative types from all over the world are drawn to the city's "artistic freedom, extraordinary exhibition spaces, affordability, and a design-interested public open to new ideas". In short, creativity is part of the zeitgeist in Berlin.



Brandenburg Gate
Berlin has always celebrated its architectural achievements

SLEEPING IN STYLE

Nowhere is the city's aptitude for cutting-edge design more evident than in its boutique hotels. The newly-opened Soho House Berlin is a case in point, seductively blending old and new to create a 21st-Century urban retreat.

This private members-only club and 40-bed hotel occupies a listed former department store and communist-era archive in Berlin's fashionable Mitte district, the 1928 Haus der Einheit, or House of Unity.

A first of its kind in Germany, it targets figures from the media, fashion and art worlds with its range of meticulously planned and executed apartments, member and conference areas and a Cowshed spa. The largest rooms come in at 118 square metres and feature free-standing baths, dining areas and seating. As a finishing touch, most rooms have a vintage record player complete with a selection of vinyl LPs.

Also worth noting is The Weinmeister, an achingly hip four-star member of the exclusive Design Hotel collection (www.designhotels.com). Located near the Hackescher Markt in Mitte – a hotspot for trendy types thanks to its idyllic art, shopping, fashion and clubbing

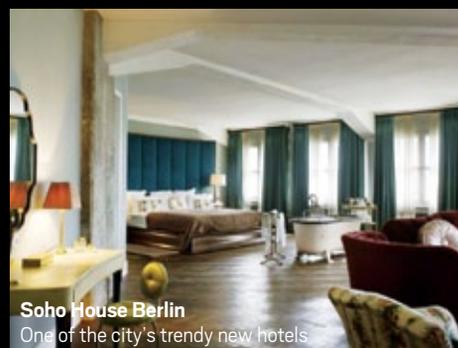
scenes – it boasts oversized beds, Apple iMacs instead of TVs and a 24-hour mindset.

Owners Tom Tänzer and Elmo Hagendorf, the entrepreneurs behind Luxe 11 – another Berlin concept property – say The Weinmeister channels a “luxury punk” aesthetic.

“The Weinmeister mirrors the excitement of Berlin street life, from the 24-hour clubs to the large gallery spaces,” says Tänzer. “We wanted to capture the essence of modern cool and what it means to enjoy the good life – the hotel exudes style and elegance but with restraint.”

If you prefer accommodation with more old-school glamour, there are plenty of options from the established big players. But you may also want to check out Spanish hotel group Whim's new five-star property, due to open in the Tiergarten in 2011.

Called Das Stue, Danish for “living room”, the hotel will have 82 rooms and suites, a luxury spa and a high-tech wallpaper-like finish over the entire rear façade. It will also feature a destination restaurant, managed by Francisco Perez of the Michelin-starred Miramar on Spain's Costa Brava.



Soho House Berlin
One of the city's trendy new hotels





EAT, DANCE, LIVE

As you would expect, Berlin has no shortage of interesting places to eat – at last count, the city boasted 14 Michelin-star restaurants including FishchersFritz, the only two-star in the city. But what is the point of visiting one of the world’s most exciting cities without trying something a little out of the ordinary?

For the truly adventurous, there is Nocti Vagus, where guests eat in total darkness and are served by specially trained blind waiters. Those who prefer to see and be seen, however, will probably feel more at home at Spindler and Klatt, a riverside restaurant in arty Kreuzberg where guests dine while reclining on oversized Asian beds. Like many Berlin hotspots, Spindler and Klatt is a club-restaurant, so you can take a turn on the dance floor after your meal.

If your tastes are a little more refined, you might want to try the Felix club-restaurant, at the Hotel Adlon Kempinski next to the famous Brandenburg Gate, or Berlin’s other World’s Finest Clubs member, Adagio. Candle-lit throughout and decorated in extravagant style, Adagio is the place to spot celebrities, with the likes of Will Smith, Sean Connery and Heidi Klum all gracing its VIP area.

For more hardcore party people, there is the home of techno, Tresor, and the renowned Berghain, both of which are housed in old power stations. Or, for true libertines, there is the famous fetish event known as the KitKat-Club – a little more tame than it used to be but still not for the faint of heart.

THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE

Despite having been the capital of the Kingdom of Prussia and the German Empire, Berlin’s cultural landscape is dominated by the events of the 20th century. During the liberal Weimar Republic after World War I, the city became synonymous with high living – as depicted in the novels of Christopher Isherwood and the movie *Cabaret* – a mood that has enjoyed a revival in recent years. The rise of Hitler in 1933 cast a shadow that the city has still not entirely thrown off. But even that catastrophe does not seem to have played as great a part in moulding modern Berlin as the post-World War II partitioning of the city and, in 1961, the construction of the Berlin Wall. It was people power as much as politics that brought about the fall of this physical barrier between East and West in 1989 – and Berliners are still rejoicing in the opportunities brought by reunification.



The Reichstag
Norman Foster’s glass dome is a tribute to Berlin’s penchant for cutting-edge design

“To experience real Berlin style you need to get off the beaten track”

Berlin’s trendiest hotels offer tailor-made tours of the city, usually focusing on art or fashion and with expert guides, but it’s just as cool to hire a bicycle and do it yourself. Top of your to-do list must be the Reichstag parliament building; its Norman Foster-designed glass dome is a wonder of the modern world, and the Museum Island, where you will find the exquisite, 3,300-year-old bust of Egyptian queen Nefertiti.

Other must-sees include the historic Brandenburg Gate, the Bauhaus Archive and, of course, the remains of the Berlin Wall – some of which now forms an open-air gallery.

Then there are the shops. Berlin is home to Europe’s largest department store – Kaufhaus

des Westens, or KaDeWe for short. Spread over eight floors, the delicatessen section alone covers 7,000 square metres and offers 34,000 products. Label-hunters will also enjoy a stroll along the Kurfürstendamm, Berlin’s main designer shopping boulevard.

But to experience real Berlin style you need to get off the beaten track. Andreas Murkudis, on Münzstrasse, is a one-stop shop for clothing and homeware from avant-garde designers, while The Corner, on Französische Strasse, channels a more high-fashion aesthetic. For luxe arts and crafts, try 2KPM on Wegely Strasse. Alternatively, just wander around the street markets and boutiques and see what gems you stumble upon.