



# Berlin Leadership Insights

## Welcome to Berlin: Insights Week Guide for U.S. Participants

Whether you're here for professional growth, cultural connection, or both, this guide will help you get the most out of your experience. This city is layered with history, buzzing with innovation, and fueled by the energy of global exchange. We're so glad you're here!

### Immerse Yourself Before You Arrive!

The following sections are entirely *optional* but thoughtfully curated to enrich your experience. Exploring a place or culture in advance can deepen your understanding and make the journey even more rewarding. If time doesn't allow—no worries. Engage as you're able.

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### Suggested Reading List

#### To Understand Berlin & German History:

- ***Stasiland* by Anna Funder** – East Germany, surveillance
- ***Berlin Now* by Peter Schneider** – Contemporary commentary, social critique
- ***The Shortest History of Germany* by James Hawes** – Historical overview, accessible
- ***Ghost Dance in Berlin: A Rhapsody in Gray* by Peter Wortsman** – Literary essays, modern Berlin

#### Fiction with Local Flavor:

- ***Berlin Alexanderplatz* by Alfred Dobin** – Modernist fiction, Weimar era
- ***I Make Envy on Your Disco* by Eric Schnell** – Satire, cultural commentary
- ***Alone in Berlin* by Hans Fallada** – WWII resistance
- ***Goodbye to Berlin* by Christopher Isherwood** – Memoir-style fiction, pre-WWII Berlin



### Suggested Films, Documentaries, or TV to Watch

- ***The Lives of Others (2006)*** – Historical drama / Cold War surveillance / East Germany
- ***Good Bye Lenin! (2003)*** – Dark comedy / Family drama / Reunification era
- ***Berlin: Symphony of a Great City (1927)*** – Silent documentary / Urban portrait / Avant-garde
- ***When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit (2019)*** – Coming-of-age / Holocaust escape / Historical fiction
- ***B-Movie: Lust & Sound in West Berlin (2015)*** – Documentary / Punk & subculture / 1980s Berlin



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## Suggested Films, Documentaries, or TV to Watch (*continued*)

- **Rick Steves' Europe:** If you've never been to Europe before, it can be helpful to view this 3-part European Travel Skills series as well as a full-length episode about Berlin.
  - Rick Steves' Europe: European Travel Skills: Part I
  - Rick Steves' Europe: European Travel Skills: Part II
  - Rick Steves' Europe: European Travel Skills: Part III
  - *Rick Steves' Europe: Berlin*



## Podcasts to Tune Into

- **History of Germany** – Deep dives into German history from ancient times to today
- **Radio Spätkauf** – Berlin news and culture in English, perfect for expats and visitors
- **Slow German** – Language-learning podcast with easy German and cultural context



## Suggested Apps to Download Before You Arrive

### For Transit & Navigation:

- Google Maps – excellent for basic navigation as well as utilizing public transportation

### For Language Help:

- DeepL or Google Translate
- Duolingo (practice basic German)

### For Daily Life:

- WhatsApp (standard for messaging)
- Units Conversion app (Weight, Length, Temperature etc.)



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## Overall Information

If you plan to spend a little extra time in Berlin before or after our program, you'll find plenty to explore in this vibrant and historic city. Some of its highlights—like its rich history, unique neighborhoods, and cultural landmarks—will certainly be part of our time together, but there's so much more to discover beyond what we can capture in the program itself. Berlin is a city where centuries of history meet a creative, modern culture, from iconic sites like the Brandenburg Gate and the Berlin Wall to lively markets, cafés, and street art around every corner.

Berliners tend to be straightforward and practical, and the city's pace is surprisingly relaxed for a European capital. Whether your interests lean toward museums, music, or simply soaking in the local energy, Berlin offers plenty to experience at your own pace.

## Berlin Etiquette & Cultural Notes

- Be punctual! It's highly valued.
- Tipping is 5–10% in restaurants
- Have cash: not all places accept cards
- Keep your voice down on public transport

## Places to Know

- **Brandenburg Gate** – Iconic 18<sup>th</sup>-century city gate and symbol of German unity.
- **Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe** – Striking field of concrete stelae honoring holocaust victims.
- **East Side Gallery / Berlin Wall Memorial** – Preserved Berlin Wall section covered in murals and historical exhibits.
- **Reichstag Building** – German parliament with a famous glass dome overlooking the city.
- **Museum Island** – UNESCO site with five world-renowned museums on the Spree River.

## Local Foods to Try

- Currywurst (German sausage with curry sauce)
- Döner Kebab (Turkish spice meat wrap)
- Berliner Pfannkuchen (German doughnut)
- Käsespätzle (German cheesy pasta)
- Berliner Weiße (local beer with syrup)



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## Museums of Berlin

- **Museum Island (Museumsinsel)**  
A UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to five world-class museums in the heart of Berlin.
  - Pergamon Museum – One of the most visited museums in Germany. Known for monumental reconstructions like the Pergamon Altar and the Ishtar Gate of Babylon. *-altar and gate currently inaccessible*
  - Neues Museum – Reopened in 2009 after war damage, housing the famous bust of Nefertiti and other Egyptian artifacts.
  - Alte Nationalgalerie – Offers 19th-century art including Romanticism, Impressionism, and early Modernist works.
  - Bode Museum – Sculpture and Byzantine art, plus a standout coin collection.
  - Altes Museum – Classical antiquities with striking Greek and Roman sculptures.
- **Topography of Terror**  
Located on the former SS headquarters site, this free outdoor and indoor museum documents the institutions of Nazi terror. Harrowing and essential.
- **Jewish Museum Berlin**  
Designed by architect Daniel Libeskind, this museum explores two millennia of German-Jewish history. Its architecture is as powerful as its exhibitions.
- **Berlinische Galerie**  
A modern art museum featuring Berlin artists from 1870 to today—great for contemporary and experimental art lovers.
- **German Historical Museum (Deutsches Historisches Museum)**  
Covers German history in a European context. Excellent for understanding key timelines and social shifts.
- **DDR Museum**  
An interactive museum that immerses visitors in everyday life in East Germany. Sit in a Trabant, look inside recreated apartments, and touch history.
- **Hamburger Bahnhof**  
Contemporary art museum in a former railway station. Features works by Warhol, Beuys, and other 20th–21st century artists.



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## Common German Words or Phrases

While English is widely understood, learning a few German phrases is always appreciated.

English	German	Phonetic Pronunciation
Yes	Ja	(yah)
No	Nein	(nain)
Hello/Hi	Hallo	(ha-lo)
Bye	Tschüss/Tschau	(chüs/chow)
Thank you	Danke	(dang-ke)
Please	Bitte	(bi-te)
You're welcome	Bitte	(bi-te)
Good morning	Guten Morgen	(goo-ten mawr-gen)
Good afternoon	Guten Tag	(goo-ten tahk)
Good evening	Guten Abend	(goo-ten ah-bent)
Bathroom?	Toiletten?	(to-a-le-ten)
Excuse me/Sorry	Entschuldigung	(ent-shul-di-gung)
No problem	Kein Problem	(kain pro-blaym)

## Mindset for the Week

- Stay curious, not judgmental
- Be open to new perspectives
- Observe, ask questions, and engage
- Lean into the unfamiliar—that's where the growth happens



If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Natalie Yakunich, fellow American and Insights Fellow & International Program Ambassador.

[Natalie.yakunich@leadershipberlin.de](mailto:Natalie.yakunich@leadershipberlin.de)