

# Travellady Magazine™

## Louisa's Place — From a Luxurious Apartment Hotel Explore the Twin Personalities of East and West Berlin

By Larry Bridwell

The capital of Germany has two powerful personalities — the youthful urbane sophistication of West Berlin and the 19th-century heritage of East Berlin overlaid by 45 years of communism. Louisa's Place manifests Berlin's combination of old and new. It is located on the trendy West Berlin boulevard of Kurfurstendamm in an historic 1905 building. Louisa was a 19th-century Prussian queen and would have been very comfortable in the luxury of her name-sake hotel.



With amenities suitable for royal tastes, the residence has 47 suites, each with living room, kitchen and bedroom. This intimate building also has a sauna, fitness center, library, and a breakfast room with a garden view. The indoor swimming pool surrounded by mosaic frescoes could easily be part of a palace.

Food fit for a queen is prepared in the Michelin-rated restaurant, Wolter's, under the direction of chef Rainer Wolter. Reflecting modern Berlin, he is famous for new German cuisine and is a popular caterer for large companies and government receptions.



An attractive advantage of Berlin is that even though it is a major world capital, the city itself is spacious, with wide boulevards and many parks. The human comfort of Berlin is reflected in Louisa's Place with rooms of high ceilings and large windows that let in light from an inner courtyard. Moreover, convenient access to the city's twin personalities is available from the excellent U-Bahn metro system one block away.

Berlin is one of the world's most exciting urban settings because of three unique factors. First, during the Cold War years, young Germans flooded West Berlin, because its draft- age men were exempt from military service. That was the case because Berlin was officially not ruled by German authorities but was instead under the legal sovereignty of the post World War II occupation of Russia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. With bars open 24 hours a day, West Berlin became a party town with an avant garde culture.

Second, East Berlin was in a special historical bubble. Its communist government preserved the old architecture of the city and promoted socialist ideals of a humane society. Although most citizens had complaints about the authoritarian rule, nonetheless, there evolved a unique sociology of social solidarity which still affects German politics. The former Communist Party, now advocating democratic left-wing policies, in 2005 attracted a significant percentage of East German votes.

Finally, in 1991, Germany moved its capital from Bonn to Berlin, unleashing dramatic new construction and economic activity which has fueled a creative blending of diverse cultures. East Berlin with its influences from Russia, Poland, Viet-Nam and other communist countries has interacted with the youthful edginess of West Berlin, generating a new thriving metropolis of cutting-edge 21st-century music, art, and urban architecture.



The nexus of this exciting urban experience is the old border between East and West Berlin. At Potsdamer Platz during the last fifteen years, Daimler Chrysler built a modern architectural complex that features the most advanced ecological design. Included is a utility plant that not only produces electricity but also captures the heat that is usually lost as a by-product of the power generation process and pipes it to warm the nearby buildings.

Daimler Chrysler planned its main site, the DebisHaus, to minimize energy consumption. Together with natural ventilation from environmentally designed window systems, energy consumption is only 50% of typical construction. Many offices do not have air conditioning and rely on natural ventilation for cooling. Asked what happens when it gets hot during the summer, a spokeswoman for Daimler Chrysler said this only happens a few days a year and that nature has provided a great solution by allowing the human body to sweat a little!

Beyond saving energy costs, this environmental friendly approach has had another benefit. Daimler Chrysler noticed that sick days decreased dramatically, because the health of its employees improved from fresh air ventilation. People did not get sick from contagious germs that usually circulate in the trapped air of conventional buildings. The spokeswoman commented that demonstrations from Green Party activists had persuaded Daimler Chrysler to emphasize environmentally friendly construction.

A few blocks from Potsdamer Platz is the famous Brandenburg Gate which marked the old border between East and West Berlin. In the square, an exhibit of huge photographs chronicles events at the site over the last hundred years.



In the historic section of East Berlin is the Gendarmenmarkt, a square famous for its two sister churches, the Protestant Deutscher Dom (German Cathedral) and the Catholic Franzoesicher Dom (French Cathedral),



facing each other to commemorate the peaceful German co-existence of the two religions. These churches were originally constructed in the 18th century. The German Cathedral was destroyed during World War II and rebuilt after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Between the churches is the Konzerthaus, a 19th-century neo-classical theater, which is the home of the Berlin Symphony Orchestra. During our visit, it was open for the annual event at which the public is invited to hear chamber music

and soloists perform in spaces throughout the building.

The creative synergy of East and West Berlin has created a great urban metropolis, and Louisa's Place is the perfect base from which to explore it.

## **If you go**

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Suites from €205/ \$251 (for up to 14 days),  
€105/\$129 (for more than 14 days), €90/\$110 (more than 29 days).

## **Getting there**

Train travel in Germany is excellent, with frequent and fast connections all over the country. If you're going to several cities, or to other countries, a good way to save money and time is with a railpass from Rail Europe. There are many railpass options available, for one, two, three or more countries. Go to Rail Europe's web site (or call a reservation agent) to decide whether your trip is best done with point-to-point tickets or a pass or combination of the two. Passes are sold only to non-European residents. <http://www.RailEurope.com> or 888-382-7245.

Photos by Lucy Komisar

Photo of DebisHaus by Hans Peter Merten (German National Tourist Board)