

Berlin walking tour

Reading List

Berlin: Portrait of a City Through the Centuries

by Rory MacLean

Berlin is a city of fragments and ghosts, a laboratory of ideas, the fount of both the brightest and darkest designs of history's most bloody century. The once arrogant capital of Europe was devastated by Allied bombs, divided by the Wall, then reunited and reborn as one of the creative centers of the world. Today it resonates with the echo of lives lived. No other city has repeatedly been so powerful and fallen so low; few other cities have been so shaped and defined by individual imaginations.

Berlin tells the volatile history of Europe's capital over five centuries through a series of intimate portraits of two dozen key residents: the medieval balladeer whose suffering explains the Nazis' rise to power; the genius Jewish chemist who invented poison gas for First World War battlefields and then the death camps; the iconic mythmakers like Christopher Isherwood, Leni Riefenstahl, and David Bowie, whose heated visions are now as real as the city's bricks and mortar. Alongside are portrayed some of the countless ordinary Berliners whose lives can only be imagined: the ambitious prostitute who refashioned herself as a baroness, the fearful Communist Party functionary who helped to build the Wall, and the American spy from the Midwest whose patriotism may have turned the course of the Cold War.

Berlin is a history book like no other, with an originality that reflects the nature of the city itself. In its architecture, through its literature, in its movies and songs, Berliners have conjured their hard capital into a place of fantastic human fantasy. No other city has so often surrendered itself to its own seductive myths. Berlin captures, portrays, and propagates the remarkable story of those myths and their makers.

A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City: A Diary

by Anonymous

For eight weeks in 1945, as Berlin fell to the Russian army, a young woman kept a daily record of life in her apartment building and among its residents. "With bald honesty and brutal lyricism" (Elle), the anonymous author depicts her fellow Berliners in all their humanity, as well as their cravenness,

corrupted first by hunger and then by the Russians. "Spare and unpredictable, minutely observed and utterly free of self-pity" (The Plain Dealer, Cleveland), A Woman in Berlin tells of the complex relationship between civilians and an occupying army and the shameful indignities to which women in a conquered city are always subject--the mass rape suffered by all, regardless of age or infirmity. A Woman in Berlin stands as "one of the essential books for understanding war and life" (A. S. Byatt, author of Possession).

The Fall of Berlin 1945

by Antony Beevor

The Red Army had much to avenge when it finally reached the frontiers of the Third Reich in January 1945. Frenzied by their terrible experiences with Wehrmacht and SS brutality, they wreaked havoc—tanks crushing refugee columns, mass rape, pillage, and unimaginable destruction. Hundreds of thousands of women and children froze to death or were massacred; more than seven million fled westward from the fury of the Red Army. It was the most terrifying example of fire and sword ever known.

Antony Beevor has reconstructed the experiences of those millions caught up in the nightmare of the Third Reich's final collapse. The Fall of Berlin is a terrible story of pride, stupidity, fanaticism, revenge, and savagery, yet it is also one of astonishing endurance, self-sacrifice, and survival against all odds.

Berlin Game (Samson)

by Len Deighton

Long-awaited reissue of the first part of the classic spy trilogy, GAME, SET and MATCH, when the Berlin Wall divided not just a city but a world.

East is East and West is West – and they meet in Berlin...

He was the best source the Department ever had, but now he desperately wanted to come over the Wall. 'Braams Four' was certain a high-ranking mole was set to betray him. There was only one Englishman he trusted any more: someone from the old days.

So they decided to put Bernard Samson back into the field after five sedentary years of flying a desk. The field is Berlin.

The game is as baffling, treacherous and lethal as ever...

Berlin Calling: A Story of Anarchy, Music, The Wall, and the Birth of the New Berlin

by Paul Hockenos

Berlin Calling is a gripping account of the 1989 "peaceful revolution" in East Germany that upended communism and the tumultuous years of artistic ferment, political improvisation, and pirate utopias that followed. It's the story of a newly undivided Berlin when protest and punk rock, bohemia and direct democracy, techno and free theater were the order of the day.

In a story stocked with fascinating characters from Berlin's highly politicized undergrounds—including playwright Heiner Müller, cult figure Blixa Bargeld of the industrial band Einstürzende Neubauten, the internationally known French Wall artist Thierry Noir, the American multimedia artist Danielle de Picciotto (founder of Love Parade), and David Bowie during his Ziggy Stardust incarnation—Hockenos argues that the DIY energy and raw urban vibe of the early 1990s shaped the new Berlin and still pulses through the city today.

Just as Mike Davis captured Los Angeles in his City of Quartz, Berlin Calling is a unique account of how Berlin became hip, and of why it continues to attract creative types from the world over.

The Reader

by Bernhard Schlink

Hailed for its coiled eroticism and the moral claims it makes upon the reader, this mesmerizing novel is a story of love and secrets, horror and compassion, unfolding against the haunted landscape of postwar Germany.

When he falls ill on his way home from school, fifteen-year-old Michael Berg is rescued by Hanna, a woman twice his age. In time she becomes his lover—then she inexplicably disappears. When Michael next sees her, he is a young law student, and she is on trial for a hideous crime. As he watches her refuse to defend her innocence, Michael gradually realizes that Hanna may be guarding a secret she considers more shameful than murder.

Stasiland

by Anna Funder

"Stasiland demonstrates that great, original reporting is still possible. . . . A heartbreaking, beautifully written book. A classic." —Claire Tomalin, Guardian "Books of the Year"

Anna Funder delivers a prize-winning and powerfully rendered account of the resistance against

East Germany's communist dictatorship in these harrowing, personal tales of life behind the Iron Curtain—and, especially, of life under the iron fist of the Stasi, East Germany's brutal state security force. In the tradition of Frederick Taylor's *The Berlin Wall* and Philip Gourevitch's *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families*, Funder's *Stasiland* is a masterpiece of investigative reporting, written with novelistic vividness and the compelling intensity of a universal, real-life story.

The Berlin Stories

by Christopher Isherwood

A classic of 20th-century fiction, *The Berlin Stories* inspired the Broadway musical and Oscar-winning film *Cabaret*.

First published in the 1930s, *The Berlin Stories* contains two astonishing related novels, *The Last of Mr. Norris* and *Goodbye to Berlin*, which are recognized today as classics of modern fiction. Isherwood magnificently captures 1931 Berlin: charming, with its avenues and cafés; marvelously grotesque, with its nightlife and dreamers; dangerous, with its vice and intrigue; powerful and seedy, with its mobs and millionaires?this is the period when Hitler was beginning his move to power. *The Berlin Stories* is inhabited by a wealth of characters: the unforgettable Sally Bowles, whose misadventures in the demimonde were popularized on the American stage and screen by Julie Harris in *I Am A Camera* and Liza Minnelli in *Cabaret*; Mr. Norris, the improbable old debauchee mysteriously caught between the Nazis and the Communists; plump Fräulein Schroeder, who thinks an operation to reduce the scale of her Büste might relieve her heart palpitations; and the distinguished and doomed Jewish family, the Landauers.

Every Man Dies Alone

by Hans Fallada

A New York Times Book Review Notable Book of the Year

"The greatest book ever written about the German resistance to the Nazis." —Primo Levi

"One of the most extraordinary and compelling novels ever written about World War II. Ever. ... Please, do not miss this." —Alan Furst

"It has something of the horror of Conrad, the madness of Dostoyevsky and the chilling menace of Capote's *In Cold Blood*.... In the quiet Quangels, Fallada has created an immortal symbol of those who fight back against 'the vile beyond all vileness' and so redeem us all." —Roger Cohen, *The New York Times*

"An unrivalled and vivid portrait of life in wartime Berlin." —Philip Kerr, author of the "Berlin Noir" novels

"Has the suspense of a John le Carré novel ... visceral, chilling" —*The New Yorker*

"One of the most extraordinarily ambitious literary resurrections in recent memory" —*The Los Angeles Times*

"A one-of-a-kind novel ... Fallada can be seen as a hero, a writer-hero who survived just long enough to strike back at his oppressors." —*The Globe and Mail*

"Stunningly vivid characters ... gets you inside Nazi Germany like no other novel." —*The San Francisco Chronicle*

"Essential, thrilling." —*The St. Petersburg Times*

"This is a novel that is so powerful, so intense, that it almost hums with electricity." —*Minneapolis Star-Tribune*

The Innocent

by Ian McEwan

A member of a British-American surveillance team in Cold War Berlin finds himself in too deep in this masterful work from the author of *Atonement*. Twenty-five-year-old Leonard Marnham's intelligence work—tunneling under a Russian communications center to tap the phone lines to Moscow—offers him a welcome opportunity to begin shedding his own unwanted innocence, even if he is only a bit player in a grim international comedy of errors. His relationship with Maria Eckdorf, an enigmatic and beautiful West Berliner, likewise promises to loosen the bonds of his ordinary life. But the promise turns to horror in the course of one terrible evening—a night when Marnham learns just how much of his innocence he's willing to shed.

The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape

by Brian Ladd

In this compelling work, Brian Ladd examines the ongoing conflicts radiating from the remarkable fusion of architecture, history, and national identity in Berlin. Ladd surveys the urban landscape,

excavating its ruins, contemplating its buildings and memorials, and carefully deconstructing the public debates and political controversies emerging from its past.

"Written in a clear and elegant style, *The Ghosts of Berlin* is not just another colorless architectural history of the German capital. . . . Mr. Ladd's book is a superb guide to this process of urban self-definition, both past and present."—Katharina Thote, *Wall Street Journal*

"If a book can have the power to change a public debate, then *The Ghosts of Berlin* is such a book. Among the many new books about Berlin that I have read, Brian Ladd's is certainly the most impressive. . . . Ladd's approach also owes its success to the fact that he is a good storyteller. His history of Berlin's architectural successes and failures reads entertainingly like a detective novel."—Peter Schneider, *New Republic*

"[Ladd's] well-written and well-illustrated book amounts to a brief history of the city as well as a guide to its landscape."—Anthony Grafton, *New York Review of Books*

The Berlin Wall: The History and Legacy of the World's Most Notorious Wall

by Charles Rivers

"From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an 'Iron Curtain' has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow." – Winston Churchill, 1946

"This is a historic day. East Germany has announced that, starting immediately, its borders are open to everyone. The GDR is opening its borders ... the gates in the Berlin Wall stand open." – German anchorman Hans Joachim Friedrichs

Though it never got "hot," the Cold War was a tense era until the dissolution of the USSR, and nothing symbolized the split more than the Berlin Wall, which literally divided the city. Berlin had been a flashpoint even before World War II ended, and the city was occupied by the different Allies even as the close of the war turned them into adversaries. After the Soviets' blockade of West Berlin was prevented by the Berlin Airlift, the Eastern Bloc and the Western powers continued to control different sections of the city, and by the 1960s, East Germany was pushing for a solution to the problem of an enclave of freedom within its borders. West Berlin was a haven for highly-educated East Germans who wanted freedom and a better life in the West, and this "brain drain" was threatening the survival of the East German economy.

In order to stop this, access to the West through West Berlin had to be cut off, so in August 1961, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev authorized East German leader Walter Ulbricht to begin

construction of what would become known as the Berlin Wall. The wall, begun on Sunday August 13, would eventually surround the city, in spite of global condemnation, and the Berlin Wall itself would become the symbol for Communist repression in the Eastern Bloc. It also ended Khrushchev's attempts to conclude a peace treaty among the Four Powers (the Soviets, the Americans, the United Kingdom, and France) and the two German states. The wall would serve as a perfect photo-opportunity for two presidents (Kennedy and Reagan) to hammer the Soviet Communists and their repression, but the Berlin Wall would stand for nearly 30 years, isolating the East from the West. It is estimated about 200 people would die trying to cross the wall to defect to the West.

Things came to a head in 1989. With rapid change throughout Europe, the wall faced a challenge it could not contain, the challenge of democracy's spread. On the night of November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall was effectively removed from the midst of the city it so long divided. It was removed with pick axes and sledgehammers, but also removed from the hearts and minds of the people on both sides who only hours before had thought the wall's existence insurmountable. As one writer put it, "No border guard, no wall, can forever shield repressive regimes from the power of subversive ideas, from the lure of freedom."

The fall of the Berlin Wall is often considered the end of the Cold War, and the following month both President Bush and Gorbachev declared the Cold War over, but the Cold War had been thawing for most of the 1980s. President Reagan is remembered for calling the Soviet Union an "evil empire" and demanding that Gorbachev tear down the wall, but he spent the last several years of his presidency working with the Soviet leader to improve relations. The end of the Soviet Union came when Gorbachev resigned on December 25, 1991. The Soviet Union formally dissolved the next day.
