

The T&C Traveler

Since the celebrated fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the city has undergone a gradual recovery and architectural renaissance, reclaiming its spot as one of Europe's most dynamic capitals. This summer (on July 9), the 2006 World Cup competition, hosted by Germany, will culminate in Berlin's recently remodeled Olympic Stadium, generating an air of excitement. Visitors, staying for the big game or not, will be captivated by the city's innovative new buildings, provocative art scene and youthful energy—nearly half the residents are under the age of thirty-five.

Just stroll through the increasingly stylish Mitte, once a faded neighborhood in eastern Berlin but now the height of hipster chic and home to many important art galleries. Here are some of the world's most pioneering contemporary institutions, such as **Kunst-Werke** (69 Auguststrasse; 011-49-30-24-34-590) and **Galerie Eigen & Art** (26 Auguststrasse; 011-49-30-28-06-605), living cheek by jowl with **Andreas Murkudis** (21-23 Münzstrasse; 011-49-30-30-88-19-45), a cutting-edge lifestyle store, and **Wunderkind** (8 Rückerstrasse; 011-49-30-28-04-05-85), the shop for fashion designer Wolfgang Joop's line of haute bohemian couture.

A few blocks from a new high-tech Hugo Boss store is Mitte's hotel of the moment: **Lux 11** (9-13 Rosa Luxemburg Strasse; 011-49-30-93-62-800; lux11.com), an apartment hotel with seventy-two rooms, complete with fur throws and cappuccino machines; it's worth the money to upgrade to a suite. There's a Japanese fusion restaurant, **Shiro i Shiro**, as well as an Aveda day spa. Mitte's most well-known property, the **Hotel Adlon** (77 Unter den Linden; 011-49-30-22-610; hotel-adlon.de), also continues to draw guests, thanks to its excellent service, discretion and location, right next to the Brandenburg Gate.

Not far from the Reichstag, with its Sir Norman Foster-designed glass dome,



new luxury hotels can be found in the reinvented Potsdamer Platz. After the wall fell, it was a no-man's land; now it's a showcase of modern architecture, from Renzo Piano's DaimlerChrysler complex to the **Grand Hyatt Berlin** (2 Marlene Dietrich Platz; 011-49-30-25-53-12-34; berlin.grand.hyatt.com), designed by José Rafael Moneo. While the Hyatt is a favorite, especially during the Berlinale film festival, the recently opened **Ritz-Carlton Berlin** (3 Potsdamer Platz; 011-49-30-

33-77-77; www.ritzcarlton.com) has wooed a selective American clientele with its old-world service, despite the Prussian-inspired decor, which is heavy on marble and gold. The 302-room property also boasts the **Vitrum** restaurant, with one of Berlin's finest chefs, Thomas Kellermann, who

sends out such delicate seasonal dishes as Breton lobster with asparagus, passion fruit and truffles.

In fact, most of the city's top culinary talent works in hotels. The new and whimsically named **Fischers Fritz** (49 Charlottenstrasse; 011-49-30-20-33-8), in the Regent Berlin, is overseen by the talented Christian Lohse. And in the Swissôtel Berlin, thirty-two-year-old chef Tim Raue prepares original fare, like langoustines wrapped in asparagus with asparagus ice cream, at his **Restaurant 44** (44 Augsburger Strasse; 011-49-30-22-01-00).

Those who are searching for alternative gourmet adventures should contact



Berlinagenten (011-49-30-43-72-07-01; www.berlinagenten.com), a custom-tour company run by the charismatic young Swede Henrik Tidefjard. His lively and unique "Gastro-Rallye" offers small groups a three- to five-course meal, with each course served at a different trendy restaurant in eastern Berlin.

The action isn't only in the east. In the Charlottenburg district, in the west, there's the much buzzed-about **Goya** (18 Budapest Strasse; 011-49-30-26-39-14-30), a restaurant and club in the former New German Theatre, an Art Deco building. Sitting under the Murano-glass

chandeliers; you will find that it's truly dining as performance. All this sparkle befits a city on the world stage again. —GISELA WILLIAMS

LETTER FROM BERLIN



From top: New in Berlin are the Wunderkind shop and the Shiro i Shiro restaurant.