

Tourism and Political Change

3

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German Reunification and Tourism in Berlin

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Part I

Unification/ Reunification

3 German Reunification and Tourism in Berlin

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Introduction

Perhaps more so than any other city, Berlin has been affected by most major global political events of the 20th century. The two World Wars, the Cold War, and the rise and fall of Communism were experienced with unusual immediacy in the city. Berlin's development from the Second World War until German Reunification in 1990 was largely determined by Germany's membership in two anomalous 'families' of political units symptomatic of the global political map of the time: quasi-states and Soviet satellite states. Since German Reunification, Berlin has experienced an unprecedented phase of growth, accompanied by an increase in popularity with tourists, both German and foreign. With more than 17 million overnight stays in 2008, Berlin has become one of Germany's most-visited tourist destinations ([http://www.visitberlin.de/reiseindustrie/index.en.php?seite= ueberuns_btm](http://www.visitberlin.de/reiseindustrie/index.en.php?seite=ueberuns_btm)).

The focus of this chapter is to examine the relationship between political differences and change and tourism development in Berlin. This involves a comparison of patterns of tourism in the two halves of the city in the period preceding the fall of the Berlin Wall, especially the decade immediately preceding 1990, and noting how patterns have changed in each of the two halves in the two decades since reunification.

Tourism development

Both East Berlin and West Berlin were fragments of a previous whole, and both claimed to be the true heir of the pre-war metropolis of Berlin. West Berlin had lost its importance as the economic, commercial and political centre of Germany (commerce moving to Hamburg, finance to Frankfurt and the government to Bonn) and found itself in need of a new definition. East Berlin retained the central function which greater Berlin had had in Hitler's Reich, making a 'rewriting' of the symbolic significance of the city even more important (Merritt, 1986). Berlin increasingly became the subject of competing claims of proprietorship over its parts and its future. West Berlin was advertised as the *Bollwerk der Freiheit* (bulwark of freedom) while East Berlin depicted itself as a *Stadt des Friedens* (city of peace). Tourism development and marketing in both halves of Berlin can be seen as components and expressions of these two political and economic visions of the city.

Chapter extract

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