

Berlin art hotels

For a night of surreal inspiration, check into a room that's more akin to an art installation than simply a place to lay your head

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FORGET LONDON, NEW YORK AND BEIJING. BERLIN IS THE ART WORLD'S REIGNING HOT SPOT, with any gallery and creative worth their salt making their mark in the metropolis. For the last few years, this energy has permeated every aspect of city life, and hoteliers have picked up on the scene with gusto.

In almost every corner of Berlin, you can now find an 'art hotel', which could be anything from a five-star boutique with a curated selection of paintings and sculptures, to edgy installation projects with bookable beds for adventurous guests.

It would be difficult to imagine a more bizarre hotel anywhere in the world than Propeller Island City Lodge (Albrecht Achilles Strasse 58; +49 (0) 30 891 9016; propeller-island.com; singles from €69, doubles from €94). Love it or loathe it, it's impossible to deny that it's one of a kind. Each of the 30 rooms, situated on the second to fourth floors of an apartment building, is the personal vision of artist Lars Stroschen, and all are truly, madly, wildly

steps. Miriam Bers of GoArt! Berlin (goart-berlin.de), who provide art tours and consultancy, explains that, “A good artist must be exhibited in Berlin nowadays, like London ten years ago.” This might explain why a city with a population of 3.4 million now has 450 art galleries, with a significant number of them found in a handful of streets around Arte Luise.

“In the 1990s, artists moved into this area, newly opened since the fall of the Wall, because it was cheap,” says Miriam of this part of Mitte. “And like everywhere, first the artists come, then the galleries come, then the money comes, and suddenly everything is more expensive.” What was an edgy, hip district just over a decade ago has already become a grande dame on the city’s art scene.

Stroll down Oranienburger, Invalidenstrasse and Auguststrasse (nicknamed Gallery Street), all just a few steps from the hotel, to buy (or just browse) works by the world’s leading contemporary artists.

Nearby is another personal gallery, but this is one you can sleep in. Former gallery curator Christiane Waszkowiak promotes new artists via her 30-room mitArt Hotel and Café (Linienstrasse 139-140; +49 (0) 30 2839 0430; doubles from €110), with a small selection of works in the rooms and café by her favourite up-and-comers, including Jens P Drichel, Jeanne Fredac, Barbara Gockel, Gerhard Knodel, Annette Kühl and Brigitte Städler.

The Berlin Artist Apartment (9 Simon Dach Strasse; berlinartistapartment.com; four-person flat from €89) is another attractive option. Situated in fashionable Friedrichshain, this comfortable flat is a time-warp from the 1940s, complete with mid-century furnishings, child-like paintings, three-dimensional framed pieces and carefully grouped collections of objects.

Sophisticates might prefer to sashay into the super-slick Oberholz Apartments (Rosenthaler Strasse 72a; +49 (0) 30 240 855 86; sanktoberholz.de; from €245 per night), bang in the middle of trendy Mitte and a stone’s throw from the twinkling eye of the Fernsehturm (TV Tower). The parquet floors, cream walls and dark chocolate interiors are evocative of a swanky design hotel, but with the bonus of 125sq m space. The art here is more subtle than in-your-face Propeller Island. A cow grazes the walls in the dining room, while a rooster struts behind the futon in the smallest bedroom. A hive-shaped city of tiny black and white houses rests above the sleepers in another bedroom. Artists are all from the Berlin art scene, including Felix Broede, Luci & Coma and Gerard Janssen.

Best of all, each apartment has three balconies overlooking buzzy Rosenthaler Platz, a popular meeting point where West has merged into East to create a mish-mash of traditional bars and chic eateries, quirky boutiques and established galleries and rebellious graffiti artists. *Metropolis* crashes into reality in ghetto-glorious technicolour. See it before the scene changes.

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