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## BERLIN'S BRANDENBURGER HOF HOTEL: WHERE THE OLD MEETS THE NEW

By Anne Z. Cooke, Tribune Media Services, [World's Fare](#)

BERLIN -- In the 19 years since the Berlin Wall fell, this storied city, once the capital of the Prussian Empire, has been on the rebound. Tearing down, restoring historic monuments and creating new landmarks, Berlin attracts world travelers by the bus and planeload. A day walking the city's famous "allees" is as stimulating as it is noisy, bold and brash.

All the more reason, then, to stay at the Brandenburger Hof Hotel, located in west central Berlin's upscale Charlottenburg neighborhood. Secluded, graceful and up-to-the-minute hip, this luxury retreat radiates special warmth. And so it should, since it was once a private manor house, built in the neo-classic architecture in vogue in Western Europe and the United States at the turn of the last century.

Surviving two world wars and the Cold War, the 108-year-old house (in the former British Sector) is now a five-star hotel with premiere personal service, 58 rooms, 14 suites, a small Thaleia Spa and Die Quadriga, a Michelin one-star restaurant. Though the city has grown around and past it, the tree-lined, Eislebener Street location is still quietly residential. And it's now just a five-minute walk, door-to-door, to the fashionable shopping "mile" on Kurfurstendamm Street, and a 15-minute walk to the world-famous Berlin Zoo.

Fortunately, the Brandenburger Hof is no mere restoration. The stately front facade, cleaned and restored, looks as it did in its heyday, and the hotel's bones are intact. But the present owner and manager, Daniela Sauter, has transformed the interior spaces, creating a fresh, vibrant, contemporary look.

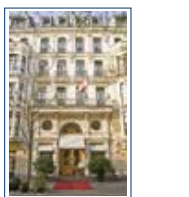
The biggest change is in the building's central courtyard, a feature particular to Berlin. Originally open to the sky, Sauter adapted the space for all-season use, building a glass-walled arcade and then closing the roof opening with glass panels. A Japanese garden, with ornamental trees and shrubs flourishes under natural light in the center; the enclosed arcade, also lit by natural light, is a seating and breakfast area, and at the end, a large reception space with a grand piano.

The next challenge was how to convert the original home's reception salons and living areas into lounges and a dining room. The front

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parlors and entrance hall became the Reception Desk, inner hall, the elevator zone and offices.

Sauter's solution for the rear space was to create two intimate sitting rooms -- the wine room, and the library -- and several small dining rooms, each decorated in a different color and theme, but serving the same menu. Berlin residents who often eat here have their favorite spaces; you will, too. The hotel's cuisine and the wine list (with 850 labels) regularly win awards and appear on best-of-the-best lists, an accomplishment in a country where fine dining is now a national pastime.

Sauter's artistic leanings have dominated the themes and forms found in the hotel decor, straddling the line between modern and minimalist. She collects Asian art, an inspiration for many of the forms she's borrowed and simplified. For color and ambiance, contemporary Italian design, with bright casual colors, prevails.

The typical double guest room is rather small (300 to 366 square feet), as you'd expect in an existing, older building. But they are uncluttered, comfortable, well lit and nicely laid out, with windows that open onto the street or onto the garden. The suites, in two sizes, are more lavish of course, and larger.

All have fresh flowers, a desk, flat-screen TV, Wi-Fi hot spots, mini-bar, bathrobe and slippers, hair dryer and lotions. The rate per night includes an "a la carte" -- an extended continental breakfast -- with cheese, sliced meats, fruits, bread, cereal and coffee or tea). Or you can order a hot breakfast from the menu. Either will set you up for another stimulating -- and exhausting day -- touring Berlin.

### **INCIDENTAL INTELLIGENCE:**

If Berlin's size and bustle intimidates you, consider one of the hotel's all-inclusive packages, an "arrangement" as they're called. Three-night, two-day themed tours, they are all-inclusive, from the limousine that picks you up and takes you back to the airport, to room, breakfasts, one dinner, guides in Berlin and tour transportation.

Daily rates for a single room starts at 185 euros; a double room for two starts at 270 euros. Children five and under are free. All rooms include an a la carte breakfast.

At Eislebener Strasse 14, 10789 Berlin -- Charlottenburg, Germany. Call 011-49-030-21405, or visit [www.brandenburger-hof.com](http://www.brandenburger-hof.com).

(Anne Z. Cooke and Steve Haggerty explore the world from Venice, Calif.)

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