

PRUSSIA & THE RISE OF GERMANY BERLIN & POTSDAM

MONDAY 6 – SATURDAY 11 DECEMBER 2021 (6 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£2335

- **Comprehensive introduction to Berlin, one of Europe's most remarkable cities, dressed in its Christmas livery**
- **See the city's major historic sites & the pick of the city's museums**
- **Special access to the Reichstag to include dinner in its rooftop restaurant**
- **We visit Potsdam to explore the royal parks & their palaces**
- **Very comfortable 5* hotel just off Unter den Linden**



Berlin, Museum Island

OVERVIEW

Prussia - How many reactions can a name conjure up in the Anglo-Saxon imagination? In this case, surely some of the most frequent include Frederick the Great in his role both as military genius and as patron of the arts; Bismarck and the creation of a German Empire; the family links between the Prussian and British royal families; the militaristic traditions which propelled Germany into two World Wars and their horrific consequences?

While these themes will form *part* of the historic framework for our visit to Berlin, in contrast to these often tragic events there is a parallel and happier story, above all the reunification of the two Germanys after the collapse of Communism and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Indeed it is Berlin, more than any other city, which has demonstrated Germany's resilience, its acknowledgement of its past and its faith in the future, expressed through a commitment to the human spirit in all its forms. Thus, the great cultural traditions of German music, literature and the visual arts will be with us at all times – a descant to our theme.

Our visit will weave these complex strands via a series of guided walks around Berlin's historic centre. Since reunification, enormous investment has poured into the restoration of the historic core and the creation of a new government district from where the reunited Germany is administered. For culturally biased travellers these projects may be dwarfed by the reorganisation of many of the city's Museums and Galleries onto the 'Museum Island', a testament to Germany's belief in visual culture as a transformational experience.

From the German Historical Museum with its exemplary overview of the country's history, to the Altes Museum with unrivalled holdings of antiquities and the Neues Museum, remodelled in stunning fashion by David Chipperfield – the room with Nefertiti's bust is alone worth a detour - all of mankind's history is brought to life as nowhere else. The main Pergamon Museum is closed for restoration but we will be able to see their 'Panorama' display of selected sculptures from the ancient site. For lovers of paintings there is the magnificent Gemäldegalerie with Germany's most comprehensive display of Old Masters. We also visit Potsdam to explore the royal parks and their palaces.

Berlin's commitment to musical life is well known. We have left most evenings free so that participants can take advantage of any performances which might be available with further information to follow when made available. The wonderful architecture of Germany's capital is also the perfect backdrop to traditional German Christmas markets. Jolly street markets, festive decorations, culture and music in abundance await us.

Our hotel will be the very comfortable 5* Hotel Regent, a short walk from the famous Unter den Linden and most of the sights we shall visit, and very close to two of the city's opera houses. It has a starred Michelin restaurant and there are many other good restaurants nearby.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Monday 6 December – We fly from Heathrow to **Berlin Brandenburg**, arriving early afternoon. We drive into the city to begin an **Introduction** focusing on its historic centre, partly by coach, partly on foot, divided

between this afternoon and tomorrow. Iconic monuments such as the **Brandenburg Gate**, the remarkable **Museum Island**, the city's World War II monuments, the **Holocaust Memorial**, the **Berlin Wall** and the amazing transformation of the city since reunification will all be encountered. We continue to our hotel, the **5* Hotel Regent** where we shall also have our first group dinner – water, wine and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Tuesday 7 December – Leaving the hotel on foot we walk over to the **German Historical Museum** (*Deutsches Historisches Museum*). This is one of the best introductions to a country's diverse history and culture that the present writer has ever encountered – comprehensive, full of outstanding exhibits, all displayed with imagination and flair. We have a group lunch in the Museum restaurant. This afternoon we continue our **Introduction** to the city when we re-join our coach. The evening will be free.

Day 3: Wednesday 8 December – The world-renowned **Museum Island** (*Museuminsel*) hosts five of the city's most important museums and over the next few days we shall visit almost all of them. We begin with the **Neues Museum**, commissioned to take the overflow from the Altes Museum (see below) and though very badly damaged in World War II, it has been magnificently restored by British architect, David Chipperfield. The contents range from pre-history to ancient Egypt and beyond, the highlight being the wondrous bust of Nefertiti. After a break for lunch (not included) we continue to the **Panorama** of selected pieces from the **Pergamon Museum** and then to the adjacent **Altes Museum** which has an amazing collection of Greek and Roman antiquities. The evening will be free.

Day 4: Thursday 9 December – In the years before reunification, **Charlottenburg** was one of the four districts in Berlin's western sector, in fact it was THE district, full of elegant shops and expensive housing. Our focus will be **Schloss Charlottenburg**, a fine palace built in the 1690s by Frederick, Elector of Brandenburg as a summer residence for his wife, Sophie Charlotte (the same man who modestly upgraded himself as King Frederick I of Prussia). The original baroque Schloss was extended several times and of particular interest to us will be the **New Wing**, created for Frederick the Great, which houses one of the finest collection of French eighteenth century paintings outside France. We return to the city centre to the city's **Kulturforum** and Berlin's finest picture gallery, the **Gemäldegalerie**. It has an excellent restaurant for lunch (not included) after which we spend the afternoon looking at a stunning array of masterpieces. All the major European schools are represented with particularly good paintings by Raphael, Caravaggio, Rubens, Rembrandt and Vermeer. After the visit you will be free to walk back to the hotel through the lovely **Tiergarten Park**. The evening will be free.

Day 5: Friday 10 December – We return to the Museum Island, this time to see the **Alte Nationalgalerie** with its unrivalled collection of German Romantic painting and a superb group of French Impressionists. We end our formal visit late morning after which you will have the afternoon free for private explorations. We meet again in the early evening when we walk to the **Reichstag**, a remarkable fusion where the historic skeleton of Prussia's Parliament, destroyed in World War II, has been refashioned by Richard Rodgers to hold the new German parliament. It is an astonishing achievement and our day will end with dinner in its splendid rooftop glass-walled restaurant after which we return to our hotel on foot.

Day 6: Saturday 11 December – We leave our hotel and travel by coach to **Potsdam**, long the summer retreat of the Prussian royal family. The town is encircled by a wonderful park full of palaces, garden follies and the like including **Sanssouci**, the exquisite retreat built by Frederick the Great. We have our final group lunch in central Potsdam, after which we continue to the airport for the return flight to Heathrow.

Music & Opera: We have left most evenings free so that participants can take advantage of any performances which might be available. Details will be distributed once known.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2335 **Without Flights** £2170 **Deposit** £350 **Single Supplement** £375 (Double Room for Sole Use)

Hotels 5 nights with breakfast at the 5* Hotel Regent, Berlin

Flights British Airways

Outward: **BA982** Departs London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1010** arrive Berlin Brandenburg **1305**

Return: **BA995** Departs Berlin Brandenburg **1735** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1835**

Price includes 2 dinners & 2 lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, City Tax, entry fees & gratuities, services of Tom Duncan & our local tour manager/guide

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 3 dinners & 3 lunches



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