Berlin and the East of Germany

Monarchs, Poets, Reformers and Christmas Markets

European Castles Tours

For more than three centuries the rulers of Brandenburg commissioned the best artists of their time to enhance the Royal residences in and around Berlin with elaborate palaces and gardens. There was building activity under a long series of Prussian monarchs – from Joachim II to the Great Elector, and from Frederick the Great to the last of the German emperors, William II. The resulting works of architecture and landscape gardening are overwhelming.

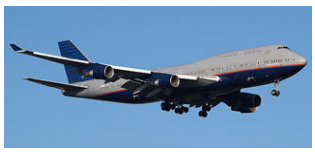
Also visit the stunningly beautiful cities of Leipzig and Dresden in Saxony with their rich cultural heritage, follow Martin Luther's footsteps in Wittenberg, Wartburg and Erfurt, visit Weimar, the town of poets and thinkers and enjoy its rich history from Luther to the iron curtain – and its opening!

Map

Itinerary - 2012 Tour

Day 1 - DEPARTURE

Board your flight from home to Berlin. (The new Berlin-Brandenburg International airport is scheduled to take over from Tegel in June 2012.) This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.



Day 2 - WELCOME To BERLIN

Arrival in Berlin, the German Capital. **The transfers to the hotel depart at 10 a.m. and at 1 p.m.**

Rest in the afternoon and take advantage of the hotel facilities, or to go for a first stroll in the city.

Tonight you'll meet your travelling companions and tour director and enjoy a great welcome dinner.

> *Your tour includes: Transfer from airport to hotel, dinner, hotel in Berlin*

Day 3 – BERLIN SIGHTSEEING, CHARLOTTENBURG PALACE

Start your day with an orientation tour of the capital of Germany.

Guided sightseeing in the once-divided metropolis features the elegant Ku'damm, the restored Reichstag, the 210-foot Victory Column in the Tiergarten Park, the Holocaust Memorial, and Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church with its bomb-damaged tower.

Drive past the State Opera House and Checkpoint Charlie, and continue on foot in the old part of the city to Brandenburg Gate – the heart of old Prussia with many historical buildings.

After free time for lunch spend the afternoon at CHARLOTTENBURG PALACE, the largest residence of the Hohenzollern in Berlin. Originally built by Elector Frederick III as a summer residence for his wife Sophie Charlotte, the palace was later extended into a stately building with a cours d'honneur.

The magnificent palace is surrounded by a baroque garden, in which diverse architectures melt into a unique ensemble. The entire palace presents itself with majestically equipped rooms and saloons and with top-class art collections that offer outstanding masterpieces.

One of the highlights in the exhibition is the largest collection of French paintings of the 18th century outside of France. The ensemble of rooms and saloons – artistically as well as historically impressive – is a living testimonial of courtly culture from baroque times until the early 20th century.

Enjoy time at one of Berlin's best Christmas Markets – right in front of Charlottenburg Palace!

After dinner you have tickets for a revue show at Friedrichstadt Palast !

> *Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, guided city tour, inside tour Charlottenburg Palace, dinner, tickets Friedrichstadt Palast, hotel in Berlin*

Day 4 – POTSDAM AND ITS PRUSSIAN MONARCHS

Today we focus on Potsdam, the capital of Brandenburg. This city, just outside Berlin, offers many unique cultural landmarks. First visit SANSSOUCI. No other palace is more closely connected with the personality of Frederick the Great. The name Sanssouci - "without care" - should be understood as the aspiration and leitmotif of the king, because it is here that he most preferred to withdraw from the world with his dogs. His summer residence was both a favourite place and an important sanctuary for him in difficult times.

Day 4, continued

King Frederick desired to be buried in a grave on the highest vineyard terrace, and his wish was finally fulfilled in 1991. The location of the palace on the celebrated vineyard terraces and the originally preserved, 18th century interior decorations permit today's visitors to become immersed in the world of the philosophers.

Lunch will be at Potsdam's romantic Christmas Market today.

Later we visit CECILIENHOF, the palace of the Potsdam Conference in 1945. Emperor William II had Cecilienhof Palace built between 1913 and 1917 in the north of Potsdam's New Garden for his eldest son, Crown Prince William, and his wife, Crown Princess Cecilie.

The palace's appearance was attuned to its scenic surroundings through the use of traditional materials like brick and wood. In order to disguise the actual size of the palace, with its 176 rooms, individual building elements were cleverly grouped around several courtyards.

We return to Berlin for dinner this evening.

> *Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, tours of Sanssouci and Cecilienhof, service of local guide, dinner, hotel in Berlin*

Day 5 – LUTHERSTADT WITTENBERG, LEIPZIG, ERFURT

Today first we visit LUTHERSTADT WITTENBERG, the home town of Dr. Martin Luther, the Great Reformer, and the city affectionately known as the “Cradle of the Reformation”. See the Luther House, the Castle Church where Luther posted his 95 critical theses in 1517, provoking the Protestant Reformation, and the Town Church where he often preached.

On to LEIPZIG where the city's colourful past and lively present can be glimpsed everywhere. Take a stroll through the city centre – there's plenty to explore! Visit the market place with the Old Town Hall, St. Thomas‘s Church where Bach was cantor, St. Nicholas‘s Church, and the Mädler Passage with its legendary restaurant, Auerbachs Keller. Each place will help you discover more about the diverse traditions, personalities and history of Leipzig.

Enjoy time in one of Germany's largest Christmas Markets before we continue to ERFURT, the capital of Thuringia. Go for a stroll in the old town and Erfurt's Christmas Market, followed by dinner in a local brewery.

> *Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, tours of Wittenberg and Leipzig , service of local guide, dinner, hotel in Erfurt*

Day 6 – WARTBURG CASTLE, WEIMAR

A beautiful drive this morning to the WARTBURG CASTLE overlooking Eisenach in the Thuringia Forest, constructed between 1155 and 1180. It is one of the best preserved secular buildings of the late Romanesque period north of the Alps, and it is surely one of the most beautiful.

It was here that Luther translated the Bible. Goethe praised the beautiful natural surroundings of the Wartburg, and Ludwig II King of Bavaria used it as a model for Neuschwanstein. Enjoy your guided to of this wonderful castle!

Our next stop today is WEIMAR – famous for three items on the World Heritage List: Classical Weimar, the State Bauhaus, and Goethe's handwritten manuscripts in the *Memory of the World*.

"Here, you feel as grand and free as the wondrous nature before your eyes." Goethe's words still ring true today, and are a perfect description of what awaits visitors in and around Weimar.

The National Goethe Museum is the most important monument to the classical period. But the town has plenty more museums to visit – more than 40, in fact! They include the Bauhaus Museum, the Museum of Prehistory and Early History, and even the German Bee Museum!

Go for stroll with a local guide and spend time on Weimar's Christmas Market.

Return to Erfurt where you have free time for dinner tonight.

> Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, entrance fee Wartburg, tour in Weimar, service of local guide, hotel in Erfurt

Day 7 – DRESDEN

Leave the state of Thuringia and drive back into Saxony to DRESDEN, one of Germanys most beautiful cities and a jewel of history. Dresden today ranks as a world-class city of art and culture.

Set in a magnificent landscape in the Elbe valley it went through a blossoming of architectural and artistic brilliance that earned it the name "The Jewel Box". On our orientation tour we see the Royal Palace, Zwinger Palace, the Semper Opera House, Elbe castles, Villa Quarter, Hellerau garden city, award-winning modern buildings, and the "Blue Wonder" bridge east of the city centre. Inside visit at FRAUENKIRCHE (The Church of Our Lady), one of Germany's most amazing post-WW2 reconstructions.

Day 7, Dresden, continued

It seems as though Augustus the Strong and his successors were not prepared to wait for nature to finish the job; with their skill, artistry and determination, they filled the Grüne Gewölbe (Green Vault) and Türckische Cammer (Turkish Chamber) with treasures from all over the world, collected paintings and porcelain, and were patrons of the great composers. Inside visit at the GREEN VAULT.

In the late afternoon time for one of the oldest Christmas Markets in Germany. In 2012 the "Striezelmarkt" is celebrating 578 years! Later enjoy a dinner overlooking the Elbe.

> *Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, Tour Dresden, entrance fee, dinner, hotel in Dresden*

Day 8 – CASTLE PILLNITZ, BERLIN

This morning see CASTLE PILLNITZ and the wonderful gardens acquired by Elector Augustus the Strong for his favorite lady, Anna Constantia von Cosel, who immediately began its Baroque conversion.

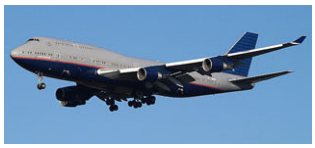
When Saxony's best-known mistress fell out of favor, the Elector himself had the hillside and waterside palaces erected. The grand castle and park grounds directly situated on the banks of the Elbe river are considered a perfect example of the chinoise style that has the architecture of the Far East amalgamate with the Baroque style. The English, Dutch and Chinese gardens on the extensive garden grounds will urge you to take a stroll and visit the famous 250-year-old Japanese camellia.

Return to Berlin for mid afternoon arrival. Get your final shopping done and join your tour director and traveling companions for a fabulous farewell dinner.

> *Buffet breakfast, door-to-door transportation, River Cruise, inside visit Pillnitz Castle, dinner, hotel in Berlin*

Day 9 - HOME FROM BERLIN

Time to say "Auf wiedersehen". One final breakfast and then a complimentary transfer to the **Berlin Airport** where you arrived for your return flight home. Return flights may leave anytime today.



> *Buffet breakfast, transfer to Airport*

Cost and Date Information

Tours include:
- all features as per itinerary, departure guaranteed,
- 7 breakfast buffets,
- 6 three-course dinners with choice each including one drink and coffee or tea,
- accommodation for 7 nights: 4 nights Berlin, 2 nights Erfurt, 1 night Dresden
- door-to-door transportation,
- reservation fees, entrance fees, and local guide fees, and
- the services of the Tour Director and Driver throughout the tour.

All castle visits include inside tours with experienced guides and plenty of time on your own.

Personal expenses, lunches and gratuities for the driver and guides are not included.

There are no hidden extras. Maximum group size is 30 persons.

The **Berlin and the East of Germany Tour is** offered on the following basis:

Tour prices are for the **land segment** only. Air fare is not included.

Prices are per person, in U.S. dollars, based on double occupancy.

Single Occupancy is available for a Single Supplement charge of US $ 350.

Three adults sharing one room each receive a Triple Occupancy reduction of US $ 100.

A child 8 to 16 years old sharing a room with two adults receives a 30% reduction on this tour.

Guaranteed Departure: This tour is guaranteed to operate as scheduled and will not be cancelled due to a low level of participation.

A deposit of US $ 300 per person is required to secure a reservation.

Personal expenses, lunches and gratuities for the driver and local guides are not included.

Berlin and the East of Germany Christmas Tour – 2012

Your international flight leaves …	Double Occupancy	Single Occupancy	Triple Occupancy	Child 8 - 17 with 2 Adults
December 8, 2012	US $ 2,449	2,799	2,349	1,714

This is one of our three Christmas tours for 2012.
We also offer a Black Forest, Alsace and Switzerland tour (Nov 30 - Dec 8) and our original Christmas Markets Tour in Bavaria (Dec 8 - 16).

Regular season versions of this tour will run May 16 - 24 and Oct 17 - 25, 2012.

Cost and Date Information, continued

Private Tour Option

Do our dates not work for you? We can arrange the tour for you or your party as a private tour. Same itinerary as above in a private limousine or van, with bilingual, professional private guide / chauffeur. Prices per individual are the same as for the regular group tour, plus a US $ 200 per day private tour premium for the group. Please contact us directly to confirm availability.

Detailed **Reservation Request** instructions and your choice of an online or paper form are provided on the Reservations page of www.europeancastlestours.com .

Final payment is due 45 days before departure.

Five weeks before departure you will receive a detailed information package with lots of travel tips and information about places we will visit.

Participation in Astrid Baur Travel tours is conditional on acceptance of the Astrid Baur Travel **Terms and Conditions** posted on the Reservations page of www.europeancastlestours.com .

Cancellation Policy

If notice of cancellation is received more than 45 days prior to tour start, the deposit will be retained.

Otherwise:	31 to 45 days prior to tour start:	20 % of total price
	15 to 30 days prior to tour start:	35 % of total price
	8 to 14 days prior to tour start:	50 % of total price
	1 to 7 days prior to tour start:	75 % of total price
	Departure day and later:	100 % of total price

The deposit will be applied against any cancellation charge.

Contact Information

Would you like to talk to passengers from previous tours? Let me know.

I will be pleased to answer questions you may have, and very pleased to take your reservation.

Astrid Baur, Tour Director

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