

Annual Festivals in Berlin

Berlin receives international acclaim for its rich and diverse culture, and with good reason. Every month in this bustling city, you can find a festival that celebrates every nook and cranny of human life. Classical and digital arts, music, history, people, and even food and beer, are given space to thrive in Berlin's eclectic festival scene. This is a city that mixes local talent with international, old with new, classical with contemporary, and sophisticated with sheer extravagance in a series of annual events throughout the year. No matter what time of year you decide to visit Berlin, you can be sure of experiencing true culture, and of learning something new every time.

Berlin International Film Festival (February): This year marks the 68th annual International Film Festival in Berlin, otherwise known as Berlinale. This cultural behemoth attracts an international crowd of industry professionals and movie-goers alike, promising an enticing array of screenings at venues across the city.

MaerzMuzik (March): This festival, which translates into 'March Music', is one of Germany's most important contemporary music festivals. It features live performances with an emphasis on 20th Century classical pieces, and also offers musical theatre and media art.

Festival Days Berlin (March-April): Organised by the Berlin State Opera, Festivals Days Berlin (or FDB, as it is often shortened to), is an annual opera festival held at the Staatsoper Unter Den Linde and the Philharmonie. It attracts international opera stars who come together with Berlin's state orchestra for some dizzying performances.

Gallery Weekend Berlin (April): Founded in 2004, Gallery Weekend has quickly become a staple of Berlin's thriving contemporary art scene. Spanning over two day and two nights, around 50 galleries across the city open to the public, inviting in tourists, locals and international artists alike for a spectacle of artistic talent and imagination.

Karneval (May): Karneval – short for Karneval der Kulturen, or 'Carnival of Cultures' - celebrates the true nature of this remarkable city in a free festival in the heart of Berlin. Karneval promises four days of exuberance, from lavish costumes to rich culinary delights. More than 900,000 people visit the parade to enjoy international arts, music and food.

Classic Open Air (July): A supremely elegant five-day extravaganza of classical concert performances, held outside at the Gendarmenmarkt. Previous years have attracted the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra London and the German Film Orchestra Potsdam.

Christopher Street Day (July): Another boisterous celebration of diversity and tolerance, Christopher Street Day has been a day of fun and frolics for locals and visitors in Berlin for 40 years. A fabulous parade of music, art, and costume winds its way through the streets of Berlin and finalés at the Brandenburg Gate.

Berlin Short Film Festival (July): An annual film festival with a specific focus on short independent films, Berlin's 2018 short film fest promises premieres of around 90 short films over four days, with events and networking opportunities bringing new talent together with some of the old greats.

Botanische Nacht (Botanical Night) (July): Once every year, Berlin's stunning botanical gardens remain open into the night, where themed gardens are illuminated and transformed into a mystical, romantic world that lasts until 2 am. A cultural programme runs alongside the spectacle, offering cabaret, theatre, and dance performances.

International Berlin Beer Festival (August): Every year, around 80,000 international visitors come together in the very center of Berlin to drink beer. Berlin's Beer Festival is held in a beer garden that stretches over two kilometers, and is host to a huge number of countries showcasing their beer-based beverages.

Long Night of Museums (August): Once a year, museums and cultural institutions around Berlin's city center remain open until the small hours, showcasing not only their permanent exhibitions but also performances and displays from guest artists, musicians, and dancers.

Lollapalooza Berlin (September): A relative newcomer on Berlin's infamous festival scene, Lollapalooza is a two-day open-air music and arts festival. It attracts big-name bands, and musicians, with previous years featuring The Foo Fighters, Major Lazor, and Radiohead, to name a few.

Berlin Art Week (September): For a whole week every September, Berlin is host to a rich and varied programme of exhibitions, film, art displays, fairs, and ceremonies. Galleries and cultural institutions across the city participate in the event, even offering opportunities for visitors to meet some of the curators and artists.

Oktoberfest (September-October): One of the most iconic of German festivals, Oktoberfest is a staple celebration for the winter months throughout Europe. While Munich remains the heavy-weight champion of this beer-drinking extravaganza, Berlin's Oktoberfest still packs quite a punch. Expect a Bavarian-style party tent, elaborate costumes, a brass band, and many hearty offerings of traditional German food and beer.

National Day (October): An important date in the calendar of Germany's history, National Day celebrates the reunification of East and West Germany. Today, it is celebrated in a two-to-three day street fair around the Brandenburg Gate and Strasse des 17. Jun, with a large stage offering performances by well-known artists as well as rising talent. You can also expect traditional German food, and of course, lashings of German beer.

Berlin Festival of Lights (October): This festival takes advantage of the dark winter evenings and uses them as an opportunity to illuminate some of the capital's most impressive landmarks. Brandenburg Gate, Berlin Cathedral, and the Funkfurm, to name a few, are transformed each year by this fantastic optical display that uses light production and video art to create a digital canvas of the city.

Jazz Fest Berlin (October/November): Founded in 1964 in West Berlin, Jazz Fest Berlin is one of Europe's oldest and most famous jazz festivals. It offers four days of stellar performances throughout the city by jazz artists of international renown.

Christmas Markets (November – December): No trip to Germany in the winter months would be complete without a visit to one of their infamous Christmas Markets, and Berlin's are among some of

the most impressive. Berlin's bustling annual festive markets never fail to disappoint, with an abundance of the traditional Gluhwein (mulled wine) and other snacks like gingerbread and roast chestnuts.

Silvesterparty (December): Rumoured to be the biggest New Year's Eve party in the world, Berlin celebrates in style in a spectacular open-air event at Brandenburg Gate, with a huge live concert featuring a plethora of international artists. The finale is an enormous display of fireworks at midnight to start your year off with a bang.