

Berlin with Kids

Stop-by-Stop Talking Guide – Page 1

History.
Perspective.
Adventure.
Together. ♥

What adults should know • How we explained it to our child • Family tips



1. Friedrichstraße & Trains to Life – Trains to Death

📍 Friedrichstraße

PEOPLE. STORIES.
REAL HISTORY.



What adults should know

Friedrichstraße was one of Berlin's major transport hubs during the Nazi era. Beside the station, the Trains to Life – Trains to Death memorial shows the contrasting fate of Jewish children: some were deported and killed, while others were rescued through the Kindertransport. Around 10,000 Jewish children escaped to Britain, and the first Kindertransport train left Friedrichstraße in November 1938.



How we explained it

These children are facing different directions because their lives went in very different ways. Some Jewish children were taken away and did not survive. Others were sent to safer countries, where people helped protect them.



Family tip

A powerful first stop because the story is told through children. Keep the explanation simple and let your child ask questions.



2. Reichstag & the Glass Dome

📍 Platz der Republik

DEMOCRACY.
RESILIENCE.
A BRIGHTER FUTURE.



What adults should know

Completed in 1894, the Reichstag became home to the German parliament. It was damaged by fire in 1933, further damaged during WWII, and later became a symbol of German reunification. Norman Foster's restoration and the modern glass dome were completed in 1999.



How we explained it

This is where Germany's parliament meets. The building has been damaged, rebuilt and changed as Germany changed. The glass dome lets visitors look down into parliament and out across Berlin.



Family tip

Book ahead and make this a fixed point in your day. The dome gives kids something active to do and the views are fantastic.



3. Brandenburg Gate

📍 Pariser Platz

A SYMBOL
THROUGH TIME.



What adults should know

Built between 1788 and 1791, the Brandenburg Gate began as a symbol of peace. It later witnessed Napoleon's occupation, Nazi propaganda, the division of Berlin, and finally German reunification. During the Cold War it stood beside the Berlin Wall in an inaccessible border zone.



How we explained it

This gate has been here through many parts of Berlin's history. For a long time Berlin was divided into East and West, and today the gate represents a united city.



Family tip

A short walk from the Reichstag and a good place to start explaining how Berlin was once divided.



4. Tiergarten

📍 Berlin

SPACE TO EXPLORE.
BREATHE. BE TOGETHER.



What adults should know

For our family, the Tiergarten was more than just a route between sights. It gave us a complete change of pace between Berlin's major monuments and memorials, with trees, open space and a much calmer feel than the city streets.



How we explained it

This was our break from the history. We could just walk through the park, look around and reset before the next stop.



Family tip

Don't treat this as lost sightseeing time. It was one of the reasons the day worked so well with a child.



5. Victory Column (Siegessäule)

📍 Großer Stern

AMAZING VIEWS.
A BIG PART OF HISTORY.



What adults should know

The Victory Column began in 1864 and was completed in 1873 to commemorate Prussian victories that helped lead to German unification. It was originally near the Reichstag, then moved to its current position in 1938–39 under Hitler's plans for Berlin. The gilded figure on top is Victoria, nicknamed 'Golden Elsie'.



How we explained it

This big golden column was built to celebrate important military victories. We can climb all the way up and see Berlin from the top.



Family tip

One of our favourite family stops. There is no lift and the climb is 285 steps, but Henry loved racing up them and the views were amazing.

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6. Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe

📍 Cora-Berliner-Straße

REMEMBRANCE.
REFLECTION. RESPECT.



What adults should know

This memorial covers around 19,000 square metres and contains 2,711 concrete stelae of different heights. The sloping ground and changing height of the blocks make the experience feel different depending on where you stand. Its abstract design leaves space for personal reflection rather than offering one prescribed interpretation.



How we explained it

This is a place to remember Jewish people who were persecuted and murdered by Nazi Germany. We walk through quietly and respectfully because it represents something very serious.



Family tip

You do not need to give a child every detail for them to understand that this is an important place of remembrance.



7. Topography of Terror & the Berlin Wall

📍 Niederkirchnerstraße

HARD HISTORY.
YOUR PACE.



What adults should know

This documentation centre stands on the site where the Gestapo, SS leadership and later the Reich Security Main Office operated between 1933 and 1945. Persecution of political opponents and the genocide of Jews, Roma and Sinti were coordinated from this area. The site also includes a major surviving section of the Berlin Wall.



How we explained it

This was where some of the organisations that controlled and hurt people during the Nazi period worked. There is also a section of the Berlin Wall here, which helps us understand the later period when Berlin was divided.



Family tip

The outdoor site and Wall are worthwhile. We treated the indoor exhibition differently: Rory used the audio guide while Henry and I sat with his colouring books. Not every exhibit needs to be experienced by every family member.



8. Checkpoint Charlie

📍 Friedrichstraße & Zimmerstraße

EAST. WEST.
A DIVIDED CITY.



What adults should know

Checkpoint Charlie was the best-known Allied crossing point between East and West Berlin during the Cold War. Its name came from the NATO phonetic alphabet: Alpha, Bravo, Charlie. In October 1961 it became the scene of a tense confrontation when American and Soviet tanks faced each other across the border. The original checkpoint booth was removed in June 1990; today's booth is a reconstruction.



How we explained it

This was one of the places where people crossed between East and West Berlin. Soldiers checked who was allowed through, and during the Cold War there were times when the two sides came very close to fighting here.



Family tip

It is touristy, but it gives kids something concrete to connect with the story of the divided city. You only need a short stop.



9. Alexanderplatz & the Berlin TV Tower

📍 Alexanderplatz

BIG VIEWS.
BIG NOVELTY.



What adults should know

Alexanderplatz is a useful lighter stop after the more serious historical sites. The TV Tower is one of Berlin's most recognisable landmarks and offers panoramic views across the city. You can also dine in the revolving restaurant high above Berlin.



How we explained it

This giant tower lets us see Berlin from way up high. We can look for places we have already visited, and the restaurant at the top slowly turns while people eat.



Family tip

Kids love the novelty. Henry also enjoyed the Berlin bears and the Fountain of International Friendship around Alexanderplatz. It is a good way to finish with something fun and visual.



Distance note

Walking from Friedrichstraße to Checkpoint Charlie via the Tiergarten loop is approximately 7.5–8.5 km (4.5–5.2 miles) in total.



For younger children

Consider using the S-Bahn or Bus 100/200 for the stretch through Tiergarten to the Victory Column. We found Berlin very easy to explore on foot and by train; we would not build the day around the hop-on hop-off bus.



Parent note

This guide reflects how we approached Berlin with our nine-year-old. You know your own child best, so adapt the language, level of detail and the stops themselves to suit your child's age, sensitivity and interest.