

# TRAVEL + LEISURE

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181 innovative travel experiences that take you to new and bold places



◀ The beer garden at Zenner House, a repurposed villa on Berlin's Spree river.

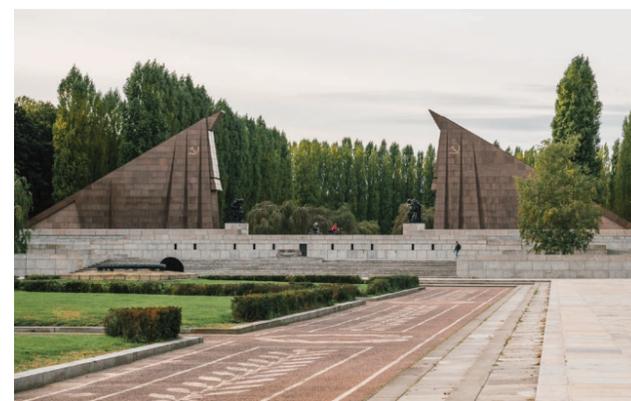


▲ Murals and street art cover industrial buildings in Oberschöneide, once the center of East Germany's energy industry.



◀ The Industriesalon Schöneweide museum is housed in a former electronics factory.

▲ Brews and small plates at Zenner House.



◀ The Soviet War Memorial in Treptower Park, designed by architect Yakov Belopolsky.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

In the former East Berlin, historic spaces are becoming the cultural and creative hubs of the future.  
By Cindy Brzostowski



▲ East Berlin-made radios, televisions, and other vintage appliances at Industriesalon Schöneweide.

WHEN I'VE TOLD non-Germans that I live in Berlin, the same question has come up more than once: "West or East?" Though the Wall fell in 1989, in some minds the division still stands. On walks in my neighborhood of Baumschulenweg, I confront a physical reminder of this whenever I cross a double row of cobblestones that marks where the Wall once stood.

Though some visitors may not realize it, many popular attractions were in East German territory, including the Brandenburg Gate, Alexanderplatz, and Museum Island. But it's also worth going farther into the less touristed neighborhoods of East Berlin, where creative projects and adaptive-reuse initiatives are transforming unused buildings—many with their own fraught history—into community spaces and incubators for the Berlin art world.

In Plänterwald, a forest on the banks of the river Spree, I've watched as more and more of the new **Spreepark** ([spreepark.berlin](http://spreepark.berlin)) has emerged over the months. Opened in 1969, its predecessor, VEB Kulturpark, was the only theme park of its kind in East Germany—and is said to have attracted around 1.5 million visitors annually. The site and its abandoned attractions, long hidden beneath the

overgrowth, are being developed into a large public space with rides, arts venues, and a restaurant. Also under way nearby is the transformation of **Zenner House** ([zenner.berlin](http://zenner.berlin)), a 200-year-old estate in neighboring Treptower Park, which now houses a riverside beer garden and concert venue, with more arts spaces in the works.

One day last fall, I made my way across the river to Rummelsburg, where a luxury residential complex called the BerlinCampus now occupies what was once Germany's largest workhouse, opened in 1879, and then later an East German prison. Just down the road, I passed by **Sisyphos** ([sisyphos-berlin.net](http://sisyphos-berlin.net)), a popular nightclub in a former dog-food factory where on weekends the hedonism doesn't end until Monday morning. The same stretch of street took me past **Flussbad** ([slowness.com](http://slowness.com)), a multipurpose arts center that's set to open in 2024 in a Weimar-era public-bath complex on the Spree, and then **Funkhaus** ([funkhaus-berlin.net](http://funkhaus-berlin.net)), a music and event space in the former state broadcasting center.

My trek brought me east to Schöneweide—an area spread across both banks of the river that deserves its own full day of wandering. In the

"upper" district, Oberschöneide, massive brick factory buildings loom as impressive reminders of East Germany's once-booming energy industry. (In the early 20th century, Berlin earned the nickname "Electropolis.") The unique architecture and ample space have inspired artists, including Jorinde Voigt and Olafur Eliasson, to set up their private studios in the historic industrial halls.

"All of this has emerged in the last thirty years," says Solange Lingnau, director of the **Reinbeckhallen** ([stiftung-reinbeckhallen.de](http://stiftung-reinbeckhallen.de)), once a factory producing high-voltage systems that now houses workshops, event spaces, and a gallery for contemporary art. "The neighborhood has transformed while still keeping a lot of its identity and residents. For them, the development adds value to their own history." To learn more, there are walking tours hosted by **Industriesalon Schöneweide** ([industriesalon.de](http://industriesalon.de)), a museum of industry inside an old transformer factory.

Across a pedestrian bridge to Niederschöneide, the "lower" district on the Spree's southern bank, is the Hasselwerder Villa—originally built in 1907 as a residence for Richard and Elsbeth Lehmann, Berliners who were deported and killed by the Nazis. The house was used as a military command station, which it remained until the end of East Germany. This building, too, has found yet another life as **Novilla** ([movingpoets.org](http://movingpoets.org)), a center for the

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international creative collective Moving Poets, which hosts events and readings. "It's maybe a little harder to fall in love with Schöneweide," says founder and artistic director Till Schmidt-Rimpler. "But once you develop a connection, it's yours to see."

From the villa, I started my journey back home, stopping for a cold beer at **Revier Südost** ([reviersuedost.de](http://reviersuedost.de)),

a cultural center with a beer garden and outdoor market, in the beautiful old Bärenquell Brewery. The transformations there are just beginning as plans for more commercial spaces in the historic complex unfold. I understood what Schmidt-Rimpler meant: these parts of Berlin may seem harder to get to know, but if you make the effort, you'll see the future is hidden in plain sight.



## Global Glow

Soho House, with its worldwide roster of clubs, co-working spaces, and spas, has come a long way since it opened its first members-only location in London in 1995. Now the expansion continues with the launch of **Soho Skin** ([sohoskin.com](http://sohoskin.com); from \$18). The new line—designed with all genders in mind—includes shave gels, exfoliators, face creams, and more, developed with input from Soho members. The flagship product is the 24/7 Treatment, with lactic acid for brightness and hyaluronic acid to maintain hydration—a perfect pick-me-up for the brand's always-on clientele. —TIM LATERNER