

## **The Art & History of Berlin**

### **21st-26th June 2011**

As always Tailored Travel arrangements went without a hitch and I give below my report on our visit to Berlin.

Day 1: Check in at Heathrow good as a group and sat together on the plane. Thomas was waiting for us at Tegel with the two Australians. Into Berlin where we stopped for lunch prior to coach tour of Berlin. Excellent commentary from Thomas. Hotel also excellent though there were one or two comments about the glass walls to the bathroom area. I personally would not recommend it to people sharing unless they knew each other well! Hotel was very accommodating with a drinks party and had an excellent Buffet on the first evening. Thomas joined us.

Day 2: Leisurely start at 10.00am was good. Guided tour of Gemaldergalerie. I was with Museum guide who spent rather too long at the first picture so rather cut down the time we then spent looking at other high lights. Those who were with Thomas said he spoke well and gave very good interpretations so everyone wanted to be in his group after that! Some managed to fit in three Museum/Art Galleries in that area.

Jewish Museum: Thomas explained it well beforehand and what to look for. A very thought provoking Museum especially towards the end as it came up towards the 1930's onwards. I found it quite moving.

Evening: We stayed in the hotel for dinner and 9 others joined us whilst the rest scattered into the area. (Torrential rain that night so quite a few got rather wet or did not venture too far from the hotel)

Day 3: Excellent visit to the Berliner Dom – there was an organ recital being given for a group who must have been on a music tour. Visit to Alte Museum very good – we were with Museum Guide who certainly knew her art. Thomas took us to an area not far from Museum Island where there was a good selection of cafes etc for lunch. Pergamon Museum mind-blowing again. I made sure I was with Thomas for this and he was super. Free flow through the Neues Museum went well but by then some of us were feeling a bit weary and did not make it to all three floors.

Museum Pass brilliant idea and some stayed on into the evening looking at or going back what they had seen during the day.

Day 4: Charlottenburg – very good visit. Thomas was on home ground here and gave us an excellent tour. Again told us about nearby Museums where we could use our pass and where to have lunch. Transferred us back to hotel dropping off folk en route to do their own thing. It was a pity we could not get into the Reichstag, thank you for trying, but Thomas felt we left it a bit too late in applying for entry.

Day 5: Early start for Dresden but Thomas gave us a good background introduction to the City. Walking Tour going on into the Green Vaults making time for quick lunch afterwards. I was with the Museum Guide who unfortunately did not put his 'whisper' microphone on his head but had it round his neck. So when he turned his head to the left

his voice faded away almost to nothing. I did ask him to talk into his microphone which he did not about 30 seconds and then reverted. I mentioned this to Thomas as a 'comment' rather than a 'complaint'. Thomas had explained the three Museums in the Zwinger so we bought our tickets in the Old Masters Gallery and then managed to get into the Porcelain Museum too. Mind blowing collections and we felt it was sacrilege to go through at the speed we did but we wanted to see as much as we could.

(There was to be a rock concert that evening and they were testing the stage for sound with a rock group – the volume at the rehearsal was making the building shake, I dread to think what it was like that night –we all felt it was being held in the wrong place)

There was so much to see in Dresden but it might encourage some to go back at a later date.

Group Dinner in the hotel. They gave us 5 x 6 tables and Thomas joined us. Had the Restaurant to ourselves which was very good and an excellent buffet.

Day 6: Slightly later departure as coach delayed with traffic. Visit to Ceclienhof very interesting as most of us had no idea what had gone on in Germany before, during and after the war. Thomas's knowledge was amazing. Again Thomas showed us some very good cafes in the Dutch Quarter for lunch. Sanssouci Park was with Thomas and by closing doors in front of us and behind us it felt as if we had the Palace to ourselves. Again Thomas was on home ground so gave us a huge amount of detail. Time for a cup of coffee back in the Dutch Quarter before we transferred to Tegel Airport. Thomas talked us through all we needed to know to check in.

Overall views:

Itinerary worked well and we were glad Michael insisted we had Thomas as a guide. As with Jan in Northumberland, he knew the people he was talking about intimately and his knowledge was phenomenal. He knew where to stand so that we could see the things he was talking about without having to turn round and he was brilliant at keeping us all together. He also knew where to direct us to get food etc.

Hotel – As I said at the beginning there were just one or two comments about the glass walls to the bathroom area. It did not allow much privacy for those sharing who were not married. You had to know your friend well to share under circumstances. The room we had the first night was quite small, we did not say anything but Thomas got us up-graded to a corner room which gave us more room. We were all over the hotel, from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 32<sup>nd</sup> floors and it seemed that the layouts although similar were all different.

Coach transfers worked well but with 7 different drivers which might have made it harder for Thomas.

The additional information you gave about concerts/opera etc. was well received. Several went to the Philharmonic and the Opera House, with a group to the Comic Opera (good English translation on the back of the seat in front of you).

All in all an excellent Arts Tour. Thank you.

**VW, Kingston Upon Thames June 2011**