



## Beats of Berlin: A Techno Culture Heritage Walk



Co-funded by  
the European Union

# Beats of Berlin

## A Techno Culture Heritage Walk

### General Information

Since 2024, Berlin's **techno culture** has been recognised as **intangible cultural heritage** in Germany. This tour explores **its early years** through music, urban space, abandoned buildings, and the new freedoms of post-reunification Berlin.

**Primary Themes:** Techno Culture, freedom and creativity, conflicts between culture and commerce.

**Group Size:** 1-8 participants

**Starting location:** Topography of Terror / Surviving Wall Segment  
Niederkirchnerstraße 8, 10963 Berlin

**Distance:** 6,5 km (including one subway ride)

**Estimated Duration:** 2,5 hours

**Material needed:** "Beats of Berlin"-Booklet, charged phone, usual city tourist gear, map application like googlemaps

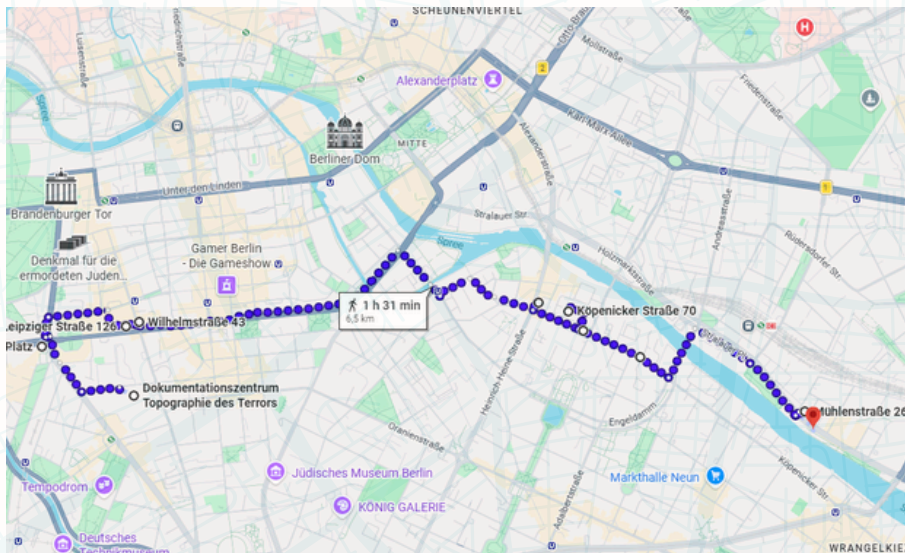
**Accessibility Level:** Easy to medium, mostly along sideways but with curb cuts, stairs and ramps.

“There was no street, no asphalt, no streetlights, only potholes. We were at the edge of the world. You stood in front of an unassuming barracks on an asphalt lot. After you'd been let in by the bouncers, you stepped onto the floor which was characterized by an eclectic house sound.

--Tresor co-founder Dimitri Hegemann

# Beats of Berlin A Techno Culture Heritage Walk

## General Information



## Itinerary

- Exhibition Topography of Terror
- Sony Center
- Former Club Tresor
- Former Club E-Werk
- Former Club Walfisch
- Former Club Planet
- Today's Tresor Club
- Eisfabrik & Spreeufer
- East Side Gallery

SCAN ME



# Accessibility

---

## **Sidewalks and curb cuts**

Most of the tour takes place on standard city sidewalks in Mitte and Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. Pavements are generally wide enough for groups. However, there are occasional high kerbs and irregular curb cuts at crossings as well as some narrower sections along the Spreeufer and older streets. Participants using wheelchairs or with limited mobility may need support at a few crossings and kerb edges.

## **Stairs, ramps and elevators**

The route includes one U-Bahn journey between two stops. On this segment, not all stations are fully barrier-free; access may involve stairs and escalators, and elevators are not guaranteed or can be out of service. All outdoor stops themselves are reachable at street level without mandatory stair use, but individual shortcuts or lookouts (e.g. closer to the water) may involve steps.

## **Rest areas and seating**

There are several possibilities to rest along the route: benches and seating areas near Potsdamer Platz, scattered seating along the Spreeufer, some ledges / low walls where people can sit near East Side Gallery. However, continuous, planned rest stops with guaranteed seating are limited, especially in the middle section of the tour.

## **Accessible restrooms**

There are public or semi-public toilets at major transport hubs (e.g. Potsdamer Platz, Ostbahnhof), shopping centres near the central stops and gastronomy near the stops of the tour. However, restroom access is not guaranteed and typically depends on cafés/restaurants.

## **Safety**

---

Standard urban safety rules apply:

- stay with the group
- be aware of traffic and bicycles
- keep valuables secure

# Beats of Berlin

## Stop 1: Topography of Terror / Surviving Wall Segment

### From Control to emptiness



The contrast at our starting point for a tour about cultural free spaces and the creativity of the early techno movement could hardly be greater.

Because what is the opposite of self-expression and the ecstasy of free individuals?

**Control! In our case: state control up to and including lethal force.**

What we see here is part of the former border installations, the so-called “death strip”. The death strip was the heavily secured border zone on the East Berlin side of the Wall: a wide, cleared corridor between the actual border wall and additional barriers, designed to make escape almost impossible.

Typical elements included signal and barbed-wire fences, patrol paths, floodlights, watchtowers, anti-vehicle ditches and other obstacles, as well as raked sand or gravel to make footprints visible.



# Beats of Berlin

The place where we are standing lies directly next to a preserved section of the Wall. Here, at the original site, you can still see where the Wall ran and how close this area was to the former border zone.

After the fall of the Wall, a vacuum opened up along its former course. Total control gave way, at first, to emptiness. An emptiness that daring, **creative people** were eager to fill.

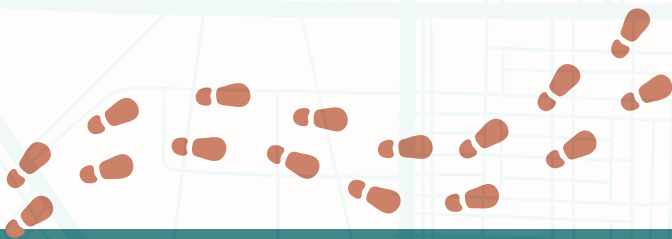
## Activity

**SCAN ME**



### Next stop:

After leaving the exhibition grounds turn left until Stresemannstraße then turn right until you reach Potsdamer Platz.



# Beats of Berlin

## Stop 2: Potsdamer Platz / Sony Center

### From wasteland to slick corporate plaza



Thirty-five years is a long time in a living city.

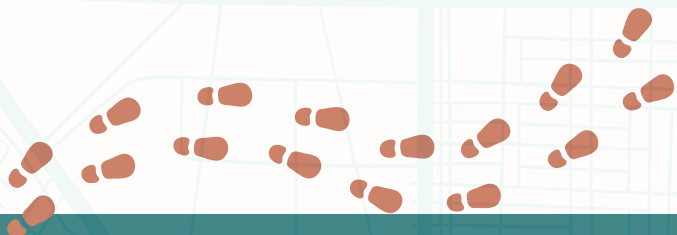
And one result of that is what you see here at the Sony Center on Potsdamer Platz.

The city pulses between glass façades and traffic arteries.

Streams of people cross each other, we hear fragments of conversations, the noise of rolling suitcases and cars.

Every square metre is planned, owned and clearly assigned to a specific use and therefore, if you like, controlled again!

In the **early 1990s**, there was almost **no control**: Potsdamer Platz was a vast sandy, muddy **wasteland** of ruins, empty plots and improvised paths where the Wall and the “no man’s land” had been.



# Beats of Berlin

Clubgoers on their way to Tresor (our next stop) remember crossing dark, open areas to reach basements and half-destroyed buildings.

Those **empty, undefined spaces** made it easy to start something new without asking anyone or any authority for permission.

What happens if you can just play and express yourself without anyone telling you no? That's what Tresor was all about.

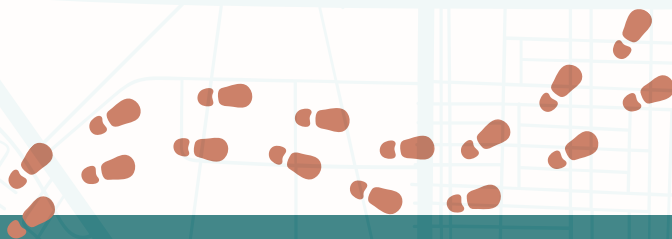
## Activity

**SCAN ME**



## Next stop:

For the next stop follow Leipziger Straße westward until you reach no. 126.



# Beats of Berlin

## Stop 3: The former club Tresor

### The symbol of techno in Berlin



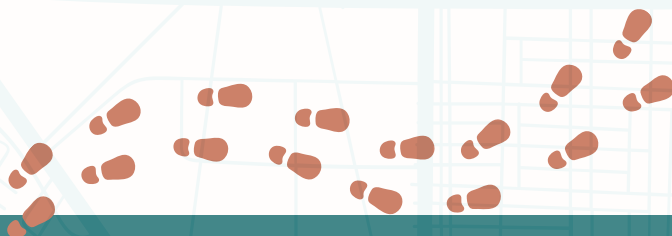
**In a way it was coincidence.**

**In Detroit, a new, machine-like music was being created and then the Wall fell and turned the former GDR capital into an "autonomous zone".**

**Suddenly there were all these empty spaces to discover. And techno became the soundtrack of this.**

The real stars of the parties were often the abandoned, **decaying buildings**, which turned into **dance floors**, sometimes just for one night, sometimes long enough for people from all over the world to dance there.

From this atmosphere, Tresor emerged: Today the sterile architecture of the Leipziger Strasse 126a shows no signs that it was the beating heart of techno for 14 years.



# Beats of Berlin

When Tresor opened in March 1991, the space was still semi-legal with unclear licences. East and West Berliners, punks, ravers and curious outsiders met here to Detroit techno in a dark, sweaty, almost airless vault. Music fans just had to find the venue first.

**“There was no street, no asphalt, no streetlights, only potholes. We were at the edge of the world. You stood in front of an unassuming barracks on an asphalt lot. After you'd been let in by the bouncers, you stepped onto the floor which was characterized by an eclectic house sound.”**

--Tresor co-founder Dimitri Hegemann

People remember sweat dripping from the ceiling, beer being passed through metal bars, strobe flashes cutting through the fog, and dancers reduced to silhouettes.

Many describe leaving the basement as changed people. Tresor became a prototype for the temporary use of leftover space turning ruins and border infrastructure into laboratories for freedom.

Between 1991 and 2005, thousands of nights took place here, but today nothing on the surface tells that story. Today Tresor is located in Köpenicker Straße in Kreuzberg.



# Beats of Berlin

In Tresor, techno was anonymous, sweaty, semi-legal. Only a few years later, TV cameras and celebrities were dancing to the same music at our next stop E-Werk, a decommissioned power station turned into a techno temple that even hosted the MTV Europe Music Awards aftershow.

## Activity

## Videoclip Tresor in the 90ies

**SCAN ME**

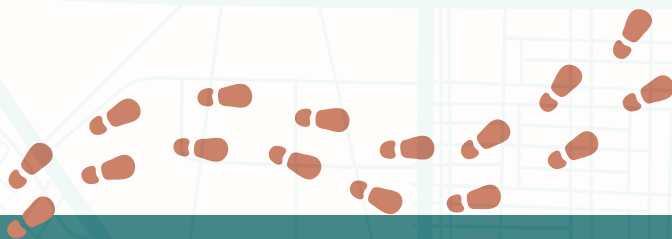


**SCAN ME**



## Next stop:

Again, follow Leipziger Straße westward until you reach Wilhelmstraße. Walk left until you reach no. 43.



# Beats of Berlin

## Stop 4: E-Werk

### From power plant to techno stage for the world



After the hidden vault of Tresor, our path leads to another piece of leftover infrastructure:

**E-Werk, a former electrical substation from the 1920s.**

**While the Tresor was rough, radical and uncomfortable, E-Werk epitomised the high and professionalisation of Berlins early techno culture.**

This had consequences. The culture that started in total freedom now had to address new forms of control reflected in revenues, safety regulations, and professional event management.

Several floors, steel walkways and cranes turned the building into a vertical playground: fire barrels on the ground level, lasers and projections high up under the roof, dancers moving along balconies and staircases. And all of this in the middle of a government district in transition.



# Beats of Berlin

Here played DJs like Paul van Dyk, Sven Väth and Massive Attack. The Prodigy played during the 1994 MTV European Music Awards. The parties became more carefully staged: running orders, security, guest lists, sponsorships. The feeling of freedom was still there but it was increasingly organised.

Suddenly the global pop industry was dancing in a space that had grown out of squats, raves and experimental nights.

## Soundbite!

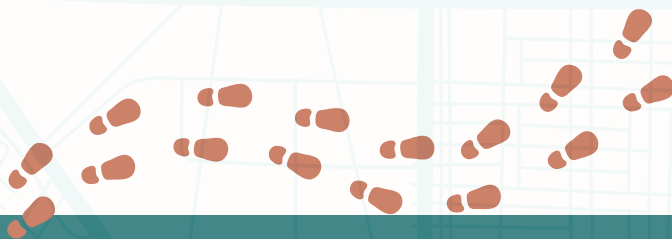
### E-Werk Parkplatzparty 1996

**SCAN ME**



## Next stop:

Walk to subway station Stadtmitte, take the U2 to Märkisches Museum. Follow Wallstraße westward and turn right at Inselstraße. Continue your way until you reach Köpenicker Str. 76.



# Beats of Berlin

## Stop 5: Walfisch

**From ghost station to the most beautiful hell in the world**



During the division of Berlin, Heinrich-Heine-Straße was an important Wall checkpoint, especially for goods traffic.

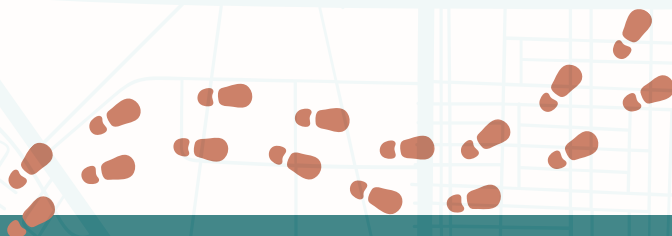
The U-Bahn station itself was a ghost station: trains from West Berlin passed through without stopping, guarded by GDR border troops.

This was a place of state surveillance and tight border control.

This corner building at Heinrich-Heine-Straße/Köpenicker Straße housed a rather ordinary pub called Zum Walfisch.

After the Wall fell and the border regime collapsed, the pub turned into something completely different: an **afterhour refuge** for people who were still wired when all the other clubs had closed.

Again the figures of the early techno scene were behind it – among them Peter Michael Strube, known as “Der Würfler.”



# Beats of Berlin

In the book *Der Klang der Familie* he recalls how they first had to explain the idea of an afterhour to the three owners: opening at five in the morning, peak time around seven or eight, closing around midday. At first, the owners didn't believe it would work – and then it did.

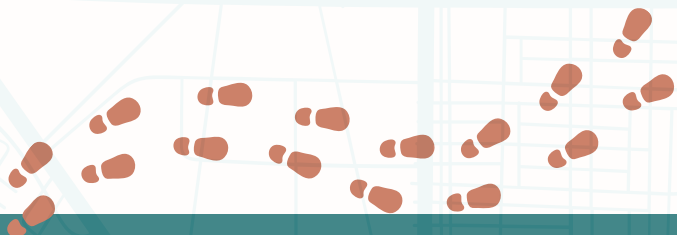
**Most of the time the tour was: Tresor, Planet, Walfisch. Walfisch was really fucked up. Wonderful. The most beautiful hell in the world. A free space you could descend into, everyone done in, everyone happy, and still the sound going.**

--Inga Humpe (*Der Klang der Familie*)

Many remember a sense of being completely done and completely happy at the same time, held together by the remaining pulse of the sound.

What had been a place of state surveillance and state control suddenly became a portal to a parallel universe of ultra-long afterhours where people sometimes walked out only on day three.

Toady the location is hosting the also legendary KitKat Club where techno and sex-positive parties still echo that early ethos of bodily freedom.



# Beats of Berlin

## Stop 5: Walfisch

**From ghost station to the most beautiful hell in the world**

We already know two of Imga Humpe's legendary stops, let's investigate the third one: Planet!

### Activity

**SCAN ME**



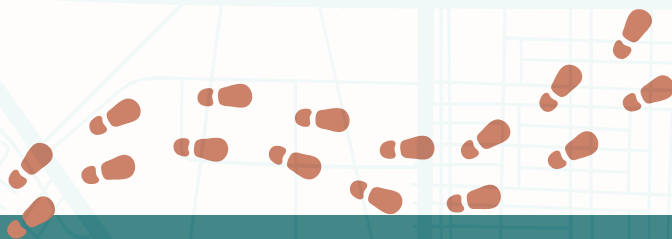
### Soundbite! Walfisch 1993

**SCAN ME**



### Next stop:

Continue your way down Köpenicker Straße until no. 50.



# Beats of Berlin

## Stop 6: Planet

### The “Pretty Sister” of Tresor



Clubs come and go, and sometimes they do so on one and the same site. Planet was one of those places. Around 1991–1993, Planet was located in an old soap factory near the Spree, on a site where later, for a while, the club Kater Holzig would move in.

The atmosphere at Planet was very different from Tresor’s dark vault or Walfisch’s “beautiful hell”.

DJ Clé says the following about Planet in Der Klang der Familie:

“Planet was a bit kinder than Tresor, maybe like the pretty sister. It was more colourful, more playful, the crowd more gay. The atmosphere was much warmer, the music not as hard.”

--DJ Clé (Der Klang der Familie)



# Beats of Berlin

And DJ Terrible a.k.a Andreas Tomall adds:

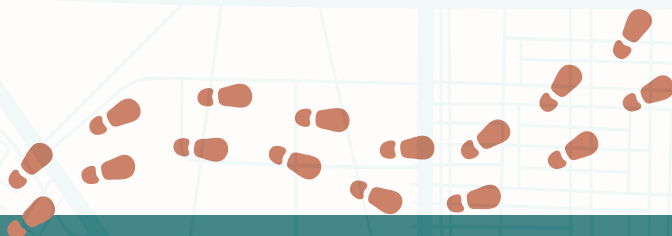
Planet replaced Tresor as the city's central event. Tresor was so super serious, like: 'We've got the hardest records, the toughest DJs; if you dare go down into that basement, you first have to manage to come back out alive.' Planet was entertainment for everybody – as long as you could find it. If you didn't know that the sign was a small glow stick hanging in front of the little entrance hut, and that you had to go through a hole in the fence, you could drive up and down Köpenicker Straße forever.”

--DJ Cle' (Der Klang der Familie)

Planet had to close around 1993, but the story of the site didn't end there.

A few years later, the same piece of land became home to Kater Holzig as part of a new wave of clubs that turned this improvised warehouse feeling into a brand and a business model.

Planet sits right on that line: still wild and temporary, but already a step closer to the curated, marketable image of Berlin nightlife.



# Beats of Berlin

## Activity

**SCAN ME**



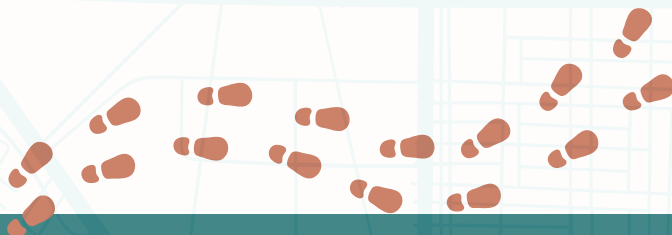
## Videoclip PLANET Club (1991-92)

**SCAN ME**



### Next stop:

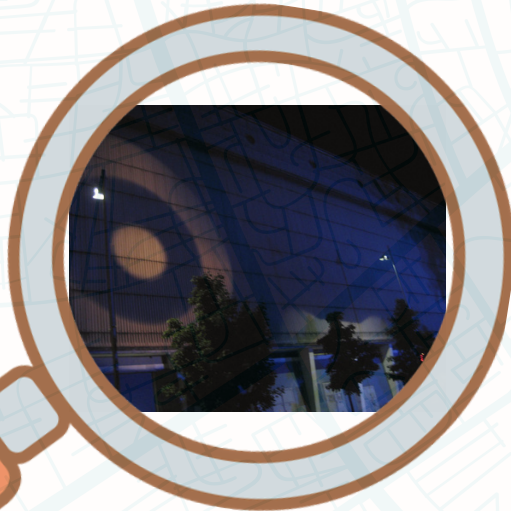
Walk back along Köpenicker Straße for a short distance and turn right into the next courtyard entrance.



# Beats of Berlin

## Stop 7: Kraftwerk + Today's Tresor

### From Underground Lab to Cultural Institution



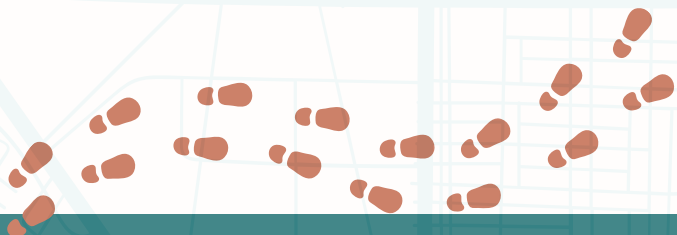
**In 2007, Tresor moved into this former heating and power station: Kraftwerk.**

**Tresor is no longer an underground laboratory but an icon of the international techno scene and a recognised part of Berlin's cultural identity.**

Some original elements of the old club, like the metal lockers, were built into the new rooms. The improvised feeling is gone, this place is clearly here to stay.

In Kraftwerk, techno shares space with art exhibitions, performances, festivals and light shows. The same building hosts club nights, sound installations, conferences and sponsored events.

Techno has now moved from the margins into the centre of the city's official self-image.



# Beats of Berlin

A small symbol of this shift: the original Tresor door from Leipziger Straße now lives in the exhibition "Berlin Global" in the Humboldt Forum, behind glass – a museum piece.

Here our themes come together: **freedom, control and commercialisation**. Tresor began as a semi-legal experiment in a forgotten vault; now it operates in a landmark industrial monument, embedded in cultural policy and city marketing.

The music is still loud, the nights are still long but the scene is much more regulated, safer, more professional, and part of a brand: "Berlin techno".

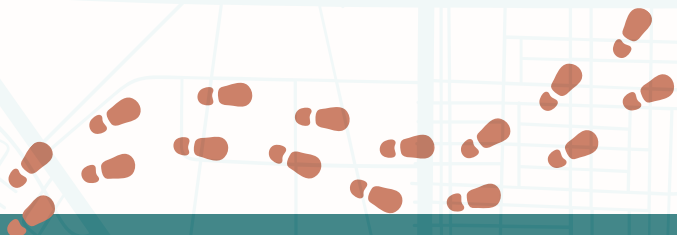
This raises the same question we asked at E-Werk, now on a bigger scale: **when a culture becomes an institution and even heritage, how much freedom does it gain, and how much does it lose?**

At the same time, pressure from commercialisation and urban development pushed parts of the techno scene to become more political.

Our next stops show how raves turned into protests and how clubs began to speak up for the city.

## **Next stop:**

Leave the site the same way you came in and continue along Köpenicker Straße until you reach no. 40.



# Beats of Berlin

## Stop 8: Eisfabrik & Spreeufer

### Techno Culture and political protest

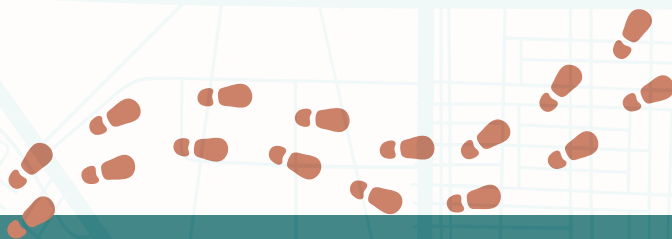


**On this stretch of the Köpenicker Straße and the Spreeufer we're no longer standing in front of a legendary club but in front of something just as important for the story:**

**a symbolic battlefield where techno, real estate and the right to the city collided.**

The former Eisfabrik, one of Berlin's oldest ice factories, stands here as a relic of industrial history right next to the river. After production stopped in the 1990s, the complex slowly decayed: empty halls, broken windows, graffiti, occasional illegal parties. For many in the scene, ruins like this felt like the natural habitat of post-Wall techno: rough, open, not yet assigned a clear function or price tag.

In the early 2000, the Spreeufer became one of the hottest pieces of real estate in the city. Plans under the label Mediaspree promised new offices, hotels and event locations along the river.



# Beats of Berlin

The Eisfabrik, although a listed building, was partly threatened by demolition and radical redevelopment. This is where techno culture began to appear not just as a soundtrack for parties, but as a political actor.

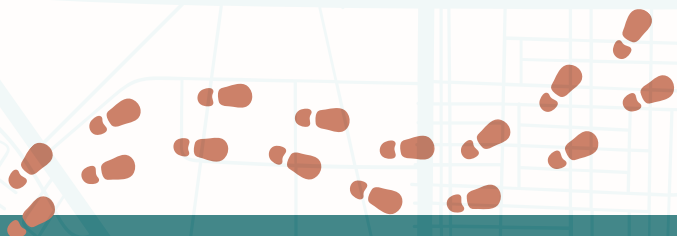
Initiatives like Mediaspree versenken! (Sink Mediaspree!) and the Fuckparade – a technoparade born as a protest against the commercial Love Parade – marched, raved and shouted against the planned riverfront “investor architecture”.

## All culminated in one big question: **Who is the Spree for?**

For the first time in our tour, the focus shifts clearly from inside to outside: Techno doesn't just use ruins and empty lots anymore; it defends them, speaks about them, and claims them as part of a lived urban culture.

The conflict around Eisfabrik and the Spreeufer shows how far we've come from the early 1990s: from carefree illegal raves in forgotten places to organised protest against the loss of those same places.

From here, we move towards the former Ostgut site and the Mediaspree developments – another spot where club culture, investors and city branding met head-on, and where the image of “Berlin nightlife” was sharpened for the global public.



# Beats of Berlin

## Activity

Videoclip Demo Mediaspree  
versenken on 12.07.2008

**SCAN ME**

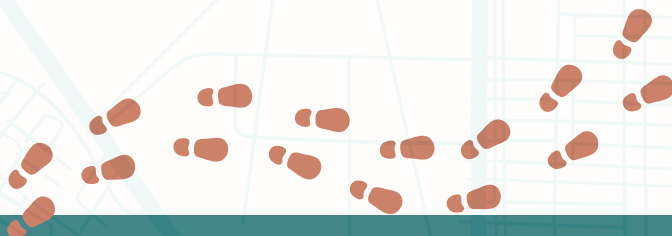


**SCAN ME**



## Next stop:

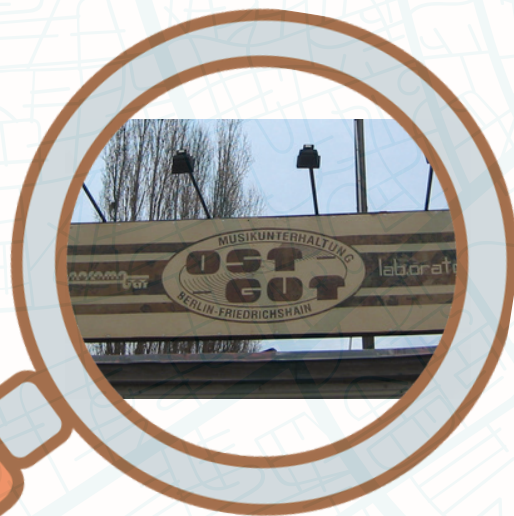
Follow along Köpenicker Straße and turn left into Engeldamm. Cross the Spree and turn right into Stralauer Platz until you reach Mühlenstraße 26.



# Beats of Berlin

## Stop 9: Ostgut

### Subcultures go or they institutionalize



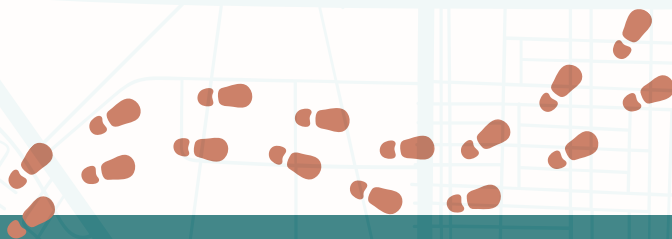
**Ostgut opened in 1998 in a former railway freight warehouse.**

**At night it became one of Berlin's most important clubs for hard techno and queer, gay and fetish-friendly parties; by day it was just another leftover industrial building in an area that investors and planners were already redesigning.**

In the early 2000s, the hall was demolished and replaced by the arena complex that stands here today part of the same redevelopment wave along the Spree that is often summed up under the name Mediaspree.

**Ostgut** itself was not the main protest icon of that conflict, but its disappearance is typical of what happened to many subcultural spaces.

The Ostgut crew and spirit did not disappear, but moved into another former power station nearby. There, in 2004, **Berghain** opened, which has since become the global symbol of Berlin techno and nightlife.



# Beats of Berlin

Berghain is a paradox in our story: a club that is world-famous, **endlessly hyped and yet still manages**, through its door policy and its strict “no photos” culture, **to feel like a protected, semi-hidden space**.

It shows that even within commercialised, marketed “Berlin nightlife”, pockets of real freedom can survive if they are carefully defended.

From here we head to the East Side Gallery, back to the Wall now an official monument to close the loop between borders, ruins, clubs and heritage.

## **Next stop:**

Head to the East Side Gallery – you shouldn’t miss it.



# Beats of Berlin

## Stop 10: East Side Gallery

### We end where we began: at the Berlin Wall

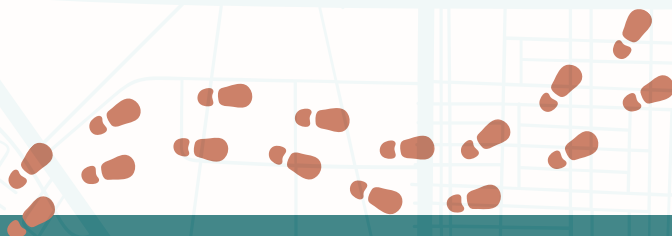


The East Side Gallery is a 1.3 km stretch of former border wall covered in murals, protected as a monument and visited by millions of tourists every year.

Right after the fall of the Wall, artists from all over the world came here to paint images of freedom, hope and reunification on the concrete.

What had separated people suddenly became the **canvas for a new story about openness and crossing borders**. Today, the East Side Gallery is part of Berlin's official heritage, a key image in every marketing brochure and, at the same time, surrounded by hotels, offices and an arena that were all heavily contested in the Mediaspree debates.

On our tour we have traced a similar path for Berlin's techno culture. It began in forgotten basements and ruins – **Tresor's** vault, **E-Werk's** power station, **Walfisch's** afterhour hell, **Planet's** playful warehouse.



# Beats of Berlin

It then moved into bigger, safer, more professional spaces: E-Werk at its peak, **Kraftwerk** and **today's Tresor**, **Berghain** as global symbol. And finally, like the Wall, it became part of the city's official story.

Since 2024, Berlin's techno culture is officially recognised as intangible cultural heritage by the **UNESCO Cultural Heritage Committee**.

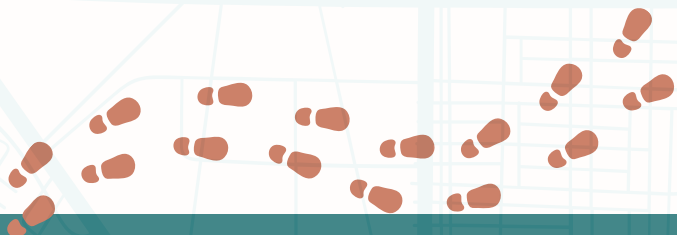
Tresor's original door now stands behind glass in a museum, techno is listed in cultural heritage registers, and club nights appear in curated festival programmes. What began as illegal raves in ruins is now something the city is proud of and wants to protect.

## Activity

**SCAN ME**



The tour ends here, but Berlin's beat goes on. Keep listening, keep exploring and think about the stories your own neighborhood could tell.



# Beats of Berlin

## References

Exhibition along the Berlin Wall, with the Federal Ministry of Finance in the background (2019), own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=83854053>

Hochhausformation: Forum-Tower, Kollhoff-Tower, Bahntower, by Tuxyso / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=44485701>

„Old“ Tresor in Leipziger Straße (2003)

The authorship has not been specified in a machine-readable format. Michael Brossmann is assumed to be the author (based on the rights holder information). - The authorship has not been specified in a machine-readable format. It is assumed to be an original work (based on the rights holder information). <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=893396>

Wartengebäude in the inner yard of E-Werk, 2008, by Jörg Zägel - Eigenes Werk, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7109610>

Building with KitKatClub 2025, by GodeNehler - own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=173913475>

Planet 1992, Snapshot from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ\\_1sQyFYM4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ_1sQyFYM4)

Tresor – New location in Köpenicker Straße (2008), by Boca Dorada - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bocadorada/2855497743/>, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=74749288>

Eisfabrik in Berlin-Mitte, by User:Nicor - Eigenes Werk, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2940083>

Ostgut

The authorship has not been specified in a machine-readable format. Michael Brossmann is assumed to be the author (based on the rights holder information). - The authorship has not been specified in a machine-readable format. It is assumed to be an original work (based on the rights holder information).

CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=678663>

East Side Gallery, by Vwpolonia75 (Jens K. Müller, Hamburg) - Eigenes Werk, CC BY 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21026593>



Co-funded by  
the European Union



This booklet was created by EuroSoc#DIGITAL as part of the project Empower Youth Explore Stories (EYES).

## Contact

EUROSOC#DIGITAL gGmbH  
Sponholzstr. 11  
12159 Berlin

Tel: +49 (0) 30 - 2023-9615-0  
Fax: +49 (0) 30 - 2023-9615-9  
[info@eurosoc-digital.org](mailto:info@eurosoc-digital.org)

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

(Project code: 2024-2-DE04-KA220-YOU-000293002)