



A view of Mitte's Museum Island.



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### 1 Hotel Amano

Since its debut in 2009, the Amano has become Mitte's most successful new boutique hotel. The rooms are appealingly simple, the lobby is a lively meeting place for locals, and the bar and rooftop lounge have become undisputed hot spots. Ester Bruzkus, who did the interior design, credits the owners for opening their pocketbooks to get the right look: "It was the first time working in Mitte where I got to use whatever brands I wanted—Artemide, Gervasoni, Zeitraum." Rates from around \$130/night; [hotel-amano.com](http://hotel-amano.com)

### 2 KW Institute

Founded in the early 1990s, this pioneering contemporary-art center mounts avant-garde exhibitions of rising or unjustly overlooked names. Pictured is a recent installation by Polish artist Paulina Ołowska. [kw-berlin.de](http://kw-berlin.de)

### 3 Bandol Sur Mer

The insiders' pick for Mitte's best restaurant is this intimate French bistro housed in a former kebab joint. With only seven tables, booking ahead is crucial. The menu, displayed on giant blackboards, is authentic French: fish soup, escargots, veal tartare. 011-49-30-67-30-20-51 →

# CENTER STAGE

In the heart of red-hot Berlin, the Mitte district gains new polish, presence, and glamour

**B**ERLIN USED TO BE ABOUT trash style," says architect Ester Bruzkus. "You bought everything at a flea market—nobody cared. But that's changing." Change is a word you hear often in this restless, electric city, and no more so than in the center of the former Communist east, the Mitte district, where Bruzkus, one of Berlin's rising young architects, has been doing her latest work. Mitte has been many things since the Wall came down—squatters' paradise, art-world laboratory, bohemian hideaway. Now, with an influx of chic hotels and restaurants and an ever-expanding gallery, shopping, and nightclub scene, the district is transforming again. For the first time in its recent history, Mitte feels sophisticated, rich, and polished.

Mitte is already on the tourist map, thanks to Museum Island; the grand

boulevard, Unter den Linden, that leads to the Brandenburg Gate; and a proliferation of international shopping—from A.P.C. to Gucci to Kiehl's to Bottega Veneta. But the neighborhood rewards exploration: Walk the intimate streets striped with tram rails and you'll stumble across homegrown fashion boutiques, galleries in hidden courtyards, and friendly locavore cafés. You'll also see a few graffiti-covered entryways, even a prostitute or two—this is the former East Berlin, after all. ("The difference is that here they dress like Barbarella," says Philomene Magers of Mitte's blue-chip art gallery Sprüth Magers.) It's this collision between the neighborhood's gritty past and its cosmopolitan present that gives Mitte its energy. On a recent visit, *AD* culled a selection of the area's latest and lesser-known offerings—where to stay, eat, and shop, and what to see and do. —TAYLOR ANTRIM



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## 4 Lunettes Selection

This tiny boutique on Torstrasse has garnered a reputation among stylesetters for its stock of rare, unworn vintage eyewear. Now, proprietor Uta Geyer has debuted her own collection inspired by the best designs of the last century—dashing and romantic frames that bring to mind Berlin's bohemian past. [lunettes-kollektion.com](http://lunettes-kollektion.com)

## 5 Soho House

Last year this outpost of the London members-only club opened in a former Communist-party archive. The tongue-in-cheek country-house decor, playful atmosphere (ping-pong in the lobby), and rooftop pool have quickly found favor with well-heeled Berliners—and the rooms, also available to nonmembers, are the most comfortable in Mitte. *Rates from around \$170/night; [sohohouseberlin.com](http://sohohouseberlin.com)*

## 6 Tausend

Mitte's boîte of the moment is found hidden under a railway bridge. Dress the part and you'll get past the doorman and into a tunnel-like cocktail lounge plated with mirrors and lit by a jet-engine-shaped lamp at one end. There's a DJ, an extensive cocktail menu, and a backroom cantina for those who like to fuel up before dancing all night. [tausendberlin.com](http://tausendberlin.com)

## 7 Neues Museum

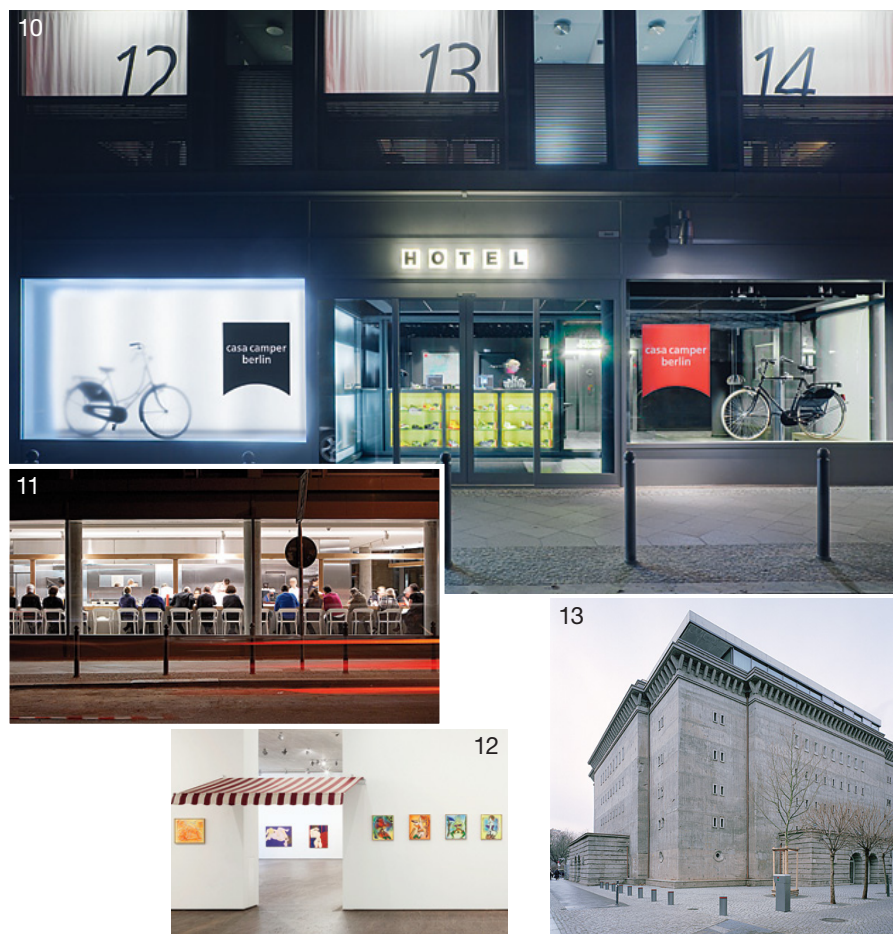
Museum Island can feel overcrowded with tourists, but you should make time to see this 19th-century museum devoted to ancient treasures and artifacts (including an iconic bust of Nefertiti). Reduced to a near-ruin by wartime bombing, the building has only recently reopened, thanks to a stunning and meticulous renovation by British architect David Chipperfield. [neues-museum.de](http://neues-museum.de)

## 8 The Barn

It doesn't get any more cheerful and relaxed than this new locavore café with its micro-roasted coffee and tasty artisanal sandwiches. It's the perfect place to recharge while gallery-hopping along Auguststrasse, just steps away. A recommendation: the carrot cake. "It's from my mother's recipe book," says the friendly owner, Ralf Rüller (pictured). [thebarn.de](http://thebarn.de)

## 9 Sprüth Magers

Mitte teems with galleries, from newcomers like Peres Projects to established spaces such as Neugerriemschneider and Sprüth Magers. Put the latter, housed in an 18th-century social club, at the top of your list, given its generous exhibition rooms and star-filled roster, which includes Richard Prince, Andreas Gursky, and Louise Lawler (2009 installation shown). [spruethmagers.com](http://spruethmagers.com) →



### 10 Casa Camper

The Spanish shoe company's new hotel has a chic-functional aesthetic and an inside-out façade (the room numbers are displayed to the street on exterior translucent shades). The interior design is spare but considerate, with Shaker pegs along the bright red walls of the rooms, hanging lamps, and ample bathrooms illuminated by enormous windows. The top-floor lounge and terrace with food and drink available 24 hours is a thoughtful touch for the just-arrived and jet-lagged. *Rates from around \$230/night; [casacamper.com](http://casacamper.com)*

### 11 Dos Palillos

Casa Camper tapped Albert Raurich, former head chef at Spain's temple of gastronomy El Bulli, to helm its new ground-floor restaurant—the most talked about in Mitte. Take a seat at the gleaming white dining bar fronting the open kitchen and try not to be intimidated by the menu, which offers a choice of 12 or 16 courses. The pan-Asian tapas-inspired dishes, from pickled cucumber to egg soup to Cantonese-style pork, are delicately flavored and well paced while the cool, sleek space, designed by Paris-based siblings Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, makes you want to linger. *[dospalillos.com](http://dospalillos.com)*

### 12 Me Collectors Room

This new art venue on gallery-packed Auguststrasse comes courtesy of Thomas Olbricht, a physician with an extensive collection of works by major contemporary artists—John Currin, Gerhard Richter, Cindy Sherman—as well as Renaissance and Baroque objets. The latter form the site's permanent collection, “Wunderkammer,” while temporary exhibitions aim to challenge and titillate (“X-Rated,” pictured, runs through May 8; a show devoted to cannibalism opens May 29). *[me-berlin.com](http://me-berlin.com)*

### 13 Sammlung Boros

This massive bunker has been many things since it was built by the Nazis—a banana warehouse, a prison, even a fetish club. Advertising executive Christian Boros bought it in 2003 and spent the next five years transforming the structure into an evocative venue for his personal art collection (tours by appointment only on weekends; reserve online). After a three-year run, the current exhibition is due to change soon, so hurry to see Boros's acclaimed assemblage of installations by Olafur Eliasson, Kitty Kraus, Anselm Reyle, and others. *[sammlung-boros.de](http://sammlung-boros.de) →*





#### 14 Do You Read Me?!

Belgian wine journal *Tong*, San Francisco's *Meatpaper*, UK cycling quarterly *Rouleur*... every magazine you can imagine—and a few you probably couldn't—is on display in this newsstand-style shop tucked among art galleries on Auguststrasse. [doyoureadme.de](http://doyoureadme.de)



#### 15 C/O

C/O's atmospheric former post office building is as much the attraction as the institute's exhibitions of world-class photography (shown are works by Bettina Rheims). Floors of ornate tile, heavy steel doors, foxed-plaster walls—it's a vision of Old Berlin and one you should hasten to see, as C/O is being forced into a new space due to open this summer. [co-berlin.info](http://co-berlin.info)



#### 16 Lala Berlin

Mulackstrasse is Mitte's best and most intimate shopping street, and Leyla Piedayesh's Lala Berlin is its go-to centerpiece. Eight years ago the designer quit her job with MTV to create a line of luxurious cashmere scarves (still Piedayesh's signature) and has since expanded her line to include gossamer silk dresses, tailored jackets, and a new shoe collaboration with Unützer. [lalaberlin.com](http://lalaberlin.com) □