

LASTING IMAGES OF EAST BERLIN

All things considered, the first leg of **TARGET**'s journey through 3 European countries – Germany, Italy and France – was a most-pleasant experience.

Berlin, Germany, should be a must for any intrepid traveller who wants a European experience with great food and excellent service.

Hotel Adlon will, always, be this medium's choice of a hotel in East Berlin; and, the rotund shape of this reviewer's tummy is testament as to the quality of the food and the expertise of the chefs who prepared the food.

Memories Of Yesteryear: Checkpoint Charlie

In this final report about what used to be called East Berlin, here are some images that will remain impregnated in **TARGET**'s memory banks:

1. There are at least 2 kinds of police people, roaming the streets of East Berlin in what is known as the Mitte District: Real police people and '*others*'. The '*others*' are fat, middle-aged men and women who are slovenly dressed, sporting revolvers at their hips, and chain-smoking cigarettes. They all have extremely big bellies and it is clear that they could not run more than a few steps before collapsing of exhaustion from the effort. These policemen and police women are used as '*show*' guards, outside the embassies of countries, embassies that line Unter Den Linden, mainly. The embassies do not, in truth, require guards of any description, but, after all, what does one do with former East German civil servants who are out of work and are unfit for any other kind of occupation? In the event of any real problem, the '*show*' police call in the real, green-uniformed police for back-up – while they sit in a corner, awaiting for the trouble to subside. Actually, it is quite a sight to watch these show police because, in truth, they remind one of Jonathan Swift's satire, Gulliver's Travels, written in the 17th Century;
2. The servicing staffs of high-class restaurants and hotels do not walk, generally, but march in unison in accordance to what must have been the instructions of a highly trained and seasoned, army drill sergeant. When serving a customer, the accepted modus operandi includes, having the left arm, resting on the small of the back, while the right arm is used for serving ... with a shallow, polite bow, of course. There is a well-established hierarchy that has to be observed by all staff members and permission must be obtained by one rank to a higher rank when requests are made, requests that are outside of the lower rank's bailiwick;
3. Berlin is a very safe city. Crime is kept to an absolute minimum not by the employment of a huge police presence, but due to the innate propensity of the population to be polite and avoid

unpleasantries;

4. Generally, the staff of brand-named shops – Escada and Hermes, especially – and arrogant and very unfriendly. They deign to give service except to repeat customers who speak German. Also, clothes for Asians are few and far between in the best shops. This makes East Berlin a *'heaven'* for husbands and boyfriends of Asian ladies – because they do not have to do much shopping for their wives/girlfriends;
5. East Berlin is a cultural candy shop: It is an absolute joy to visit the many museums and art galleries in the city. One must be willing to spend many, many hours in order to take in these excellent cultural establishments. The cost of admission is negligible, but the experience is priceless;
6. West Berliners do not like East Berliners. **TARGET** was given many, many reasons for this phenomenon, all of which made little sense;
7. By and large, East Germans are very polite people and will go out of their way to assist the tourist. This is unlike the French who prefer not to speak to anybody who does not speak Parisian French;
8. German wine is generally good and the reputation that German wines are acidic is unfair although the sparkling wines are, generally, much too sweet for **TARGET**'s taste;
9. East Berlin is a very clean city and even the public toilets are spotless. However, often, one has to pay about \$HK6 to take a pee in a public toilet. Also, for men, it is normal for elderly ladies to clean the toilets – even while males have their penises, dangling, as urine is evacuated;
10. The pavements are often cobble-stoned and one is advised to wear sturdy walking shoes for comfort and stability;
11. Taxi drivers are strictly controlled and, unlike Hongkong, the taxis are very clean with the drivers, for the most part, being polite and helpful. However, taxi drivers are, still, taxi drivers;
12. Germans love bread and cakes and every restaurant has a large assortment of freshly made breads and cakes of all kinds. Beware of that bulging in the nether lands!
13. In good restaurants, there is rarely a negative response to a reasonable and valid request. Serving staff go the full mile in order to satisfy guests' requests;
14. In good restaurants and first-class hotels, service is a way of life. One does not need to ask for a refill of a glass of water or wine, it is done as a matter of course; and,
15. The German people, generally, still suffer the stigma of yesteryear, being the highly developed Germanic race that persecuted the Jews and the gypsies of Europe, during World War II. It is accepted in East Germany that the Germans of that period were cruel and inhuman. Today's German appears to regret, outwardly, the acts of yesterday's soldiers and civilians in trying to exterminate all of the Jews and gypsies of Europe and/or the world. At the same time, however, the Jewish population of Germany is not the most-beloved of German citizens in spite of certain streets, having been named after former Israeli leaders – which is, probably, not much more than paying lip-service to the survivors of Germany's outrageous behaviour under Adolf Hitler and his gang of 5 million, trained killers.

By European standards, East Germany is very good value for money.

In fact, by any standards, it is good value for money.

It has not yet been discovered by the slovenly tourist from China.

So there is still time to enjoy cultural Germany without unruly tourists from the Middle Kingdom, talking loudly on mobile telephones in dining establishments and making a nuisance of themselves, squatting on street corners, or acting in a boisterous and or uncouth manner.

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