

How to find accommodation in Berlin

(This guide was developed to the best knowledge and is based on publicly available information from presumably trustworthy sources. The GUC will not be liable for accuracy and integrity of the content or for any losses or damages occurred from the use of this information)

This guide contains useful information about:

1. Geographic and administrative structure of Berlin
2. GUC Berlin Campus location
3. Usage of public transportation system
4. Advice on how to find accommodation
5. Rental contracts – basic essentials
6. German housing terms and abbreviations

1. The geographic and administrative structure of Berlin

Berlin is the capital of Germany and, with its approximately 3.5 million inhabitants, the country's largest city. Berlin is also one of the 16 states of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is divided into 12 administrative districts which are subdivided into 96 neighbourhoods.

Berlin's districts



Source: de.wikipedia.org

Berlin's neighbourhoods



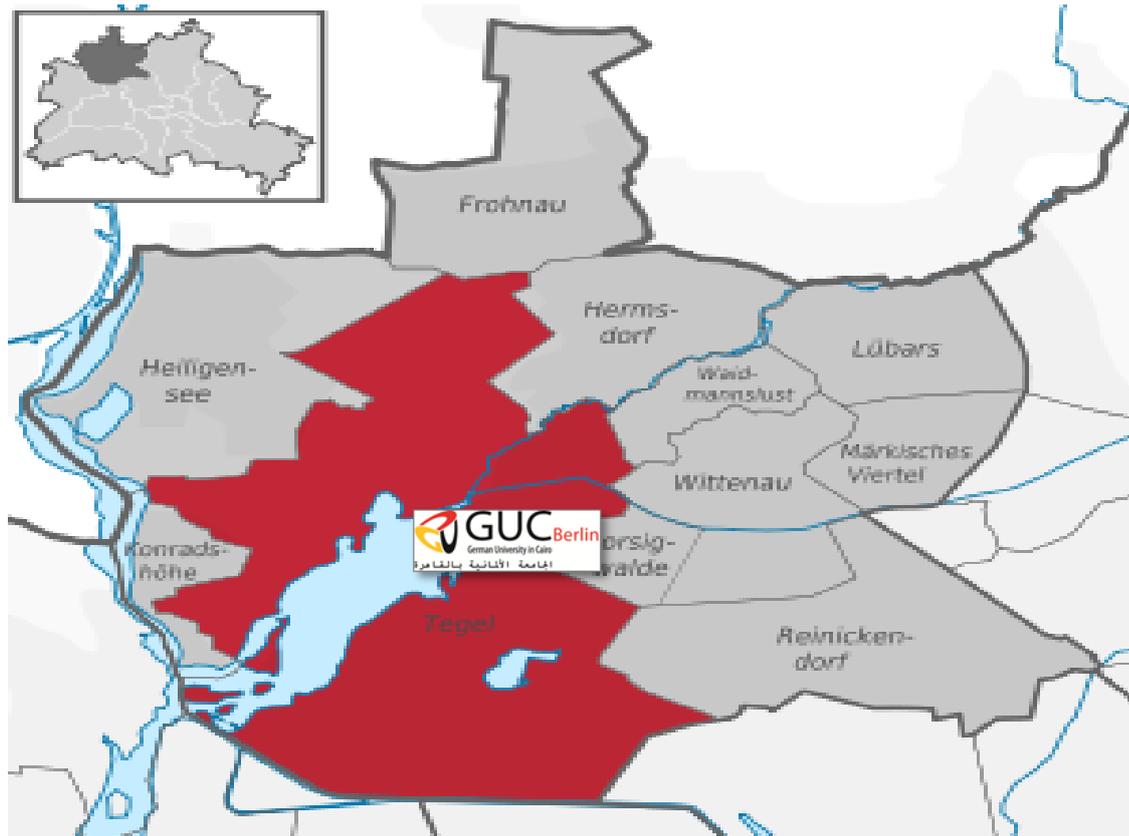
Source: www.localpedia.de

2. GUC Berlin Campus location

District Reinickendorf – neighbourhood Tegel

The district of Reinickendorf is split into eleven neighbourhoods. It encompasses the northwest of the city area, including the Berlin Tegel Airport and Lake Tegel.

The GUC Berlin Campus is located in the neighbourhood Tegel, a former suburb of Berlin and former home to Borsig-Werke factory – Europe’s largest locomotive producer at the end of the 19th century. One of Berlin's largest shopping malls – Borsighallen- is located just a few walking minutes away from the campus.



Source: de.wikipedia.org

GUC Berlin Campus address:
German University in Cairo
Am Borsigturm 162
13507 Berlin



The Campus is located in direct vicinity to the U-Bahn station Borsigwerke (U-Bahn line 6).

3. Berlin's Public Transportation System and how to use it

It is advisable to choose your living location where you have a good public transportation connection to the GUC Berlin Campus in order to minimize your daily commuting time. The U-Bahn and S-Bahn are the most frequent means of transportation with many connecting stations.

Berlin's public transportation network is well developed and easy to use. It is operated by the public transportation company BVG (Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe) and includes the following means of transportation

- U-Bahn (*U*ntergrundbahn): underground metro system with nine underground lines
- S-Bahn (*S*tadtschnellbahn): urban railway system
- RB (*R*egionalbahn): regional trains for suburban areas around Berlin
- RE (*R*egional Express): fast regional trains
- Trams (*S*traßenbahn)
- Busses

For an overview of the subway (U-Bahn and urban railway system), please refer to the map on the next page.

Please note: There are frequent ticket controls. The penalty for not having a valid ticket is 40€. Passengers using a bus have to enter from the front door and show their tickets to the bus driver.

The website of the BVG provides you with information regarding:

- Planning your route using an interactive journey planner

- Getting information on timetables, routes and maps of all public transportation (S-Bahn, U-Bahn, Bus, Tram, regional and even ferry).
- Buying tickets and fares overview

<http://www.bvg.de/index.php/en/index.html>

Information on the tariff zones Berlin A, B and C:

Berlin tariff area is divided into zones A, B and C (please refer to the U-Bahn and S-Bahn map showing only A and B zone below)

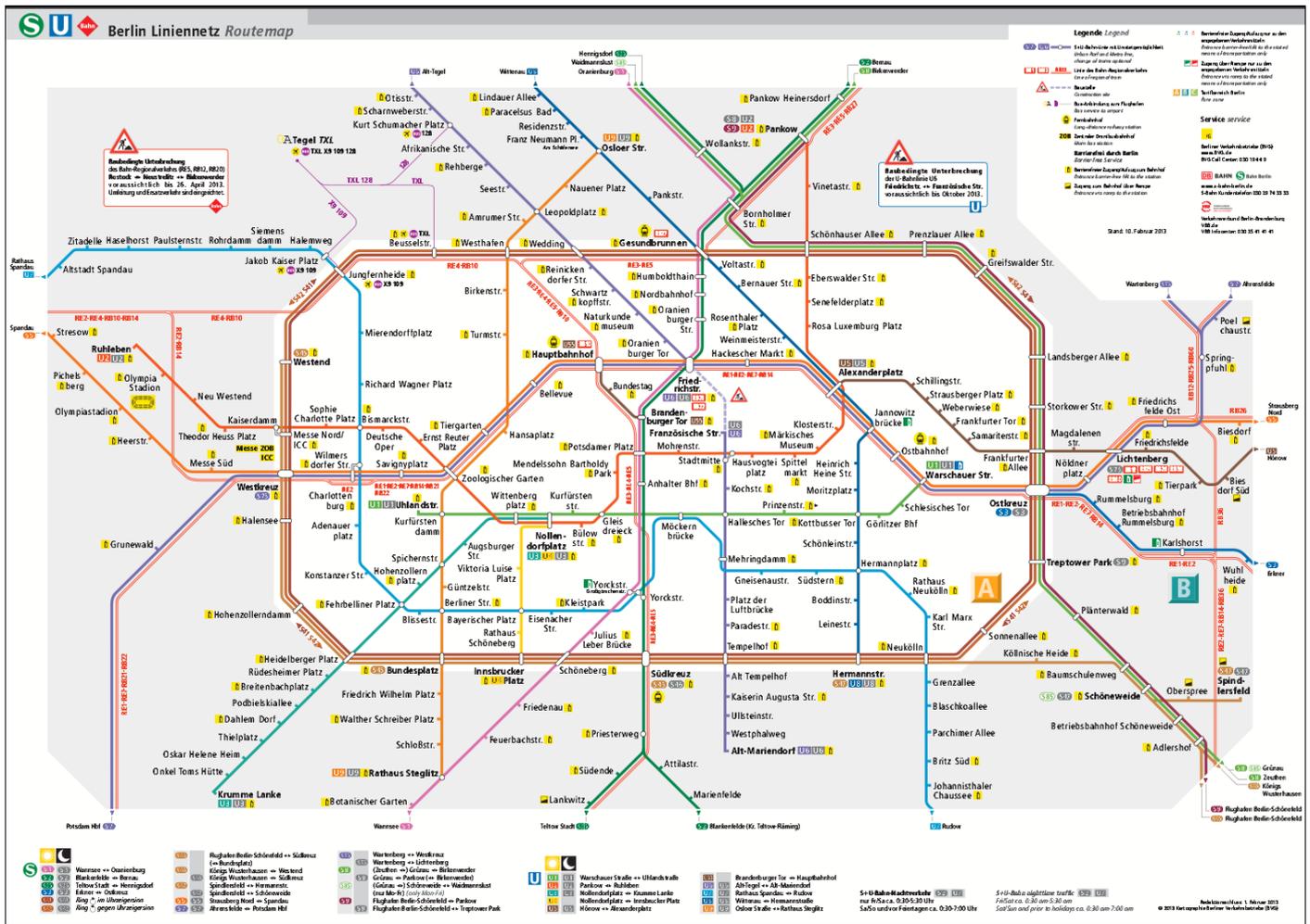
Zone A: Berlin's inner city up to and including the urban rail ring

Zone B: outside the urban rail ring up to the city boundary

Zone C: Greater Berlin (an area of approximately 15 km around the State of Berlin, including the City of Potsdam)

Beware of tricksters!

Please buy your tickets only at official outlets at S-Bahn/U-Bahn stations. The purchase or sale of used tickets is prohibited.



Source: www.bvg.de

4. How to find an accommodation in Berlin

Define your preferred location

Berlin is completely different when compared to other European cities, as each district has its own center and is well-connected through the public transportation system. Since the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, the competition between Berlin's various centers has been resurrected and it is this variety that makes Berlin special.

As Berlin is a very big city, you should choose the location of your room/apartment carefully in order not to spend an hour or more on transportation.

If you prefer to live near the GUC Berlin Campus and yet want to have a good connection to the inner city the best neighborhoods to look at are Tegel, Wedding and Mitte along the metro (U-Bahn) line 6. Other relatively close areas are Charlottenburg-Nord, Siemensstadt and Moabit (please refer to the map "Berlin's neighborhoods" on page 2).

Things you need to know before you start your search

- Most of the apartment-listings mention the number of rooms (Zimmer) included in the apartment. This usually excludes kitchen and bathroom. For example: a 2-room apartment usually includes one bedroom and one living room (this are the two rooms), a kitchen and a bathroom.
- Maybe you would be able to find a sublet, called Untermiete or Zwischenmiete, which is a contract between tenant and tenant, or a "Nachmieter", meaning taking over someone's lease. These are quite common in Berlin.
- When looking for shared apartments (i.e. renting a room in an apartment with other students), please be aware that mixed gender shared apartments are quite common in Germany.
- Anyone who stays in Germany for non-touristic reasons has to register at the 'residence registration office' within one week after moving in at the accommodation. GUC assists you with that registration and de-registration (at the end of your stay in Germany) but you need to inform the GUC if you change your accommodation in between as you need to register your new address at the residence registration office.

Types of accommodation

Due to the growing demand and rental price increase it is more difficult to find a room/apartment in Berlin than a few years ago. Therefore, please start looking for your accommodation on time! There are several accommodation options you may want to consider:

Rented apartments through GUC

The GUC has reserved a number of furnished apartments for GUC students (located at the border of Berlin Mitte and Kreuzberg) through the real estate agency Arwobau. The apartments are shared by three students (one double room, one single room). For more information please refer to Ms. Heba Habib at the GUC Berlin Office in building C. Please notice that there is only a limited number of rooms and apartments available. If you decide to book one of these rooms we highly recommend you to register as early as possible. Once all our

rooms are taken, you will have to look for accommodation on your own. Please follow the link for more information: <http://www.guc.edu.eg/CampusBerlin/accommodation.aspx>

Furnished apartments

Many of the GUC students who are spending a semester in Berlin are looking for furnished apartments to be shared among 2-5 fellow students. Apart from individual housing offers, there are real estate agencies offering simple furnished apartment for short stays (couple of months) targeting international students. One can assume that apartments offered through such agencies are serious and trustworthy offers:

- House of Nations: <http://house-of-nations.de/cms/index.php?id=apartments-berlin&L=1> (most of their houses are located in Wedding, an area close to the GUC Berlin Campus)
- Paul-Fleischmann-Haus: http://www.paul-fleischmann-haus.de/content/e3/e204/index_eng.html (convenient location nearby the GUC Berlin Campus)
- Arwobau GmbH: www.arwobau.de/Apartments/Ueberblick_und_einfache_Suche/ (some of their apartments are located far away from the city centre and the GUC Berlin Campus)

Other real estate agencies are:

- <http://berlin.homecompany.de/en/index>
- <http://www.coming-home.org/index.php?l=en>
- <http://www.9flats.com/berlin-germany/sem/Berlin-Apartments?gclid=COXA5v72mbYCFcRQ3goduBsAAw>
- <http://www.berlin99.com/>

There are many "apartment-finder" websites which serve as an exchange platform for landlords and tenants. However, you have to consider the risk of scam when looking for offers on these websites as anyone can post offers here (please read the section below: "Be aware of scam"):

- www.immobilienscout24.de
- www.immowelt.de
- www.immonet.de
- www.airbnb.de
- www.studenten-wg.de
- www.wg-gesucht.de

Please note: Many rental objects are offered through real estate agents who usually charge a fee of one-month rent if a contract is concluded.

Hostels

There are hundreds of hostels in Berlin which offer a very basic, low budget accommodation. There are rooms for up to 8 people. Please make sure to carefully choose the right room in order not to end up sharing a room with strangers of mixed-gender. Consider that the rooms are small, space is limited (for your personal belongings, to study, etc.) and neighbors might be loud. The best way to find a hostel is to "google" hostels in the area you would like to live in or through using a booking website such as www.booking.com.

Be aware of scam

Please note that not all apartments-listings on the internet are serious offers. Here are some recommendations minimizing the risk of you becoming a victim of scam:

- Be alerted when the name of the person offering the apartment is different from the name in his email address: "google" the email address to see if it appears on any scam lists.
- Most scammers ask for a deposit payment via Western Union, MoneyGram or bank transfer with a promise that you can have the keys to an apartment (that does not belong to him!) Never transfer money before you (or a friend) have seen the apartment and a contract is signed!
- Many times scammers argue in their reply to your request that they are not located in Germany and will send you the keys to the apartment by mail. Such apartments are always offered at an extremely good price and the pictures look great.

6. Rental contract

Before a tenant moves in into an apartment, the landlord and the tenant need to sign a rental contract, which includes the personal data and key responsibilities of landlord and tenant.

Generally, all rental contracts should include the following:

- Name and contact address of landlord and tenant
- Address of the property.
- Date of conclusion of contract
- Starting and end date of rental contract.
- Maximum number of people allowed to live in the apartment.
- Lease rental charges and frequency of payment.
- Amount security deposit
- Bank account number (onto which the rent must be transferred).
- Fees to be paid to the real estate agent, if any.
- A list of the furnishing of the apartment (furniture, curtains, electronic devices, etc.) provided by the landlord.

Both the landlord and the tenant must sign the rental contract, and the landlord must give the tenant a copy before the start of the rental contract.

Please check the apartment in accordance to the furnishing list. After signing the contract you will get the keys. Now you can pay the first month's rent and the security deposit.

Please make sure that the notice period for the termination of the contract is included in the rental contract (e.g. 30 days before move-out date).

Make sure to have a signed copy of your contract as you need it for the residence registration office (GUC will assist you with the registration and de-registration, please refer to Mrs. Sarah El-Sawaf).

Security deposit (*Kaution*)

The landlord will normally ask the tenant to pay a security deposit. This deposit can be any amount up to a maximum value of one to one and a half months' rent. Its purpose is to cover any unpaid rent or potential damages caused by the tenant. If the rent is paid in full and no damages were caused to the apartment, the tenant gets his/her deposit refunded at the end of the rental contract (after move-out of the apartment)
The rental contract should include the date for refund of the security deposit.

Check-list for moving out of your apartment

1. Give notice to the landlord

Notice can be done at any stage in the contract by writing to the landlord or the property management company. However, you must abide by the notice period specified in the contract. Usually, the notice has to be given by the end of a month. The maximum notice period by law is three months.

2. Clean the apartment

Tenants are expected to leave the apartment in the same condition as they found it in upon moving in. Therefore, please make sure to give the apartment a thorough cleaning to avoid any deductions from your deposit. Also please bear in mind that this can include having the walls painted, if they were freshly painted when you moved in.

3. Inventory

Confirm the condition of the apartment at the time of leaving, in consultation with the inventory and the list of defects that you agreed upon with the landlord or property management broker when you moved in.

4. Redirect your mail

The German Post Office can forward your mail for a six- or 12-month period (approximate costs: €15 or € 25). It is useful to make use of this service in case you are expecting any important mail to be sent to your apartment's address after your departure.

5. Keep your German bank account

This will allow you to receive your deposit from the landlord or property company. However, some companies may be able to arrange an international bank transfer. You can then ask your bank to close the account on a certain date after your departure. When doing this it is sensible to provide them with a contact in address in Egypt or Germany and your new banking information.

6. De-registration

Upon your arrival in Germany/Berlin you have registered yourself as a temporary resident in Berlin (*Anmeldung*) at the Local Public Office (Bürgeramt). Before your departure from Germany you will have to de-register (*Abmeldung*) at the same authority. Please ask Ms. Sarah El-Sawaf for assistance.

7. Turn off everything

Make sure that lights, gas, and all electrical devices have been switched off.

8. Return the key

Return all keys that you have received back to the landlord or the representative of the property management company.

9. Ensure your deposit is returned

Your deposit is held in a third party account for the duration of your rental contract. The deposit will be refunded to you in full if you have paid all the rent and not caused any damages to the apartment.

6. German housing terms and abbreviations

To help you in your search for a room/apartment, we have listed the most common abbreviations used in classifieds for accommodation in Germany

AB: *Altbau* - Old building pre-1945

KM: *Kaltmiete* - basic rent (exclusive of heating and utilities).

WM: *Warmmiete* - total rent (inclusive of heating and utilities)

NK: *Nebenkosten* - additional costs

NMM: *Nettomonatsmiete* - net monthly rent (excluding additional costs)
zzgl. NK: *zuzüglich* - plus additional costs
DG: *Dachgeschoss* - top floor/attic
EG: *Erdgeschoss* - ground floor
VH: *Vorderhaus* - front building
HH: *Hinterhaus* - rear building
Qm: *Quadratmeter* - square meters
Wfl.: *Wohnfläche* - living area
BK: *Balkon* - balcony
ZH: *Zentralheizung* - central heating
ZH/GH/EH: *Zentralheizung/Gasheizung/Etagenheizung* - central heating/gas heating self-contained central heating
NR: *Nichtraucher* - non-smoking
WG: *Wohngemeinschaft* - shared apartment
Zi: *Zimmer* - rooms
BZ: *Badezimmer* - bathroom
Whg: *Wohnung* - apartment
2 Zi.-Whg: *2 Zimmerwohnung* - apartment with 2 rooms
2 ZKDB: *2 Zimmer, Küche und Duschbad* - apartment with 2 rooms, kitchen, shower bath
EBK: *Einbauküche* - built-in kitchen
KN: *Kochnische* - kitchenette
kalt: *Kalt* - cold (basic rent exclusive of heating and utilities)
K: *Kaution* - security deposit
Untermieter: subtenant
MVZ: *Monatliche Vorauszahlung* - monthly advance payment
Prov.: *Provision* - fee, commission
WBS: *Wohnberechtigungsschein* - subsidized housing certificate (you are not entitled to it)