WELCOME TO THE OLDEST UNIVERSITY IN BERLIN

Founded in 1809 by Wilhelm von Humboldt, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin opened in 1810 with 256 students and 52 members of academic staff.

The main building of the university was originally the palace of Prince Heinrich von Preußen (Henry of Prussia). It was built between 1748 and 1766 by Johann Boumann according to plans by Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff, a renowned architect of that time. After the Prince’s death in 1802, the building had been used for various purposes until King Friedrich Wilhelm III bestowed it on the then newly founded university in 1810. In honour of the King, the university was named “Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität: a name that was kept until 1946. In 1949, the Alma Mater Berolinensis was renamed “Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin” in memory of its founder Wilhelm von Humboldt and his brother Alexander von Humboldt, the well-known scientist and explorer.

In the course of its existence, a large number of outstanding scholars and scientists has added to the reputation of the university. In its early years, August Boeckh, Albrecht Daniel Thaer and Karl Friedrich von Savigny were members of its staff. Later, Hermann von Helmholtz, Karl Theodor Weierstrass, Rudolf Virchow, Albert Einstein and Max Planck taught at its faculties, too. Among the most well-known students were Heinrich Heine, Ludwig Feuerbach, Otto von Bismarck, Karl Marx, Heinrich Mann and Kurt Tucholsky. Prominent alumni of the recent past were Regine Hildebrandt and Wolfgang Thierse, to mention only a few.

Join us and discover Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin; find out more about the great personalities who are closely connected to the university as well as to Berlin. Enjoy your tour!
This is a building open to everyone where each guest is welcome. While walking around, we invite you to visit all publicly accessible rooms and locations. But we would like to remind you that the lecture halls and seminar rooms are in use during the semester – please do not disturb ongoing lectures.

1. FORECOURT (EHRENHOF)
In front of the university’s main building, you will see the monument of Hermann von Helmholtz, the physicist and physiologist. If you turn around and face the main building, you find on your left the monuments of Theodor Mommsen, the historian, and Max Planck, the physicist. The monuments of Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt are erected on both sides of the entrance gate. On the other side of the avenue Unter den Linden, right across the street, the Faculty of Law resides in the historical buildings of the Bebelplatz – in the so-called Kommode and Altes Palais (Old Palace). Do not hesitate to visit these buildings, too. But first, enter the main building and proceed to the first floor via the main staircase.

2. THE 11TH THESIS ON FEUERBACH
On 5 May 1953, the wording of the 11th thesis on Feuerbach by Karl Marx was unveiled in the entrance hall of the university’s main building. The ceremony was part of the celebration of the Karl Marx Year in the German Democratic Republic. Marx had been a student of law at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität from 1836 to 1840. After 1990, the removal of the thesis was debated; but since the entire building had been classified as a historical monument in 1975, no such changes could have been made. On the right-hand side, there is a small sign with further information on the thesis. A special leaflet is available at the Welcome Desk. In order to continue your tour, follow the stairs to the Senatssaal (Senate Hall).

3. SENATE HALL AND NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS
On the opposite side of the entrance hall used to be the Alte Aula (Assembly Hall) of the university. Along with the central part of the main building, it was completely destroyed during World War II. In 1951/52, the Senatssaal (Senate Hall) was built. It is here where the sessions of the Academic Senate are held and where other major events take place regularly. On the walls, you can see the portraits of the university’s 29 Nobel Prize winners. Leaving the Senate Hall, turn right in order to enter the building’s east wing.

4. PORTRAITS OF RECTORS
Some portraits of former rectors of the university are hung on the walls of the hallway leading to the building’s east wing. Among them are famous scholars and scientists, such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, the university’s first elected Rector, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Theodor Mommsen, Hermann von Helmholtz, Karl Weierstrass and Max Planck. Now follow the hallway and turn left passing through four automatic doors which lead you to the Auditorium maximum (Audimax). If the Audimax is occupied, just go down the stairs through the cafeteria into the backyard.

5. AUDITORIUM MAXIMUM
During World War II, almost the entire east wing was destroyed. Reconstruction work started in 1953. The east wing with the Audimax (then named Marx Engels Auditorium) was re-opened in 1962 with seats for 720 people. On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the university’s foundation, comprehensive renovation work was carried out. If you go through the Audimax, you will notice the stained glass windows by the exit on the first floor. These windows are works by Walter Womacka, who is well-known for the so-called "cummerbund" around the former Haus des Lehrers (House of Teachers) in Alexanderplatz. In case the Audimax is occupied, you can reach the east wing’s first floor with the stained glass windows by entering the doors to the left-hand side of the cafeteria. A plaque in the lobby commemorates Albert Einstein who lectured at the university between 1915 and 1929.

6. BACKYARD (GARDEN)
After you have come downstairs, leave the building and continue your personal tour in the garden itself. Since 1820, the original layout of the garden has changed significantly. By 1920, it had been divided into four separate areas: the forecourt, the gardens along the west wing on Universitätsstraße, the garden by the Lindentunnel (Linden underpass) and the backyard. In the wake of reconstruction work in the early 1960s, further changes were made. Today, chestnut trees offer leafy shade. In 1995, a lawn was added in the centre in order to provide a place to relax for students, staff and visitors. The Monument of the Victims of Fascism is situated in the north-eastern corner of the yard. The bronze sculpture "Die Sinnende" (Reflecting Girl) by Sabine Grzimek was er-