

## **1994-2014: Twenty years anniversary of the German National Tourist Guide Association (BVG D)**

### **Grand Anniversary Celebration in Berlin**

In November 2014 no less than three events brought 160 tourist guides and tourism experts from Germany and all Europe to Berlin: the celebrations of both the 20th anniversary of the German National Tourist Guide Association e.V. (BVG D) and the 25th anniversary of the Association of Berlin Tourist Guides (Berlin Guide e.V.) as well as the Annual General FEG meeting. No wonder the events were so well-attended! But not only colleagues were present but also numerous representatives from politics, local authorities and professional associations, among them the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA).

It has been twenty years since the BVG D has been founded, years in which the professional profile of tourist guiding has changed substantially: At present more than 6000 professional tourist guides in all over Germany are represented by the association. They have built a strong network, are trained to achieve the BVG D Certificate DIN EN as key to outstanding qualification, benefit from insurance coverage and are represented in all tourist associations and on tourist fairs.

Urs Lehmann from Heidelberg, who was chairwoman of the BVG D during its first six years, lively recalls the exciting time which led to the foundation of the association in November 1994 in Cologne. The vital impulse to founding the BVG D, Lehmann remembers, had come from the FEG by urging her „finally to sort out our situation here in Germany and to represent our interests as local tourist guides. (...) The BVG D would never have come into being if it hadn't been for the FEG.“ Over a 10-year-period Lehmann attended all FEG meetings and was member of the FEG's Executive Council from 2000 to 2005. In light of this longstanding and intense cooperation between the two associations it wasn't but consequential that Dr. Ute Jäger, who has been chairwoman of the BVG D since 2007, was proactive that Germany should host the FEG meeting in 2014. Her presentation proofed a success. Now all were celebrating together: The 25th anniversary of the Association of Berlin Tourist Guides led to the decision to hold the whole event in Berlin, right at the Kurfürstendamm.

But not only the tourist guides had cause to celebrate. Only a few days prior to the event the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall had been commemorated. Consequently, the German Reunion was the defining topic of the discussions and guided tours. As part of the opening ceremony, Carsten Engelmann, member of the municipal council of Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, Burkhard Kieker, executive director of visitBerlin, and BVG D-chairwoman Dr. Ute Jäger shared their respective memories and impressions. Markus Müller-Tenckhoff, member of the board of the Association of Berlin Tourist Guides, found the most personal words and gave a vivid description as to how profoundly and quickly Berlin's image has changed since then – and what this demands of a professional tourist guide. Because it is the guides who are responsible that a certain image is perceived and received by the guest. They provide „real entertainment by real facts“, Müller-Tenckhoff said. The complex task of a tourist guide, the „art of guiding“, cannot be expressed more aptly.

In order to pursue this task successfully, the major event offered not only a broad tourist program in Berlin and Potsdam but also numerous workshops, meetings and a groundbreaking panel on tourism politics. The trips and outings provided a whole range of topics for the guests, and even the Berlin-experienced got their money's worth: There was a

city tour, a visit of the Reichstag, the „Magical Mystery Show“ at the Wintergarten Varieté, a boat trip on the Spree river and a Berlin-themed evening. And finally: Potsdam!

Potsdam: a place with a history of more than thousand years, garrison town and residence of Prussian kings, town of court, military and administration. To this day, Potsdam's urban cityscape reflects the sober tolerance of the Prussians, who used to welcome religious refugees and foreigners and thus laid the foundation to their land's economic prosperity. But Potsdam is also the place where Hitler's newly elected Reichstag held its first meeting in 1933. In 1945 the Potsdam agreement and declaration sealed the end of the NS regime. After the German Reunion the former district capital of the GDR became capital of the newly founded federal state of Brandenburg. Potsdam is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, city of palaces and parks at the idyllic Havel Lakes, a magnificent, historical cultural town, a centre of film industry, education and science. And Potsdam's tourist guides know how to bring history to life! „If Friedrich II was still alive, the construction of the new Berlin airport would have been finished long ago“, Gitta Arnold, one of almost 90 members of Potsdam Guide e.V., quipped. The Potsdam tourist guide association was founded in 1997 and many of its members have achieved the professional qualification in accordance with the standards set by the BVGD. During the day trip they presented the Glienicke Bridge, the classisistic buildings by Karl-Friedrich Schinkel, the extensive palace grounds, Potsdam's historic city centre and, eventually, the Cecilienhof. The Palace, based on English Tudor-style buildings, was built for crown prince Wilhelm and his wife Cecilie zu Mecklenburg and was finished in 1917. The Potsdam conference, which was held there in 1945, „was supposed to be a peace conference“, Gitta Arnold explained, „but the negotiations were interrupted by the message, that the atom bomb was now ready for operation. This led to the catastrophes in Japan and to the Cold War.“ Standing in the very rooms of the Potsdam conference, her listeners realised, how powerfully a vivid guided tour manages to convey emotions and facts.

A special thanks to all the dedicated colleagues of Berlin Guide e.V. ([www.berlin-guide.org](http://www.berlin-guide.org)) and Potsdam Guide e.V. ([www.potsdam-guide.de](http://www.potsdam-guide.de)).

Georg Reichlmayr, BVGD