Berlin

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Last Tuesday I was in Berlin for the first time, and in the east of Germany for the first time even. Added a gallery with some shots of Berlin.

I took the train from Hamburg to Berlin and noticed the landscape between those cities is just one large Battlefield: Bad Company map. No mountains, no rivers, just hills, fields, trees and small villages. Nobody would be surprised if they saw some tanks moving through that environment.

The first surprise in Berlin was that the Hauptbahnhof was very not busy. Build on a scale for some wishful amount of traffic, or the oversized remains of a megalomanic soccer championship event. From there it was off to Alexanderplatz. It turned out that is the place where the famous television tower stands, so that must be the former DDR. That would explain the Stalinist architecture. But it doesn't get any better going west. The current government buildings are guarded about as heavily as the inner−German border back in the days, which gives it the same unfriendly atmosphere, and you wonder if they just re−employed the same people for it. The little patches of green grass are protected so you are not allowed on them. Streets are broad and given the number of people with diplomatic immunity driving around there, you've got to be very careful crossing them. The Brandenburger Tor is disappointingly small, the Arc de Triomphe is so much larger it could probably arc over it, as illustrated by this Blender experiment using Google Sketchup 3D warehouse models of the Tor and the Arc:

The river Spree is also small. Tiergarten is OK, but grilling is not allowed in that park. There is a lot of space everywhere, but instead of being impressive it seems it's just because nobody is interested in building anything there. The area is dominated by the Hauptbahnhof in the north and another huge building with the DB logo on it in the south. In between ugly buildings which make you wonder what they want to accomplish here. Berlin is probably nice for people being driven around in some limo they didn't pay for, but compared to Paris or London, or even Munich, Hamburg or DÃ¼sseldorf it's still a pathetic place.

by Roland van Ipenburg http://www.xs4all.nl/~ipenburg/blog/posts/dull/2009/09/03/berlin/