



# QOL SURVEY

GLOBAL/TOP 25 CITIES

## Where to live well

Who's up? Who's down? Who's in? Who's out? Our 11th annual Quality of Life Survey identifies the cities with all the answers when it comes to liveability.

Illustration Sara Piccolomini

As a wave of populism has risen in western liberal democracies, the idea of the city has come under attack. In the UK, the populists sneer at the “metropolitan elite”; in the US it's the “coastal elites”; and in France, Marine Le Pen rails against Paris's “arrogant elite”. Those living in cities, they argue, are “out of touch” with the needs of “real” Britons, Americans and French people.

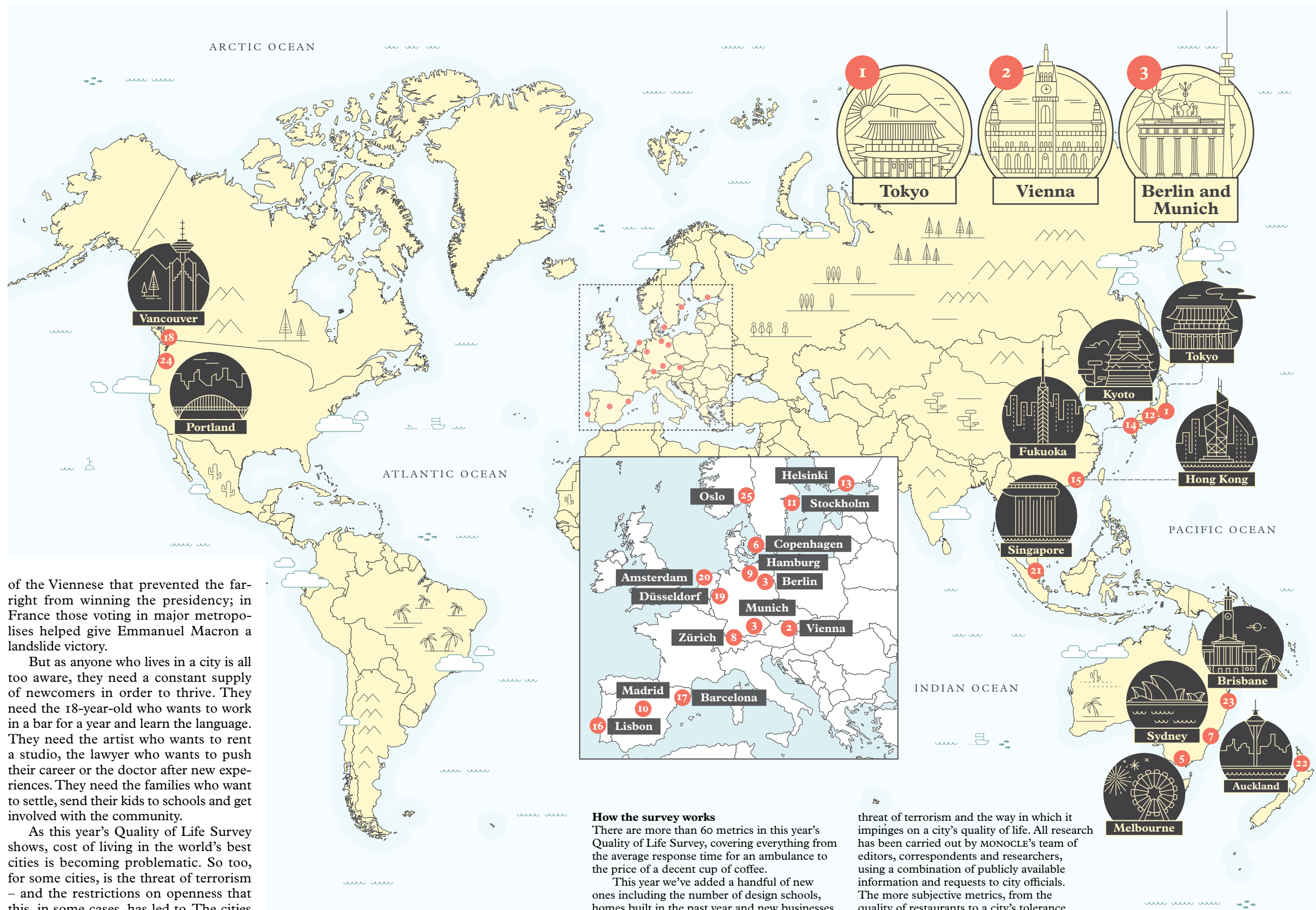
There is something peculiar about this argument. It is made by people who tend to live in homogenous communities and where difference is often denigrated, not celebrated. It is made by people who want their country to turn back the clock to a mythical “golden age”. And it is no coincidence that it is often made by people who live in economically struggling regions. Perhaps those areas would be doing better if they looked a bit more like cities.

The divide between those who live in cities and the rest of a country's population appears to be widening, not just economically but socially and politically too. The UK's great cities, particularly London, voted in favour of the country remaining in the EU. The US's big urban centres voted overwhelmingly for Hillary Clinton and have set themselves the task of becoming sanctuary cities able to defend their residents from the anti-immigrant policies emanating from Washington. In Austria, it was the votes

of the Viennese that prevented the far-right from winning the presidency; in France those voting in major metropolises helped give Emmanuel Macron a landslide victory.

But as anyone who lives in a city is all too aware, they need a constant supply of newcomers in order to thrive. They need the 18-year-old who wants to work in a bar for a year and learn the language. They need the artist who wants to rent a studio, the lawyer who wants to push their career or the doctor after new experiences. They need the families who want to settle, send their kids to schools and get involved with the community.

As this year's Quality of Life Survey shows, cost of living in the world's best cities is becoming problematic. So too, for some cities, is the threat of terrorism – and the restrictions on openness that this, in some cases, has led to. The cities to thrive in the coming years will be those that remain open and liberal, safe and affordable. — *sjb*



### How the survey works

There are more than 60 metrics in this year's Quality of Life Survey, covering everything from the average response time for an ambulance to the price of a decent cup of coffee.

This year we've added a handful of new ones including the number of design schools, homes built in the past year and new businesses set up. We have also, given the spate of terrorist attacks, added a new metric that assesses the

threat of terrorism and the way in which it impinges on a city's quality of life. All research has been carried out by MONOCLE's team of editors, correspondents and researchers, using a combination of publicly available information and requests to city officials. The more subjective metrics, from the quality of restaurants to a city's tolerance levels, have been assessed by our team of editors and correspondents.



Tokyo: *This year's winning city*

Living in Japan can sometimes feel like inhabiting a very safe, impossibly polite bubble, detached from the strife, intolerance and ugly rhetoric that seem to be so prevalent in many parts of the world. Of course, other places are not always so bad and Japan is not perfect but, as far as large-scale cities go, Tokyo has got urban living down to a fine art. Primary school children walk to school unaccompanied as a matter of course and the streets are safe, even at night. Good service is expected and received in every situation. In fact, the level of civility is so universal, and everyone so attuned to it, that any deviation from acceptable standards – a mildly sullen waiter or inattentive shop staff – causes disproportionate outrage.

The overwhelming sense is that people go out of their way not to bother others. Disturbing fellow subway passengers with a booming conversation just wouldn't be on and you can almost feel the collective horror should someone start eating a pungent burger or put their shoes on a seat. If it sounds exhausting, it really isn't. The awareness of not imposing one's presence on others is absorbed from childhood and internalised to the point where it becomes instinctive. There's an unspoken agreement among Tokyo's citizens that whatever the situation – a crowded train, a busy bus or an airport security queue – it will all be much easier if everyone thinks of others and not just themselves.

The "manners" posters that proliferate on the Tokyo subway, reminding passengers not to sit selfishly or shake their wet umbrellas in the direction of others, show just how different Tokyo is from every other megalopolis. Most major cities are grappling with serious crime and the threat of terrorism. Not that Japan is a stranger to external danger: North Korea has been lobbing missiles in Japan's direction with varying degrees of success and

Donald Trump has blown hot and cold on a relationship that was once a cornerstone of regional security. The laissez-faire attitude to smoking also needs more attention from officials, particularly with the 2020 Olympics fast approaching.

Tokyo's charm is sometimes hard to pin down. It's about a combination of tight neighbourhoods, superlative food, trains that leave when they're supposed to and a general ease of moving around what should be an unbearably crowded city. Maybe it's also the density of cultural offerings and the pockets of greenery. Or the fact that people cling doggedly to the rhythms of the natural world regardless of their urban surroundings, eating ginkgo nuts in the autumn and picnicking under cherry trees in spring. While we'd welcome other challengers, we're still in thrall to Tokyo's unique blend of small-town warmth and big-city excitement. — FW

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**What's changed this year**

Tourism has exploded: the number of visitors to Japan reached 24 million in 2016; the government wants to hit 40 million by 2020.

**What should change next year**

There has been much discussion – and even more resistance – but it's high time for Japan to put an end to smoking in bars and restaurants.

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**Population:** 9.4 million.

**Murders:** 75 (in 2015).

**Unemployment rate:** 3.2 per cent.

**Public parks:** 6,062.

**Homes built in the past year:** 148,275.

**Culture:** 260 museums, 224 libraries, 575 art galleries.

**Design schools:** 23.

**Cycle lanes:** 155.4km.

**New infrastructure projects:** Stations on the Yamanote and Kibiya lines are due to be completed in 2020.

**International connections:** 108 from Narita International Airport and 34 from Haneda Airport.

CITY STORIES OI:

*A big city on a human scale*

By Hirofumi Kurino,  
co-founder, United Arrows

Four things make Tokyo the attractive city it is: tradition, innovation, diversity and the people. The feudal city of Edo became Tokyo 150 years ago but many traces of Edo remain: the city's layout, Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples and shops.

The warm-hearted spirit of the *Edokko* (people from Edo) lingers too. This legacy is what visitors know as the "kindness" of Tokyo's people, the ease of getting around and the pleasure of shopping. For the Japanese, a shop is not just a commercial entity: it is part of the community. After the recent earthquakes, shops quickly reopened to provide a crucial lifeline. While it meant people could buy clothes, the support was not just about the availability of goods but the human interaction between survivors and shopkeepers.

Human interaction is the beauty of shopping here. One neighbourhood in Setagaya, for example, has small shops rather than big supermarkets. The owner of one vegetable shop phones my wife when he has fresh ingredients he knows she'll like.

Tokyo is just one big village. Consider lively Shimokitazawa or tiny Shoin Jinja, dotted with restaurants and secondhand bookshops. The capital is a place of remarkable diversity. — (M)



**Plenty to smile about:**

TOP: Smiling staff at Merci Bake in Shoin Jinja  
BOTTOM: Pond life in Inokashira Park





**Flora and fauna:**

TOP: Picnic with a canine companion in Yoyogi Park  
 BOTTOM: Admiring the wares in Kichijoji neighbourhood florist Cocoride  
 OPPOSITE: Yoyogi Park playing host to bubbles and bambinos



PHOTOGRAPHER: Kohai Take





**Harmonious surroundings:**  
 TOP LEFT: Personable pooches making friends at a police box  
 TOP RIGHT: Finding tranquility in Kiyosumi Gardens  
 BOTTOM LEFT: Indian restaurant Ami in Komazawa  
 BOTTOM RIGHT: Pit-stop Allpress Coffee in Kiyosumi Shirakawa

**Culture and caffeine:**  
 TOP LEFT: Staff at Nostos Books in Shoin Jinja  
 TOP RIGHT: Homeware shop Babaghuri in Kiyosumi Shirakawa  
 BOTTOM LEFT: On the move in Komazawa Olympic Park  
 BOTTOM RIGHT: Coffeeshop Iki Espresso Tokyo in Kiyosumi Shirakawa



Vienna: *Time to think*

When it comes to quality-of-life lists, Vienna is a veteran, consistently scoring well. It's easy to see why: the Austrian capital's inner city is walkable, human-scaled and packed with wedding-cake baroque architecture. Green space comprises about 50 per cent of the urban area. The mighty Danube with its canals and tributaries is a calming presence. There's home-grown food and wine, a long tradition of craftsmanship that, miraculously, hasn't disappeared in a sea of mass production and tonnes of generously funded high-culture.

These are the obvious things that make it nice to live here. But Vienna has plenty of less-visible advantages as well. The social-democratic city government, for one, which has been in place since the Second World War and is responsible for fair housing prices, low public-transport costs, clever urban planning and updated infrastructure. Consistency clearly counts: mayor Michael Häupl has been in his post for nearly 24 years.

Vienna is also smart. Close to 100,000 students attend Vienna University; in everyday conversation intellectual references spiced with dark humour are practically mandatory (along with some neurotic tics that make clear Sigmund Freud could *only* have grown up here). Even the most basic stuff of life is exceptional: Vienna's tap water, for example, is crystal clear, coming through two pipelines from mountain springs 330km away and generating hydroelectric power along the way.

But the most invisible quality-of-life signifier of all might be the way that the Viennese use time. While the rest of the world races around with coffees to go, the Viennese linger in 19th-century coffeehouses over their *Kaffee Mélange*. Business meetings that would take 45 minutes elsewhere will likely run up to three hours but your Austrian contacts will never forget your name. The city's innovators embody a mix of idleness and productivity that seems

paradoxical but isn't. Whether in the burgeoning start-up scene, diplomacy or the arts, the Viennese innately know that a leisurely meal can lead to creative breakthroughs, just like it did for composer Gustav Mahler and painter Gustav Klimt a century ago.

Speaking of time, the Viennese are bringing back a temporal icon that graced the city's streets in 1907: the *Normalzeit* (normal time) clock, shaped like a cube and showing hours and minutes on a numberless clock-face. In 1910 the Austro-Hungarian monarchy's many time zones were standardised to Central European Time. The clocks disappeared with the advent of smartphones but lately the timeless clocks have been reintroduced to Vienna's streets. They're a symbol of an abstract luxury that the Viennese refuse to relinquish – time to work properly, to think, to spend with friends and family and enjoy the other things that make the city great to live in. Without time, what good is the rest? — KB

#### What's changed this year

The sizable refugee population in Vienna has been relatively well absorbed and, with the seemingly endless presidential election out of the way, the migration debate has finally quietened down.

#### What should change next year

Vienna should continue building low-income housing and expanding its infrastructure but it should also consider at least some Sundays when shopping is allowed.

**Population:** 1.8 million in the city; 3.8 million in the metropolitan area.

**Murders:** 16.

**Unemployment rate:** 15 per cent.

**New businesses:** 8,982.

**Culture:** more than 100 museums, 41 libraries, 150 art galleries.

**Independent bookshops:** 149.

**Restaurants opened in past year:** 76.

**Cycle lanes:** 1,346km.

**New infrastructure projects:** New houses, schools and offices in the Sonnwendviertel neighbourhood.

**International connections:** 176 locations from Vienna International Airport.



**Picking up the pace:**  
Cultured cycle on the Ringstrasse's bike lane near the Kunsthistorisches Museum and Naturhistorisches Museum





**Whatever the weather:**

TOP LEFT: Soaking up the sun on the banks of the Donaukanal at Tel Aviv Beach bar and restaurant

TOP RIGHT: Taking a pew in Museumsquartier

BOTTOM LEFT: In the warmer months Naschmarkt is the spot for after-work drinks

BOTTOM RIGHT: Relaxing in the shade at Burggarten, part of Vienna Hofburg

**Sitting pretty:**

TOP LEFT: Museumsquartier is a hub for arts, culture and dedicated lounging

TOP RIGHT: Outdoor tables in Naschmarkt filling up for the evening

BOTTOM LEFT: View from Tel Aviv Beach across the Donaukanal, with Ringturm tower in the background

BOTTOM RIGHT: Barefoot vibe at bar and restaurant Adria Wien on the Donaukanal



## Berlin: *Truly public spaces*

Until just a few years ago, Berlin's quality of life was measured mostly by its cost of living. Thanks to an overabundance of residential buildings, rents were laughably cheap, attracting creative types from all over the world seeking freedom from financial pressures. The boon has since ended and the hype has passed but the city has maintained its position in our rankings. Why?

Maybe the most important factor is that there isn't one Berlin. Each district has such a distinct flavour that travelling from leafy Zehlendorf to glossy Mitte and on to rugged Neukölln feels like visiting completely different cities. (Thanks to good public transport and bike and car-sharing options, this is easy.) The variety has led to intense loyalties around neighbourhoods and, for a city of 3.5 million people, it can feel surprisingly village-like.

Berlin is also one of Europe's most multicultural cities: more than half of its residents aren't native to the city. Not only is English spoken nearly everywhere but in many cafés in Mitte, Kreuzberg and Neukölln it is the official language, as the requirement for staff to know German is increasingly redundant. The reason may be that their bosses don't speak it either: despite Germany's reputation for bureaucracy, opening a business in Berlin usually requires just one visit to a public office and paperwork is available in many languages.

Berlin's defining feature used to be the presence of world history on every corner; today the ubiquity of great restaurants seems like a more important characteristic. From a city that used to dance, Berlin has become a city that eats. Food now attracts more creative energy than the many technology start-ups that dominated Berlin a few years ago.

Lacking the legacy industries of other German urban centres, Berlin has done much to support entrepreneurialism and subsidise culture. The result is that it's the world's only

city with three opera houses, many of Germany's most cutting-edge theatres and a museum that houses everything from ancient artifacts to quirky industrial objects.

Still, Berlin is at its best when the government keeps its distance. A legacy of the post-reunification anarchy is the strong sense of ownership residents have over their city. Most parks don't close at night, the curfew for bars still seems to depend on what they negotiate with their neighbours and residents regularly turn the spaces around trees in the street into miniature gardens.

This understanding that public space truly belongs to everybody has given Berlin a strong sense of freedom. And it survives in an age when many other cities are experiencing security clampdowns. The British embassy continues to be more heavily guarded than Angela Merkel's private residence, which is recognisable only by two police officers strolling the vicinity. — KK

### What's changed this year

The debate on traffic infrastructure, and especially bicycle safety, has finally become a serious conversation – if not exactly conclusive.

### What should change next year

Since the chances of the BER opening next year are so slim as to be non-existent (and it's only five years late so far), Tegel Airport should be allowed to remain open forever.

**Population:** 3.5 million in the city; 6 million in the metropolitan area.

**Murders:** 37.

**Police response time:** 8 minutes 18 secs.

**Unemployment rate:** 8.9 per cent.

**Homes built in the past year:** 22,365.

**Culture:** About 180 museums, 91 cinemas, more than 440 art galleries.

**Independent bookshops:** 219.

**New restaurants:** 279.

**Cycle lanes:** 590km.

**New infrastructure projects:** Humboldt Forum, a cultural centre, will open in 2019.

**International connections:** 167 from Berlin-Tegel and Berlin-Schönefeld.



### Liquid refreshment:

Making the most of the summer with a dip in Krumme Lanke, a lake in Berlin's Steglitz-Zehlendorf borough