

Book reviews

As it's holiday season we take a gander at some far-flung places in this month's books. So if you're not jetting off somewhere exotic, escape the daily grind with a book

Berlin Dr Hans Christian Adam ISBN 978-3-8228-1445-1 £40

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When this book landed in the *Pro* office, we definitely knew about it. It's huge, and in this instance, huge certainly is beautiful.

Berlin: Portrait of a City is a gorgeous hardback beast of a book. It tells the great story of one of my favourite cities, from 1860 through to the present day in pictures. Not just any old pictures either, but glorious colour, black & white and sepia images, and all superbly reproduced.

There are famous images of landmarks like Checkpoint Charlie and the Brandenburg Gate as well as images taken by famous photographers, including the likes of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Helmut Newton and Thomas Struth. But this book is about much more than the famous, it chronicles the survival and development of the city and its people through two world wars, the Cold War, the airlift, the tearing down of the Wall, reunification of the country and the reinstatement of the city as the capital.

Many of the most compelling pictures are those credited to 'Anon'. They are of the most ordinary and commonplace of scenes, but they tell the story of this city through its graffiti, children's games and borders.

While most photographers will value this book for the range of illuminating images, it also offers a brilliant commentary on the city's history – in English, German and French, no less. Commentators include well-known Berliners like Marlene Dietrich alongside illustrious writers such as Vladimir Nabokov and even rock stars like David Bowie.

Deftly weaving candid images of Berlin's citizens that hint at the lives of these people in with architectural shots of this resplendent city, impressive even when it's been shattered by the Allies at the end of the Second World War, this book is a beautiful portrait of a truly impressive city.

Lisa Clatworthy

