

...to the Memorial to the Division of Germany in Marienborn

On August 13, 1996, Minister President Dr. Reinhard Höppner of Saxony-Anhalt opened the "Memorial to the Division of Germany" in Marienborn. Special points of interest for visitors include the automobile entry area, the control tower, and the inspection garage for vehicles leaving East Germany. A visitor-guide system, multi-media stations and signs enable visitors to explore the memorial on their own.

In the Visitors Center a permanent exhibition in the documentation center provides further insight into the historical contexts which led to the fortification of the GÜSt as a "bulwark of the border regime". Videos such as "The eye of the needle between two worlds" or "On guard for the GDR" can also be viewed in the documentation center. The Hötenleben Memorial, which documents the originally fully developed border installation over a length of about 350 meters, has been a part of the Marienborn Memorial to the Division of Germany since January 1, 2004.

Remembrance needs a place. For those who were affected by the division of Germany, the Marienborn memorial offers an appropriate setting in which to recall experiences, to deal with psychological wounds, or to bring past fears into the context of the present. The memorial is an auratic location which also provides an environment for exchanging ideas, for examining both sides of the border and for trying to understand the perspective of the other side. The Marienborn Memorial to the Division of Germany is a member of the Memorial Sites of Saxony-Anhalt Foundation and the center is becoming the focus of great public interest. In the first ten years over 1.3 million people visited the memorial.

The Marienborn Memorial to the Division of Germany has become a place of remembrance, mourning, reflection and research. It has changed from a fortress of division to a place of encounters. A place "where Germans tell Germans about their experiences" as former German Federal President Prof. Dr. Roman Herzog put it in 1998. Today seminars and encounters (with eye witnesses) are held in the heart of the former GÜSt Marienborn (Autobahn). In his visit to the memorial on November 9, 2004, Federal President Prof. Horst Köhler emphasized the role of the memorial as an "open place for learning", where "the generations meet" and by asking their own personal questions share their experiences with each other.

Opening hours:
Tuesday - Sunday 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Bundesautobahn A2 from the direction of Berlin:
Exit Marienborn / Helmstedt - Ost (East).
Bundesautobahn A2 from the direction of Hanover:
Exit at the Esso-gas station in Marienborn.
B1 (state road) from the direction of Helmstedt:
In Morsleben continue in the direction to Marienborn.
B245 (state road):
Sommersdorf, Harbke/OT highway Völpke.

Follow the signs for "Gedenkstätte."

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From the Marienborn border checkpoint...



Memorial to the Division of Germany in

MARIENBORN

The Marienborn Memorial to the Division of Germany is a member of the Memorial Sites of Saxony-Anhalt Foundation.

 **STIFTUNG GEDENKSTÄTTEN SACHSEN-ANHALT**

The Marienborn Memorial of the Division of Germany with its extension Hötenleben Memorial is part of the project "Grenzenlos - Wege zum Nachbarn e.V." (Borderless - Paths to neighbours, registered society). Other elements are the Zonengrenz-Museum Helmstedt (East German Border Museum, Helmstedt) and the Helmstedter Universitätstage (Helmstedt University Days).

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Publisher: Stiftung Gedenkstätten Sachsen-Anhalt
(Memorial Sites of Saxony-Anhalt Foundation)

Revised reprint



On the federal motorway (Bundesautobahn 2) between Helmstedt and Alleringersleben, tall light-towers surrounded by long barracks and a number of smaller buildings mark the site of the former Marienborn border checkpoint facility (GÜSt=Grenzübergangsstelle).

Until 1989, this was the "eye of the needle" between East and West. Helmstedt-Marienborn was synonymous for a border that not only separated Germans from each other, but also divided Europe and the world into two opposing military and political blocs, two competing economic systems, two ideological systems and spheres of influence. The Allied control point, originally opened on July 1, 1945, rebuilt and expanded in 1972, developed during the course of the Cold War into the largest and most important crossing point along the former German border. Approximately 1,000 people, border police as well as civilian employees, worked in the passport control and customs areas at the GÜSt. Between 1985 and 1989 alone, 34.6 million travelers passed through this checkpoint.

After the opening of the border on November 9, 1989, East German citizens could for the first time pass through the Marienborn GÜSt without restrictions. When the economic, currency and social unification of East and West Germany went into effect at midnight on June 30, 1990, the function of the GÜSt came to an end, exactly 45 years after it had been established.

Memorial to the division of Germany in Marienborn - outline map

1 Automobile entry/Passport control

Clearance area for passport and identity controls of all travelers with automobiles or motorcycles on the way to East Germany or in transit to West Berlin, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

2 Conveyor belts in the passport control area

Weather-protected conveyor belts transported passports and vehicle documents in different-colored artificial leather folders to the passport and identity controls, which were conducted by intelligence personnel of the East German Ministry of State Security ("Stasi").

3 Light-towers

At night, arc lamps and floodlights on twelve scalable light-towers, producing up to 8000 watts each, kept the grounds lit as bright as day, without glare or shadows.

4 Truck and bus entry/Passport control

Besides passport and identity controls, the customs officials in the clearance area for trucks and buses used movable and stationary mirrors and trained dog teams to search for hidden refugees and forbidden goods.

5 Special plant inspection

The inspection of plants and vegetable products, including seeds and coffee beans, took place in this control area.

6 Automobile customs control area

This building complex included x-ray machines for baggage items, a body-search room, a cashier's office where customs fees or fines for "offences against customs laws" were paid, and inspection garages, areas in which vehicle parts could be dismantled for inspection. You will find detailed information on six topics of customs clearance in the GDR in the rooms which have been preserved in their original state.

7 Former exit area

This clearance area for customs, passport and identification controls for all travellers leaving East Germany or in transit from West Berlin, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, was torn down in 1995.

8 Inspection garage for cars leaving the GDR

The inspection garage became the last stop for many East German citizens who attempted to escape hidden in automobiles. This was the clearance area for intensive inspection in case of "well-founded suspicion". A photo documentation of an unsuccessful escape attempt can be seen here.

9 Mortuary

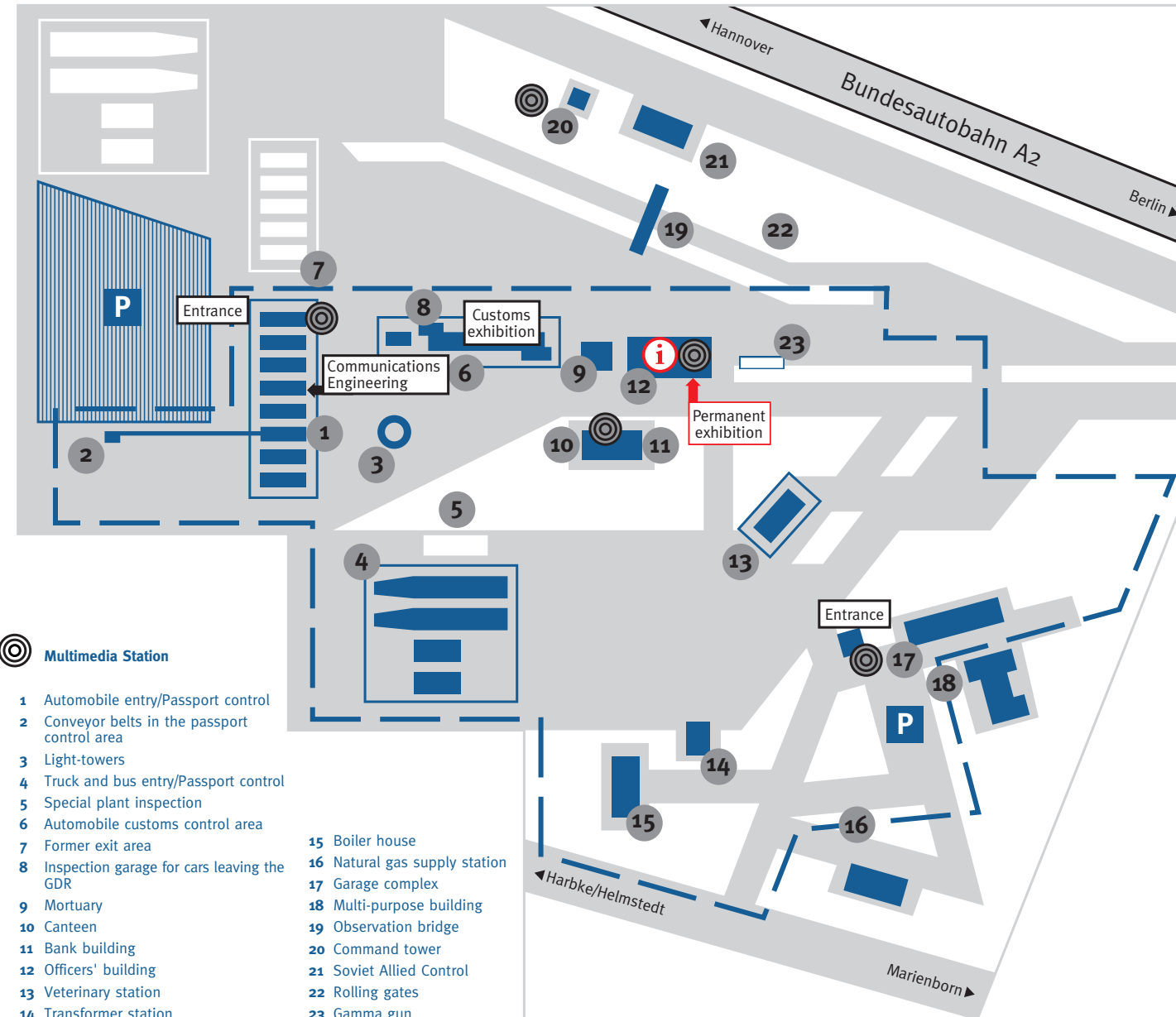
In this garage sick people in ambulances and even corpses had to be examined and identified before being transported from East to West Germany.

10 Canteen

The employees could get themselves refreshments in the so-called "Kaffeeklappe" (coffee bar). This facility has been "an area of silence" -since October 2000. A room for meditation and reflection offers visitors a quiet atmosphere for contemplation. In another room, a media station provides information for further insight and consideration.

11 Bank building

The East German national bank conducted the required "minimum exchange" of currency for all persons travelling to East Germany. The exchange rate for East and West German marks was 1 to 1.



12 Officers' building

This was the administrative and command centre for the East German border police, the staff of the Ministry of State Security ("Stasi") responsible for passport controls, and the customs administration. Currently, the Visitors Center houses a permanent exhibition as well as special exhibits, a library, seminar rooms and administrative offices.

13 Veterinary station

Clearance area for the inspection of livestock shipments as well as pets taken along when entering or leaving East Germany.

14 Transformer station

Electricity for the operation of the GÜSt came from the public mains, the amount equivalent to meeting the needs of a small town with a population of about 20,000. In case of power failure, within 20 seconds three reconstructed airplane engines took over as emergency generators to provide electrical power for the most important security facilities.

15 Boiler house

In addition to the boilers, the building also housed cabinet-making, metalworking and electricians' workshops.

16 Natural gas supply station

Heating was provided by two boilers using natural gas delivered to this station.

17 Garage complex

The garages housed the service and combat vehicles.

18 Multi-purpose building

A telephone interception system for monitoring telephone conversations at the GÜSt, as well as conversations between East and West German citizens in the region was located here. The building also served as a meeting room and canteen for the employees.

19 Observation bridge

From the observation bridge, trucks were checked for hidden persons or goods.

20 Command tower

This command tower was the command centre of the officer on duty. Here is where all the information ran together. All control and blocking systems such as traffic lights, barriers and rolling gates for the entire complex could be controlled from here. In case of an attempted escape, traffic at the GÜSt could be totally halted within seconds.

21 Soviet Allied Control

Officers of the Red Army inspected persons and military vehicles from the three Western Allies and the Soviet Union. The Allied control area was strictly separated from the East German-run clearance areas. The buildings used by the Soviet Allied Control were demolished in the 1990s.

22 Rolling gates

Using a system of traffic lights, barriers and rolling gates the border guards could prevent escape attempts by car or truck. The rolling gate was designed to stop a truck weighing 50 tonnes and travelling at a speed of up to 80 kilometres per hour. Four rolling gates were installed at the Marienborn checkpoint.

23 Gamma gun

From 1978 to 1980 a so-called "gamma gun" with a low emission dose of caesium 137 was tested at the border checkpoint in Marienborn. After successful completion of the tests, gamma guns were used at all border checkpoints between East and West Germany and West Berlin. This technology was used for checking automobiles and trucks for hidden persons or goods on their way out of East Germany.