

MARIENBORN MEMORIAL TO DIVIDED GERMANY

Since its founding in 1996, the memorial, through its ongoing exhibition and educational work, has become a site for historical and political education, international exchanges and research, and is now one of the most important places for out-of-school learning experiences. The Border Memorial Hötensleben, the largest example of preserved GDR border fortifications, became a part of the Marienborn Memorial in 2004. Together they provide a comprehensive view of East-West experiences with the rigid GDR border regime and shows what it was like to live close to the inner German border.

VIEWING THE SITE

Visitors can explore the memorial on their own and view the historic processing area for cars and trucks entering the GDR as well as the customs area with its inspection garages. The currency exchange office of the GDR national bank, preserved in its original state, and the processing barracks of passport control are also freely accessible. The command tower can be visited on a free guided tour. The former service building contains the permanent exhibition on the history of the border crossing site and the GDR border regime, the visitors information centre and additional rooms for temporary exhibitions. A second exhibition about border inspection procedures and how they were experienced by travellers is on display in the original passport control rooms.

The Marienborn Memorial to Divided Germany is part of the Sachsen-Anhalt Memorials Foundation. It is funded in part by the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM). The Border Memorial Hötensleben is also a part of the memorial complex. Both sites were awarded the European Heritage Label within the Iron Curtain Network in 2011.

OPENING HOURS

Daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

CONTACT

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Marienborn MEMORIAL TO DIVIDED GERMANY

Map of Grounds

EN

Gestaltung: KOCMOC 2019



STIFTUNG GEDENKSTÄTTEN SACHSEN-ANHALT

SITE OF COMMEMORATION, EXCHANGE AND LEARNING ABOUT HISTORY

The Helmstedt/Marienborn border crossing is one of the most distinctive commemorative sites of German division. Situated at the meeting point between East and West, the GDR border crossing site (GÜSt) Marienborn developed into the largest and most important border crossing on the inner German border. The emblematic architecture of large roofs and rows of lamp posts on the grounds of the control area reflects the heavily monitored border between two political systems that not only separated Germans from Germans, but also divided all of Europe and the world into two opposing power blocs. The Marienborn Memorial to Divided Germany opened on the grounds of this unusual historic site on 13 August 1996. It is a place to commemorate those who lost their homes, experienced suffering or injustice, or were killed as a consequence of the GDR border regime.

HISTORY OF THE SITE

The victorious powers of World War II established the Allied checkpoint Helmstedt/Marienborn on the Hannover-Berlin autobahn on 1 July 1945. It was the sole access point for Western Allies travelling to divided Berlin. The GDR took control of operations at the Marienborn checkpoint in 1950. In May 1952, the GDR government established a deadly border regime with barbed wire, signal fences and mines. The checks at the Marienborn border crossing site were aimed at defending against "hostile" influences from the West. As passenger traffic increased and the Transit Agreement went into effect in 1972, a new, much larger border crossing site was created. In the years 1985 to 1989 alone, 34.6 million travellers were processed here. Some 1,000 people – including Border Troops, passport control and customs officers, and civilian workers – worked at the border crossing. When the border opened on 9 November 1989, the people from the GDR were able to pass through the Marienborn border crossing site unrestricted. The checks in Marienborn were discontinued at midnight on 30 June 1990.

MAP KEY

- 01 **Entrance West** / The entrance to the memorial is located in the area for entry inspections at the former centre of the Marienborn border crossing site (GÜSt). This is where you can learn more about the border crossing site during the East-West conflict from 1945 to 1990.
- 02 **Passport Conveyor Belt** / Conveyor belts transported travellers' documents to the passport and identity check in the control barracks.
- 03 **Passport Inspection for Automobile Entry** / Employees of the Ministry for State Security checked travellers entering the GDR and in transit to West Berlin.
- 04 **Control Grounds** / For the GDR, the border crossing presented a "gateway" through which all perceived or real opponents had to pass. Stopping escapes to the West was of utmost importance, which is why extensive inspections were conducted.
- 05 **Passport and Customs Inspection for Truck Entry** / During inspections of trucks entering the GDR, passport inspectors and customs officials searched for illegally imported goods.
- 06 **GDR Customs** / Customs officials searched for media, objects and consumer articles that were banned from import. The permanent exhibition on GDR Customs is presented in the historic rooms.
- 07 **Inspection Garage for Cars leaving the GDR** / In the exit area, customs searched specifically for refugees hiding in vehicles.
- 08 **Customs Inspection of Entry Cars** / Customs checked whether travellers were bringing in banned goods or currencies. Western newspapers, literature and other publications were confiscated.
- 09 **Canteen** / GÜSt employees bought food in the canteen during their breaks. This room is now a place of quiet for individual reflection and prayer.
- 10 **Customs Inspection and Transfer Garage** / The garage building was used to inspect sick or deceased persons being transferred to the Federal Republic or the GDR.
- 11 **Currency Exchange Office of the GDR National Bank** / Everyone travelling to the GDR had to exchange a set amount of German marks into GDR currency for each day of their visit.
- 12 **Office Building (exhibition)** / The Office building contained the offices of the head of the Passport Control Unit (PKE) of the Ministry for State Security (MfS), as well as the offices of GDR Customs and Border Troops. Today the permanent exhibition and visitors centre are located here.
- 13 **Former Exit Area** / The clearance area for cars leaving for the Federal Republic was torn down in autumn 1995.

- 14 **Sliding Barrier** / Four massive sliding barriers were designed to prevent vehicles from crashing through the border. The sliding barriers were originally positioned at the GÜSt exit to the West.
- 15 **Observation Bridge** / Border soldiers on the observation bridge searched for people hiding on trucks that were leaving the GDR.
- 16 **Soviet Allied Control** / In this separate clearance area, members of the Soviet Army inspected military vehicles and military personnel from the three Western Allies and the Soviet Union.
- 17 **Command Tower** / All information came together in the command centre where the GDR Border Troops officer was on duty. Barriers and traffic lights were controlled from here.

- 18 **X-Ray Screening** / In the 1980s, employees of the Ministry for State Security (MfS) used radioactive sources to screen vehicles.
- 19 **Cattle Stalls and Blasting Pit** / The cattle enclosure was a quarantine area for farm animals. The border crossing site contained several blasting pits for explosives and munitions.
- 20 **Utility Tunnel** / An accessible tunnel with cables and pipes for power, water, sewage, telecommunication and heating ran beneath the grounds of the border crossing site.
- 21 **Veterinary Inspection** / Commercial animal transports and pets being brought into the GDR were inspected in this clearance area.

- 22 **Entrance South** / Visitor parking is located at the former employee entrance to the GÜSt. This is where you can learn more about the role of the border crossing site during the East-West conflict from 1945 to 1990.
- 23 **Access Control** / Employees of the Ministry for State Security checked people entering the control territory.
- 24 **Multipurpose Building and Garage Complex** / The building contained offices, conference and functional rooms. The business and service vehicles were parked in the garages.
- 25 **Transformer Station and Boiler House** / Electricity for the GÜSt came from the public mains. When a power failure occurred, electricity was provided by an emergency generator.

