

Between August 13, 1961, and November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall cut an unrelenting gash through the whole of downtown Berlin in an attempt to prevent the citizens of East Berlin and the GDR from fleeing to the West. The Wall never completely succeeded in cutting off the stream of escapees; the SED party regime that ruled the GDR added a variety of border security installations after August 13, 1961, resulting in a multi-tiered closed-frontier system. In the West, the frontier strip was known as the Todesstreifen, or „death strip“, due to its death toll of a hundred and thirty-six. The Berlin Wall that the SED had so long used in its attempt to cement its stranglehold on the people of East Germany fell with the collapse of the GDR in 1989, ushering in the dictatorship's ultimate demise.



Remains of the frontier installations used in the Memorial



The path the Wall took



Fenster des Gedenkens (Window of Remembrance) – a place to remember the deaths at the Wall

The Berlin Wall Memorial is a central memorial site in remembrance of a Germany divided. Located in the middle of the country's capital city, the Memorial will run either side of the former frontier strip for 1.4 km, or just under a mile, at the historic Bernauer Straße site. The last remaining part of the Berlin Wall in all its tiered structure located on the Memorial area gives visitors an impression of what the frontier installations looked like at the end of the eighties, with remnants and traces of the installations as well as the dramatic events that took place here to illustrate the history of the divided nation.

## The Memorial

The Berlin Wall Memorial straddling Bernauer Straße is currently being extended, as is the outside exhibition on the frontier strip previously located in East Berlin, an exhibition illustrating the history of the division focussing on Bernauer Straße as an example. The Memorial will include a monument to the remembrance of the divided city and the victims of communist dictatorship as well as the Window of Remembrance; the Chapel of Reconciliation is also located here. The new visitors' centre as well as a documentation centre with a look-out tower and an exhibition on the construction of the Wall in August 1961 is located on the opposite side of the road, in the western part of the city. There is now an exhibition in the Nordbahnhof S-Bahn local train station – Grenz- und Geisterbahnhöfe im geteilten Berlin, or „Frontier stations and ghost stations in divided Berlin“, to document the impact of the Wall on the city's public transport system.



Frieda Schulze, aged 77, escapes from her apartment on the first floor of a house on the frontier, September 25, 1961

### Bernauer Straße – a historic site

Bernauer Straße became a symbol of Berlin's division upon the Wall's construction on August 13, 1961. The street shows especially poignant traces of the division – house fronts on the eastern side marked the frontier; the pavement right in front was in the western part. Families, friends and neighbourhoods were torn apart; the spectacular escapes from the houses are part of the city's living memory, whole families taking their chances in a leap for freedom out of the windows until the windows were walled up along the whole street front, and the street's two thousand or so inhabitants were evicted and rehoused.

## Eye-witness accounts and personal biographies

Contacting eye witnesses plays a major role for the Memorial. Nothing brings history to life as much as those experiences of each and every individual that experienced the Wall's construction and suffered from the division. An eye-witness archive open to the public gathers, preserves and shares the memories of those affected; their stories are passed on in different ways:

- Remembrance ceremonies
- Exhibition and educational projects
- Events and publications

Including eye witnesses is especially important in developing awareness; however, the directness of face-to-face contact with those with living memory of events will not always be possible, so collecting and preserving eye-witness reports for the historical record takes an important part in the work of the Memorial.



Border guard Hans Conrad Schumann jumps the barrier after the construction of the Berlin Wall at Ruppiner Straße, August 15, 1961

## Research and documentation

Researching the Wall, its history and the people in East and West that suffered from the division – and those that served the division – is an important task for the Berlin Wall Memorial. This involves collecting, organising and documenting the relevant facts, and preparing them for public presentation. This is a task for the research and documentation department of the Memorial.



Frontier installation at Bernauer Straße 1965/1966





Dynamiting the Church of Reconciliation in 1985

## Daily remembrance of the deaths at the Berlin Wall

Remembrance ceremonies take place at the Chapel of Reconciliation, Bernauer Straße 4, on Tuesdays to Fridays from midday to a quarter past midday; the ceremonies were initiated by the reconciliation association on August 13, 2005, and are co-organised by the Stiftung Berliner Mauer (Berlin Wall Foundation).

Every remembrance ceremony centres on the personal biography of a life taken by the Wall, a fate to be preserved from collective amnesia. A name may be a statistic, but each and every name belonged to a unique individual.

The ceremony aims towards giving comfort to those close to the deceased, to provide a forum for public remembrance at this historic site, and to strengthen the public memory of those that fell victim to the Berlin Wall. Townspeople and visitors to Berlin, men and women, young and old, friends and family of the victims are welcome to attend the ceremonies.



Outside exhibition with the course of the Wall retraced

## Chapel of Reconciliation

The tenth anniversary of the Fall of the Wall saw the topping-out ceremony of the Chapel of Reconciliation in 1999. The old church dating back to 1894 was on the death strip after 1961 – inaccessible to its parishioners – and a new community centre was built for the orphaned parish on Bernauer Straße in 1965; the church on the death strip was dynamited in 1985. After the Wall fell in 1989, the death-strip property was returned to the parish on condition that it would be used as a church. The bells from the old church were rescued and returned for use in their original home in the new chapel, as was the old retablo.



Chapel of Reconciliation in 2008



Window of Remembrance

## Educational projects

Bernauer Straße's location was one of the epicentres in the history of Germany's division between 1961 and 1989, and this is where the educational commitment begins – a historic location for school classes and non-school educational groups to experience the topics that surround the Berlin Wall and the division of Germany in a variety of ways, by a variety of examples. The Memorial provides an analytical and a creative approach in its seminars.



Chapel of Reconciliation in 2008





Visitors' Centre on Bernauer Straße 119, on the corner of Gartenstraße

### Memorial site opening times

Daily, 6:00 AM – 10:00 PM

### Documentation and Visitors' Centre opening times

From Tuesday – Sunday, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Ghost stations exhibition: during the opening times of the Nordbahnhof S-Bahn station  
The outside exhibition on the former death strip of the memorial site is accessible all year around.  
Guided tours are available on request.

**Free admission!**

### Visitor service, contact

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