

Brandenburg Gate



The Brandenburg Gate (German: Brandenburger Tor ['bʁandŋ̊ˌbʊʁɕe 'toːɐ̯] ⓘ) is an 18th-century neoclassical monument in Berlin. One of the best-known landmarks of Germany, it was erected on the site of a former city gate that marked the start of the road from Berlin to Brandenburg an der Havel, the former capital of the Margraviate of Brandenburg. The current structure was built from 1788 to 1791 by orders of King Frederick William II of Prussia, based on designs by the royal architect Carl Gotthard Langhans. The bronze sculpture of the quadriga crowning the gate is a work by the sculptor Johann Gottfried Schadow.

The Brandenburg Gate is located in the western part of the city centre within Mitte, at the junction of Unter den Linden and Ebertstraße. The gate dominates the Pariser Platz to the east, while to the immediate west it opens onto the Platz des 18. März beyond which the Straße des 17. Juni begins. One block to the north stands the Reichstag building, home to the German parliament (Bundestag), and further to the west is the Tiergarten inner-city park. The gate also forms the monumental entry to Unter den Linden, which leads directly to the former City Palace of the Prussian monarchs (now housing the Humboldt Forum museum), and the Berlin Cathedral.

[PREVIOUS GATES](#)

History

In the time of King Frederick William I (1688), shortly after the Thirty Years' War and a century before today's Brandenburg Gate was constructed, Berlin was a small walled city within a star

fort with several named gates: Spandauer Tor, St. Georgen Tor, Stralower Tor, Cöpenicker Tor, Neues Tor, and Leipziger Tor (see map). Relative peace, a policy of religious tolerance, and status as capital of the Kingdom of Prussia facilitated the growth of the city. With the construction of Dorotheenstadt around 1670 and its inclusion in Berlin's city fortifications, a first gate was built on the site, approximately at the level of today's Schadowstraße, consisting of a breach through the raised wall and a drawbridge over the dug moat.[5]

With the expansion of Dorotheenstadt to the west and the construction of the Berlin Customs Wall (German: Akzisemauer) in 1734, the latter of which enclosed the old fortified city and many of its then suburbs, a predecessor of today's Brandenburg Gate was built by the Court Architect Philipp Gerlach as a city gate on the road to Brandenburg an der Havel.[6] The gate system consisted of two Baroque pylons decorated with pilasters and trophies, to which the gate wings were attached. In addition to the ornamental gate, there were simple passages for pedestrians in the wall, which were decorated with ornamental vases at this point.[7]

Description

The central portion of the gate draws from the tradition of the Roman triumphal arch, although in style it is one of the first examples of Greek Revival architecture in Germany.[2] The gate is supported by twelve fluted Doric columns, six to each side, forming five passageways. There are also walls between the pairs of columns at front and back, decorated with classicizing reliefs of the Labours of Hercules. Citizens were originally allowed to use only the outermost two passageways on each side. Its design is based on the Propylaea, the gateway to the Acropolis of Athens,[2] which also had a front with six Doric columns, though these were topped by a triangular pediment.

The central portion is flanked by L-shaped wings on either side, at a lower height, but using the same Doric order. Next to, and parallel with, the gate these are open "stoas", but the longer sides, stretching beyond the east side, have buildings set back from the columns. These are called "custom houses" for the Berlin Customs Wall, which was in force until 1860, or "gatehouses".

The Doric order of the gate mostly, but not entirely, follows Greek precedents, which had recently become much better understood by the publication of careful illustrated records. The Greek Doric does not have bases to the columns, and the fluting here follows the Greek style for Ionic and Corinthian columns, with flat fillets rather than sharp arrises between the flutes, and rounded ends to the top and bottom of flutes.

COLD WAR

War

After Germany's surrender at the end of the war, the Brandenburg Gate was located in the Soviet occupation zone, directly next to the border to the zone occupied by the British, which later became the border between East and West Berlin. In connection with the East German uprising of 1953, three men took down the red flag on the roof of the Brandenburg Gate and, shortly after noon on 17 June 1953, hoisted the joint black-red-gold flag of East Germany and West Germany. One of the three men, Wolfgang Panzer, probably paid for this action with his life and was never seen again.[23]

On 21 September 1956, the East Berlin magistrates decided to restore the only surviving but damaged former city gate. Despite heated arguments and mutual accusations, both parts of Berlin worked together on the restoration. The holes were patched, but were visible for many years. The quadriga was completely recreated based on a plaster cast from 1942; the reconstruction was carried out by the sculptor Otto Schnitzer and the traditional foundry Hermann Noack in Friedenau. The restoration was completed on 14 December 1957. The Iron Cross standard above the quadriga was replaced by a wreath, as originally intended, but the Iron Cross returned after German Reunification, and remains in place in 2024.

[POST-1989](#)

Post-1989

When the Revolutions of 1989 occurred and the wall was demolished, the gate symbolized freedom and the desire to unify the city of Berlin. Thousands of people gathered at the wall to celebrate its fall on 9 November 1989. On 22 December 1989, the Brandenburg Gate border crossing was reopened when Helmut Kohl, the West German chancellor, walked through to be greeted by Hans Modrow, the East German prime minister. Demolition of the rest of the wall around the area took place the following year. In 1990, the quadriga was removed from the gate as part of renovation work carried out by the East German authorities following the fall of the wall in November 1989. Germany was officially reunified in October 1990.