Brandenburg Gate

Built between 1788 and 1791 by Prussian King Frederick William II as a key entry point to the city of Berlin, Brandenburg Gate was topped off with a statue known as the “Quadriga,” which depicted a statue of the goddess of victory driving a chariot pulled by four horses. The statue remained in place for just over a decade, before falling into the clutches of Napoleon Bonaparte and his Grand Army. After occupying Berlin that fall and triumphantly marching beneath the arches of the Gate, Napoleon ordered the Quadriga dismantled and shipped back to Paris. The horse and goddess were hastily packed up in a series of crates and moved across the continent.

Napoleon, perhaps preoccupied with the crumbling of his recently established empire, appears to have forgotten about the statue, and it languished in storage until 1814, when Paris itself was captured by Prussian soldiers following Napoleon’s defeat. The Quadriga was returned to Berlin and once again installed atop the Brandenburg Gate, this time with one change: As a symbol of Prussia’s military victory over France, an iron cross was added to the statue. The cross was later removed during the Communist era, and only permanently restored in 1990 during the unification of Germany.

After a meteoric rise to power at the head of his Nazi Party and a power struggle with German President Paul von Hindenburg, Adolf Hitler was appointed to the position of chancellor on January 30, 1933. That evening, the new chancellor was treated to a torchlight procession through Berlin, as thousands of brown shirted stormtroopers and SS members passed under the Brandenburg Gate to the presidential palace, where Hitler and high-ranking members of the Nazi Party were cheered. It was the first of many large-scale propaganda events held by the Nazis as they tightened their control over Germany in the years leading up to World War II.

The end of the war destroyed much of Berlin, but the Brandenburg Gate survived, albeit with heavy damage. In one of the last cooperative measures before the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the East and West Berlin authorities worked together on its restoration. Once the wall went up, however, access to the Gate, located in what was now East Berlin, was cut off

Almost two years after the Berlin Wall was erected, John F. Kennedy delivered one of the most famous addresses of his presidency to a crowd of more than 120,000 gathered outside West Berlin’s city hall, not far from the Brandenburg Gate. Like Ronald Reagan after him, Kennedy’s speech has been largely remembered for one particular phrase. In Kennedy’s case, it was in German—poorly spoken German, some believed.

Ronald Reagan had visited Berlin once before in his presidency, in June 1982, when he addressed West German dignitaries and a crowd outside the city’s Charlottenburg Palace, affirming America’s support for the city of Berlin and its people. Five years (and three Soviet leaders later), Reagan prepared to return to West Berlin to celebrate the city’s 750th anniversary. The preceding years had seen an escalation in rhetoric on both sides (with Reagan famously referring to the USSR as an “Evil Empire”), but also the first noticeable “thaws” in the Cold War in nearly a decade, including the Reykjavik Summit in Iceland the year before and ongoing negotiations that would result in an arms treaty in late 1987.

Although authorship of the 1987 Berlin speech’s most famous line remains in dispute, there is little doubt that Reagan’s advisors were almost as deeply divided about whether he should use the potentially inflammatory words, as the city of Berlin was itself. Some feared antagonizing Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, with whom Reagan had built a successful working relationship. Others on Reagan’s team, fearful of charges that the administration had gone “soft,” argued that the time had come for a full-throated challenge to the Communists. The back and forth over the text continued for almost a year, but in the end Reagan made the final decision to keep the line in, and on June 12, 1987, he addressed not just the crowd of more than 20,000 gathered at the Brandenburg Gate itself, but millions of listeners in the Unites States, the Soviet Union and around the world, thunderously calling for Gorbachev to [“tear down this wall.”](http://www.history.com/speeches/reagan-demands-fall-of-berlin-wall)

# **facts you never knew about the Brandenburg Gate**

It's one of the most iconic scenes of recent German history: Hundreds of thousands of people celebrating before the Brandenburg Gate as the Berlin Wall fell on November 9th 1989.

The Gate has now come to represent German unity and freedom since the end of the Cold War and divided country. It holds great “symbolic value” for Germany, Christian Tänzler, a spokesperson from Berlin's [tourism website](http://www.visitberlin.de/), told The Local.

Not only is it “a symbol of the German-German divide”, but it also “stands for the reunification” of East and West Germany in 1990, Tänzler went on to add.

Despite being heavily damaged in the Second World War, the Gate has withstood the test of time.

“Today, people from all over the world link the Brandenburg Gate with freedom, tolerance and cosmopolitanism”, a Senate spokesperson told [Berliner Kurier](http://www.berliner-kurier.de/berlin/kiez---stadt/stolzer-geburtstag-das-brandenburger-tor-wird-225-jahre-alt-24486006).

But there is far more to the famous landmark than initially meets the eye.

**Here are a few facts that you probably didn’t know about the Brandenburg Gate.**

**1. August 6th 1791** – that's when the Gate was opened, after having been commissioned by Friedrich Wilhelm II. The Gate was erected not as a political symbol, but instead for a rather more simple reason – to mark the end of the boulevard Unter den Linden.

**2. The Propylaeum of Athens’ Acropolis**– that's what the gate was modelled on.

**3. 1806** – that's when the Quadriga (the sculpture of the horse-drawn chariot on the top of the Gate) was stolen by Napoleon’s soldiers and taken back to France as a victory trophy. But after Napoleon was defeated, the Quadriga was returned to Berlin.

**4. January 30th 1933**– that's when the Nazis held a torchlit procession through the Gate to celebrate Hitler’s seizure of power.

**5. 1945 until 1957**– that's when the Soviet flag was flown on the top of the Gate. However, the flag was ripped down during the peaceful protests on June 17th 1953, when demonstrators protested against the political and economic conditions in the GDR.

**6. June 12th 1987** – that's when the [then-US President Ronald Reagan made his rousing speech before the Gate](https://www.thelocal.de/20150612/reagan-to-gorbachev-tear-down-this-wall), exclaiming, “As long as this gate is closed […] it is not the German question alone that remains open, but the question of freedom for all mankind […] Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”.

**7. December 1989** – that's when the Gate was opened as a border crossing by West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and East German Premier Hans Modrow.

**8. 2000 until 2002** – that's when the Gate was renovated by Berlin’s Foundation for the Protection of Monuments, costing a massive 6 million Euros.

**9. 4000** – that's the number of [counter-demonstrators who gathered to prevent 300 supporters of the anti-Islam group Pegida from marching from the city hall to the Gate on January 5th 2015](https://www.thelocal.de/20150113/100000-march-against-pegida). In addition, all the lights at the Gate were switched off.

**10. 26 metres** – that's the height of the the Gate, which is made up of six Doric columns on either side,  supporting a transverse beam 11 metres deep. There are five walkways through the gate.

**11. 130,000** – that's the number of people who gathered at the Gate following the attacks on an Orlando gay club in 2016. The Gate was lit up in rainbow colours to commemorate the 49 victims.

**12. The luxury Adlon Hotel, the French and the US embassies** – those are the buildings which surround the Gate, in its prime location at Pariser Platz, otherwise known as Berlin’s “gute Stube” (“best room”).

**13. The Märkisches Museum in Berlin** – that's where you can see the horse’s head from the Quadriga sculpture.

**14. About a million** – that's the number of people who flock to the Gate every year for its famous New Year’s Eve party, complete with music and fireworks.

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| **Brandenburg Gate** | |
| Brandenburger Tor | |
| The Brandenburg Gate, viewed from the [Pariser Platz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pariser_Platz) on the East side | |
| [Wikimedia](https://foundation.wikimedia.org/wiki/Maps_Terms_of_Use) | © [OpenStreetMap](https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright) | |
| **General information** | |
| **Type** | City gate |
| **Architectural style** | [Neoclassical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassical_architecture) |
| **Location** | [Berlin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin), Germany |
| [**Coordinates**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system) | [52°30′58.58″N 13°22′39.80″E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Brandenburg_Gate&params=52_30_58.58_N_13_22_39.80_E_type:landmark)[Coordinates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): [52°30′58.58″N 13°22′39.80″E](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=Brandenburg_Gate&params=52_30_58.58_N_13_22_39.80_E_type:landmark) |
| **Construction started** | 1788 |
| **Completed** | 1791 |
| **Design and construction** | |
| **Architect** | [Carl Gotthard Langhans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Gotthard_Langhans) |

[**Construction started**](https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=APq-WBtCY2t5s-eF3TnFWIS4le5-lJDbfQ:1650818245645&q=brandenburg+gate+construction+started&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDTJTrPQ0s0ot9JPzs_JSU0uyczP08_JT04EMYqtkoFESVEpWFihuCSxqCQ1ZRGralJRYl5Kal5SaVG6QnpiSaoCNnUAVT3RpGQAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj87fqYka33AhXZk_0HHQswDNoQ6BMoAHoFCIgBEAI)**:**1788

[**Opened**](https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=APq-WBtCY2t5s-eF3TnFWIS4le5-lJDbfQ:1650818245645&q=brandenburg+gate+opened&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDTJTrPQUsxOttJPLErOyCxJTS4pLUrVLy4pKgWzrPILUvNSUxaxiicVJealpOYllRalK6QnlqQqQGQAdS_fzUoAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj87fqYka33AhXZk_0HHQswDNoQ6BMoAHoFCIcBEAI)**:**August 6, 1791

[**Architects**](https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=APq-WBtCY2t5s-eF3TnFWIS4le5-lJDbfQ:1650818245645&q=brandenburg+gate+architects&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDTJTrPQUslOttJPLErOyCxJTS4pLUrVLy4pKgWzrODCi1ilk4oS81JS85JKi9IV0hNLUhXgksUArw6mAFEAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj87fqYka33AhXZk_0HHQswDNoQ6BMoAHoFCIsBEAI)**:**[Carl Gotthard Langhans](https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=APq-WBtCY2t5s-eF3TnFWIS4le5-lJDbfQ:1650818245645&q=Carl+Gotthard+Langhans&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDTJTrNQAjNTTMzKC7VUspOt9BOLkjMyS1KTS0qLUvWLS4pKwSwruPAiVjHnxKIcBff8kpKMxKIUBZ_EvPSMxLziHayMu9iZOBgBlCoGdF8AAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj87fqYka33AhXZk_0HHQswDNoQmxMoAXoFCIsBEAM), [Johann Gottfried Schadow](https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=APq-WBtCY2t5s-eF3TnFWIS4le5-lJDbfQ:1650818245645&q=Johann+Gottfried+Schadow&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDTJTrNQAjONs4orTbRUspOt9BOLkjMyS1KTS0qLUvWLS4pKwSwruPAiVgmv_IzEvDwF9_ySkrSizNQUheDkjMSU_PIdrIy72Jk4GAF1ihBmYQAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj87fqYka33AhXZk_0HHQswDNoQmxMoAnoFCIsBEAQ)

[**Height**](https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=APq-WBtCY2t5s-eF3TnFWIS4le5-lJDbfQ:1650818245645&q=brandenburg+gate+height&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDTJTrPQUsxOttJPLErOyCxJTS4pLUrVLy4pKgWzrDJSM9MzShaxiicVJealpOYllRalK6QnlqQqQGQAQv3ApkoAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj87fqYka33AhXZk_0HHQswDNoQ6BMoAHoFCIkBEAI)**:**26 m

[**Architectural style**](https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=APq-WBtCY2t5s-eF3TnFWIS4le5-lJDbfQ:1650818245645&q=brandenburg+gate+architectural+style&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAOPgE-LUz9U3MDTJTrPQ0stOttJPLErOyCxJTS4pLUrVLy4pKgWzrJCEE3MUiksqc1IXsaokFSXmpaTmJZUWpSukJ5akKmBRBgDCClGIZAAAAA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj87fqYka33AhXZk_0HHQswDNoQ6BMoAHoFCIMBEAI)**:**Neoclassical architecture