

25 Facts About The Berlin Wall You Didn't Know Yet

André Klein · Sunday, June 3rd, 2018



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NOT TOO LONG AGO, there were two Germanies: East and West, separated by the impenetrable (Berlin) Wall and its death strip. It separated neighbors on the same street, split up families, inspired courageous escape attempts and created tragedy after tragedy.

Many people did not expect to see an end to this tyranny in their lifetime, making the Fall of the Berlin Wall one of the most remarkable positive events in recent Germany history.

In this short article, you can find key facts around the construction, its reign of terror and finally, the Fall of the Berlin Wall, which is known as “Der Mauerfall” or: “Die Wende” in German.

In German, the (Berlin) Wall is simply known as: “Die Mauer” – The Wall.



Memorial tablet for Berlin Wall in Berlin-Staaken, Germany (via [Wikimedia](#), Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International, 3.0 Unported, 2.5 Generic, 2.0 Generic and 1.0 Generic license.)

Construction of the Berlin Wall started on August 13, 1961.



Photo (left) via [Wikimedia](#), Creative-Commons-Lizenz „Namensnennung – Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen 3.0 Deutschland“, photo (right) via [Wikimedia](#) (Public Domain)

On the 15th of June, SED-boss Walter Ulbricht had claimed in an international

press conference: “No one has the intention of erecting a wall”, but shortly after he ordered a systematic lock-down of the border, with the first preliminary barricades being installed in mid-August.

The Berlin Wall was a symbol of separation for 28 years.



Berlin Wall, Niederkirchnerstraße, Berlin 1988, photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative-Commons-Lizenz „Namensnennung – Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen 4.0 international“.

The Berlin Wall wasn’t just a wall but a perfidious installation containing a “death strip”.

*#INFOGRAPHIC. Cross-section of the Berlin Wall as it was in 1983
pic.twitter.com/NR7n2R5UmL*

— AFP news agency (@AFP) November 7, 2014

The total length of the Wall around West-Berlin was 156.4 kilometers (97.182 miles).



An S-Bahn train moving through the border crossing in Berlin Wedding. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative-Commons-Lizenz „Namensnennung – Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen 3.0 nicht portiert“.

43.7 kilometers (271.53 miles) of these 156.4 kilometers were separating East-from West-Berlin.

The Inner German border was 1400 kilometers (869.9197 miles) long.



Diagram showing the inner-German border and the Berlin Wall. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

The Berlin Wall was part of a much bigger border. The Inner German Border was actually 1400 kilometers long, crossing 24 kilometers of waterways.

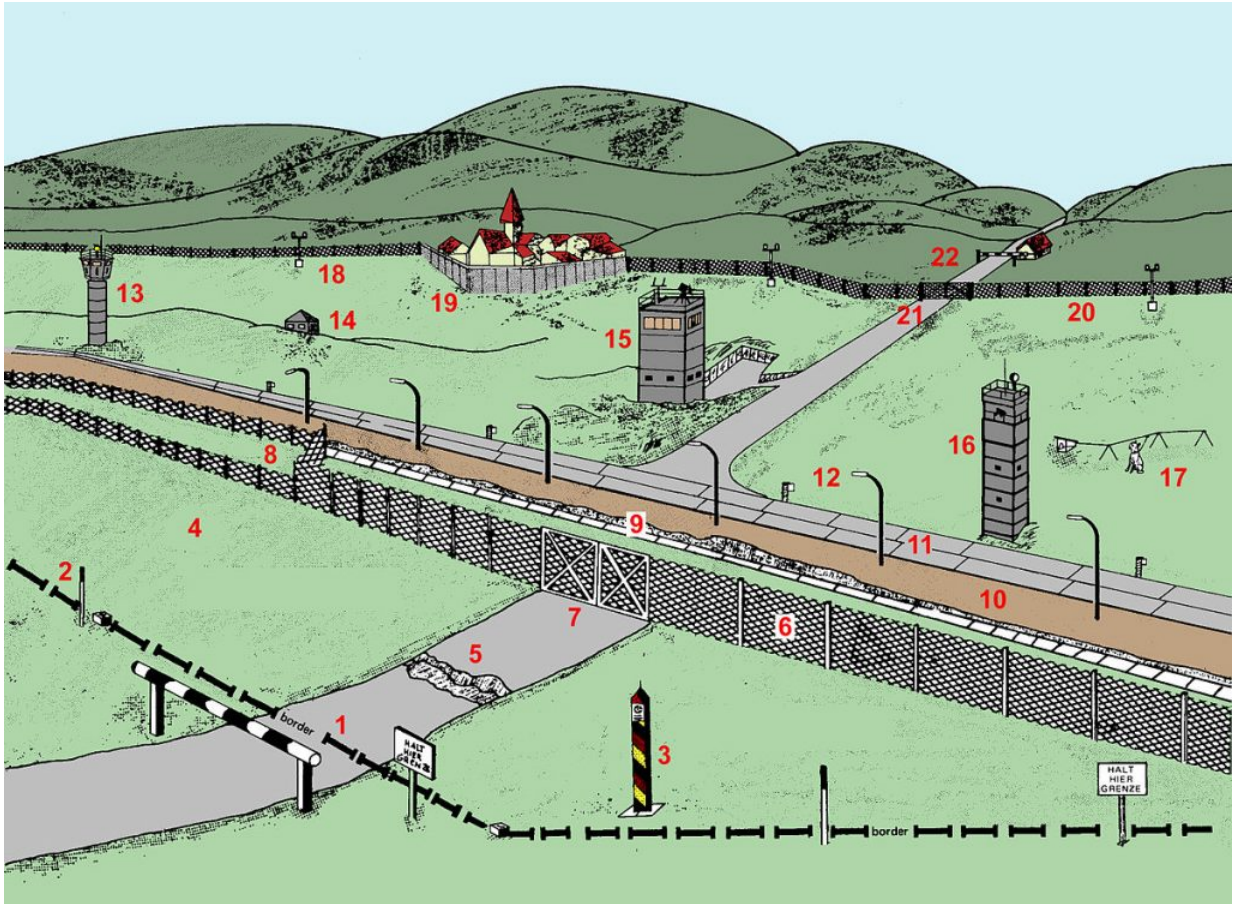


Diagram of the inner German border fortification system circa 1984. Photo via [Wikimedia](#) (Public Domain). See [here](#) for more info.

The Berlin Wall interrupted 12 S-Bahn and U-Bahn Lines, and 193 streets.



2013 photo, showing a remaining section of the Berlin Wall as seen from Friedhof der Sophiengemeinde (old East Berlin) towards Bernauer Strasse. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

Each segment of the Berlin wall was 3.6 meters (11.811 feet) high and weighed 2.75 tons.



One segment of the Berlin Wall, photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative-Commons-Lizenz „Namensnennung – Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen 3.0 nicht portiert“

186 watch towers were placed along the wall.



Showing “death strip” and watch tower in Bouchéstraße Berlin, 1986. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

The wall was guarded by 11,500 soldiers.



1981 stamp commemorating 20 years of the Volksarmee (“National People’s Army”), photo via [Wikimedia](#), License unknown.

They had no less than 484 guard dogs.



October 1961. East German soldiers use guard dogs to track down individuals attempting to escape to West Berlin. From the booklet "A City Torn Apart: Building of the Berlin Wall." Photo via [Wikimedia](#) CIA Historical Collection (Public Domain)

The number of border crossings within the city of Berlin was 8.



border crossing Oberbaumbrücke, 1987. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported, 2.5 Generic, 2.0 Generic and 1.0 Generic license.

5075 Berliners successfully escaped over, under and through the wall*.



East Berliners escape to the West. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Public Domain

Around 100,000 people escaped from the rest of East Germany.



An elderly woman, standing at Berlin Wall, in west sector, with hands raised, after waiting three hours to see her East Berlin friends and relatives (1961).

Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Public Domain

The Federal Republic of Germany (West) bought politically detained prisoners from GDR-prisons.



Coins of East Germany. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported

574 East-German soldiers deserted to West Berlin*.



Photo from 1961, showing members of Volksarmee, Kampfgruppen and Volkspolizei at the Berlin border, via [Wikimedia Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Germany](#).

1709 shots were fired by border soldiers, ...



Border fortification and guard tower at Berlin Wall, Staaken. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative-Commons-Lizenz „Namensnennung – Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen 3.0 nicht portiert“

... wounding around 200 and killing more than 100 inner-German refugees. **



Following Germany's reunification, a couple reads grave markers of East Germans who died in an effort to escape over the Berlin Wall to the West, 1990. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Public Domain.

37 attempts to dynamite the wall were recorded.



Berlin wall section at Bouchéstraße/Harzer Straße. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), GNU-Lizenz für freie Dokumentation.

The first victim was called Ida Siekmann.



Berlin Wall: Bernauer Straße 48 with the Ida Siekmann memorial. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license.

On the 22nd of August, 1961 she tried to jump from her apartment in Bernauer Straße to West-Berlin, but the jump failed and she succumbed to her injuries.

The last victim was Winfried Freudenberg.



Winfield Freudenberg (last fatality at the Berlin Wall) at the Wall of Remembrance. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

The electrical engineer died while trying to escape on the 8th of March, 1989 in a hot air balloon, after successfully making it over the wall and crashing in Berlin Zehlendorf.

On the 3rd of April 1989 the firing order was rescinded.



Berlin Wall Death Strip at Wiesenuferstraße, Berlin, 1990. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

The Fall of the Berlin Wall happened on 9th November, 1989.



The Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989. The photo shows a part of a public photo documentation wall at the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative-Commons-Lizenzen „Namensnennung – Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen 3.0 nicht portiert“, „2.5 generisch“, „2.0 generisch“ und „1.0 generisch“.

People who dug out pieces of the wall were called “Mauerspechte” – wallpeckers.



“Wallpeckers” at the Berlin Wall between Reichstag building and Brandenburger Gate. Photo via [Wikimedia](#), GNU-Lizenz für freie Dokumentation.

On the 22nd of December, 1989, border troops officially opened the border crossing at Brandenburg Gate.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1089-1222-016
Foto: Gimm, Peer | 22. Dezember 1989

Photo via [Wikimedia](#), Creative-Commons-Lizenz „Namensnennung – Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen 3.0 Deutschland“ .

**between 1961 and 1989*

***the exact number is unclear.*

Sources: berlinermaueronline.de, Wikipedia, Welt.de, T-Online