



OUTDOOR VISITOR GUIDANCE SYSTEM

History

In Thekenberge Hills near Halberstadt, the National Socialists had a 13-kilometre long tunnel system dug into the rock from April 1944 to April 1945. More than 7,000 prisoners from 22 countries and stateless persons were forced into slave labour to establish facilities for the intended underground armaments production in this specifically constructed satellite camp of Buchenwald concentration camp code-named 'Malachit'. About three quarters of the inmates were 'exterminated through labour' or perished when the camp was evacuated in April 1945.

Memorial

The Memorial comprises three departments:

- The Visitors' and Documentation Centre where a permanent exhibition illustrates establishment, function and dissolution of the satellite concentration camp as part of the underground relocation of German weapons production.
- The former camp site with structural remnants of barracks, places of execution and several mass graves.
- Tunnel system: Some 120 m of the so-called Reichsbahn [German State Railway] tunnel and one transverse tunnel are open to visitors.

Visitor Regulations:

The former concentration camp grounds are in the ownership of the Foundation Memorials in Saxony-Anhalt. Please, observe our guidelines:

1. Visitors enter the site at their own risk. Please, note that there are limited gritting and snow-clearing services.
2. Please, do not leave the marked paths.
3. A special permit is required to access the site by car.
4. Please, keep dogs on a leash.
5. Horse-riding and practicing sports are not permitted.

To maintain a dignified commemoration, visitors are asked to behave appropriately: Members of extremist parties or organisations whose activities are contrary to the free democratic basic order may be denied access to the memorial on certain occasions. The memorial staff has been instructed to enforce the rules of the memorial. They have the right to expel visitors who express misanthropic or anti-democratic views, to deny admission to the memorial, and to prohibit unauthorised acts of commemoration. The same applies to wearing clothing or displaying symbols that glorify dictatorships.



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Entrance Gate / Roll Call Ground

This was the original location of the concentration camp entrance gate the led to the roll call ground.

The prisoners had to report for roll calls by prisoner number every day before and after work.

Roll calls after return to the camp often took longer because prisoners were injured, buried or even killed during work every day and had to be searched for in the vast tunnel system.

“At 5.30 am we had to line up on the large square for roll call. We stood there for an hour and a half, regardless of whether it was raining or snowing, whether it was freezing or stormy [...]. At the evening roll call, the ragged, striped column staggered into formation. Holding hands, they stood there in the wind until the camp commander had counted the living and the half-dead, who were kept on their feet with the help of their comrades. The dead from the small barrack were added to the tally, and so the required number was reached.”
Miervaldis Bērziņš-Birze (Latvia)



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Stela 'Extermination through Labour'

Magdeburg-based sculptor Wolfgang Roßdeutscher (b. 1945) created this limestone stela in 1984 as a symbol of the devastating effects of slave labour into which inmates were forced in the tunnel system.

The stela is edged with stone reliefs from a nearby small hall of honour. This structure had been erected around 1970 as part of the Memorial's redesign as a transitional solution until completion of the stela and was then demolished.

"There [in Langenstein], the exhausted prisoners were forced, under the supervision of the SS and civilian staff, to dig a kilometre-long tunnel for an underground aircraft factory. It was hell. I later learnt that the SS had issued the slogan 'Extermination through work' at that time [...]. We had to drill and blast in the tunnel without breathing apparatus or safety helmets. They tried to squeeze every last bit of strength out of us and also deliberately harassed us by making us stand in pointless roll calls before and after work and when collecting our meals once a day."
Arno Lustiger (Poland)



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Camp Kitchen

The inmates had to subsist on a thin soup regularly cooked here in two large cooking pans from water and vegetables (initially also with some meat). The soup, plus a slice of bread, was their only meal of the day.

Remnants of troughs of cement-plastered bricks used for washing food ingredients are still clearly recognisable.

A floor drain recess is located at the centre of the foundation.

The left section of the camp kitchen had a cellar.

Parts of the service stairs are still visible.

"After [returning] to the camp at around 7.00 pm, prisoners were given their midday ration of watery soup with potato peelings and about 100 g of clay-like bread, with an extra portion of around 50 g of margarine. This bread was meant to last for both dinner and breakfast. Sometimes I wanted to save just a small piece for the morning, but [...] unfortunately, my hunger was stronger [...] and I ended up devouring the piece of bread I had set aside for the next day. Only then could I fall asleep. I had to wait until the following evening for my next meal."
Ryszard Kosinski (Poland)



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Main Infirmary

The main infirmary was a masonry structure with wood panelling and cement floors. The floor plan of the building can still be told from remnants of the foundations and walls in the entrance area.

A total of four infirmaries were established across the camp premises over time. Hygienic conditions were atrocious. Inmates with medical training tried to provide medical care as prisoner physicians and nurses but had hardly any medicines or dressings.

"The infirmary had a capacity of 75 beds. As the number of illnesses and injuries increased, two men had to be placed in each bed [...]. The most common serious injuries sustained during underground tunnel construction were: fractures, head injuries and spinal injuries [...]. The camp's first fatalities were simply piled up next to the infirmary. Conditions became so appalling that the camp authorities authorised the erection of a small Wehrmacht hut to house the dead until they could be buried."

Willi Klug (Germany)



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Sanitary Barrack

In February 1945, more than 5,000 prisoners were held in the camp.

The inmates were accommodated in 20 wooden barracks and had to put up with only six sanitary barracks.

Appointments in five of the sanitary barracks were only simple toilets, i.e. a wooden beam over a trench (latrine), and washing troughs of cement and bricks with several water taps.

The sixth barrack was only a latrine while one washing trough stood separately outdoors.

"It's a stinking barrack that's always packed with people in the evening. You wait until there's space [...]. Some who are too weak don't wash at all, and eventually nobody does anymore. Some of them end up looking dreadful! The cement dust irritates the skin, causing inflammation. People's skin becomes red and swollen. Eventually, the skin cracks open and oozes. Even in this condition, people carry on working [...]. The whole business of washing may be hard to understand nowadays, but to really grasp it, you have to live here."
Edmund Wojnowski (Poland)



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Southern Mass Grave

US army soldiers who liberated the concentration camp found dead bodies of prisoners across the whole grounds and in barracks.

Villagers from nearby Langenstein were made to bury the dead. They used an existing pit that was later called "Southern Mass Grave".

A large number of terminally ill inmates died shortly after their liberation while still in the camp. Many of them found their last resting place here. The present form of the mass grave was designed in 1996.

"We looked around, searching for a central command post, when our eyes fell in horror upon two circular holes, each about ten metres in diameter, filled with corpses strewn haphazardly about. A horrifying jumble of contorted limbs, arms and legs staring into the air, and white, parchment-like skulls with fixed, lifeless eyes presented itself to us, the two living ones, and revealed to us the full extent of the hellish inferno that had unfolded here."
Konrad Hager (parish priest of Langenstein in 1945)



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Cube to commemorate the Death March

Redesign of the Memorial commenced in 1966 and included also two works of art: a stela "Extermination through Labour" completed later and a cube symbolising the death march that started here and claimed numerous victims.

The bronze sculpture by Magdeburg-based sculptor Eberhard Roßdeutscher (1921-1980) is a cube with reliefs that depict the prisoners' situation during the death march in April 1945. The route shown reflects the status of research in 1969, the year when the sculpture was created.

"In early April 1945, all the prisoners were divided into large groups. These groups were led out of the camp by the SS. We did not know where to they were forcing us. At night, the SS began shooting prisoners; then they did so during the day as well. We were driven through the woods and given almost nothing to eat. Very few prisoners survived.

I escaped one night and was picked up by American troops. I spent a long time in hospital before I was handed over to our Soviet troops."

Grigory Shmatkov (Ukraine)



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Barrack 3

From 15 August 1944 to 19 February 1945, the number of prisoners rose from almost 2,000 to more than 5,000 and, hence, the number of barracks from six to 16. More than 300 men were forced to live in each hut in very close quarters without sanitary facilities. Some barracks initially had bedsteads, other never had any furnishings at all.

This part of a former prisoner barrack was salvaged on corporate premises in Böhnshausen in 1992 and marks the location of Barrack 3.

“Two men had to sleep in each bed, so four in each bunk bed. The beds had mattresses made of wood wool and paper. There was one blanket for every two men [...]. Apart from a table and a few chairs, there was also an iron stove in the barracks. We were not given any fuel for it. We often looked for some wood on our way to work [...]. Anyone caught [doing so] was punished. There were an awful lot of vermin in the barracks, especially lice. Because of the vermin and the poor hygienic conditions, typhus and dysentery spread throughout the camp.”
Vasyl Melnichuk (Ukraine)



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Barrack 4

Jewish prisoners were kept in Barrack 4 during the last months of the camp.

They had been deported shortly before liberation of concentration and extermination camps in Eastern Europe by the Red Army via concentration camp Buchenwald to its satellite camp Langenstein.

The barracks were also called blocks. The SS appointed inmates as block elders or camp guards who did not have to work in the tunnels but oversee their fellow prisoner's compliance with camp directives.

"On 18 February 1945, after a relatively smooth journey, we arrived at this camp, which was still under construction. Our transport consisted of a thousand men, half of whom were Jews. We Jews were allocated a wooden barrack to ourselves, Block 4. Our barrack was divided into ten larger and three smaller rooms. Fifty men were housed in each of the larger rooms; the three smaller ones were reserved for the block leader and his staff. We were given wood shavings, which we used to cover the floor. That was our sleeping area. There was nothing else in the room."
Bernard Klieger (Belgium)



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Barrack 13

Prisoner Barracks had a length of about 50 m and a width of about 12 m.

A 2-metre wide central corridor provided access to five large rooms and one small room on either side.

The large rooms had a length of about 8 m.

The arrival of one of the last prisoner transports on 10 February 1945 increased the number of inmates to over 400 in Barrack 13.

This part of a former prisoner barrack was salvaged on corporate premises in Böhnshausen in 1992 and marks the location of Barrack 13.

"We had reached our destination: the Zwieberge camp [...]. We arrived at Block 13. It was already evening. The area was lit up and everyone was heading to the evening roll call. They were people emaciated to the point of being mere skeletons, numbed by exhaustion, who dragged themselves with great difficulty through the snow and mud. My first encounter with this camp was harrowing. Block 13 was the last one in a small valley, not far from the barbed-wire fence [...]. I settled into a dormitory, where I found other Italians: Professor Smareglia and the student Dino Burelli."

Alberto Berti (Italy)



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‘Pine Tree of Death’

This pine tree was used by SS guards to kill concentration camp inmates who had tried to escape. In some cases, the SS tried to force prisoners to hang condemned fellow inmates. The single grave next to the pine tree presumably holds the mortal remains of a prisoner who refused to obey such SS order.

The pine tree died in the 1960s and has been preserved as a symbol of resistance in concentration camp Langenstein-Zwieberge.

“News of the situation at the front kept pouring into the camp. Andrei Ivanovich passed this news on to us, and we spread it amongst the prisoners with the aim of boosting their morale. The SS men found out about Andrei Ivanovich’s activities and – in order to get rid of him – ordered him to hang prisoners who had been caught whilst attempting to escape, as they knew he would not carry out such an order. As was to be expected, he did not carry out this order. An SS man hanged him along with the captured escapees.”

Johann Laid (Estonia)



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Small Camp or 'Junkers Camp'

The small camp of only three barracks was located within the large camp, separated by a simple fence.

Its inmates were forced to work for suppliers and subsidiaries of aircraft manufacturers Junkers-Flugzeug- und Motorenwerke (JFM) until January respectively February 1945 in satellite camps of KZ Buchenwald in Aschersleben, Niederorschel, Langensalza and Halberstadt. After their relocation to Langenstein-Zwieberge, they were to work for newly-founded Malachit AG, another JFM subsidiary.

"The Malachit Works were, in fact, a re-establishment of the Junkers Works, assembled from every corner of the Reich [...]. In the long, labyrinthine, countless tunnels stood densely packed rows of machines ranging from the smallest to the most mammoth in size. There were mountains of unidentifiable components lying about; there was clattering and rattling, humming and buzzing [...]. Detonations followed in rapid succession. SS and factory security, engineers and German civilian workers dashed back and forth as if God knows what was being achieved. What was [actually] being achieved was next to nothing [...]."
Moritz Tauber (Slovakia)



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Monument / Mass Graves

Until mid-March 1945, a farmer from Langenstein was commissioned by the concentration camp administration to take the dead to Municipal Crematorium Quedlinburg.

Their ashes were initially returned to the main camp Buchenwald and later buried near the crematorium.

The high mortality rate made the SS in January 1945 to order dig four mass graves on this mound. Two more graves were added after 11 April 1945 to bury many inmates who died even after liberation of the camp.

"Deep trenches had been dug on a hill behind the camp perimeter fence, about 100 metres from our blocks. Four prisoners would each carry two bodies in a wooden box to the trench and empty them out; the empty boxes were then carried back to the mortuary barrack and refilled. One day [...] I slipped [whilst doing this] and fell into the pit containing the bodies. I had to walk across this mattress of soft bodies to climb back out, and I felt so sick that I vomited up the soup, which was so precious."

Paul Le Goupil (France)



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Monument / Obelisk

A grove of honour with six funerary enclosures surrounded by a low wall with an obelisk was laid out here in 1949. From 1966 to 1968, the whole area was raised by sandstone slabs from the tunnel, the obelisk enlarged and the funerary enclosures combined. The wall was inscribed with the countries of origin of the prisoners. A partial redesign scheme in 2010/11 included covering the individual burials with sandstone flagstones from the tunnel.

The text on the obelisk is a quotation from Bertolt Brecht's poem 'In Praise of Illegal Work', which he wrote in 1930 as part of the play 'The Measures taken':

Step forward

For one moment,

unknown and hidden faces,

And receive our thanks

The names of the prisoners' countries of origin inscribed on the wall reflect the situation in the 1960s and do not correspond to today's countries and their official names.



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Death March

The camp was evacuated shortly before the arrival of American troops. Six groups, each with 500 prisoners who were still able to walk, were forced to march. They were marched in rows of about five prisoners across. The other prisoners stayed in the camp. The prisoners of the first group were marched for over 260 km between the front lines until the forced march came to an end. Another group had to cover an additional 100 km. There is no reliable evidence of what happened to the other groups. The majority of the prisoners were shot by the guard teams when they collapsed of exhaustion or attempted to escape. Only a small proportion of them survived the death march.

"At around four o'clock in the morning on 21 April, before daybreak, the tanks' alarm sirens began to wail in Jessen, heralding the arrival of the Russians.

The guards quickly roused us and shot the prisoners who were unable to get up.

Shots rang out across all the clearings in the forest. Some bodies were shot several times with a coup de grâce."

Paul Le Goupil (France)

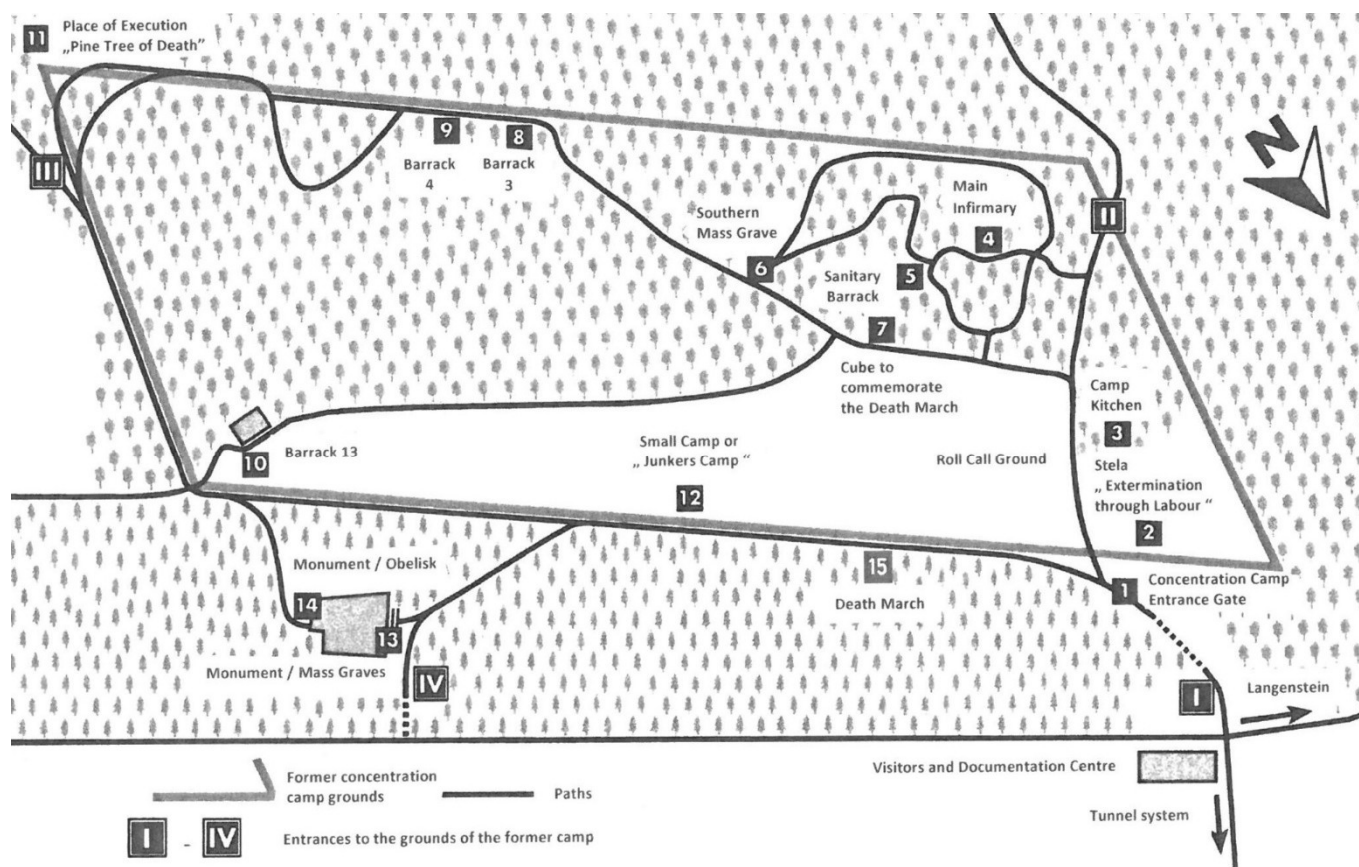


**GEDENKSTÄTTE
FÜR DIE OPFER DES
KZ LANGENSTEIN-
ZWIEBERGE**



**STIFTUNG
GEDENKSTÄTTEN
SACHSEN-ANHALT**

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Opening hours:

Permanent exhibition in the administration building

Tuesday – Friday

09:00 till 15:30

Saturday – Sunday (every last weekend in a month) April - October

14:00 till 17:00

Building and exhibition are closed on public holidays.

Outdoor facilities

The former concentration camp site is accessible at any time without appointment.

Tunnel system

Saturday / Sunday (the last weekend in a month) April - October

14:00 till 17:00

November – March

closed

Contact:

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