



Our History. Germany since 1945

Guide through the
exhibition



Stiftung
Haus der Geschichte
der Bundesrepublik Deutschland



A Cordial Welcome

**to the Museum of Contemporary
History of the Federal Republic
of Germany**

We invite you to tour the Permanent Exhibition – “Our History. Germany since 1945”. Spread over 4,000-plus square metres, it is a lively and up-to-date panorama of contemporary German history, with individual perspectives set in an international context. It showcases original artefacts. There are many interactive stations plus interviews with contemporary witnesses to escort you on your way from the end of the Second World War to the present.

**History.
Germany since 1945**

1945 – 1949

Burden of the Past and Germany's Division

World War II, unleashed by Germany, ends with the surrender of the German armed forces on 8 May 1945. What remains is largely a traumatized and devastated country. The Allies occupy Germany and divide it into four zones. Many people are dead or missing; families are torn apart. The enormity of the Nazi crimes raises questions about accountability: Who knew, who shared the blame? But widespread public discussion doesn't get started in Germany until the 1960s. The ravages of war and the country's division have devastated the economy. Rationing is supposed to assure the distribution of basic supplies, but the black market is booming. In 1948 the deutschmark is introduced in the western zones, laying the groundwork for an economic upturn.

The occupied zones grow apart politically and economically: In the west is born the Federal Republic of Germany, a parliamentary democracy; in the east the GDR, a coercive communist state modelled on the Soviet Union.



- 1 Liberation and Occupation
- 2 The Ever-Present Past
- 3 The Economy
- 4 Fresh Political Start
- 5 Berlin Blockade
- 6 Four Zones – Two States

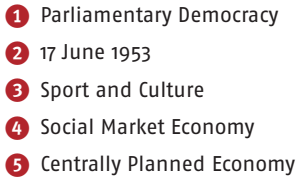


1949 – 1955

Building and Rebuilding in East and West Germany

The first elections to the new German Bundestag (Parliament) in 1949 result in a stable governing majority; Konrad Adenauer becomes chancellor. A central issue is German unity: Adenauer wants any reunification to have a western anchor; his opponents fear that German division will become final. The East Germans can vote too – but only for or against the “National Front” and its Single List of candidates.

Both West and East Germany raise their own armed forces, integrating them into the two military defence alliances, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. More and more, the two severed German states also grow apart economically: In West Germany the social market economy is launched, a system based on economic freedom and social balancing; East Germany adopts the socialist system of a centrally planned and state controlled economy. On 17 June 1953, major economic problems in East Germany lead to a popular uprising that is violently suppressed.



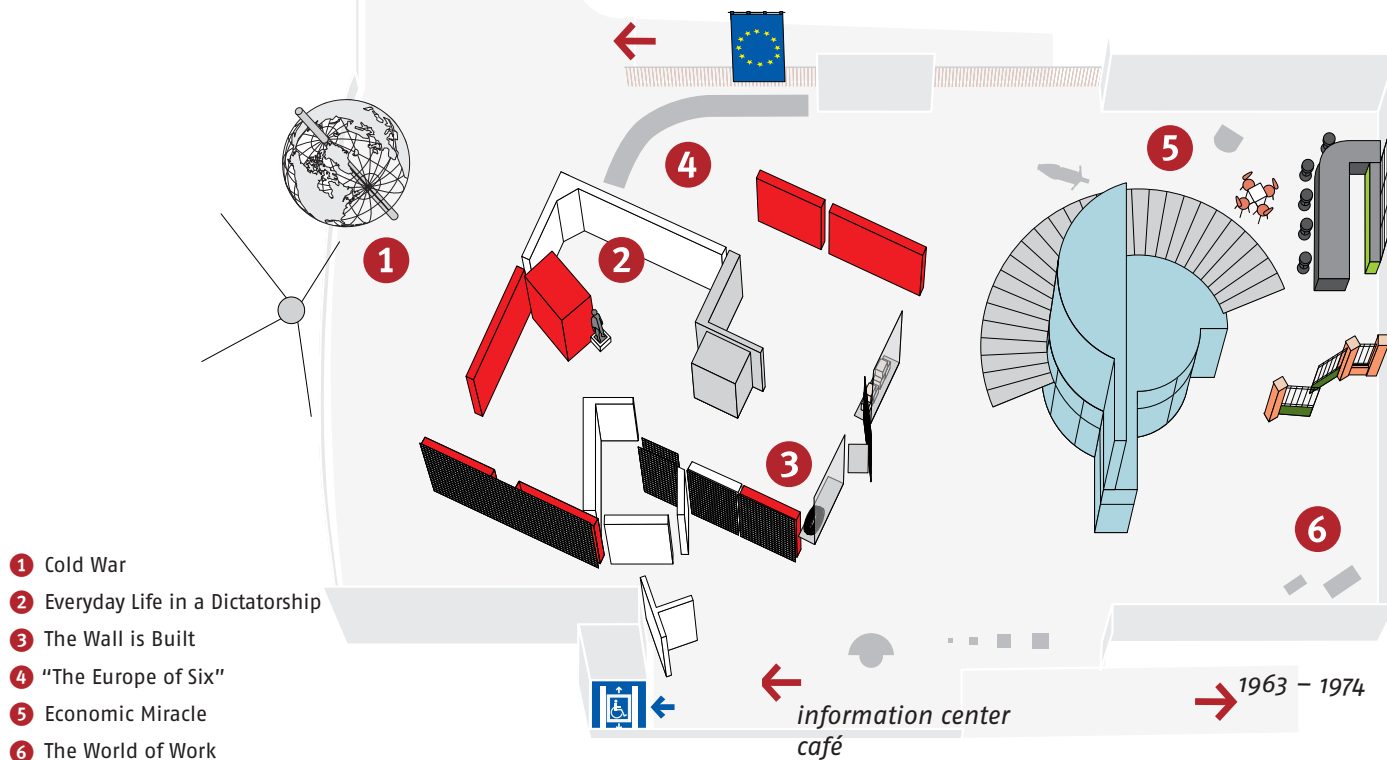
1955 – 1963

Cold War and Deepening Division

West Germany's western ties and its global economic integration make possible the "economic miracle", hailed with wonder at home and abroad. Daily life and consumer patterns are changing, holiday trips become widely affordable. The flourishing economy enables the government to pursue an active social welfare policy benefiting pensioners and families.

"Socialism Wins" is the slogan of the East German Communists' 5th Party Congress. East Germany stakes everything on economically overtaking West Germany. But many East Germans are fleeing westwards for political and economic reasons. The Berlin Wall cements the partition of Germany. East and West are now locked in a face-to-face Cold War.

In 1963 Chancellor Adenauer is hustled out of office by his party; an era of post-war German history draws to a close.



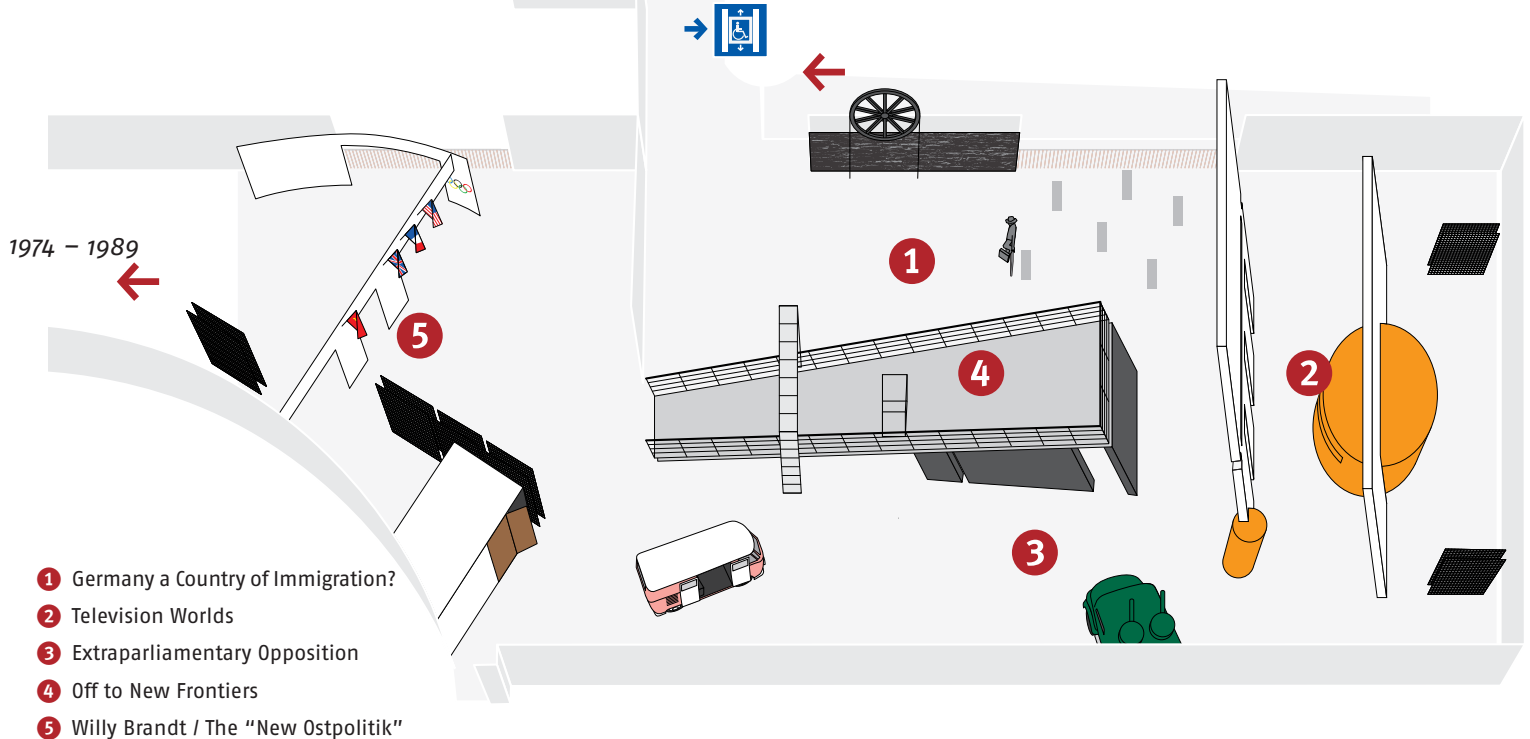
1963 – 1974

Continuity and Change

The 1960s are transition years, marked by the search for new bearings. Faith in technological progress and in the basic achievability of goals expresses the buoyant spirit of the times. This is symbolized in 1969 by the first manned lunar landing. The Vietnam war politicizes much of the young generation. Student protests, which also aim at antiquated educational and societal structures, are widely covered in the media.

In West Germany Willy Brandt becomes the first Social Democratic chancellor since the end of World War II. There are heated discussions about his government's reforms and its efforts to come to terms with Germany's neighbours to the east. "Change via convergence" is Brandt's proclaimed strategy.

In East Germany in 1971 Erich Honecker succeeds Walter Ulbricht as head of state and General Secretary of the Communist Party. Cautious economic reforms and a cultural "thaw" are short-lived.



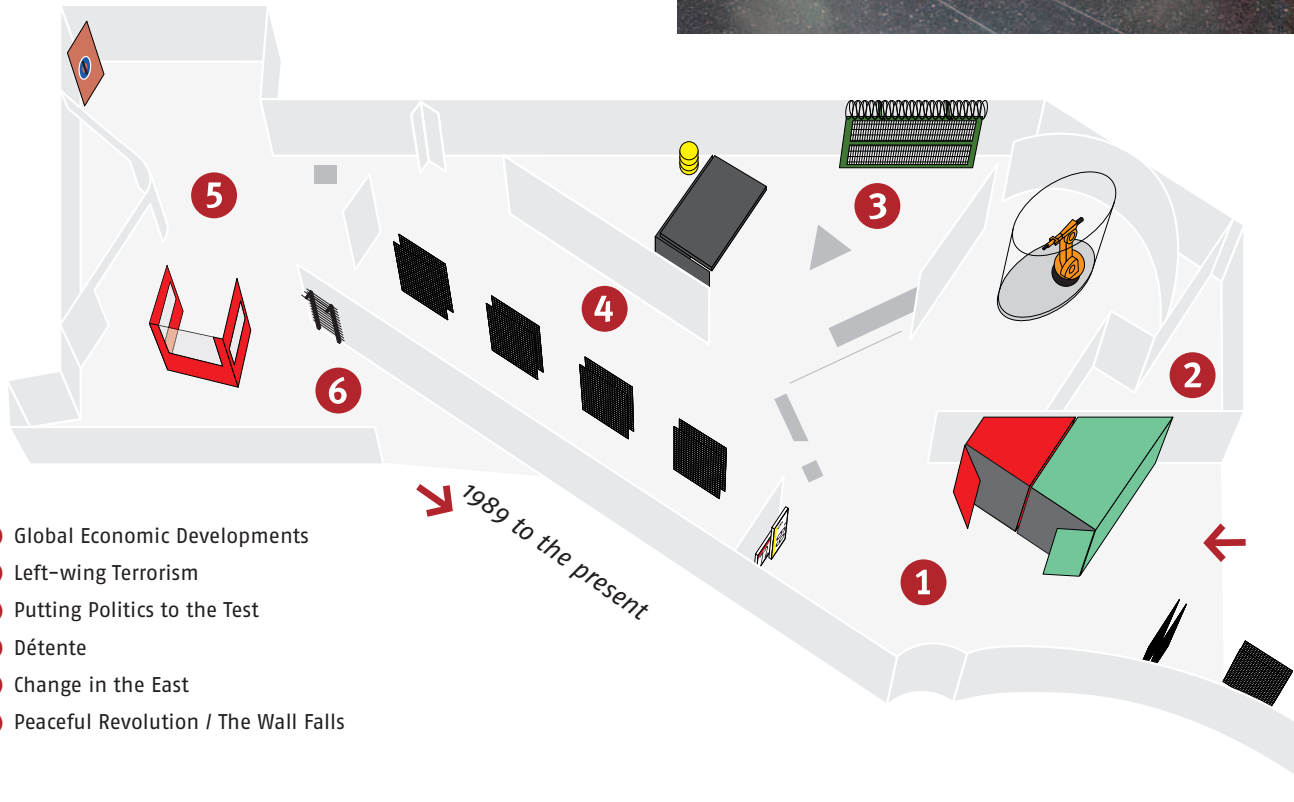
1974 – 1989

New Challenges

The oil crisis of 1973–74 spells a clear message: Economic growth is not to be taken for granted; the world's natural resources are limited. Microelectronics and increasing global competition pose a challenge especially to industrial sectors such as steel. While prosperity continues unabated for most people, rising unemployment remains an issue. Many people feel that they and their problems get short shrift from "politics". They start citizens' action groups and are increasingly vocal in publicizing their protests.

The east-west arms race continues: Responding to the Soviet deployment of SS-20 missiles, NATO moves to deploy its own intermediate range missiles.

When Mikhail Gorbachev takes office as the new General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, epochal upheavals begin in 1985 to shake the East Bloc, where opposition movements invoking Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union attract large followings. The East German Communist regime, confronted with major economic problems, fails to recognize the signs of the times and steps up its repressive policy.



- 1 Global Economic Developments
- 2 Left-wing Terrorism
- 3 Putting Politics to the Test
- 4 Détente
- 5 Change in the East
- 6 Peaceful Revolution / The Wall Falls

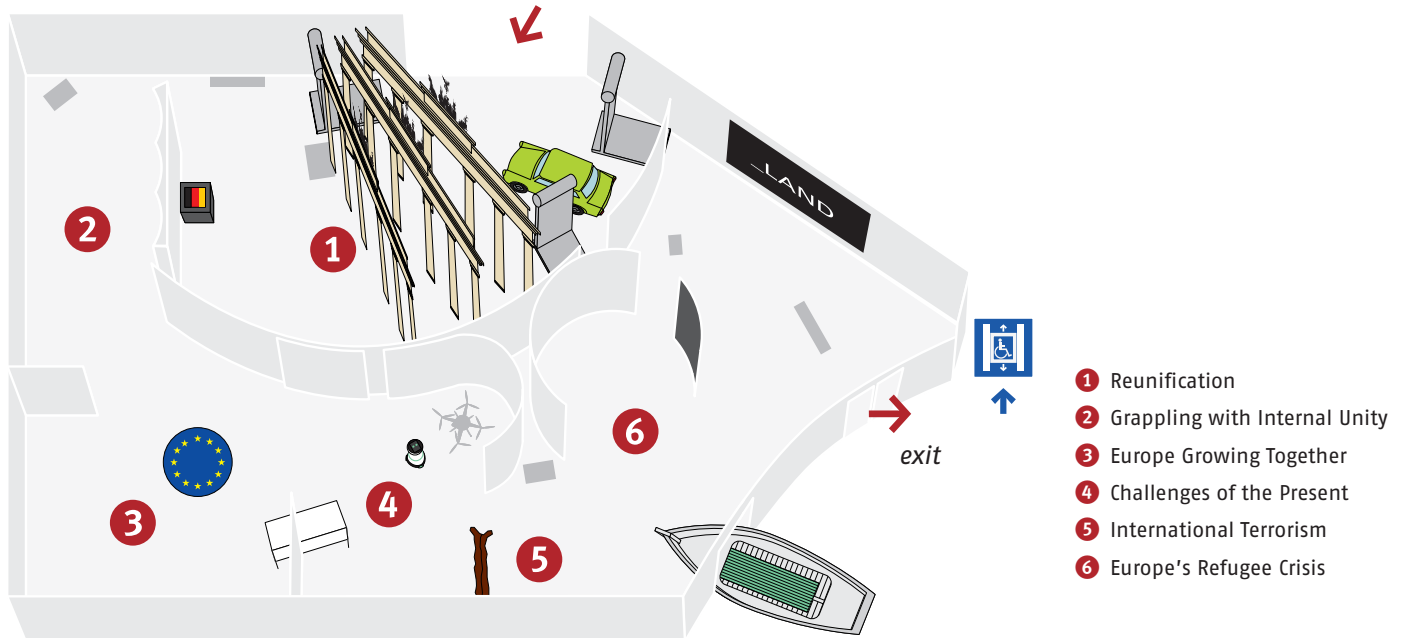
1989 to the present

German Unity and Global Challenges

The reunification of Germany in 1990 is the formative event of the decade. After the initial euphoria fades, one thing quickly becomes clear: East and West Germany's economical growing-together faces the nation with big challenges. The Treaty of Maastricht lays the foundation of the European Union: most EU countries join together to launch a common currency, the euro. But more extensive common action by EU states remains controversial: Great Britain opts in 2016 to leave the EU.

The attack by El Qaeda terrorists on the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are world-shattering events. Islamic attacks in Germany and other countries undermine people's sense of security. Want and hardship in Africa and the civil war in Syria cause more and more people to flee. Receiving and integrating refugees are formidable tasks for the German state and its society.

Digitization is spreading at tremendous speed. It has transformed economic and social systems in only a few years' time. It drives globalization, pervading all spheres of life.



And don't miss the other Museum displays:

- **The German Chancellors' Pullman car** and **Konrad Adenauer's official Mercedes** on the lower level (leading to the subway) recall the era when Bonn was the federal capital.
- The 2nd century AD **Roman cellar** has been preserved right where it was discovered. Exhibits stemming from the site and an animated reconstruction bring to life the time of the Roman "vicus".
- **The museum garden** outside the building offers a sampling of typical postwar horticulture – from the allotment plot to the gardens and green spaces of today.
- **Special exhibitions round out the programme.**

Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland

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Underground lines 16, 63, 66

Station Heussallee / Museumsmeile

Parking Museumsmeile, car and coach parking,
parking for wheelchair-users in the under-
ground garage (entrance Rheinweg)

Opening hours Tue–Fri 9 a.m.–7 p.m.

Sat, Sun, public holidays 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Information Centre: Tue–Fri 9 a.m.–7 p.m.

Visitor Services Group reservations

Telephone + 49 (0)228/9165-400,

Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Admission free

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