

Potsdam

Germany's city of palaces, gardens and culture Sightseeing in a winter ambiance

By: Johannes Bardong

Once you are in Berlin, Potsdam is not far away and worth seeing. From the fairground of the ITB exhibition at the edge of the city of Berlin it's only about 25 kilometres to the capital of the state of Brandenburg. In just slightly more than half an hour on public transport you reach one of former East Germany's most important, interesting and beautiful sights.

The unique park landscape between Potsdam and Berlin, with its various palaces, was designated a world cultural heritage site by UNESCO in 1990. Particularly during the summer months crowds of tourists visit the Sanssouci Palace and Gardens and the Dutch Quarter. During the winter the snow-covered Sanssouci Gardens look like a forgotten landscape from a fairy tale. With the falling temperature the otherwise crowded 132 steps leading to the Sanssouci Palace are only populated by children trying to go sledging. Next to the steps grapes and figs are grown under glass.

Sanssouci Palace and Gardens

The private summer palace in Rococo style was built around 1745 according to the sketches of the Prussian King Frederick the Great based on the model of Versailles. The small palace where he lived during the summer months has twelve rooms. The Prussian monarch composed music and philosophised in his palace he called Sanssouci (French for no worries).

Frederick the Great attached great importance to a combined flower, fruit and vegetable garden in the park. That was based on his preference for fresh fruits and his view that art and nature should form a unit. The Sanssouci parks developed as a ➤

baroque ornamental garden, in which lawns, trees, hedges, flower beds and about 3,000 fruit trees were planted. Oranges, melons, peaches and bananas were cultivated in the greenhouses of the numerous gardeners' houses in the park. A 2.5 kilometre main avenue with circular flower beds and fountains alongside was added. A windmill emphasised the idyllic, rural nature of the site.

After the death of the royal inhabitants Sanssouci was turned into a museum. Today

it is one of the oldest palace museums in Germany.

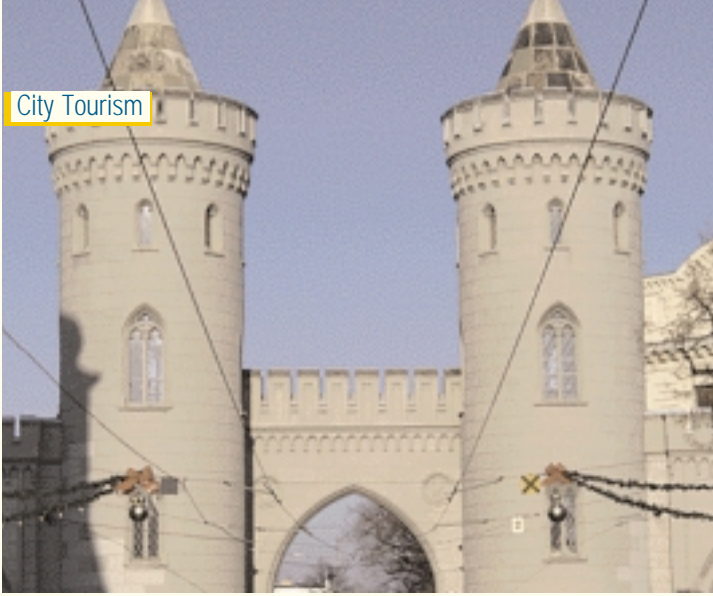
The interior of the palace

The interiors of the palace include an audience room, a concert room, a work place and bedroom, a library and an elongated gallery. The rooms have great architectural beauty and contain works of art and inheritances of Frederick the Great. There is a dome richly decorated with golden ornaments and a light opening on top of the oval



The Sanssouci Palace

قصر السانسوسي



The Gate of Naumburg in Potsdam

بوابة نومبرغ في بوتسدام



The windmill

طاحونة الهواء

festival room that was based on the model of the Pantheon in Rome. In the work and bedroom one can see Frederick the Great's desk and the armchair in which he died. The circular private library is reached by a narrow course from the work and bedroom. It is filled with about 2100 books of Greek and Roman poetry, historiography and French literature from the 17th and 18th centuries. In the gallery there are marble sculptures of Greek and Roman divinities beside the paintings of famous artists of the time. On the walls and the ceiling the concert room shows exuberant Rococo ornamentation.

Trick fountains and Islamic architecture

Frederick the Great may have invested a large amount of money in the park's trick fountains but he did not manage to get them working. It took one hundred years to solve the problems. Frederick William IV succeeded with the help of the steam-engine. In 1843 at the edge of Sanssouci Park he established the so called mosque at the Havelufer. The mosque is not a place of religious admiration, but a disguised steam engine house to feed the fountains of the park and to secure the water supply of the existing precious plants. Built in the style of Turkish mosques with a minaret on top it was constructed to provide water for the great 38 meter high fountain underneath the palace 600 meters away. Today it is a museum. During the 19th century Islamic, Egyptian, Chinese, Russian and Norman architectural elements were often used to animate the landscape with delightful architecture. As at other locations in Potsdam, exotic and historical elements were used to attract the viewer's eye with beautiful harmoniously composed arrangements.

Potsdam profits from its varied cultural influences

After Frederick William chose Potsdam in 1660 as his second residence beside Berlin the city gained in importance. In 1685 and the Edict of Potsdam allowed the French Huguenots, religious refugees, to settle in Brandenburg. More than 20,000 arrived. Their input into the economic and cultural life of the city was a blessing and an inspiration.

Dutch quarter

Close to Sanssouci are 134 typical Dutch houses of red brick, divided by two roads into four blocks. The pictorial houses built for Dutch craftsmen, belonged to French and Prussian commercial agents and artists later on.

After the reunification of Germany this area was rediscovered and almost completely restored. Today a mixture of dwellings, small shops, galleries, workshops, restaurants and cafes gives the quarter a unique character which makes it popular with both locals and tourists. There is also a museum devoted to history and future development. Besides the main site and expanded parks and gardens there is much more to see in the city.

Potsdam lures visitors with a variety of cultural events. There are lots of museums, concerts, theatres and cultural events. The studios in the suburb of Babelsberg are one of the important centres of German film production.

That is why there is a museum of film not far away from the station in Potsdam. There is a Lebanese Restaurant with the unimpressive name "Café in Film Museum" hidden inside. Here you can get excellent food at reasonable prices, in appropriate Arab surrounding.

Information (English / German) and Addresses

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The 2.5 kilometres long principal axis

ممشى مشجر يمتد إلى 2.5 كم