



Relief showing the founding of the Academy of Sciences and Humanities

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OPENING HOURS

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when no private functions are being held
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ADDRESS FOR VISITORS

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Main entrance at Rathausstraße 15
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Wheelchair access at Jüdenstraße 1

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ROTES RATHAUS ONLINE

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BERLIN'S 'CHRONICLE IN STONE'

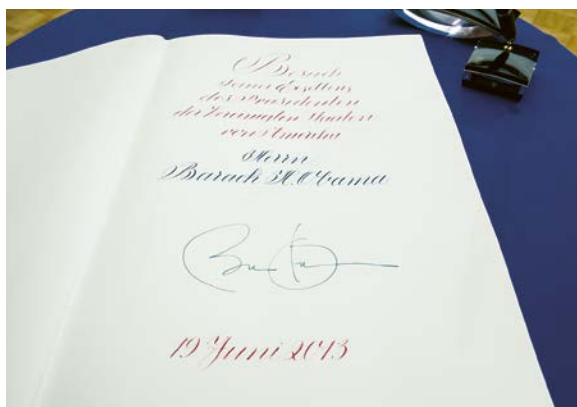
The Red Town Hall's striking, bright red brick façade stands in vivid contrast to other buildings in the heart of the city. Its detailed design is embellished by the terracotta plaques of the 'CHRONICLE IN STONE': a series of reliefs that tell the story of the city's dynamic growth up until the German Empire was founded in 1871. The 36 reliefs were created by the sculptors Ludwig Brodwolf, Alexander Calandrelli, Otto Geyer, and Rudolf Schweinitz from 1877 to 1879.

The 'CHRONICLE IN STONE' starts at the rear of the building at the corner of Gustav-Böß-Straße and Spandauer Straße, and runs counterclockwise around the Town Hall. The first panels illustrate the early years: the Slavic people converting to Christianity; the cultivation of the land; the foundation of the city. Around half of the reliefs are devoted to everyday urban life in the Middle Ages, and the panels above the Jüdenstraße entrance show scenes from the medieval justice system: the pillory, the old courthouse, and a robbery and murder.

The panels on the front of the building on Rathausstraße show the bourgeoisie submitting to the elector Frederick II ('Irontooth') by giving him the keys to the city. The scene is followed by the construction of the Hohenzollerns' palace. Other reliefs honor the achievements of the Prussian monarchy and the city's industrial boom in the 19th century. The chronicle ends with German unification: in the last relief, Berliners celebrate the news from Versailles about the founding of the German Empire.



A look inside the Louise Schroeder Conference Room, formerly called the Green Hall due to its color scheme



Barack Obama was the first person to sign the latest (ninth) volume of the Golden Book



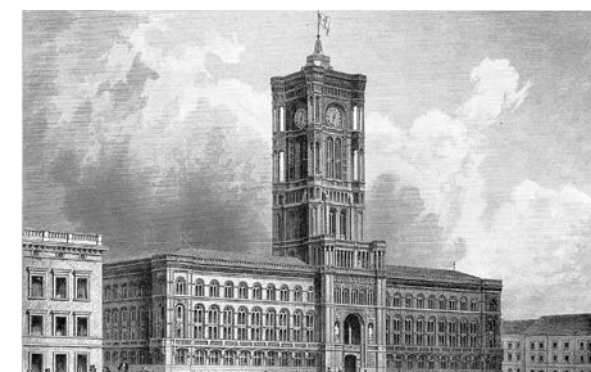
Office of the Governing Mayor

HISTORY

- History of the Town Hall
- History of Berlin

- 1237 First documented reference to the city of Berlin
- 1861 Cornerstone laid
- 1865 Following the initial phase of construction, the city government meets for the first time in the Town Hall, which becomes the official seat of the mayor
- 1867 Topping-out ceremony
- 1869 Opening of the Ratskeller
Completion of the Town Hall
- 1870 First session of the city council
- 1871 German Empire founded with Berlin as its capital
- 1879 Completion of the 'Chronicle in Stone'
- 1914–1918 First World War
- 1920 City council meeting room enlarged
Creation of the new municipality of Greater Berlin
- 1933 Interiors and grand staircase redesigned
National Socialists strip the city government of its powers and enforce political conformity throughout the city administration
- 1939–1945 Second World War
- 1945 Building left severely damaged by the war; new city government appointed by the Soviet occupying power
Berlin occupied by the Allies
- 1948/1949 Non-communist city council members leave
and take up office in Schöneberg Town Hall
Berlin Blockade; division of the city
- 1951 Reconstruction (until 1955); major interior remodelling; rooms repurposed
Reconstruction of the two halves of the city begins separately

- 1955 SED-led city government and city council move into the reconstructed Red Town Hall
- 1961 Construction of the Berlin Wall
- 1987 Renovation of the exterior
Berlin's 750th anniversary celebrated in both halves of the city
- 1989 First 'Round Table' meeting in Berlin (4 December) on the future of the GDR
Fall of the Berlin Wall (9 November)
- 1990 Reunification of Berlin; joint administration of the two halves of the city
- 1991 Extensive renovation and modernization; seat of the Governing Mayor from 1 October on
German Bundestag votes to move the German capital from Bonn to Berlin
- 1999 Government and parliament take up their work in Berlin
- 2011 Archeological excavations; remains of the old town hall uncovered
- 2012 Berlin celebrates its 775th anniversary
- 2019 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall
- 2020 The Town Hall celebrates its 150th anniversary
100 years of Greater Berlin
The "Rotes Rathaus" (Red Town Hall) station opens on the U5 subway line
- 2024 35th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall



The Town Hall shortly after its completion

BERLIN



THE RED TOWN HALL

Seat of Government and
Landmark in the Heart of Berlin



Dear visitors,

Welcome to the Red Town Hall, the seat of the Governing Mayor of Berlin and his administrative staff, the Berlin Senate Chancellery. The Red Town Hall gets its name from its red-brick façade, and much more takes place here than just politics. Above all, its doors are open to Berlin's urban community and guests. The building hosts conferences, exhibitions, and tours; deserving citizens are honored in ceremonies within its walls; and heads of state from all over the world sign the Golden Book of Berlin here.

Time and again, ever since the cornerstone was laid, the Red Town Hall has been the scene of significant events in Berlin's turbulent history. Because the Town Hall is the seat of the mayor, the city government, and the city council, the history of democracy in Berlin was also written here – until that democracy came to an abrupt end with the rise of the Nazis in 1933. The building was severely damaged in the Second World War and rebuilt in the 1950s. After that, it was the seat of the mayor of East Berlin, while West Berlin's government held its meetings at the Schöneberg Town Hall. Since 1991, the Red Town Hall has been the seat of the heads of Berlin's state government and a home to democracy and dialogue in the historic heart of the reunified city.

I hope you enjoy your visit!



Kai Wegner
Governing Mayor of Berlin



Kai Wegner,
Governing Mayor of Berlin

© Yves Sucksdorff

A VENUE FOR ENCOUNTERS

One of Berlin's most iconic landmarks, the neo-Renaissance Red Town Hall was built from 1860 to 1869 according to plans by Hermann Friedrich Waesemann. At 94 meters (including the flagpole), its tower is visible from afar.

The Red Town Hall is the seat of the Governing Mayor and his administrative staff, the Senate Chancellery. Every year, it attracts around 80,000 visitors – to exhibitions, tours, and formal events. When no functions are being held, visitors are welcome to tour the ceremonial rooms.

A TOUR OF THE TOWN HALL

The tour starts in the foyer, where four allegorical figures watch over the grand staircase from their lofty perch. They represent shipping, agriculture, fishing, and trade. Many honored guests have walked the red carpet leading up the 39 steps of the grand staircase. In addition



The foyer with the grand staircase

© Landesarchiv/Platow

to royalty such as King Philippe and Queen Mathilde of Belgium, they have included film stars like Helen Mirren and Lupita Nyong'o (president of the jury for the 2024 Berlin Film Festival) and German champions from Berlin in basketball, handball, ice hockey, and volleyball.

The Golden Book, Berlin's official visitors' book for distinguished political guests, is exhibited in a display case in the gallery. A memorial plaque commemorates the members of the city council and city government who were murdered under the National Socialist and Stalinist regimes.

With a soaring ribbed vaulted ceiling painted in a striking orange, the Hall of Pillars is considered the Town



A view of the Hall of Pillars

© Landesarchiv/Wunstorf

Hall's most beautiful room. The hall, which is painted to resemble Siena's Palazzo Pubblico, once housed the city government's library. The nine-meter ceiling is supported by three rows of pillars and columns. The structural elements of the hall are reminiscent of a Gothic cathedral. Following its destruction in the Second World War, the hall was rebuilt in a less ornate style. This is where the GDR awarded its Medals of Merit and the 'Banner of Labor' order. Nowadays, the Hall of Pillars is used for ceremonial activities, exhibitions, and weddings.

The Hall of Arms, which measures around 280 square meters in size, was once the venue for city council meetings; today, it is primarily used for state receptions and official ceremonies. The floor and the door frames are made from red Thuringian marble, while the walls are adorned with painted stucco trim.



A view of the coats of arms at one end of the Hall of Arms

© Senatskanzlei Berlin

The hall takes its name from the windows featuring historical versions of the coats of arms of Berlin, with the typical bear, and of the 23 boroughs incorporated as the municipality of Greater Berlin in 1920. The windows were designed by Heinrich List.

At 30 meters in length and 18 meters in width, the Main Hall is the Town Hall's largest room. Its arched windows are 6.90 meters high. It was planned as a venue for festivities from the very beginning. This is also where East Berlin's city council convened until 1990. The monumental painting 'The Berlin Congress of 1878,' which the court artist Anton von Werner produced for the city of Berlin, once again adorns the wall at one end of the room, as it did from 1881 to 1945.

Not all of the rooms in the Town Hall are accessible to the public: Berlin's state government holds its weekly session in the Senate Meeting Room every Tuesday. The Governing Mayor works in his office, where he meets with guests and discusses policy. The Louise Schroeder Conference Room is the scene of conferences and negotiations for coalition agreements, among other events.



The Senate Meeting Room

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ARCHITECTURE AND STYLES

The Red Town Hall and its imposing tower, which was built to rise above the Berlin Palace, symbolize the self-confidence of the city's middle class. The Town Hall was designed by Hermann Friedrich Waesemann in a style reminiscent of the Italian Early Renaissance. The building has four main wings and a nearly square floor plan. Middle wings spanning this square divide the building into three inner courtyards. Berlin's Town Hall sustained severe damage in the Second World War and was reconstructed from 1951 to 1955 under the guidance of the architect Fritz Meinhardt, who made fundamental changes to its interior design. Many of the rooms were repurposed, and rooms that had been ornately decorated were rebuilt in a much less elaborate style. The building was listed as a historical monument in 1979. When the Governing Mayor left Schöneberg Town Hall to take up office in the Red Town Hall in October 1991, the architect Helge Pitz gave the building another makeover. The technical infrastructure was modernized at this time as well. The elevator towers added to the exterior walls of the courtyards are one example of these renovations.

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