

HISTORY TRAIL ODER-WARTA 1945

At the end of the Second World War, the heaviest fighting in the Oder-Warta region left scars that are still visible today. Follow the cross-border history trail in the footsteps of the events of spring 1945.

On 31 January 1945, the first units of the Soviet Army reached the Oder River and established themselves there. Heavy fighting broke out entlang the present-day border river between Poland and Germany, resulting in countless casualties and devastating destruction of towns, villages and infrastructure by the end of April 1945.

Anklam



The locations on the 1945 War Events History Trail vividly convey the dramatic events at the end of the Second World War. These include former prisons and camps such as the Sonnenburg Penitentiary in Słońsk, Oflag IIC Woldenberg in Dobiegniew, the Wehrmacht prison in Anklam and the satellite camp of the Theresienstadt ghetto in Wulkow.

Places such as Klessin, Kienitz, Kostrzyn nad Odrą, Santok and Seelow also represent severe destruction and heavy losses in connection with the last major Soviet offensive towards Berlin. Nazi Germany finally surrendered on 8 May 1945 in Berlin-Karlshorst.

The **Oder-Warta 1945 history trail** recalls the events of that time and offers exciting insights from different perspectives.

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„Remembrance connects“ the Oder-Warta region is a German-Polish network for cross-border educational and remembrance tourism. Under the leadership of the city of Seelow, the tourism brand of the same name connects around 180 places of remembrance on both sides of the border to create a multi-perspective landscape of remembrance. Discover the unique history of the Oder-Warta region.

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LIBERATION ROUTE EUROPE

European Cultural Route of Liberation 1944-45

Liberation Route Europe is a certified Cultural Route of the Council of Europe and a project of the LRE Foundation. The route connects people, places, and events to mark Europe's liberation from occupation during World War II and to reflect on the long-lasting consequences and history of the war through a multi-national, multi-perspective approach. With hundreds of sites and stories in ten European countries, the route links the main regions along the advance of the Allied Forces in 1943-1945.



www.liberationroute.com

www.lre-germany.org

IMPRINT

Editing and layout:
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Images: map ©ECCOFORT e.V.; map background ©Printmaps.net/OSM Contributors; title and inside 1/3/5: ©Muzeum Twierdza Kostrzyn; inside: 2/4 ©Muzeum Twierdza Kostrzyn, picture Przewodnik

The project „Remembering Together - 80 Years of the End of the Second World War 2025“ was funded by the Small Projects Fund (KPF) 2021-2027 of the PRO EUROPA VIADRINA Euroregion as part of the INTERREG VI A Brandenburg-Poland 2021-2027 cooperation programme.



Travelling through the unique history of the German-Polish border region on the Oder and Warta rivers

History trail of the 1945 war events

MUSEUM OF THE FORTRESS KÜSTRIN

Unique surface monument on the Oder

Station on the Liberation Route Europe



www.reembrance-connects.eu



MUSEUM OF THE FORTRESS KÜSTRIN

Unique surface monument on the Oder

The Prussian fortress of Küstrin was built in the middle of the 16th century and, with six bastions, was one of the largest European city fortresses of its time. It was continuously expanded until 1887 and four outer forts were added: Gorgast, Zorndorf (Sarbinowo), Sępzig (Zabice) and Tschernow (Czarnow). Due to advances in weapon technology, the fortress became technically obsolete shortly afterwards and its military function was abandoned.



In January 1945, the Red Army advanced from the east, gaining considerable ground and driving refugees and scattered Wehrmacht units before them. Küstrin was an important target on the Oder River because a railway line and a road led directly to Berlin via the bridges. Meanwhile, the Germans once again declared Küstrin a fortress, made makeshift additions to the historic defences with obstacles and field fortifications and assembled a garrison of around 10,000 men to hold off the enemy for as long as possible while they captured the city and occupied the bridges.

The first Red Army units reached Küstrin on 31 January. In the following weeks, bridgeheads were set up under fierce German resistance and the city was sealed off except for a small corridor. However, it could not be taken.

On 6 March, the Red Army began a simultaneous attack from several sides, which was to lead to the complete elimination of the defences. On 12 March, the new town of Küstrin was conquered. On 22 March, the Soviet bridgeheads were successfully brought together and the fortress of Küstrin was cut off from supplies. German attempts to relieve the fortress were unsuccessful, which even Hitler's personal intervention could not change. From 24 March, the old town was bombed so heavily that no building survived. It was not until 30 March that the fortress was finally taken and replacement bridges for traffic and the railway were built. The first train rolled over the bridges towards Berlin on 25 April 1945.

On the western side of the Oder, the German troops used the time to expand their defences on the Seelow Heights, around 10 km away. The last major battle of the Second World War took place there from 16 to 19 April 1945.

On 8 May 1945, Nazi Germany capitulated and the national borders in Europe were redrawn. As a result, Poland was shifted to the west and Küstrin became Kostrzyn nad Odrą. The new town was rebuilt. The area of the old town was left to its own devices in the new German-Polish border region and was „forgotten“ for almost 50 years. It was not until 1994 that some areas of the fortress began to be excavated, with ruins of old houses, paved streets and pavements coming to light under the mounds of earth.

Today, the Museum of the Küstrin Fortress in Kostrzyn nad Odrą is a unique monument, also known as the „Pompeii on the Oder“. It is an impressive reminder of war and its consequences. Exhibitions tell the story of the fortress and information boards help visitors tour the former old town centre of Küstrin.



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