MEGASTRUCTURES
FORCED LABOR AND MASSIVE WORKS IN THE THIRD REICH

Hamburg • Neuengamme • Binz • Peenemünde • Szczecin
Walcz • Bydgoszcz • Łódź • Treblinka • Warsaw

Featuring
Best-selling Author & Historian
Alexandra Richie, DPhil

Save $1,000 per couple when booked by January 18, 2023!
Dear Friend of the Museum,

Since 2015, I have been leading The Rise and Fall of Hitler’s Germany, a tour from Berlin to Warsaw with visits to Stalag Luft III, Wolf’s Lair, Krakow, and more. As we look ahead to the future, I am excited to expand the tours in Poland, visiting a number of largely unexplored sites.

The all-new tour is named Megastructures after many of the large complexes we visit such as Peenemünde, the Politz Synthetic Oil Factory, and numerous gun batteries and bunkers. As we tour, we will pause to remember the forced laborers who suffered under Nazi oppression. We will learn of the prisoners at the Neuengamme Concentration Camp near Hamburg who, at first, manufactured construction materials, then transitioned into the main force that cleared the city’s rubble and bodies after the devastating bombing raids of 1943.

In Prora, we will explore the Nazi’s “Strength through Joy” initiative when we view the three-mile-long resort that was never completed. In preparation for its opening, Poles, Slavs, and others viewed as subhuman were trained as servants for the German leisure tourists who would visit the seaside resort.

We will also explore the battlefields in Poland. Near the city of Walcz, Polish and Soviet forces waged a furious battle against the Germans along some of the largest fortifications in Europe, known as the Pomeranian Wall. This wall was the eastern counterpart to the Siegfried Line, protecting Germany’s borders.

Once we arrive in Warsaw, we have included an all-new itinerary designed to continue the story we began on The Rise & Fall of Hitler’s Germany. With visits to Pawiak Prison, the Katyn Museum, and Treblinka, we will uncover more of the history of Warsaw during World War II.

This tour will be difficult, but rewarding. A journey like this will create lifelong impacts, and I am honored to join you as we commemorate the victims of Nazi oppression and experience the freedom that is now a part of daily life in Germany and Poland.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Richie, DPhil

Author and Featured Tour Historian

THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM
EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL PROGRAM

Travel with experts

26 top historians
174 published books and
47 documentary credits

ww2museumtours.org

5 Museum Quick Facts
8 million+ visitors since the Museum opened on June 6, 2000
$2 billion+ in economic impact
160,000+ active Museum members
8,000+ travelers, representing every US state
625,000+ social media followers

Visit 30 countries covering all theaters of World War II

Travel to 27 countries

Tour Programs operated on average per year, at times accompanied by WWII veterans

Explore Overseas American Battle Monuments Commissioncemeteries

museums on our itineraries

New Orleans’ No. 1 Attraction
United States’ No. 3 Museum
World’s No. 8 Museum

Photo: The Umschlagplatz monument erected where Jews were gathered for deportation from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka extermination camp. Courtesy of Lucas Vallecillos/Alamy Stock Photo.
LEARN THEIR NAMES

Remembering the children of Neuengamme Concentration Camp

Within the Neuengamme Concentration Camp, the Nazis used 20 children between the ages of 5 and 12 for medical experiments. SS officer Kurt Heissmeyer exposed the children to tuberculosis to study the effects of the disease on Jewish children. The experiments lasted until April 19, 1945, when British troops approached the edge of the city. The men in charge of the experiments knew that the discovery of the children would cause an outcry. On April 20, the Nazis moved the children to the schoolhouse at Bullenhuser Damm. Nazi guards administered morphine injections before hanging the children. In an attempt to hide the evidence, the SS burned the bodies in a Neuengamme crematorium. Thirty years after the murders, the surviving parents learned of their children's fate. Bullenhuser Damm School is now a memorial to the children and their caretakers who died there in 1945.

Friendship through tragedy

After the death of Jacqueline's mother, she was sent to a special children's barrack in Auschwitz where the children were being held for later ogus medical experiments. The majority of the children spoke only Polish, but one of the boys, Georges-André Kohn, spoke French, too, and they became close friends.
On June 6, 1943, a prison camp in Szubin was designated Oflag 64 and reserved for American officers. The first 150 prisoners to arrive came from North Africa, many of them captured in the Battle of Kasserine Pass. The men called themselves “Kriegies,” short for the German term for prisoner of war Kriegsgefangenen. The men attempted an escape in late 1943 by digging a tunnel, but in 1944, news arrived of the disastrous “Great Escape” attempt at Stalag Luft III. Plans for the tunnel ended. To keep moral up, the prisoners published a newspaper called The Oflag 64 Item with “All the News That’s Been Geprüft (checked)” and boasted “The Largest Circulation Inside the Wire.” In January 1945, the Germans evacuated most of the Americans west as the Soviets approached. On January 23, the camp was liberated by the Soviet Army. Approximately 100 Americans remained in the camp, and they soon became pawns in negotiations over repatriating Soviet prisoners liberated in the west. Today, a small monument marks the location of the camp.

The research facilities at Peenemünde created the feared Vergeltungswaffen or vengeance weapons such as the V-1 and V-2 rockets and the V-3 gun. From Peenemünde, Wernher von Braun oversaw the creation of the world’s first cruise missiles and ballistic rockets. Like most German work areas, Peenemünde used slave labor from nearby camps, including Buchenwald, to construct the test sites and rockets. On August 17/18, 1943, Bomber Command attempted to bomb the site, but missed, accidently bombing the labor camp. This raid, and another like it a week later, resulted in only minimal damage to the program. Between 1943 and 1945, an estimated 60,000 forced laborers worked in the factories building the V-weapons. Approximately 20,000 prisoners died from disease, malnutrition, and execution.
MEGASTRUCTURES
Forced Labor and Massive Works in the Third Reich
Hamburg • Neuengamme • Binz • Peenemünde • Szczecin
Walcz • Bydgoszcz • Łódź • Treblinka • Warsaw

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• Personalized luggage tags and customized name badge
OPTIONAL 2-NIGHT PRE-TOUR EXTENSION

HAMBURG & AMERICA

PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

- Two nights accommodations at the 5-star Hotel Atlantic Kempinski in Hamburg
- Transfer from Hamburg Airport (HAM) to Hotel Atlantic Kempinski
- Two full days of touring, including all admissions
- 2 Breakfasts, 1 Lunch, 1 Reception
- Beer, wine, and soft drinks with included lunches and reception
- Expert local guide/tour manager
- Private, first-class, air conditioned motor coach transportation
- Personal listening devices on all included touring

From $1,495 double occupancy, $1,895 single occupancy
$129 per person taxes and fees are additional.

PRE-TOUR PROGRAM ITINERARY

Day One – Arrival
Arrive into Hamburg Airport (HAM) and transfer to Hotel Atlantic Kempinski where the balance of the afternoon is free to explore this charming city along the Elbe. This evening, meet your fellow tour mates at a welcome reception.
Accommodations: Grand Atlantic Hotel (R)

Day Two – Jewish Quarter
Before World War II, approximately 20,000 Jews lived in Hamburg. The rise of the Nazi regime saw the synagogues destroyed and a 1937 proclamation that Hamburg would become one of five “Führer cities.” As a “Führer city,” Hamburg underwent a transformation into Germany’s model shipping center. Systematic persecution of Hamburg’s Jewish population increased, leading to the mass deportations in 1941. Today, your local expert will escort you through the Jewish Quarter and to a viewing of the Curio-Haus, the location where the British military oversaw trials of officials from the Neuengamme and Ravensbruck concentration camps. Continue to the Jewish Cemetery in the Ohlsdorf district.
Accommodations: Grand Atlantic Hotel  (B, L)

Day Three – Hamburg’s Emigration Halls
From 1850-1934, Hamburg served as the main port of emigration for those departing Eastern Europe for the United States. After a long and arduous land journey, emigrants would stay for several days in the halls near the docks while awaiting their embarkation to America. In 1901, four Swiss-chalet style halls increased the comfort of the accommodations. The Nazis destroyed these halls in 1934. Rebuilt in the early 2000s, the halls are now part of the Ballinstadt Museum, which details the emigration process and the conditions of the passage to the United States. Join the main tour group this evening for a Welcome Dinner.
Accommodations: Grand Atlantic Hotel  (B, R, D)
DAY ONE

ARRIVE HAMBURG

Arrive in Hamburg (HAM) and transfer to the Hotel Atlantic Kempinski. Enjoy free time this afternoon before this evening’s welcome dinner and tour preview with Dr. Alexandra Richie.

Accommodations: Grand Atlantic Hotel (R, D)

DAY TWO

OPERATION GOMORRAH

During the last week of July 1943, a combined bomber offensive over Hamburg left approximately 40,000 people dead and destroyed much of the city. On the ground, the experience was a nightmare. Civilians sought shelter underground, but the resulting firestorm sucked the oxygen from the air and made the underground tunnels as dangerous as the surface.

Visit St. Nicholas Church, which has been preserved in a state of destruction with the tower still standing as the second-tallest structure in Hamburg. An observation platform in the tower gives a panoramic view of the city. Continue on a tour of other remains of the bombing of Hamburg including the flak towers and an underground bunker. The day concludes at the Ohlsdorf Cemetery, one of the largest cemeteries in the world. Ohlsdorf holds a mass grave of bombing victims and a peace memorial. The evening is free to explore Hamburg independently.

Accommodations: Grand Atlantic Hotel (B, L)
Until early 1943, the air war against Germany focused mainly on the industrial Ruhr region, where a five-month bombing campaign severely slowed German steel production. At the Casablanca Conference in 1943, Allied leadership discussed plans for a combined bomber offensive and round-the-clock bombing. Hamburg, an industrial city near the coast with shipyards and manufacturing facilities, presented an attractive target. Planning for the raid included new technology such as chaff and improved incendiary bombs.

Just after midnight on July 24, 1943, Operation Gomorrah began with a large raid by the Royal Air Force. The RAF began the attack by dropping thin strips of metal called “chaff” or window to confuse German radar. The heavy bombers then dropped their loads on Hamburg, igniting small fires around the city. The fires overwhelmed Hamburg’s fire response, and the flames lingered into the next day.

While the British bomber crews bombed at night, the American Army Air Forces took over daylight bombings. Inexperienced at this stage of the war, the American bombers counted on daylight visibility to see their targets, but German flak and fighters would also benefit in the daylight. The Americans targeted the Blohm and Voss shipyard and an aero-engine factory. Unfortunately, smoke from the prior night’s bombing and the German fighters kept the bombers off course. The shipyards received only minor damage, and the factory sustained no damage from the bombing.

Attacks continued for several more days. On the night of July 27, 1943, British bombers again hit Hamburg. This attack led to an enormous firestorm, with winds reaching up to 150mph and with temperatures up to 1,470 degrees Fahrenheit. The inferno covered 8 square miles of the city, igniting asphalt roads and oil that had spilled out of damaged ships into nearby canals. When operation Gomorrah concluded on August 3, 1943, roughly 42,000 people were dead. Another 37,000 were injured. Half of the city was rubble.

The bombing campaign seriously reduced Hamburg’s ability to produce war goods. The loss included a quarter of Hamburg’s large factories and half of its smaller factories. Hamburg’s transportation networks were up and running soon after the attack, but the city never fully recovered during the war. The British advanced on and captured the city in April 1945.
In December 1938, the Nazis established a prison camp at a former brick factory in the suburb of Neuengamme. They brought in the first prisoners with the goal of establishing a work camp to produce the bricks needed for military construction. The camp expanded rapidly. From 1938-1945, approximately 100,000 people passed through the gates of Neuengamme. More than half of them did not survive the war. Tuberculosis experiments conducted on Jewish children at Neuengamme ended in tragedy with 20 children between the ages of 5 and 12 hanged at the Bullenhuser Damm School in Hamburg. Today, pay tribute to the victims at Neuengamme and Bullenhuser Damm with visits to both memorial sites.

Accommodations: Grand Atlantic Hotel (B, L)

Depart Hamburg today and travel north to the outskirts of Kiel where the Nazis inaugurated a naval memorial that was planned during the Weimar Republic. At its dedication ceremony in 1934, Nazi officials used the memorial to remind visitors that Germany was not defeated on its own soil during World War I. The event served both to commemorate past German navies and to inaugurate a new German naval force in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. Visit a museum on German naval history that discusses several German commanders from World War II and their fates. A viewing platform at the memorial’s tower gives a glimpse of the next stop, a German U-Boat. U-995 patrolled the waters of the Baltic and the North Sea. Today it is a science museum allowing visitors to experience the inside of a WWII submarine. Depart Kiel for Binz, Germany, after lunch.

Accommodations: Travel Charme Kurhaus Binz (B, L)
At the research facility located in Peenemünde, Wernher von Braun oversaw the development of the Nazis V-1 and V-2 rockets and the V-3 cannon. Over 60,000 forced laborers built the site while the Nazis tested their terror weapons. Despite von Braun’s membership in the Nazi Party and rank of lieutenant in the SS, he received an invitation to come to the United States in 1945 as part of Operation Paperclip. Von Braun contributed to the US space program with the US Army and transferred to NASA in 1958 where he was the first director of the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, AL. A tour of the facility includes the science and technical museum located in the former power plant and a coach tour viewing the remains of the larger facility, which was mostly destroyed after the war. Return to Binz this evening and visit the remnants of the Nazi recreation facility at Prora. This nearly three-mile-long complex was a centerpiece of the Nazi “Strength through Joy” leisure program. Construction ceased in 1939 as the war redirected most of the materials away from Prora. Enjoy dinner with the group this evening in Binz.

Accommodations: Travel Charme Kurhaus Binz (B)

Known as Stettin when the city was part of Germany, Szczecin was home to 135 forced labor camps during World War II. One of the most significant facilities in the area was the Politz Synthetic Oil refinery to the north of Szczecin. During the height of its production, the refinery produced 15% of Germany’s oil. The refinery was the target of numerous bombing raids from 1944-45, including a 1,000 bomber raid on the night of February 8–9, 1945. The Soviets overran and dismantled much of the site at the end of the war, leaving the skeletons of the buildings visible. In Szczecin, visit the city’s underground, where bomb shelters enabled the German citizens to escape from the raids. End the day at the Szczecin National Museum Dialogue Center, which features exhibits on World War II and the Cold War.

Accommodations: Grand Park Hotel Szczecin (B, L, R, D)
Today’s excursion heads north toward Swinoujscie. A V-3 site explains the long-range cannon filled with multiple explosive charges that, in theory, would allow projectiles to hit the UK from continental Europe. The V-3 was used in combat against the Allies in Luxembourg during the Battle of the Bulge. After lunch, continue to Battery Goeben. Take a two-kilometer hike through the forests east of Swinoujscie, and discover trenches that lead to several gun positions and a large observation tower. Constructed in 1938, the cannons at Battery Goeben never fired. In 1940, the Germans moved the cannons to Norway leaving the casemates at Goeben vacant.

Alternatively, remain in Szczecin today and tour the historic city center independently.

Accommodations: Grand Park Hotel Szczecin (B, L)

The eastern counterpart to the Siegfried Line or Westwall, the Pomeranian Wall runs near the German/Polish border as it was prior to September 1, 1939. The tour visits the bunkers near the town of Walcz, including an open-air museum featuring military vehicles. As the Red Army approached in January 1945, battles raged all along the Pomeranian Wall. The Polish-Soviet Cemetery at Walcz contains the remains of 6,045 Soviet and Polish soldiers, most of whom lost their lives in the fighting near this section of the Pomeranian Wall.

Accommodations: Hotel Słoneczny Młyn (B, L, D)
DAY NINE
ŁÓDŹ

Departing Bydgoszcz this morning, visit the monument to Oflag 64 in Szubin. Oflag 64 served as a prison camp for American officers from 1943-1945. Continue to Łódź, a town nearly annihilated by the Nazis. The tragic story of Łódź underscores much of what has been experienced on the tour thus far. The site of a large Jewish ghetto during World War II, the labor of the prisoners here was of great value to the Nazis. Starting in 1942, Jews departed to the death camps from Radegast Station, which is now home to a memorial. The ghetto was the last to be liquidated in August 1944. Only 10,000 of the city’s prewar Jewish population of 230,000 survived the war. Continue into Warsaw this evening.

Accommodations: Hotel Bristol Warsaw (B, L, D)

Treblinka accentuates the brutal nature of the Nazis and their “Final Solution.” The regime promoted their ideal of the “Aryan Race,” while subjugating those whom they felt were inferior. Millions died under brutal conditions as slave laborers, were murdered in the streets, or fell victim to industrialized death camps like Treblinka. Between 800,000 and 900,000 people were murdered at Treblinka, making it the deadliest camp behind Auschwitz. While visiting Treblinka, what is now often referred to as one of the “forgotten camps,” you’ll be able to walk in the forest that once hid the second most lethal camp of the Holocaust. Begin with a visit to the small museum that houses relics and artifacts discovered over the years, and end with a walk through the area that once held the multiple gas chambers and a train depot that led to imminent death. Today, a memorial of stones represents the hundreds of thousands of victims who perished between July 1942 and July 1944 at Treblinka Extermination Camp.

Accommodations: Hotel Bristol Warsaw (B, L)
Between July 1942 and October 1943, Treblinka extermination camp operated in a forest just northeast of Warsaw. Following the invasion of Poland in September 1939, the Nazi party began rounding up Jews and putting them in ghettos, allowing them to be isolated and exploited for slave labor. These ghettos lacked adequate living conditions, food supplies, and other basic needs for a large population to survive.

At the Wannsee Conference in 1942, a new plan was established to deal with the “Jewish Question.” Known as Aktion Reinhard, the mass liquidation of the Jewish populations in occupied Europe proved to be the deadliest part of the “Final Solution.” Three extermination camps, Belžec, Sobibor, and Treblinka turned murder into an industrial operation. Treblinka opened in two phases: Treblinka I as a work camp in 1941, and Treblinka II as an extermination camp in 1942. At most, Treblinka I housed 1,000 to 2,000 people used for slave labor to chop wood for the open-air crematorium or in the nearby quarry. Treblinka II had three sub-sections: the administrative section, the arrival section, and the execution section.

The commandant of Treblinka II, Franz Stangl, insisted his camp look hospitable so the incoming victims would not suspect their fate. He used forced labor to plant flowerbeds along the railroad tracks leading into a mock train station, complete with ticket counters and train schedules. Nearby buildings in the arrival section housed the personal belongings people brought with them, including luggage, shoes, and jewelry. A large pit behind a fake aid station served as the execution ground for the old, sick, and weak who were immediately shot, dumped, and later burned. The third section lay farther to the back with the large gas chambers. Originally, large holes were dug to hold the bodies, later replaced with crematoria.

In all, the Nazis murdered between 800,000 and 900,000 at Treblinka. With the termination of Aktion Reinhard on October 19, 1943, Treblinka ceased operations. Immediately, Jewish slaves began tearing down the camp, and worked to cover up any evidence of what happened there. The following August, Soviet forces found the human remains, including bones, teeth, and a black pathway made of human ash. Today, what remains of Treblinka is a memorial to those who perished at the hands of the Nazi party.

Photo Page 25: Dr. Alexandra Richie at the ash fields in Treblinka. Courtesy of Sarah Kirksey.
Warsaw’s rebirth is one of the most dramatic turnarounds of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Almost razed to the ground through Nazi brutality, two uprisings, and the battle between the Germans and Soviets, Warsaw is now a vibrant city with a youthful energy. As the city has expanded, it has kept the reminders of its tumultuous past. Visit several sites of remembrance including Pawiak Prison, the Katyn Museum, and the former Gestapo headquarters. Dr. Alexandra Richie will uncover even more of the history of the city before a final dinner at her countryside home, which also holds a rich historical significance.

Accommodations: Hotel Bristol Warsaw (B, R, D)

Bid farewell to Poland this morning and transfer to Warsaw Chopin Airport (WAW) for individual flights back to the United States. (B)

Photo: Sigismund’s Column in Castle Square, Warsaw, Poland.
Grand Park Hotel in Szczecin boasts a unique combination of modern design with the soothing tranquility of the surrounding Kasprowicza Park. It is the ideal place for those who appreciate a high standard of customer service, luxury and tranquility. This boutique hotel has only 26 unique rooms and amenities such as smart TV, minifridge, and tea and coffee making facilities.

Grand Atlantic Hotel
Hamburg, Germany
Located directly on Lake Alster, the five-star Hotel Atlantic Kempinski has served as a calm oasis since its opening in 1909. Centrally located, it is easy to explore Hamburg independently. Amenities include flat-screen TVs, Wi-Fi, and iPod docks, Nespresso machine, minibar and indoor pool. The Atlantic Restaurant offers a combination of modern German fare with regional and maritime cuisine.

Travel Charme Kurhaus Binz
Binz, Germany
Kurhaus Binz is noted for its excellent hospitality on the Baltic Sea island of Rügen, with more than 100 years of history. Today its fresh, modern design adds a special elegance to the rooms and restaurants. With a spectacular location on the beach and pier, the Kurhaus Binz offers unique style along with magnificent panoramic views of the Baltic Sea. Complimentary Wi-Fi is included.
HOTEL SLONECZYNY MLYN
BYDGOSZCZ, POLAND
The Słoneczny Młyn is the first 4-star hotel in the city located near the Brda River in Bydgoszcz. The building was renovated from the 19th-century Kentzer Mill. During World War II, the mill operated under the management of Gustaw Harmel of Germany until 1945. After the war, the mill became a private enterprise for a short time. In 1948, the mill was nationalized, and fell into disrepair. In 2008, the facility became the four-star "Słoneczny Młyn" Hotel. Complimentary Wi-Fi is included.

Alexander Richie, DPhil

Alexander Richie is a historian of Germany as well as Central and Eastern Europe, with a specialization in defense and security issues. She completed her B.A. (Hons) in Political Science at the University of Victoria and went on to study at St. Antony’s College, Oxford, where she wrote her doctoral thesis, The Political Manipulation of History in East and West Germany.

Richie is also the author of Faust’s Metropolis: A History of Berlin, which was named one of the top ten books of the year by American Publisher’s Weekly. Her latest book, Warsaw 1944, won the Newsweek Teresa Toraniska Prize for best non-fiction book of 2014 and the Kazimierz Moczarski Prize for Best History Book in 2015.

She has contributed to many articles, documentaries, radio, and television programs, and serves on the Presidential Counselors at The National WWII Museum. She is also a member of the Senate at the Collegium Civitas University in Warsaw, Poland, and the Władysław Bartoszewski co-chair of History and International Studies at the Collegium Civitas. Dr. Richie is a favorite of Museum travelers and has hosted dozens of tours with The National WWII Museum to destinations in Germany, Poland, along the Elbe, and in the Baltic.

HOTEL BRISTOL WARSAW
WARSAW, GERMANY
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Background Photo: Aerial View of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

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