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English 

Sparrenburg Bielefeld's landmark

www.sparrenburg.info



For explorers of all ages

It's really hard to believe but up to the 19th century, Sparrenburg was no more than a dilapidated ruin. Today, after extensive renovation, the castle is a popular destination and a must-see for everyone visiting Bielefeld. Opened in 2014, the Visitor Information Centre at the entrance to the courtyard is the first point of call for visitors. The surrounding green spaces and the promenade are very popular with strollers.

Visiting Sparrenburg

Tower and Visitor Information Centre

- ▶ April - October: Daily 10.00 - 18.00
- ▶ November - March: Sat, Sun + public holidays 11.00 - 18.00 (not 24 December - 1 January)
- ▶ **Tickets:** Adult: € 3.00, concessions: € 2.50, Kids aged 3 - 13 years: € 2.00

Public tours of the casemates

- ▶ April - October: Daily 12.00 and 14.30
Sun + public holidays additionally 16.00
- ▶ **Tickets:** Adult: € 9.00, concessions: € 6.00, Kids: € 5.00
- ▶ **Combined tickets** for tower and public tour
Adult: € 11.00, concessions: € 7.50, Kids: € 6.50

Private group tours, April to October,
by arrangement.

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Bielefeld Marketing
Für dich. Für die Stadt.

Sparrenburg Visitor Information Centre
Am Sparrenberg 40
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Welcome!

Bielefeld's landmark on the ridge of the Teutoburg Forest towers over the city. Built in the first half of the 13th century, Sparrenburg has had an eventful history. Often besieged, it has never been captured. Even today, visitors taking a tour of the branching underground passages, called the casemates, will find themselves right back in the Middle Ages. The castle also provides the best souvenir of Bielefeld - the superb panoramic view from the 37 m tall tower.





History of Sparrenburg

No-one knows the exact date when the foundation stone was laid, but the first written record of the fortress dates from 1256. The castle was the seat of power and residence of the sovereign prince, the Count of Ravensberg. It is not certain where the castle gets its name from. However, the counts' coat of arms was three red chevrons ("Sparren") on a silver ground. Lordship of the castle changed constantly due to lack of male heirs, marriage or conflicts between noble families. At the beginning of the 16th century Sparrenburg was developed into an early modern fortress.

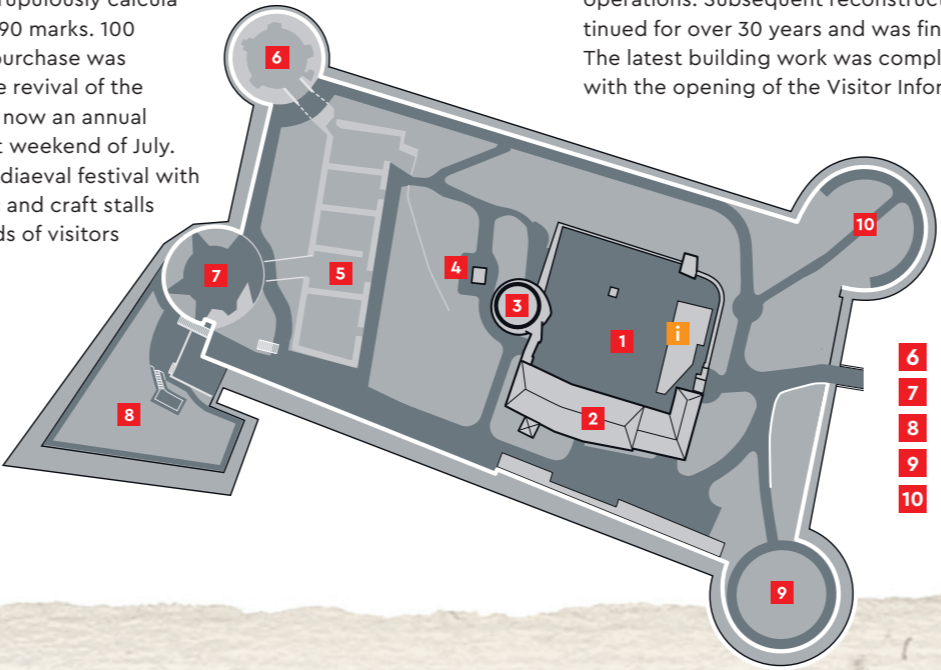
Often besieged, never captured

The outline map shows the former extent of Sparrenburg, still visible today, with its four bastions. During the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) the castle was besieged several times but never taken. The garrison was not always the same, though: sometimes it was Dutch troops calling the shots, sometimes Spanish, Swedish or Hessian. After the death of the Great Elector, Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg, in 1688 the castle lost its military significance. It was later used as a prison. The decline began.

Historic purchase

In the mid-19th century, the fashion for seeing castles in a romantic light seized Germany and Sparrenburg was rediscovered as a historic monument. Donors dug deep in their pockets to finance the rebuilding of the dilapidated tower. In 1879, Bielefeld Town Council purchased the castle from the State of Prussia for the scrupulously calculated sum of 8,934.90 marks. 100 years later, that purchase was celebrated by the revival of the Sparrenburgfest, now an annual fixture on the last weekend of July. This colourful mediaeval festival with its knights, music and craft stalls attracts thousands of visitors every year.

- i** Visitor Centre
- 1** Courtyard
- 2** Restaurant building
- 3** Tower, Tower dungeon
- 4** Well
- 5** Armoury



- 6** Kiekstatt Bastion
- 7** Windmill Bastion
- 8** Scherpentiner
- 9** Schuster Bastion
- 10** St Mary's Bastion

From ruin to landmark

During the Second World War Sparrenburg was again used for a military purpose, as an anti-aircraft gun emplacement. All the buildings on the upper fortress site except for the tower were destroyed in an air raid on Bielefeld in 1944. It took five years for the castle to be reopened to visitors after the clearing-up operations. Subsequent reconstruction work continued for over 30 years and was finished in 1996. The latest building work was completed in 2014 with the opening of the Visitor Information Centre.

Archaeological surprises

The fortress complex has regularly thrown up archaeological surprises since the restoration work started in 2006. 2007 saw the discovery of the surface of the 16th century Kiekstatt bastion. Dating from the same era, the foundation walls of the 50 m long armoury were uncovered in 2008. In 2010 archaeologists found a room thought to have been a latrine. A mighty 13th century wall came to light in 2013. These discoveries, along with thousands of little finds, help to paint a picture of life at the castle in olden days.

Paradise for bats

Sparrenburg also plays an important role in nature conservation. Nowhere else in North Rhine-Westphalia do so many different species of bat have their winter home. The castle's largely frost-free casemates provide ideal conditions for them. 14 species, from the Noctule to the Whiskered Bat, have been recorded here. To protect them, there are no guided tours of the casemates in winter. Sparrenburg and the surrounding green spaces were designated a protected FFH (Flora Fauna Habitat) in 2000.

History of the Castle

1256	► First mention of Sparrenburg in a document
1346-1614	► Several changes of hands: following the Jülich-Cleves dispute over the succession, the inheritance is finally divided between Kurbrandenburg and Pfalz-Neuburg.
1615	► Netherlands troops occupy Sparrenburg
1623	► Spanish occupy the fortress

1626-1647	► After being besieged in turn by the Spanish, Dutch, Swedes and French during the Thirty Years War the castle passes into the hands of Brandenburg.
1673	► Münster troops surround the fortress. Biggest siege, with 1,500 men
1743-1877	► Castle is used as a prison
1842	► Rebuilding of the tower starts

1879	► Bielefeld Town Council purchases the ruined fortress for 8,934.90 marks
1884	► First Sparrenburg Festival
1900	► Kaiser Wilhelm II unveils the monument to the Great Elector, Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg
1944	► All buildings except the tower destroyed in an air raid

1949	► Sparrenburg is opened to visitors again
1996	► Thirty years' reconstruction work finished
2006/2007	► Start of further renovations and archaeological excavations (including uncovering of the Kiekstatt bastion)
2014	► Major building project completed with opening of the Visitor Information Centre