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February 16th, 2018

Dear friends,

the German capital Berlin and the capital of the Land Brandenburg Potsdam are linked by a bridge called "Glienicker Brücke". This bridge became quite famous since it was used three times during the days of the Cold War for the exchange of captured spies between the Eastern Block and the Western Countries. In 2015 Steven Spielberg has documented one case in his impressive movie "Bridge of Spies" which was filmed on site.

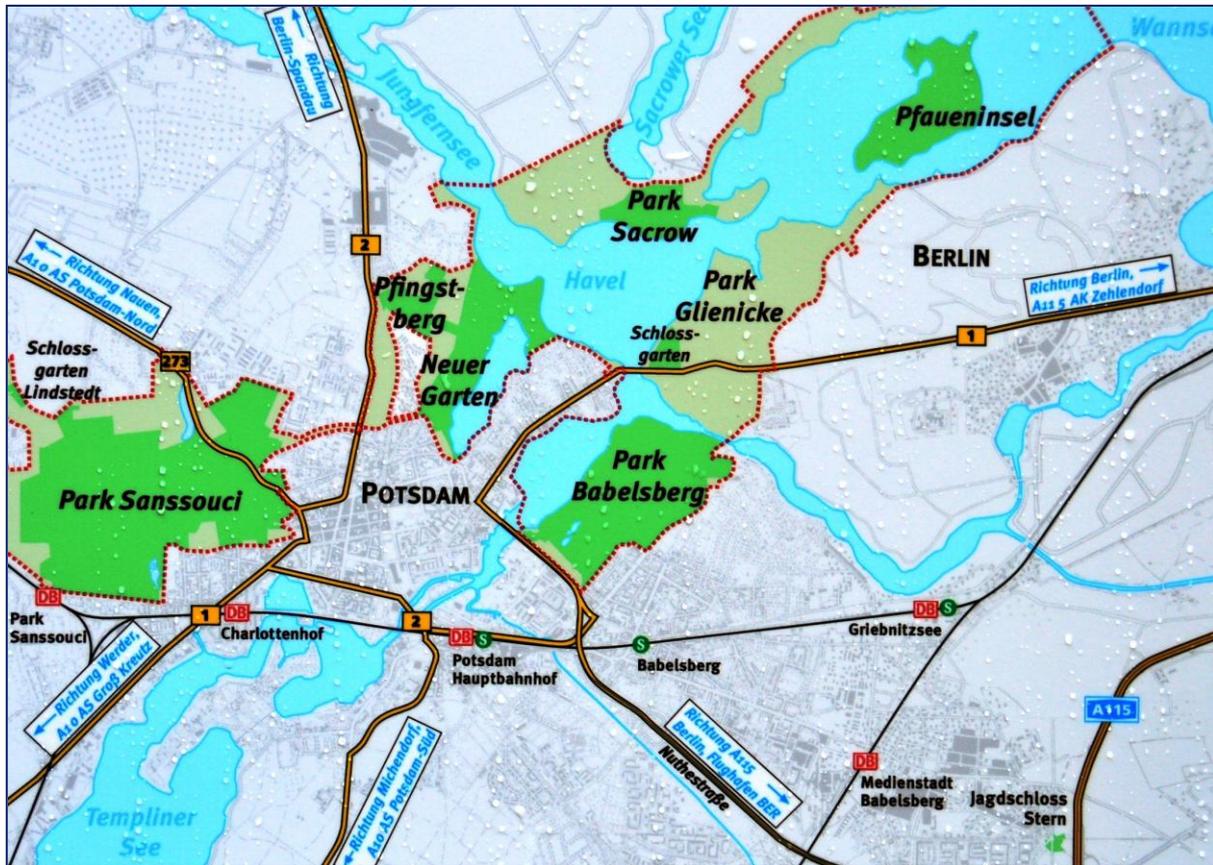


When we had visitors during the period of the Cold War, it was a must to travel to the Glienicker Brücke. It divided the political blocs of the global powers. Since 1952 the bridge was closed for the general public. The western part unmistakably belonged to the GDR (East Germany). The western pylon was decorated with the national emblem of the GDR with hammer and compass and a big signboard indicated the name the new rulers have given to it: "Bridge of Unity".

One hundred ten years ago this prominent steel framing bridge was built to cater for the high traffic density. The first wooden bridge was built in the late 17th century to enable the general public to cross the river Havel at this place.

In the 18th century the Kings of Prussia discovered the area around the city of Potsdam for construction purposes. Many new parks and castles were created by the most famous architects and landscape planners. The Director General of the Royal Prussian Gardens and

Palaces, Peter Joseph Lenné, was contracted to re-model large areas between Berlin and Potsdam with the aim to create a total work of art including quite a number of parks and castles. Characteristic of Lenné's work are versatile sight axes - a horticultural stylistical device. Part of his plans of 1833 was to replace the wooden bridge by a more prominent bridge. No other than the famous architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel was assigned to build this new bridge. When this bridge had to be replaced in 1905 by the new steel bridge many activists for preservation of sites of historical interest expressed their protests.



One of the first joint actions of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic was the application to declare the entire ensemble of palaces and parks in Potsdam and Berlin as UNESCO World Heritage. The application was already handed in before the formal reunification. With a total of 2,064 hectares this is the largest area of World Heritage in Germany.

We do not need to report about the Park Sanssouci with its Rococo style palace and the numerous other buildings in it, since any single tourist coming to Berlin will visit it, anyway. The magic Pfaueninsel (Peacock Island) also attracts many visitors. Everybody who wants to see the negotiating table in Cecilienhof Palace, where Winston Churchill, Harry S. Truman and Joseph Stalin with their delegations have redesigned the future of Germany after World War II, will visit the Neuer Garten (New Garden) in Potsdam, too.

Compared with these highlights the Park Babelsberg seems to be a more silent place, although it is not less beautiful. It was created by Prince Wilhelm (the later emperor Wilhelm I.) and his wife Augusta in a relative moderate way on a hill with its slope towards the lake. The initial basic design was part of the plans of Lenné, but the sovereign Herrmann von Pückler-Muskau was assigned to take care of the details.



The Flatow Tower is located on the hill top and you can see it from hundreds of places in the parks. From nearly everywhere in the Park Babelsberg you have got a fantastic view across the Tiefer See (Deep Lake) towards the eastern suburbs of Potsdam.



While the neo-Gothic Babelsberg Palace is located on the top of the hill with fantastic views, the small white palace is located directly next to the lake shore.



Above Schloss Babelsberg and below the Kleines Schloss



Like all the other parks from this epoch the one of Babelsberg is full of small details, as well. You can find the House of the Sailor, the small historic Gothic style court building that was moved from Berlin to this park to give way for the new red coloured Town Hall of Berlin. It

was quite evident that the park also required a cascade where water ran down the hill. For sure various fountains were part of the concept, as well.



Since the landscape in Potsdam consists of sandy hills there was of course no natural water that could supply these elements based on gravity, like in real high mountains. To solve this problem a pump house was built at the shore of river Havel in Norman style with battlement and a minaret. Steam operated pumps with 65 horse power provided the water in a reservoir on top of the hill.

These facilities made it possible to provide for another spectacular natural phenomenon: Close to the shore of the lake a geyser releases a water fountain of forty meters into the skies!



According to the concept of sight axes of Lenné you have got the view towards the Jagdschloss Glienicke across the lake from the pump house. This palace is located in Berlin.



Berlin did celebrate the so called Circle Day on February 5th. This is the day that the Berlin Wall came down 28 years, two months and 27 days, ago. Can you imagine that this wall stood directly in front of the camera for the same period of 28 years, two months and 27 days and divided the town and the world into two distinct parts?¹

Welcome to Berlin!

With warm regards

Emmanuel + Greta

¹ All pictures in this letter were taken by us on July 11th, 2017 right before and after a thunder storm.