



Schloss Bellevue

The Official Residence in Berlin

English edition



Der Bundespräsident

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Foreword

Dear visitors to Schloss Bellevue,

The palace presented in this brochure is, in a way, the “First” office and living room of our Republic. It is here that the Federal President, working with his closest staff, goes about his day-to-day duties. More importantly to me, however, I would like Schloss Bellevue to be an open house, where as many different people as possible have an opportunity to enjoy one another’s company in a comfortable setting. Of course, we do receive state visitors from around the world. But we also host gatherings of children, youths and adults from all parts of our country, representing our diverse and multifaceted society. They come here to engage in discussions, and to talk to my wife and me about ever new aspects of life in our country. We are pleased to have the privilege, time and again, to open our doors and make Schloss Bellevue a very special meeting place.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier
Federal President



Schloss Bellevue

Schloss Bellevue has been the Federal President's principal official residence since 1994. Situated at the edge of the Tiergarten, not far from the German Bundestag and the Federal Chancellery, the palace is surrounded by a spacious park bordering the River Spree. The Victory Column monument is just down the road. It was Theodor Heuss, the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949–1959), who made Schloss Bellevue his official Berlin residence alongside Villa Hammerschmidt in Bonn as a symbol of Germany's aspirations for reunification.

The palace, which has a main wing and two side wings, was built in the late 18th century in the early neoclassical style. The sandstone figures on the portal gable symbolise hunting, farming and fishing, a reminder that the palace was originally situated in the countryside. The palace owes its name "Bellevue" to its beautifully landscaped surroundings. The park was designed to provide vantage points in different directions – so-called "points de vue" – looking towards Charlottenburg, towards the south-west and across the Spree River.



BEHIND THE SCENES

The presidential standard is flown on the roof of Schloss Bellevue when the Federal President is in his official residence in Berlin or in another part of Germany. It is taken down only if he is at Villa Hammerschmidt, his official residence in Bonn, or if he designates another place in Germany as his official residence. The standard is then hoisted there prior to his arrival. When the Federal President travels abroad, the standard is taken down as soon as his airplane takes off and hoisted again when he lands in Berlin.

History

Schloss Bellevue was built in 1785 by Prince Ferdinand of Prussia to plans by Michael Philipp Boumann. The first example of the neoclassical style in Prussia, the royal country seat was a residence and generally did not have a representative function.

Its gardens and grounds were deemed one of Prussia's most delightful landscaped parks. Prince Ferdinand's guests included Napoleon as well as Alexander and Wilhelm Humboldt and Friedrich Schiller.

In 1844, the "Vaterländische Galerie", a forerunner of today's Nationalgalerie, and Prussia's first museum of contemporary German art, opened its doors in the palace.

The palace and park remained largely unchanged after World War I. In 1928, ownership passed from the House of Hohenzollern to the state of Prussia and the palace was subsequently used as an exhibition venue. During the Nazi Regime it was used for propaganda purposes and as an official guest house.



Schloss Bellevue around 1920



The ruins of Schloss Bellevue in 1946



Schloss Bellevue during renovation work in 2004/2005

During World War II, the palace was heavily damaged in April 1941. Rebuilding only started in 1955 and was completed in 1959. In 1957, while rebuilding was still in progress, the German Bundestag decided to make Schloss Bellevue the Federal President's second official residence after Villa Hammerschmidt in Bonn. The Langhans Hall was restored in the original neoclassical style. A new grand hall was also created for receptions and other events. In the course of further renovations in 1986/87, the entrance hall was redesigned and enlarged to open onto the terrace overlooking the grounds.



Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier ready to greet a visiting head of state

Following the German Bundestag's decision in 1991 to move to Berlin, Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker moved the principal official residence of the head of state from Villa Hammerschmidt in Bonn to Schloss Bellevue in Berlin in January 1994. Roman Herzog was the only Federal President who had his living quarters in the palace. Johannes Rau, his successor, was the first Federal President to move into a villa in the south-west of Berlin that is now the private residency of Germany's head of state.



Welcoming the President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella



Open day at Schloss Bellevue during the Federal President's annual citizens' festival

From May 2004 to December 2005 further renovations were carried out. The former presidential living quarters were converted into offices and the whole palace refurbished. Schloss Bellevue now has 15 public rooms used for formal entertaining. It is the setting for a host of political appointments such as state visits and the accreditation of new ambassadors to Germany, but members of the public are also invited to many of the Federal President's events in the palace and its park.

Entrance Hall

Schloss Bellevue's Entrance Hall is designed as an open space and links the interior of the palace with the courtyard and park.

This is where visiting heads of state sign the visitors' book after they have been welcomed by the Federal President in front of the palace. After signing the book, they proceed to the park, where the welcome with military honours usually takes place.

A portrait of Reich President Friedrich Ebert (Emil Orlik, 1920) can be seen on the wall to the left of the door opening onto the terrace and park; the portrait on the right is of Federal President Theodor Heuss (Wolf Röhricht, 1952).

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales signing the visitors' book



BEHIND THE SCENES

During state visits, the flower arrangements in the Entrance Hall and all over the palace always reflect the colours of the visiting head of state's national flag.





Office

This is where the Federal President receives his guests from Germany and abroad for talks.

On a pedestal beside the desk stands a bronze bust of Friedrich Ebert created by Georg Kolbe in 1925, on loan from the Georg Kolbe Museum in Berlin. Hanging on the wall behind is the painting "Weimar's 'Court of the Muses'. Schiller Reading to the Court in Tiefurt" by Theobald Reinhold Freiherr von Oer (1860), which is on loan from the National Museums in Berlin.

A special edition of the Basic Law can be seen on the low bookshelf. It was created by artist Markus Lüpertz and has 19 fold-out paintings alongside a bronze sculpture (2013).



BEHIND THE SCENES

The door to the left of the desk leads to the Federal President's study, where he holds meetings with his staff.



Gallery

The Gallery is used for receptions, discussions and press conferences. This is also where foreign ambassadors sign the visitors' book before presenting their Letters of Credence to the Federal President.

The works on exhibit in the Gallery change regularly, allowing various focuses. The Gallery links the Entrance Hall with the staircase leading up to the first floor.



Presentation of the last piece of black coal mined in Germany



The Ambassador of the United States of America signing the visitors' book



Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Elke Bűdenbender talking to young people on World Children's Day



After the signing of the visitors' book by the President of the Republic of Finland, Sauli Niinistö

Salon Voltaire and Salon Rahel Varnhagen

Salon Voltaire is dedicated to the Age of Enlightenment. The philosopher Voltaire is, moreover, symbolic of the influence of French culture on cosmopolitan Prussia. With portraits of Immanuel Kant and Moses Mendelssohn, two outstanding representatives of this era have their place in the Salon.



Salon Voltaire

Salon Rahel Varnhagen's name pays tribute to the contributions of Jewish scholarship and especially the self-confident role of Jewish women, in appreciation of intellectual independence and courage.

These two Salons are where the partners and delegations of the Federal President's official guests are welcomed and introduced.



Salon Rahel Varnhagen



Portrait of Rahel Varnhagen between Friederike Bethmann-Unzelmann (left) and Henriette Herz



Preparing for a meeting

A view inside the palace

- First floor**
- 8 Karl Friedrich Schinkel Salon
 - 9 Salon I
 - 10 Salon II
 - 11 Langhans Hall
 - 12 Salon Luise
 - 13 Salon Ferdinand
 - 14 Robert Blum Hall
 - 15 Great Hall

- Ground floor**
- 1 Entrance Hall
 - 2 Office
 - 3 Gallery
 - 4 Salon Voltaire
 - 5 Salon Rahel Varnhagen
 - 6 Cloakroom
 - 7 Staircase





Karl Friedrich Schinkel Salon

The Karl Friedrich Schinkel Salon is opposite the staircase and is used as a foyer for guests at receptions and larger events.

On display here, alongside architectural drawings by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, is a bust of the architect by Christian Friedrich Tieck, on loan from Stadtmuseum Berlin Foundation. Schinkel played a crucial role in shaping the face of Berlin. Inspired by the ancient world, he brought elegance and lightness to Prussian classicism in the early 19th century.



Visit of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, Rumen Radev

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Gallery links the Entrance Hall with the staircase leading up to the first floor. The staircase is dominated by the large portrait of Frederick William III painted by Franz Krüger in 1832 (on loan from the House of Hohenzollern).



Ornate vase (1841), a gift from Nicholas I, Tsar of Russia, to Frederick William III



Bust of Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1819, recast 1856)

Salon I and Salon II

The decoration and furnishings of Salons I and II have been kept in the style of the period when Schloss Bellevue was rebuilt between 1955 and 1959.

The pictures were chosen later to match the decoration and furnishings. In Salon I, four works by Fritz Winter from 1957 to 1962 are on display. The pictures in Salon II are by Theodor Werner and were painted between 1952 and 1959.



Salon I

Filigree inlays depicting insects native to Germany decorate both the mahogany doors and the tabletop in Salon II. The artistic inlays were worked by an unknown artist in around 1958.



Salon II



BEHIND THE SCENES

Quite a number of the pictures and furniture in Schloss Bellevue are on loan from national museums.

The Langhans Hall

The Langhans Hall was built in 1791 to plans by Carl Gotthard Langhans. It is the only room in the palace to be rebuilt after the War in its original form in the neoclassical style. Elliptical in design, it has two fireplaces and eight Corinthian columns round the walls. Once the largest room in the palace, it was originally used as a ballroom.

Nowadays it is used for receptions and award ceremonies. This is also where guests are welcomed and pass along the receiving line when the Federal President gives his New Year Reception. It is also the venue for the ceremony in which new ambassadors present the Federal President with their Letters of Credence authorising them to act as their country's official representative in Germany.



Reception for scholarship holders of the "Afrika kommt!" programme for young potentials from Sub-Saharan Africa



The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan presenting his Letter of Credence



Elke Būdenbender in conversation with guests at an event to mark the 70th anniversary of the Basic Law



Talks with the Sultan of Oman, Haitham bin Tariq, and his delegation

Salon Luise and Salon Ferdinand

Salon Luise is where, before a state banquet, the Federal President welcomes his guests as they pass along the receiving line. During state visits, the partner of the Federal President also uses the room for talks with the visiting head of state's partner. The room takes its name from Princess Anna Elisabeth Luise of Brandenburg-Schwedt (1738–1820), who married Prince August Ferdinand of Prussia in 1755. On the north wall is a portrait of Princess Luise with the urn of her dead son Heinrich by an unknown artist.

Salon Ferdinand is named after Prince August Ferdinand of Prussia (1730–1813), who commissioned the building of the palace. It is furnished and decorated in the same style as Salon Luise. Appropriately, a reproduction of the painting by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein (c. 1778) is a family portrait depicting “Prince Ferdinand of Prussia, Lord Master of the Order of St John, with his Consort Luise and their Children Luise, Heinrich and Louis Ferdinand”. The Salon is now used for smaller luncheons, dinners and talks.



Receiving line at the state banquet in honour of the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, and his wife Sabina Higgins



Elke Bündenbender (left) in conversation with Diana Nausėdienė, wife of the President of the Republic of Lithuania

BEHIND THE SCENES

A receiving line allows the Federal President as well as the visiting head of state to welcome all guests personally. The guests file past the Federal President, the visiting head of state and their partners and enter the Great Hall, where they take their seats for the state banquet. On entering Salon Luise, the guests hand the Chief of Protocol a card with their name on it so that he can announce them to the Federal President, who then knows who he is welcoming.

Robert Blum Hall

The Robert Blum Hall is used as a foyer to the Great Hall, as well as for smaller receptions, talks and meals. The paintings and drawings displayed here recall the German democracy movement in the 19th century, the Vormärz period and the National Assembly in the Paulskirche.

The large painting “Die Parteigänger” (The Jacobins, c. 1910), on loan from Landauer Kunststiftung, is a rare depiction of freedom of assembly and opinion in practice. Opposite it hangs a portrait of Robert Blum by an unknown artist, on loan from the Museum of City History Leipzig, alongside “Window scene: People watching the Imperial Regent entering Frankfurt am Main” (1852) by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, on loan from the Museum of Fine Arts Leipzig, and “Revolution in Dresden 1848/1849”, loaned by Dresden City Art Museum.



Addressing guests of honour



Great Hall

The largest room in the palace is used for receptions, concerts, discussions and award ceremonies. This is also where state banquets are held for 100 to 150 guests. The Federal President and the visiting head of state are seated at a table in the middle of the room. Before the meal is served the Federal President gives a short speech, which is followed by a speech by the visiting head of state. The walls at the north and south end of the room exhibit works by Gotthard Graubner, large, luxuriant bodies of colour entitled “Begegnungen” (Encounters), 1988. Both were created by the artist on site. They correspond in form and colour and symbolise communication transcending distance and other barriers – very much in keeping with the Federal President’s own concerns.



State banquet in honour of the President of Ireland

BEHIND THE SCENES

The kitchen is located on the south side of the Great Hall. The Federal President’s chef and his team prepare meals for up to 150 people and cater for receptions for up to 400 guests. Great importance is attached to serving regional dishes and, whenever possible, food that is in season. The wines served are all German wines.



Digital press conference along with WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus



Journalists preparing for an address by the Federal President



The Palace Park

The park of Schloss Bellevue was laid out with a system of visual axes to the surrounding landscape in 1784. Since then, it has undergone great changes. In 1959, work began on repairing World War II damage and redesigning the whole park. Three of the five original visual axes were preserved and modern features, such as

spacious lawns, circular paths and a reniform pond, were added. During a state or official visit, the guest of the Federal President is welcomed in the park with military honours. The Guard Battalion from the three Bundeswehr services – army, navy and air force – as well as the Bundeswehr Band form a line 80 metres long.

Coffee afternoon with members of the public and the heads of Germany's constitutional bodies to celebrate 70 years of the Basic Law

The national anthems are played, and the host and his guest walk past the guard of honour. Usually a class of schoolchildren with a link to the guest's country is also present. After the welcome ceremony, the Federal President and his guest talk for a while with the children.



One-on-one talks with the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor



Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark is welcomed with military honours

BEHIND THE SCENES

The welcome with military honours dates back to the 17th century and is now customary in many parts of the world. The visiting head of state is invited to symbolically inspect the armed forces of the country he is visiting. This expresses the host's trust and friendly intentions.

The Office of the Federal President

The Office of the Federal President is a supreme federal authority which assists the Federal President in the performance of his duties as head of state. Its top official, who is the most senior in protocol terms of all German state secretaries, is the Head of the Office of the Federal President.



The foundation stone for the new Office of the Federal President building next to Schloss Bellevue was laid on 14 November 1996. After two years of work, the new building designed by Frankfurt am Main architects Martin Gruber and Helmut Kleine-Kraneburg was inaugurated in November 1998.

Some 220 people currently work there. The Federal President's office is located next door in Schloss Bellevue.

The building itself is elliptical in form and its facade of black polished stone mirrors the nearby trees. In this way the Office of the Federal President blends unobtrusively into the surrounding park landscape – a symbol also of its function, namely to serve the head of state.



Interior view of the Office of the Federal President



State Secretary Dörte Dinger (second left), Head of the Office of the Federal President, holds a daily briefing

BEHIND THE SCENES

The terrazzo floor in the foyer is designed as a magic square, featuring the numbers one to nine. The sum of these numbers is always 15, regardless of whether they are added together vertically, horizontally or diagonally. This square is also known as the Magic Square of Saturn. The idea is that the square reflects the harmony and unity of the elliptical building of the Office of the Federal President.



In contrast to its dark facade, the interior is bright and full of light. The glass roof reinforces the feeling of light and airiness. The inner area behind the offices houses several meeting rooms and a library.

Busts of former Federal Presidents are displayed in the portico of the foyer. Traditionally, a sculpture of the head of state is created after he leaves office. The outgoing Federal President chooses the artist for this commission.



Evening in Schloss Bellevue Park

On the website of the Federal President you can take a virtual tour of Schloss Bellevue. Scan the QR code or go to www.bundespraesident.de/bellevue-virtual-tour.



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