

Welcome to Fort Spitzberg!

We kindly request you to pay particular attention to younger “cadets” and dogs, and to remain at all times on the marked trails. The fort is currently undergoing restoration works and the tall grass may conceal snakes!

Informational boards have been placed at different locations around the complex. This text should be used to help you find your way around the fort.

The first gate stands at the place where in the 18th century a drawbridge was constructed. Note the attached drawing, which is a reconstruction of how the fort looked after completion of construction. When approaching the internal gate leading to the fort (14), bear in mind that another drawbridge was originally located just before it, set on stone columns whose remains were discovered during excavation works towards in the late 20th century. Surrounding the fort is a dry moat, today somewhat flattened out due to gradual loss of material. It was never at any time filled with water, thus the name “dry moat”.

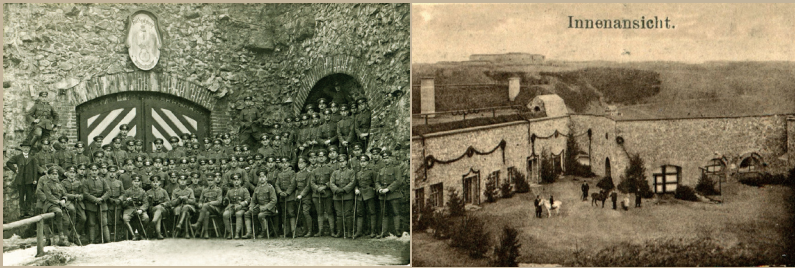
Another gate (15) cut into the low wall leads to the interior of the fort. Above it hangs an emblem which is based on a plaque from 1913. The low wall and gate were rebuilt during the adaptation works to transform the complex into a youth hostel in 1913. The original wall, constructed in the 18th century, was considerably thicker. Its remains can be seen at ground level. We now enter the courtyard, surrounded by casements and set on solid rock. The highlighted text below contains excerpts from the memoirs of Jędrzej Giertych, who was a prisoner of Oflag VIII B at the time that the camp functioned at the fort:

“We were led through the gate into a small, snow-covered courtyard lit by a lamp fixed to a high post, split into two sections by a tall barrier topped with barbed wire. To the left of the courtyard stood a small, two-storey building with two entrances. The barbed wire barrier was constructed in such a way that one of these entrances was in the first half and the other in the second half of the courtyard. To the right stood some low buildings with vaulted gates. Straight ahead, the courtyard was cut off by a high wall. In the middle of this were stairs, closed at the top by a gate, leading to the upper section of the wall. A guard stood in the half of the courtyard that was adjacent to the entrance gate. They opened a small gate in the barbed wire barrier and took us to the other side. They ordered us to pass through the door on the left side of the building.”

Following a short corridor, we reach the **SLEEPING QUARTERS (5)**. Remains of the casemates and wall paintings from the early 20th century can still be seen. This is one of the casemates where, in the times of the operation of the oflag, as many as 30 or 40 junior officers stayed, among them Jędrzej Giertych.

“In the narrow windows was placed barbed wire, and in the centre of the room stood several dozen wooden bunk beds. A dim gloom hung over the place constantly. The stuffiness and damp made spending any length of time in the room quite unpleasant.” (Leon Wernic)  
“It was essentially a confined, gloomy and dank fort where everyday life was quite difficult. The sleeping quarters were located in the former casemates of the fort, not renovated, simply fitted with electric lights and radiators. On the outside, the casemates had been half buried in a thick layer of dirt, making them basically an underground dungeon.”  
On the individual cots hang short biographies of the most important prisoners-of-war at the oflag, and from the window at the end of the room there is a beautiful view of the entire vicinity.

Walking down a corridor, we reach the next casemate, the **PROVISIONS STORE (6)**. This room served as a storeroom for supplies, equipment, and fuel for the generator which was located in the next casemate, the **WELL (7)**. This well, essentially a cistern with a depth of more than 84 metres below ground, is the deepest construction of this type in the fortress. Initially, water was drawn up from it using a small bucket wheel which was only replaced in 1913 with a modern pump. After leaving the casemate and entering the courtyard, we enter the first room to the left, the **ARMOURY (8)**. This casemate intended for riflemen was during the operation of the oflag used as secondary sleeping quarters for the junior officers. Currently, it is used as a garage for artillery dating from the Second World War. At the far end of the casemate is located another **SOLITARY CONFINEMENT AREA (9)** and another area with slots for riflemen. After returning to the courtyard, we head for its far end, passing on the left the stairs leading to the upper ring around the fort. Beyond the lower retaining wall are remains of six casemates which fell into ruin at the end of the 19th century during tests of new ammunition and explosives at the fort. Of these, only remains of the **GUN POSITION (C)** are extant. We now enter the lazzaretto, a small quarantine station used as the fort’s medical office.



To the left, we see the two-storey building of the youth hostel, built by repurposing the casemates in 1913. The lower storey at one time housed the common room of the hostel. We enter the building on the left side. The entryway leads to a further three rooms. To the left, a door leads to the former common room, which during the war was used as sleeping quarters for the German guards.

“This was the guardhouse, where the German soldiers lived. One officer was usually on duty at the fort, along with a few NCOs and about 20 or 30 soldiers. Shifts lasted 24 hours. After this, another officer and a new set of guards came. The camp commander, the Abwehr and assorted officers and NCOs as well as military administrative staff, German military doctors, translators, and so on sometimes came to the fort as required by the situation.”

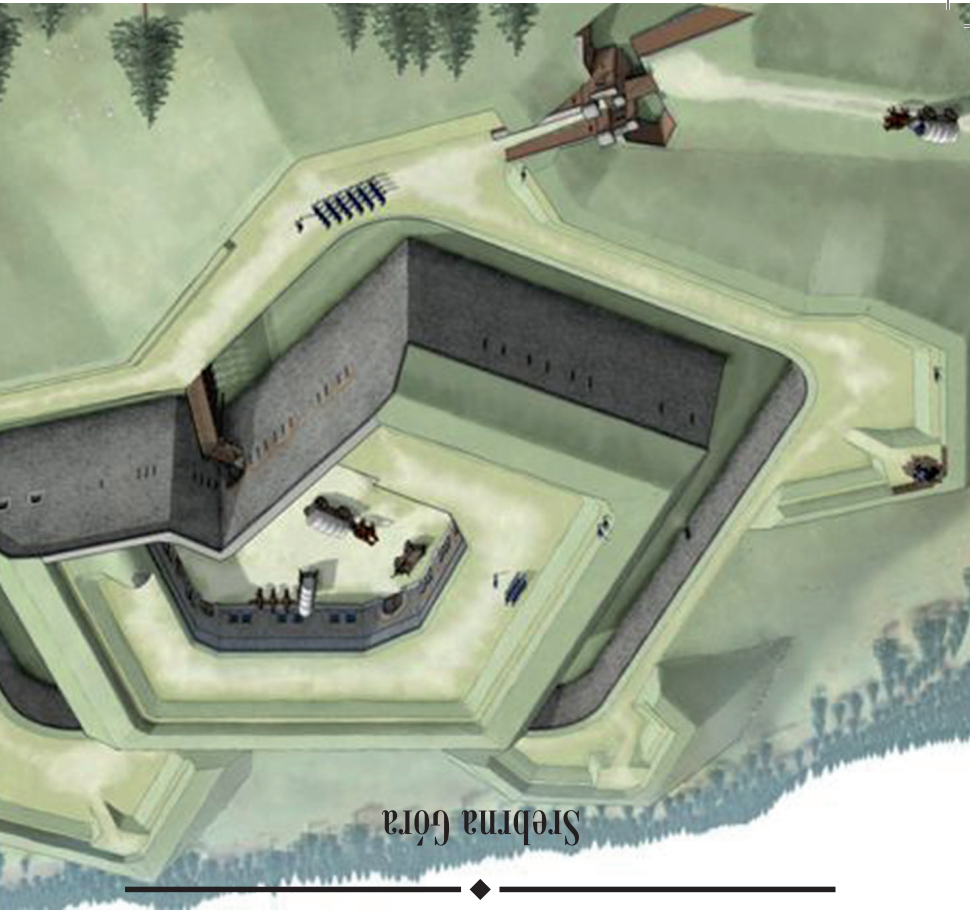
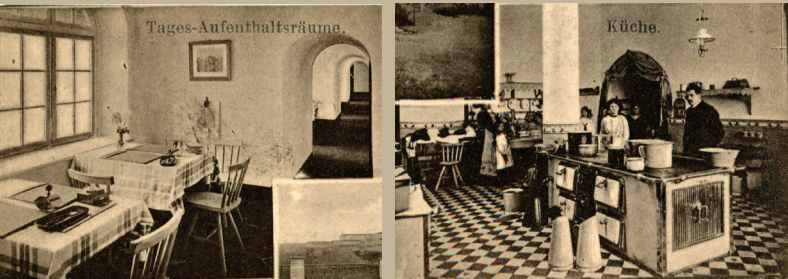
Straight ahead, a corridor leads to the solitary confinement area, the room in which general Tadeusz Piskor (13), former Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces of the Second Republic, was incarcerated. GENERAL PISKOR had a small, separate room without a door at the end of one of the casemates which was furnished with an iron-framed bed, and which had a window with a breath-taking view of the valley which lies at the foot of the fort complex, and which was also home to mice, the object of our constant observation.

“The most highly-ranked representative of the followers of Piłsudski to be interned at the camp was of course general Tadeusz Piskor. One of the leading Polish generals, he was also the Chief of Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, and at one time was one of the closest associates of Piłsudski. He had taken part in the underground operations organised by Piłsudski, although I can't remember whether only in the military operations or also in the earlier underground socialist political activities. He had leftist tendencies, but he was no Marxist. He grew up to become a soldier in the Polish Legions. I am in no way qualified nor do I possess the evidence to assess him as a strategist or military administrator, by which I mean as the head of the Polish General Staff for several years before the war and as the leader of the army in the September Campaign. But as a man, I hold him in high esteem. He stood head and shoulders above the typical Piłsudski



This room contains a secret passage leading to a fragment of the remaining casemate. The concrete floors and drains indicate that during the war this area was used as a wash room. After passing through the entrance, we see the next two rooms of the **ARMOURY (10)**. In the first is an exhibit dedicated to the history of the fort from its construction to modern times, displaying arms and uniforms from Prussian and German times as well as mementoes of the officers imprisoned in the oflag. In the second casemate there is an exhibit dedicated to secret German technologies developed in Lower Silesia during the Second World War. On addition to the 2 cm FlaK 38 gun, we can also see the only graphite rudder in Poland from a V-2 rocket, rocket engines, and experimental uniforms from the end of the war produced in plants not far from Spitzberg. It's worth mentioning that during the Second World War in the Kłodzko region, there were several dozen plants operating for the needs of the German army. These included a factory which produced weather stations for the army located in nearby Srebrna Góra, communications equipment produced for the Kriegsmarine and tank components. Following a corridor to the end of the second casemate, we pass through the reconstructed rifleman's positions to the **GUARDHOUSE (2)**. This room was used as sleeping quarters. Currently, it is displayed as it looked during the Second World

War with original furnishings. Through a drainage passage (beyond the small white and red door) we pass on to the **FREDERICK ROOM (12)**, where mementoes of the founder of the fortress await visitors, including documents with the Kaiser's authentic signature, portraits from the era, and a death mask, as well as coffee and tea and a film presenting the recollections of one of the officers imprisoned at Spitzberg. At the end of the corridor, there is a stairwell leading to the upper ring around the fort. t is worth making the effort to ascend these stairs to admire the exceptional views of the donjon of the fortress and the mountain passes of the area (B). After leaving the fort, we recommend a walk around the dry moat. The vie of the mountain passes and the vicinity is no less impressive than that from the upper ring of the fort.



Fort Spitzberg

The legend:

- |   |                 |    |                     |
|---|-----------------|----|---------------------|
| 1 | Oflag command   | 9  | Penalty             |
| 2 | Guardhouse      | 10 | Lazaret             |
| 3 | Kitchen         | 11 | Weapons warehouse   |
| 4 | Dining room     | 12 | Frederic's room     |
| 5 | Bedroom         | 13 | Piskor's punishment |
| 6 | Provision house | 14 | Outer gate          |
| 7 | Well            | 15 | Main gate           |
| 8 | Armory          |    |                     |



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Welcome to Fort Spitzberg!

Early days and Frederick the Great

*Fort Spitzberg (Ostróg), located at the summit of the hill of the same name ( 627m. a.s.l.), was constructed between 1769-1772. The distinctly divided Spitzberg massif is part of the Bardzkie Mountains and is the northernmost peak of these. The fort was commissioned by Frederick the Great, who personally oversaw the construction works of the entire system of fortifications. When completed, Spitzberg was the most modern of the forts making up the system of fortifications, and despite being fitted with only six cannons, their striking power was considerable thanks to their position in casemates in the ramparts.*

Designed on a pentagonal plan, the construction is surrounded by a dry moat. Nineteen casemates were built into the lower part of the defensive wall covered with earth, of which six were intended for artillery, one which served as a powder magazine (holding up to 25 tonnes), and two for food stores. In one of these casemates, a well was drilled, the deepest in the entire structure at 84 metres. In the 18th century, the fort was manned by eight officers and 130 soldiers. The fort, along with the entire system of fortifications, became obsolete in military term in the early 19th century. In the mid-19th century, the space was used as a training ground for new guns and ammunition, as was the rest of the system of fortifications, after which the fort was abandoned by the army and for the next half century slowly slid into ruin.

First World War

On 10 March 1913, Kaiser Wilhelm II transferred the fort to the Young German League (Jungdeutschland-Bund), a youth organisation with patriotic and pro-government underpinnings. Additionally, he

earmarked 10 000 marks for the organisation. The Silesian branch of the league began preparing the fort for use as a youth hostel, commissioning the Kłodzko-based architect Rudolf Balhorn to conduct renovation and adaptation works. As a result, one of the largest and most modern structures of this type in all of German was established at the fort, including central heating and a newly constructed building with 100 beds.

Mountain Riflemen

During the First World War, Spitzberg became a training centre for German mountain infantry units. The 4th Ersatz Gebirgs Maschinengewehr Abteilung trained machine gun companies for all German mountain units. Towards the end of the war, a unit which had initially consisted of 100 soldiers had expanded to the size of two regiments, comprising nearly 1000 troops. In 1919, the mountain riflemen were replaced by units of the Border Guards, and in 1921 the youth league returned to Ostróg.

After 1933, the fort was taken over by the Hitlerjugend. In 1938, the Jugenburg (castle of youth, as it became known) was visited by more than 12 000 persons!

Oflag VIII B

In December 1939, the Oflag VIII B was established at the fort, the first German penal oflag for Polish officers. The camp held the elite of the Polish army, including officers such as counter admiral Marian Majewski, general Tadeusz Piskor, and general Juliusz Drapella. The prisoners made many attempts at escape. Ultimately in

July 1941, the camp was liquidated and all of the prisoners transferred to other oflags. Among the 99 officers interned at Spitzberg in 1940 there were two generals, four commanders, five colonels, four lieutenant colonels, six majors, thirteen captains, twelve lieutenants, forty-four non-commissioned officers. After the liquidation of the oflag, in 1943 the fort began to be used as a prisoner-of-war camp for Russian soldiers. After the taking of Srebrna Góra by the Soviet army, the fort was transformed into a military arrest facility which operated until the complex was handed over to the Poles.

Scouts

In the 1960s, the fort was managed by a new group – scout troops associated with miners' schools – which used the fort for nearly two decades as a recreational base. Afterwards, for some time the fort was passed from hand to hand, at times standing unused.

In January 2018, the Museum of Coastal Defence in Świnoujście was entrusted with the management of the fort.

Fort Spitzberg

Srebrna Góra

