

GROUP 4 : AUDIOGUIDE

Marzahn high-rise buildings : history and architecture

HISTORY

The name „Marzahn“ was borrowed from a nearby medieval village.

But for most of history, the area was mainly open fields on the outskirts of Berlin.

Before the Olympic Games of 1936, the Nazis rounded up Berlin's population of Roma and Sinti people at this remote location to keep them out of view from visitors to the games.

After the Second World War, Berlin was divided in 2 parts and this quarter was in the communist eastern zone of Berlin.

There the first concrete slab was laid on July 8, 1977.

In the 1970s onwards some 400,000 people lived there.

After 1989 Marzahn was seen as an old-fashioned area and for that reason many people moved away and the high-rise buildings were left empty.

Because of that, in the early 2000s they were modernized: they were cut down to 3 or 4 floors, the windows were replaced by energy-saving ones and people started to move in there again for the cheaper rents.

Now, this area is greener than it was once, and it hosts approximately 190,000 people.

ARCHITECTURE

The Marzahn buildings are known as „Plattenbau“, and the main architect is Gerhard Kosel. The high-rise buildings are inspired by Bauhaus, which means that it has strict geometry and strong right-angled forms.

This also means that the buildings have to be functional and practical, and this leads to a symmetrical, monolithic and almost identical look.

The main colours are blue, yellow and red.

The buildings were constructed with prefabricated parts, which were shipped to Marzahn and then stacked together.

Plattenbau buildings are an example of communist architecture in the 1970s.

When you walk through Marzahn you can see some of the old high-rise buildings with 11 to 21 floors, but also some of the new buildings, which were re-built and now they have only 3 to 4 floors.

You will also notice that the majority of the buildings are made of concrete slabs, which might be boring, but the colours bring some freshness to the area.

The area also contains sixteen shopping centres, fifteen local restaurants and pubs, nine senior homes, five hospitals, eight general service centres, fifty indoor sports arenas, two indoor community swimming pools (with saunas) and nine youth clubs.

Today the district is focusing on new building projects with new architecture.