

# MACHTUrlaub

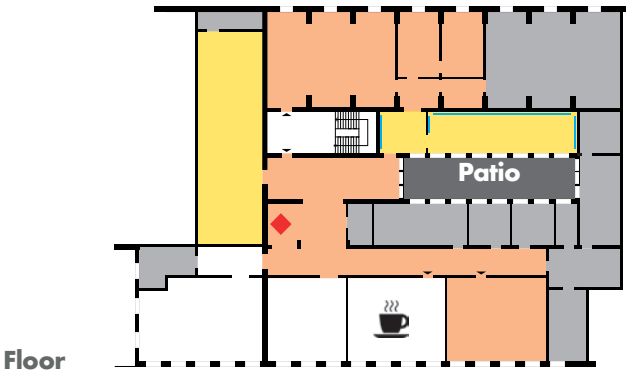
## The exhibition on the 'KdF seaside resort' in Prora

**The Documentation Center Prora**

Since 2004, the permanent exhibition MACHTUrlaub (this can mean both 'Take a vacation' and play on the word 'Macht' which translates to 'power' or 'authority') has documented the history of the complex's construction and use. It explores the project's background, its appropriation by Nazi propaganda, and the regional context of the time. Another section integrates the site's history into the broader labor and social history of National Socialism. Based on the Nazi concept of the 'Volksgemeinschaft', the exhibition offers a comprehensive panorama of work and daily life during the Third Reich. Alongside numerous image and text documents, audio and film sequences and illustrate how the regime envisioned shaping the 'Volksgemeinschaft'. The exhibition also includes a documentary film and interactive digital media stations. This exhibition is closely tied to its location in the former 'KdF resort' Prora and aims to contribute to historical education and political awareness. It is the first permanent exhibition in Germany to focus on the labor and social history of the Third Reich. The documentation is complemented by temporary exhibitions and events on topics such as history, architecture, art, nature, and politics.

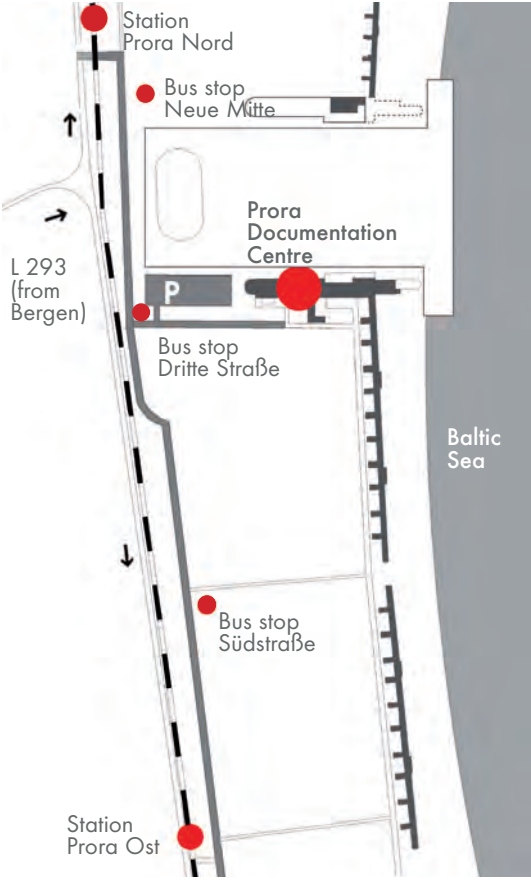
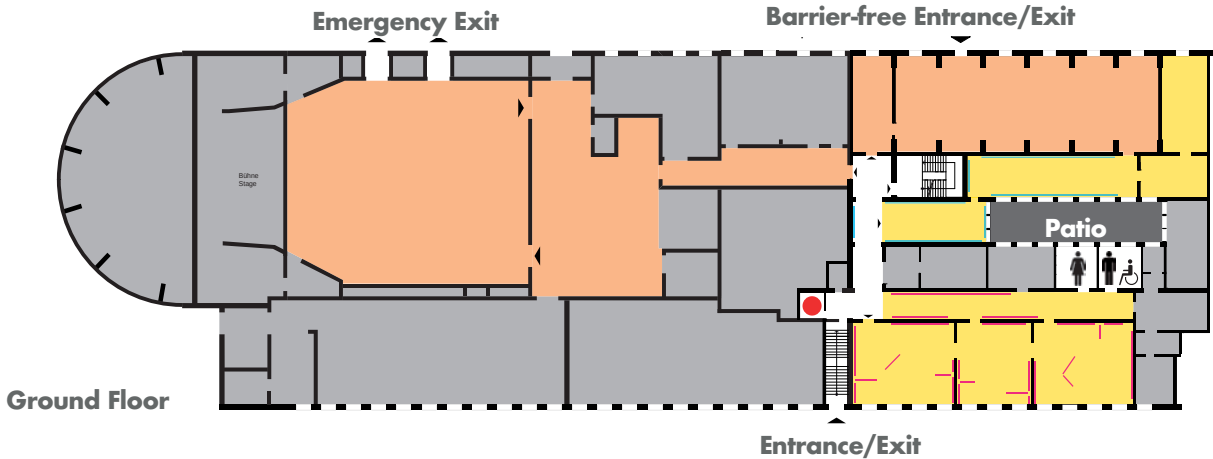


Documentation Center Prora, 2019



**Legend**

- Special exhibition
- Permanent exhibition MACHTUrlaub
- Cashpoint
- Meeting point for guided tours



**dokumentationszentrum prora**  
Dritte Straße 4 (Block 3) · 18609 Prora/Rügen · Germany  
Phone 0049/(0)38393/13991

**Opening hours**  
January, February: daily 10 a.m - 4 p.m.  
March - October: daily 10 a.m - 6 p.m.  
November: daily 10 a.m - 4 p.m.  
December: varies, information on the homepage

**Daily tours**  
Possible deviations November - February  
please refer to the homepage or call.

**Berlin office**  
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**The 'KdF seaside resort for 20.000' in Prora/Rügen**

The approximately 4,7-kilometer-long complex of the 'KdF seaside resort Rügen' was built between 1936 and 1939 on behalf of the Nazi organization 'Kraft durch Freude' ('Strength Through Joy', KdF) and was largely completed. Architect Clemens Klotz designed eight 500-meter-long residential blocks along the coastline. Today, three of these blocks are located south of a planned but undeveloped festival square, while two stand to the north, followed by the ruins of two additional blocks. Alongside the Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg, the complex is the largest contiguous architectural legacy of the Nazi era and is now a protected historical monument. As early as 1936, Hitler demanded that the Prora complex be designed for use as a military hospital 'in the event of war.' In



'KdF seaside resort Rügen', architectural perspective based on the design by Clemens Klotz, 1936

1939, with the outbreak of war, construction was halted, and the workers were reassigned to locations such as the rocket testing site in Peenemünde, where ballistic missiles (the 'V2') were developed. The complex remained unfinished, and Prora was never used as a 'KdF resort'. Parts of the site were used from 1940 to 1942 to train police battalions, and later, female auxiliary personnel of the Navy were also trained there. Forced laborers and prisoners of war were employed in Prora for further construction work. Even at this location, designated for joy and recreation, there were victims of Nazi tyranny. The Prora complex represented a promise from the Nazi regime:

20.000 people were to vacation there. In its monumental design, it serves as a significant socio-historical testimony to the regime's efforts to pacify workers – whose political parties and organizations had been dismantled in 1933 – and win them over for its policies of war, territorial expansion, and racial ideology. Leading Nazi officials emphasized that the 'nerves of the people' needed to be strengthened for the coming war. The 'KdF seaside resort for 20.000' is also an architecturally interesting example of how modernist architecture was adapted under National Socialism, despite the style being officially opposed at the time. During the GDR era, the site was a restricted military area. It served as barracks for the National People's Army (NVA) and a training center for various military units. Construction soldiers, conscientious objectors of military service in the GDR doing construction work instead of armed training were also stationed there. After German reunification in 1990, the area became a site for the Bundeswehr (German Federal Army); following their withdrawal, Prora became accessible to the public in 1991.

**The 'German Labor Front' (DAF) and the 'Strength through Joy' (KdF) Program**

The 'German Labor Front' ('Deutsche Arbeitsfront', DAF) replaced the trade unions that were forcibly dissolved on May 2, 1933. However, it did not aim to protect workers' economic and social interests. As Robert Ley, leader of the DAF, stated: 'The great goal of the Labor Front is to educate all Germans engaged in labor to adopt a National Socialist mindset.' The DAF appropriated the unions' assets and membership, becoming the wealthiest and largest mass organization in the Nazi regime. The 'Kraft durch Freude (KdF)' program was established within the DAF in November 1933 to oversee workers' leisure activities during the 'Third Reich'. Large-scale projects were part of this initiative, including a fleet of 'KdF cruise ships', the 'KdF-Wagen' ('KdF-car', later Volkswagen), and the 'KdF seaside resort Rügen', which was intended as a prototype for four additional resorts. The KdF organi-

zation became the most popular and successful division of the DAF due to its leisure offerings. By 1939, the 'KdF seaside resort' – like the 'KdF-Wagen' – was a central element of the regime's social propaganda. Notably, the foundation stone for Prora was laid on May 2, 1936, the third anniversary of the 'storming the unions'. Neither the resort nor the Volkswagen ever fulfilled their promises as social benefits. With the onset of war in 1939, the entire KdF organization and its facilities were repurposed for military use.



New ships of the KdF 'Robert Ley' und 'Wilhelm Gustloff', 1939

**A Monument of Contemporary History**

In Germany's culture of remembrance, the focus has primarily been on the crimes of the Nazi regime. However, examining the promises and offerings of the regime – such as the ostensibly classless 'Volksgemeinschaft' (people's community), access to culture, travel,

consumer goods, technology, and motorization – is essential to understanding the era. It is only by considering the duality of a polished facade and unspeakable atrocities, of modernity and barbarism, that a comprehensive picture of the 'Third Reich' can be formed for future generations. More than half a century after the war, the myth of supposedly 'good sides' or social achievements of the Third Reich persists. Prora is a place where this enduring myth is architecturally monumentalized. However, this myth does not reflect the social reality of Nazi society, which was marked by inequality and the exclusion of entire population groups. The ideology of the 'Volksgemeinschaft' conjured a racially and politically homogeneous community that was loyal and obedient to the 'Führer', with access to social benefits such as vacations in Prora reserved only for those who conformed. The fact that Prora never operated as a 'KdF seaside resort' due to the war does not diminish the authenticity of the site. Since 1936, it was a central theme of propaganda promoting the regime's promises for the future. Today, as redevelopment processes erase many historical traces, it is increasingly important to provide historical context through a documentation center.



KdF advertising poster from 1939. In the background the buildings of Prora