

Berlin Radio Tower celebrates its 90th anniversary

Over 17.3 million visitors since opening on 3 September 1926

One of the city's main landmarks opens on 14 September with a gala buffet to celebrate the event

Berlin, 2 September 2016 – It stands 147 metres tall, is known affectionately by the locals as 'Langer Lulatsch', and on 3 September will be celebrating its ninetyeth anniversary. The Berlin Radio Tower is, quite literally, a towering landmark of the German capital. Following routine summer maintenance the restaurant and observation deck of the Berlin Radio Tower will reopen on 14 September, welcoming visitors from around the world. From then until the end of October guests will be able to enjoy a gala anniversary buffet with over 30 culinary delights, while admiring the 360-degree panoramic views of the city's rooftops and green spaces. As part of this year's maintenance programme state-of-the-art radio communications were installed on the Radio Tower, and the lift was also fitted with an all-new drive, control system and cables.

Since its inauguration on the occasion of the 3rd Radio Exhibition in 1926 it has welcomed more than 17.3 million visitors. Originally designed as an aerial mast, because of its exclusive 55-metre high restaurant and the observation deck, sitting at a lofty height of 126 metres, the Radio Tower rapidly became one of Berlin's major attractions. The Radio Tower is owned by the Land of Berlin. The company operating it is Capital Catering GmbH, a subsidiary of Messe Berlin GmbH.

A chequered history

The Berlin Radio Tower was inaugurated on 3 September 1926, amid bright sunshine on the occasion of the 3rd Radio Exhibition. That year witnessed the first of many successful Green Week fairs, the birth of the future Queen Elizabeth and of Marilyn Monroe. It was also the year in which Deutsche Lufthansa AG and Daimler Benz AG were established. During construction of the Radio Tower's steel grid design according to Professor Heinrich Straumer's plans the builders frequently had to pioneer technical advances, for example when constructing the lift system and service lines for gas, water, electricity and heat. In 1932 the Summer Garden was built at the foot of the tower, an oval with a lavish green area. The tower even survived a major fire in 1935 and the devastating destruction of the Second World War.

At the time of its inauguration the Berlin Radio Tower was Germany's tallest tower. It acted as a beacon for planes flying to Berlin, Europe's aviation hub, and during the Berlin Blockade yellow warning lights helped the 'candy bombers' navigate their way to Tempelhof Airport. Beneath the restaurant electric advertising had been installed, comprising 4,000 light bulbs and featuring scrolling messages, at the time probably Germany's highest advertising hoarding of this size. The tower also made radio history: on 8 March 1929 it broadcast the first televised images via the nearby transmitter at Witzleben.

Today the Radio Tower has a gleaming new coat of paint and at night can be seen from afar with its powerful LEDs in a variety of different colours. In coordination with the Berlin Department of Listed Buildings, the restaurant was refurbished according to its original 1920s design. Visitors are spirited up to the observation deck in a remote controlled lift with glass walls in only 33 seconds. At the base of the tower is the Funkturm Lounge, a multi-purpose venue which can be booked as a spectacular party location or for conferences and exhibitions, and which is operated by Capital Catering.

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Radio Tower facts at a glance

Ownership and operation:

The Radio Tower is owned by the Land of Berlin. The company operating it is Capital Catering GmbH, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Messe Berlin GmbH.

Height above ground level:

- 147 metres to the tip of its aerial
- 126 metres to the observation deck
- 55 metres to the restaurant

Design:

The architect responsible for designing the Radio Tower was Prof. Heinrich Straumer. He supervised a total of 140 technical drawings of the steel framework. His design was based on the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

Construction period:

Construction began on 8 November 1924. On 3 September 1926, barely two years later and at the opening of the 3rd Radio Exhibition ('Grosse Deutsche Funkausstellung'), the Radio Tower was inaugurated.

Weight:

The Radio Tower weighs a total of around 600 tonnes, with the steel structure accounting for 400 tonnes and the foundations making up another 220 tonnes. Stability calculations added a further 40 tonnes for visitors and wind pressure equivalent to 105 tonnes.

The load-bearing capacity of each of the porcelain insulators installed on the foundations is 1.4 million kilogrammes.

Basic area:

- Radio Tower: 20 x 20 metres
- Restaurant: 18.5 x 18.5 metres

Lift:

The lift can carry up to ten people and reaches the observation deck in 33 seconds, travelling at 4 m/s. This year, as part of a modernisation programme, standard state-of-the art radio communications were installed, replacing the older unit. The lift was also fitted with an all-new drive, control system and cables.

Restaurant:

The restaurant seats a total of 116 guests and is located 55 metres above ground. Its design is from the art nouveau era. Even now, the interior radiates an atmosphere that harks back to the twenties. The wall panels from Caucasian nutwood, the slatted ceiling in white as well as the bar, fashioned from high-quality wood and mother of pearl, are all unique. The painstakingly crafted panels are the work of Ludwig Lüdtké. They include inlay designs by Victor Lurjé, who belonged to the renowned Vienna Workshops. After the Second World War, and in coordination with the Berlin Department of Listed Buildings, the restaurant was refurbished according to its original design. The inlays were restored by Fritz Huppke.

Observation deck:

The observation deck has a maximum capacity of 45 people. High winds can cause the observation deck to sway by up to 40 cm, while describing an ellipse around its vertical axis.

Visitor numbers:

Since the Radio Tower's inauguration in 1926 a total of more than 17 million people have visited the restaurant and observation deck. In recent times the figure has been around 60,000 a year.

Staircase:

- 287 steps to the restaurant

- 610 steps to the observation deck

Illumination of the Radio Tower | lighting system

State-of-the-art LED lighting systems illuminate the Radio Tower on the Berlin Exhibition Grounds. A computer mouse click selects the desired colour for lighting up the landmark, as befits the occasion. The lighting system comprises 68 LEDs with a power input of 9.5 kW. Their life cycle exceeds 50,000 hours. LED lighting is installed in the courtyard of the Radio Tower, on the roof of the restaurant, the observation deck as well as on the structure's steel frame. Some of the Radio Tower illumination's most spectacular visual effects include waterfalls, flames and rainbows. Furthermore, each of the major trade fairs features its own colours whenever the Radio Tower is illuminated, highlighting the event's presence from afar. Thus, traditionally the Radio Tower shines in red during IFA, in orange during ITB, in blue during InnoTrans, in the colour of the respective advertising campaign during Fruit Logistica, and naturally in green during the International Green Week.

About Capital Catering GmbH

Capital Catering GmbH (CCG) is a subsidiary of Messe Berlin. Core business at CCG focuses on Berlin ExpoCenter City and the new exhibition grounds at Berlin ExpoCenter Airport, where CCG organises catering for conferences, seminars, congresses and exhibitions. CCG also operates the Berlin Radio Tower and its restaurant. With its exclusive brand called Prime Catering CCG also organises catering services for external customers. CCG has a permanent workforce of 75 employees and relies on up to 400 part-time employees for major events.

About Messe Berlin

Based on turnover and growth, Messe Berlin is among the world's ten leading trade fair companies operating their own exhibition grounds. The company's wide-ranging portfolio includes five global brands: the International Green Week Berlin, ITB Berlin / Singapore, IFA, InnoTrans and Fruit Logistica Berlin / Hong Kong. Every year 30,000 media representatives from Germany and abroad report on events in Berlin. In terms of the media coverage it attracts Messe Berlin is one of the capital's most important ambassadors. www.messe-berlin.de

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