

Berlin Hauptbahnhof - Flooded with Light

Berlin Hauptbahnhof is the main railway station in Berlin, Germany and the largest crossing station in Europe. It began full operation two days after a ceremonial opening on 26 May 2006 and is now Europe's largest two-level railway station. It is located on the site of the historic Lehrter Bahnhof, and until it opened as a main line station, it was a stop on the Berlin S-Bahn suburban railway temporarily named Berlin Hauptbahnhof-Lehrter Bahnhof.



The building in Spreebogen, which is the largest and most modern crossing station in Europe, effectively combines striking architecture with the mobility requirements of the 21st century. Every day, some 1100 long-distance, regional and rapid transit trains call at the 14 platforms on two different levels.

Architecture

The architecture of the Berlin Hauptbahnhof is filigree and flooded with light. It has been a construction and logistics challenge since the foundation stone was laid in 1998. Short distances and daylight on all levels are key architectural features of the new Berlin Hauptbahnhof.



The 321 metre-long glass hall of the Stadtbahn line (section through the City) running from east to west is intersected by the 160 metre-long, 40 metre-wide station building, running in a north-south direction. The transparent design of the railway station as well as the well thought-out routing system make it easy for travelers to find their way around the station. The numerous glass panes let daylight into all of the station's levels and the steel futuristic-looking forms are the leitmotif of this unique construction.

The station hall is framed by two 46 metre-high arched structures that span the Stadtbahn line. The architecture thus emphasizes the station's character as a crossing. For the Hamburg architects Gerkan, Marg & Partners, the determining factor of the architecture was the importance of the new Berlin Hauptbahnhof - Lehrter Bahnhof as an interface in a Europe that is becoming increasingly integrated.



History

Lehrter Bahnhof opened in 1871 as the terminus of the railway linking Berlin with Lehrte, near Hanover, which later became Germany's most important east-west main line. In 1882, with the completion of the Stadtbahn (City Railway, Berlin's four-track central elevated railway line, which carries both local and main line services), just north of the station, a smaller interchange station called Lehrter Stadtbahnhof was opened to provide connections with the new line. This station later became part of the Berlin S-Bahn. In 1884, after the closure of nearby Hamburger Bahnhof, Lehrter Bahnhof became the terminus for trains to and from Hamburg.

Following heavy damage during World War II, limited services to the main station were resumed, but then suspended in 1951. In 1957, with the railways to West Berlin under the control of East Germany, Lehrter Bahnhof was demolished, but Lehrter Stadtbahnhof continued as a stop on the S-Bahn. In 1987, it was extensively renovated to commemorate Berlin's 750th anniversary.

After German reunification it was decided to improve Berlin's railway network by constructing a new north-south main line, to supplement the east-west Stadtbahn. Lehrter Stadtbahnhof was considered to be the logical location for a new central station.

Facilities

Hauptbahnhof has all the facilities you would expect of a new, modern station. However, it does not have any luggage lockers; instead there is only a left-luggage facility with a luggage-screening

policy, which means waiting times should be expected when checking baggage in or out.

Hauptbahnhof has been described as a "shopping center with a rail connection", and there is certainly no shortage of retail facilities - there are 80 stores. Most shops are open daily until 10pm.

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