

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY GETS A NEW MUSEUM



For more than 130 years, the Statue of Liberty has stood in the port of New York. About 4.3 million people visit the site every year, but for the lack of space, not everyone can go into the pedestal. Now, for the first time, a larger museum opens next to the statue.

Around 4.3 million visitors, between 8,000 and 28,000 a day, crowd Liberty Island every year, an island so small that you can easily walk around it in 10 minutes. **For space reasons, only about 20 percent of the visitors can enter the statue, only about 7 percent can enter the crown.** The cost-free tickets are usually sold out months in advance.

“The fact that not everyone can get into the statue is the hardest thing for all of us who work here on Liberty Island – but there just is not enough space,” says John Piltzecker of the U.S. National Park Administration, official caretaker of the Statue of Liberty for five years. “That’s why we thought it would be a wonderful gift to take the relatively small museum out of its pedestal and take it to a place where more people can see it.”

After a construction period of around three years, the new museum for the Statue of Liberty opened on Thursday (16 May). The construction of the single-story, glazed and stormproof exhibition building cost around 100 million dollars (about 89 million euros), financed entirely from donations. Star designer Diane von Furstenberg had taken the lead among fundraisers. The new museum does not require an entrance fee, but for the ferry to the island, visitors still need to buy a ticket that costs almost 20 dollars.

Everything revolves around the 46-meter-high, green “Lady Liberty” of iron scaffolding and copper outer layer, which turns its back on the museum from the other side of the island: its origins as a gift from France at the end of the 19th century, its master builders Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and Gustave Eiffel, who a few years later was to build the Eiffel Tower, later named after him, and its development into the icon of freedom and civil rights worldwide.

Films, information boards and showcases with exhibits tell this story and make it clear how much the Statue of Liberty has become a worldwide icon – it is available as a table lamp, Lego model and rubber duck. **The main attraction of the museum is the original torch, which was dismantled from the statue in 1984 and replaced by a copy.** With the help of a special transport vehicle, the fragile piece had been moved a few months ago from the old museum in the socket to the new one. From the roof of the new museum, visitors have a panoramic view over New York Harbor and the skyline of Manhattan.

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