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Press release

The Lion Gate – A monument with a future

Historic entrance reopens with a modern ServiceCentre

Berlin at the turn of the twentieth century: The affluent area of Charlottenburg was still far from the city limits and the Zoological Garden was located on swampy terrain halfway between the two. Wealthy Berliners who wanted to visit the zoo would take droshkies out of the city and drive through the forest that would soon become Berlin's largest park. The less fortunate had to embark on a long walk to reach the entrance at the north-eastern end of the zoo grounds. When Berlin's U-Bahn network was extended to Charlottenburg, more people came to visit the zoo, creating the need for an additional entrance at the western end of the grounds with direct access to public transport. Designed to reflect the status of Prussia in world affairs, the grandiose Lion Gate was opened with pomp and circumstance in 1909.

Over 100 years later, the King of the Beasts still sits majestically atop the entrance and proudly watches over the millions of visitors who walk through the magnificent gate year after year. In recent years, however, visitor numbers increased to such an extent that long queues formed at the feet of the majestic lions on Hardenbergplatz, especially at weekends and during holidays and a change had to be made. The groundbreaking ceremony for the renovation of the Lion Gate was held on 16 November 2015, kicking off a comprehensive new target and development plan for Berlin Zoo. The number of ticket booths at the Lion Gate was doubled to eight and a brand new ServiceCentre is now the first port of call for incoming visitors.

Upon entering the zoo, visitors will find themselves in a semicircular courtyard surrounded by a single-storey, pavilion-style building designed by architecture firm dan pearlman. The new building houses the ServiceCentre and an ample gift shop. Toy manufacturer Wild Republic has opened an Africa-themed gift shop in the zoo's new entrance area – the company's largest themed store worldwide. A new product line created especially for Berlin Zoo makes the array of gifts on offer truly unique. Ranging from coffee cups to chilli gardens and cuddly lions, visitors are sure to find the perfect souvenir in the 350 m² shop. Totalling over 1,000 m², the spacious new entrance area is equipped with turnstiles suitable for wheelchair users and includes sanitary and handcart rental facilities, offering visitors a better service and employees a more comfortable working environment.



Mayor of Berlin Michael Müller and deputy District Mayor of Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf Carsten Engelmann attended the inauguration of the new gate, an event set against the unique backdrop of rhinos and imposing crags from the ibex enclosure. “We are delighted that one of Berlin’s best-known institutions can now greet its visitors from Berlin and around the world with a suitably grand entrance at Hardenbergplatz,” said Mayor Müller, who is delighted with the Zoo’s new look.

“The new Lion Gate entrance was a personal priority for me,” explained Dr Andreas Knieriem, Director of Berlin Zoo and Tierpark Berlin. “Carrying out the renovation work without closing the facilities was a significant challenge that we managed to tackle brilliantly. All the employees involved in this project have my deepest gratitude and respect for this achievement!” The Lion Gate entrance is now a window into the zoo; the perfect way to prepare visitors for the ultimate zoo experience. Strategic creative agency dan pearlman put great emphasis on creating an authentic overall picture and ensuring a high-quality finish, using natural materials such as wood and clay to round off the natural feel of the area. The grey fibre cement facades are subtly patterned with diamond shapes evoking traditional African ornamentation, a natural look complemented by the grey-brown wooden slats and the large windows that brighten up and open out the whole entrance area. The costs for the renovation project amounted to €4 million. Several companies under the leadership of project management firm Projekt-S2 GmbH and landscape architecture office SKP Berlin Gebäude & Landschaften GmbH were involved in renovating a total area of 2,936 m² over a period of around eight months. “Preserving a historic monument without having to sacrifice modern comforts – the link between the past and the future has been forged with outstanding success here,” said Frank Bruckmann, chairman of the supervisory board of Zoologischer Garten Berlin AG, praising the work of everyone involved in the project.