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PRESS RELEASE

Colditz Castle Comes to Life with New Augmented Reality Exhibition

(14 August 2024) In the Leipzig Region, the new captivating exhibition "An Abandoned Place Comes to Life" opened at the historic Colditz Castle in April 2024. Breathing new life into the storied walls of Colditz, the exhibition offers guests an immersive journey through the castle's dramatic past and its fascinating transformation into a cultural landmark. For the first time, three areas of the once magnificent hunting lodge are open to visitors, covering some 1,300 square metres. In the cellar house, the castle chapel and the prince's house, more than 300 exhibits are on display and scenes from 500 years of castle history can be experienced. Colditz Castle is now home to an exhibition that vividly reanimates its legacy.

New Emotional Castle Experience with Interactive Tablet Guide

The opening of the new emotional tour is the most important project of the Staatliche Schlösser, Burgen und Gärten Sachsen GmbH (SBG) in Saxony this year. The managing director Christian Striefler of SBG explains the new concept: "Palaces and castles do not only have a glorious past as the homes of Saxon kings and princes. There are also darker chapters in the history of the buildings' use. This is what we want to show here: Colditz Castle was a high-security prisoner-of-war camp, a mental asylum and a hospital. The moving stories from these chapters are now brought to life with augmented reality."

The time travel through the castle with an interactive table guide called *HistoPad* offers augmented reality, 3D animations, a 360-degree panoramic view and high-resolution photos. Visitors can visualise Colditz Castle as it was in different historical periods and discover hidden stories and facts at the touch of a button. Eight experience stations provide fascinating insights into the rich past, immersing guests in the personal stories that have shaped this unique place. The *HistoPad* is available in six languages: English, French, German, Czech, Polish and Dutch.

Even after the reopening, visitors will not find a fully renovated castle in Colditz. The castle's special character as a lost place will be preserved and the different eras and uses of the castle can be experienced on site. The new experience is open from Tuesday to Sunday and on public holidays between April and October. Guided tours can also be booked outside of opening hours throughout the year and can be combined with the *HistoPad* digital exhibition. Admission is 10 euros.

Renaissance Era and Escape Stories from the Second World War

The augmented reality tour focuses on two particularly formative periods: visitors travel back to the Renaissance in 1520, when Elector Frederick the Wise used Colditz as a hunting lodge. Today, only a few lavishly painted coffered ceilings remain, and scenes from the Elector's everyday life are brought to life.

The other main focus of the exhibition is the period of the Second World War. From 1940 Colditz Castle was a prisoner-of-war camp for high-ranking officers of the Western Allies. Among the prominent prisoners were the nephews of Winston Churchill and the then King of England, George VI. The many impressive escape attempts by the prisoners are still considered legendary, especially in Great Britain, and have been made famous by a TV series and the book "The Colditz Story". Through these stories, Colditz Castle became a symbol of the desire for freedom. Ten of the more than 300 escape stories are taken up in the tour and brought to life in a unique way through animation. These include the most famous escape attempts through the so-called French tunnel under the castle chapel and through the theatre hall. At an adventure station, visitors can test whether they would have succeeded in escaping from Colditz Castle in the *Colditz Glider*, a glider built by the prisoners of war.

Discover More Castles in the Leipzig Region

The Leipzig region is dotted with numerous castles and palaces, each offering a unique experience for visitors. These castles are not just static remnants of the past, but vibrant centres of cultural engagement. Many offer interactive activities such as medieval banquets, historical re-enactments, and children's workshops. As well as Colditz Castle, others worth mentioning include:

- Hartenfels Castle in Torgau – one hour north of Leipzig: Explore Renaissance architecture and historical exhibits from the political centre of the Reformation. The chapel at Hartenfels Castle was consecrated by Martin Luther and is considered to be the first Protestant church in the world. https://www.schloesserland-sachsen.de/en/palaces-castles-and-gardens/hartenfels-castle/
- Kriebstein Castle – half an hour from Colditz Castle: One of Saxony's most beautiful knight's castles, it offers an interactive treasure hunt that takes visitors through its historic halls, uncovering secrets and stories along the way. https://www.burg-kriebstein.eu/en/kriebstein-castle/
- Rochlitz Castle – half an hour south of Colditz Castle: Dive into Saxon history with hands-on exhibits, educational programmes and an immersive VR headset experience that brings Rochlitz Castle's more than 1.000-year history to life. https://www.schloss-rochlitz.de/en/home/
- Mildenstein Castle – half an hour east of Colditz Castle: Experience medieval life through its well-curated exhibitions, seasonal events and a thrilling Escape Room that challenges guests to solve historical puzzles. https://www.burg-mildenstein.de/en/home/

Further Information

- https://www.leipzig.travel/en/poi/colditz-castle
- https://www.schloss-colditz.de/en/home/
- https://www.schloesserland-sachsen.de/en/home/

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