

Reopening of the Hohenzollern Crypt in 2026

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Reopening of the Hohenzollern Crypt in 2026 Open day and festive service

Open day

Saturday, 28 February 2026, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

On the open day, all interested parties are cordially invited to visit Berlin Cathedral and the Hohenzollern Crypt to discover this impressive place. The day will be accompanied by special spiritual and musical highlights. The musical programme will be provided by cathedral organist Andreas Sieling and cathedral cantor Adrian Büttemeier with the oratorio choir of the Berlin Cathedral Choir.

Festive service

Sunday, 1 March 2026, 10 a.m.

Church President Dorothee Wüst will preach at the grand festive service, which will also be attended by invited guests from the worlds of culture, politics, the church and society. Welcoming addresses will be given by Dr. Wolfram Weimer, Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM), Kai Wegner, Governing Mayor of Berlin, Bishop Frank Kopania, Head of the UEK Department in the EKD, and Georg Friedrich Prince of Prussia for the House of Hohenzollern, among others. The musical accompaniment will be provided by cathedral organist Andreas Sieling and the Berlin Cathedral Brass Ensemble under his direction, as well as the Berlin State and Cathedral Choir and the lauten compagney Berlin under the direction of Kai-Uwe Jirka.

The service is open to the public.

Accreditation for the festive service :

We are also happy to accredit journalists. Please register by 6 p.m. on 26 January at the latest by emailing: eva.hepper@berlinderdom.de

Reopening of the Hohenzollern Crypt in 2026 Renovation of the Hohenzollern Crypt in Berlin Cathedral – Timeline

2014

- Start of planning for the redesign of the crypt

2015

- Fundamental decision by the Cathedral Church Council: The Hohenzollern Crypt will be renovated and further developed.

2018

- Start of commissioning architects and planners

2019

- Application for funding at the federal government and the state of Berlin

2020

- Approval of the two major funding packages:
The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM):
Renovation of the historic burial site and preservation of cultural monuments
The State of Berlin: Measures relating to tourist infrastructure

April 2020

- Closure of the crypt and preservation of the coffins
- Start of construction

Autumn 2025

- Return of the coffins

January 2026

- Consecration of the coffins

February–March 2026

- Setting up the exhibition
- Reopening of the Hohenzollern crypt

The renovation of the Hohenzollern crypt in Berlin Cathedral 2020-2026

After more than ten years of planning and six years of construction, Berlin Cathedral will celebrate the reopening of the Hohenzollern Crypt in February and March 2026 – the largest construction project at Berlin Cathedral since its reconstruction after the Second World War. Financially and organisationally extremely challenging, the project is a significant contribution to the preservation of German and European history.

With 91 coffins from five centuries, the Hohenzollern Crypt is one of the largest burial sites in Europe – alongside the Escorial in Madrid and the Capuchin Crypt in Vienna. In 2019, the last year before its closure, around 765,000 people visited Berlin Cathedral and thus also the crypt.

Measures and background

The renovation of the approximately 1,400 m² crypt had become necessary due to the steadily increasing number of visitors, which had led to considerable climatic stress. Moisture and heat damaged the coffins, wood veneers lifted, mould formed and the comparatively high CO₂ levels created an unpleasant and unhealthy climate for visitors. On the other hand, the demands of tourist visits have also changed over the years. The crypt, as an important part of the cultural institutions on Museum Island, was in increasingly urgent need of renovation worthy of its wonderful furnishings. Last but not least, barrier-free access was also an important factor.

The measures in detail:

Climatic optimisation: Installation of an appropriate ventilation and air conditioning system to protect the sensitive sarcophagi at a constant 18-21°C and 45-55% humidity.

Accessibility: A new lift connects street level with the arcades for barrier-free access to the cathedral, while another enables barrier-free access within the building from the burial chamber to the cathedral museum.

Infrastructure modernisation: spacious sanitary facilities, new lockers and an up-to-date security and fire protection system increase comfort and safety for visitors.

New exhibition concept: Restructuring of the visitor route with a newly designed information room, atmospheric lighting, barrier-free access and a new arrangement of the coffins – based on the original historical coffin arrangement.

Newly designed visitor guidance: after visiting the Predigtkirche, visitors now have direct access to the crypt via a separate staircase as a "one-way street". There, an information room gently introduces topics such as funeral culture, infant mortality and the history of the Hohenzollern dynasty – including an interactive model of the crypt. The tour then leads up to the cathedral museum and the dome tour and from there down to the exit through the shop and café.

New coffin display with security system: Where possible, the sarcophagi are presented in an arrangement modelled on the original layout. Thanks to a specially developed surveillance system, visitors can view the coffins at close range without endangering them.

Funding and costs

The project, funded by the federal and state governments, was launched in 2014 with a feasibility study and estimated costs of €17.3 million. Construction costs rose with the start of construction work during the first coronavirus lockdown and the subsequent war of aggression against Ukraine, which was accompanied by massive increases in construction prices, energy costs and wages. An extension of the construction period and the renovation backlog of the cathedral, which was rebuilt between 1975 and 1993, contributed to the increase in costs. Added to this were structural uncertainties in the existing building and missing or incomplete documentation from the reconstruction period. The total cost now amounts to around €29 million, with Berlin Cathedral contributing around €9.3 million.

Funding body:

- **Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM):** co-financing of the structural renovation, including climate control and security systems for the burial chamber.
- **State of Berlin:** Co-financing of the tourist infrastructure and accessibility.
- **Berlin Cathedral:** Building owner; Berlin Cathedral will cover all costs exceeding the capped funding framework from its own resources.

Parties involved in the construction

- **Over 15 planning and consulting firms**
- **Around 78 construction companies:** from restorers and air conditioning technicians to natural stone masons.

- A total of **over 300 people** were directly or indirectly involved in the project.

Reopening of the Hohenzollern Crypt in 2026

Exhibition in the education room – funeral culture, infant mortality and the history of the burial site

With the reopening of the Hohenzollern Crypt, visitors will be able to access the crypt directly via a separate staircase – or via a barrier-free lift – after visiting the Predigtkirche. A newly designed education room gently introduces visitors to topics such as funeral culture, infant mortality and the history of the Hohenzollern burial place – including an interactive model of the crypt.

At the time of its construction and opening in 1905, this room served as a kind of transition between the basement of the memorial church (demolished in 1975) and the burial vault. Today, it serves as an educational and transitional space between the atmosphere of the Predigtkirche and the crypt as a place of rest for the dead. Visitors literally enter another world.

Objects, texts and films sensitively and informatively illustrate the cultural history of the burial vault, the stories and circumstances of death of the people buried there, and the burial traditions of the last centuries up to the present day. The objects on display include the death mask of King Frederick I of Prussia (1657-1713), a baroque children's dress belonging to Charlotte Albertine, Princess of Prussia (1713–1714), various funeral talers and pictorial documents relating to the ceremonial funeral processions of the Hohenzollern family, as well as special grave goods such as jewellery, clothing and personal items.

A particularly touching object in the exhibition room is the wax replica of a child of Queen Sophie Dorothea (1687-1757). It is believed to represent Crown Prince Frederick William (1710-1711). His mother had her four children who died at an early age reproduced as lifelike wax figures. This served as a personal memento and at the same time demonstrated the fertility of the dynasty. The Hohenzollern crypt houses a total of 33 children's coffins. They bear witness to the high mortality rate among children in past centuries, which also affected the high nobility.

The scale interactive model of the crypt allows visitors to understand the new arrangement of the coffins, with information on the individual Hohenzollerns and the spatial dimensions of the crypt as a whole.

Following the exhibition, the tour leads up to the cathedral museum and the dome tour and from there back down to the exit through the shop and café.

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Four portraits –

Members of the House of Hohenzollern: Biographical milestones, deaths and tombs

The following section presents the end of life, key biographical milestones and tombs of four members of the House of Hohenzollern. From the finely decorated pewter coffin of the early 17th century to baroque splendour, classicist simplicity and finally a monumentally designed marble coffin of the 19th century, the tombs reflect not only individual life stories, but also the political self-image of their time.

The staging of power, piety and dynastic culture of remembrance – condensed in the rituals of farewell and in the design of the final resting places.



Elector Joachim Friedrich of Brandenburg (1546–1608)

Joachim Friedrich was born in 1546 and reigned as Elector of Brandenburg from 1598. His reign saw the consolidation of sovereign authority within the fragmented territories. He secured dynastic claims and strengthened Brandenburg's position in the empire.

He died in 1608 during a trip in the Berlin area. He had been suffering from "chest pains" and "shortness of breath" for years. On the return journey to Berlin, his condition deteriorated; he died in his carriage, presumably as a result of a stroke. Contemporary reports describe his end in different ways. The story of the singing Elector idealises him as a pious ruler who faces death with composure.

The coffin of Elector Joachim Friedrich of Brandenburg is made of tin. It is one of the oldest in the crypt. Eighteen coats of arms refer to the territories of the electorate. Originally, the tin and gilding shone magnificently. A sculptural crucifix at the head of the coffin places the elector's death in the context of Christian ideas of salvation.



Elector Frederick William of Brandenburg (1620–1688)

Elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg succeeded his father Georg Wilhelm in 1640 at the age of 20 and, during his 48-year reign, led the poor and devastated Electorate of Brandenburg into a period of unprecedented continuity and prosperity. In 1648, he laid the foundation for Brandenburg's rise to European power in the Peace of Westphalia and secured sovereignty over Prussia in the Peace of Oliva in 1660. His victory over the Swedes in the Battle of Fehrbellin in 1675 earned him the nickname "The Great Elector".

In his final years, Elector Frederick William of Brandenburg suffered from serious health problems such as gout, kidney stones and heart failure. Even on his deathbed, he arranged his succession and blessed his son Frederick. He died of heart failure in Potsdam City Palace in 1688.

After his death, his body was autopsied and embalmed. A night-time funeral procession with hundreds of torches carried him to Berlin. There he was laid out in state, with his electoral hat, sceptre and sword as symbols of his rule. The solemn burial in the cathedral took place months later.

The coffin of the Great Elector is composed of two marble blocks: the body and base are made from one piece, the lid from another. The basic shape is a box with a rectangular cross-section. Until 1887, Frederick William's remains rested in a baroque ceremonial coffin, which was damaged and had to be restored. The mortal remains were therefore transferred to the marble coffin, where they still lie today. The coffin belongs to a group of four similar sarcophagi, which were also made for the Great Elector's second wife, Dorothea von Holstein-Glücksburg, his son, the first Prussian King Frederick I, and his wife, Queen Sophie Charlotte.

The old ceremonial coffin of the Great Elector now stands in the sermon church of Berlin Cathedral beneath the organ.



Prince Frederick Louis of Prussia (1707–1708)

Friedrich Ludwig was born in 1707 as the grandson of the first king of Prussia. As the son of the future King Friedrich Wilhelm I, he was second in line to the throne. His early death therefore had a direct impact on the dynastic future of the young kingdom.

In 1708, Friedrich Ludwig fell ill in Berlin with what was known as "Scheuerchen", a contemporary collective term for feverish childhood diseases accompanied by convulsions, and died at the age of six months.

The laying out was exceptionally magnificent. He was dressed in a silver robe, adorned with the Order of the Black Eagle and presented with a diamond crown next to his head. The staging was connected with the coronation of Frederick I as the first king of Prussia in 1701 and served to publicly display the new royal rank.

The magnificent tin coffin, designed by Andreas Schlüter and **created in 1708**, is an outstanding example of High Baroque. Gilded decorations, coats of arms, crowns and symbolic motifs such as lilies, palm branches and lowered torches refer to his role as heir to the throne.



Princess Anna Elisabeth Luise of Prussia, Margravine of Brandenburg-Schwedt (1738–1820)

Anna Elisabeth Luise was born in 1738 as a princess of Prussia. She was the daughter of Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg-Schwedt. Through her marriage to August Ferdinand of Prussia, she was closely involved in the dynastic structure of the House of Hohenzollern. As the sister of Frederick II, she belonged to the generation under which Prussia developed into a European great power in the 18th century.

After the death of her husband, she lived a secluded life, but one befitting her status, between Bellevue Palace and her palace in Berlin. She reached the exceptionally old age of 81. During the night of 9 to 10 February 1820, she died unexpectedly of what was known as "pneumonia", presumably as a result of heart failure with fluid retention in the lungs.

At her request, her body was laid out in the palace. The open coffin stood on purple velvet with ermine; only a small circle of people were allowed access. Seven days later, the funeral took place in the cathedral. More than 1,300 candles lit up the room before the coffin was lowered into the crypt.

The oak coffin, made in 1820, is covered with madder red silk velvet and rests on gilded lion paws. Eagles, monograms and insignia of power refer to her royal origins. Stars, crown cushions and a dedication plaque underline its representative character. Damage to the velvet bears witness to the often poor climatic conditions in the crypt.

The Hohenzollern crypt at Berlin Cathedral – A monument of historical and art-historical significance

After six years of construction and renovation, the Hohenzollern Crypt in Berlin Cathedral will reopen to the public in 2026. As the burial place of the Brandenburg and Prussian ruling family, it holds centuries of history and is one of the most important dynastic burial sites in Europe, comparable to the Capuchin Crypt in Vienna or the Escorial in Madrid. In 2019, the last year before its closure, around 765,000 people visited Berlin Cathedral and thus also the crypt. Its reopening marks a cultural event of national and international significance.

A place with almost 500 years of history

The origins of the dynastic burial place in Berlin date back to 1536. Elector Joachim II had a crypt built under the cathedral chapter – the former Dominican monastery next to what was then Berlin Palace – to legitimise the family dynasty. Over the centuries, the burial place underwent several architectural changes and was eventually relocated: once in 1750 under King Frederick II to its current location in the Lustgarten, and finally in 1905 under Emperor Wilhelm II, when it was redesigned and reinterpreted as part of the monumental new cathedral building.

The Hohenzollern crypt was the dynasty's central burial place until the abolition of the monarchy in 1918. Severely damaged during the Second World War, it was finally opened to the public for the first time in 1999 after extensive restoration work. The memorial church, which was formerly connected to the cathedral building and served as a memorial room and representative entrance to the crypt, had already been demolished in 1975.

A unique artistic and sepulchral heritage

With 91 preserved sarcophagi, the Hohenzollern Crypt impressively documents the development of sepulchral art and culture and thus the changes in dynastic representation over four centuries. It houses the coffins of important personalities, including Elector Joachim Friedrich and Queen Sophie Dorothea, the mother of Frederick II. The mortal remains of the Great Elector, King Frederick I, the first king of Prussia, and his beloved second wife, Queen Sophie Charlotte, also rest in the crypt. Their magnificent Baroque coffins, which now stand in the Predigtkirche and no longer contain any remains, are considered masterpieces of their time. They were designed by Andreas Schlüter, one of the most important sculptors of the North German Baroque period. With the transition to Classicism, the formal language, artistic expression and materiality changed. In fact, the Hohenzollern crypt tells not only the stories of those buried here, but also of the changing relationship between power,

death, faith and memory. It is a dignified place of sepulchral culture – unique in Germany and of European significance.

The Hohenzollerns

The Hohenzollerns shaped German and European history for over 500 years – as Brandenburg electors, Prussian kings and German emperors. Their rise began in 1415 with their enfeoffment by the Roman-German King Sigismund. In 1701, Elector Frederick III was crowned King Frederick I of Prussia, finally elevating the dynasty to great power status. Through their marriage policy, the Hohenzollerns contributed to the intertwining of European ruling houses and significantly influenced the political balance of power on the continent. With the end of the First World War and the November Revolution of 1918, the monarchy in Germany was abolished. Emperor Wilhelm II, the last ruler from the House of Hohenzollern, abdicated on 9 November 1918 and went into exile in the Netherlands.

Reopening of the Hohenzollern Crypt in 2026 Picture gallery – selection

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Coffins in the Hohenzollern crypt, photograph: Christian Muhrbeck and Boris Streubel, © Berlin Cathedral



Coffins in the Hohenzollern crypt, photography: Christian Muhrbeck and Boris Streubel, © Berlin Cathedral



Funeral procession for Elector Frederick William of Brandenburg, known as the Great Elector, Johann Ulrich Kraus
Berlin, 1688/89, etching, coloured



Coffins in the Hohenzollern crypt (Wilhelm Heinrich, Elector of Brandenburg), photograph: Christian Muhrbeck and Boris Streubel, © Berlin Cathedral



Coffins in the Hohenzollern crypt (Frederick Louis, Prince in Prussia), photograph: Christian Muhrbeck and Boris Streubel, © Berlin Cathedral



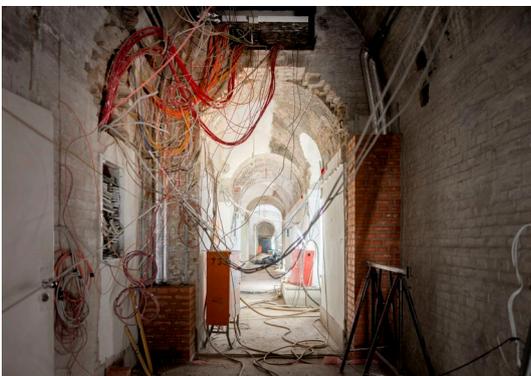
Coffins in the Hohenzollern crypt (Anna Elisabeth Luise Princess of Prussia, Margravine of Brandenburg-Schwedt), photograph: Christian Muhrbeck and Boris Streubel, © Berlin Cathedral



Coffins in the Hohenzollern crypt (Karl Philipp Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt), photography: Christian Muhrbeck and Boris Streubel, © Berlin Cathedral



Hohenzollern crypt in Berlin Cathedral: During renovation, the coffins were moved to another location, but returned to their original place in autumn 2025. Until their final placement, they remained in their protective casing. Photograph: Sonja Tubbesing



Construction site of the Hohenzollern crypt, June 2025
Photograph: Alexandra Sell, © Alexandra Sell and Berlin Cathedral



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