

Hello,

You are about to visit the historical remains of a concentration camp. In this exact place, people lost their freedom and their identity, suffered and died.

WE ASK THAT YOU SHOW THE UTMOST RESPECT FOR THIS PLACE OF HISTORY, REMEMBRANCE AND SUFFERING

and we request that you visit the Centre and the museum, the site of the camp and the National Necropolis in **silence**,

wearing **appropriate clothing**.

Please refrain from smoking, eating, drinking, using your phone or listening to music, shouting, running or walking on the lawns, and from disruptive behaviour.

No pets allowed.

Please take great care to **avoid damaging** the site and the exhibitions.

The Management reserves the right to refuse admission to any persons not complying with these rules, or to request such persons to leave the premises (European Centre, site of the camp, necropolis, museum, gas chamber etc.).

Parents and teachers,



Some images and documents presented in the films and exhibitions may be disturbing for young people.

Therefore, the visit is not recommended for children under 10.

Children and teenagers **must** be prepared for the visit and accompanied by an adult who will be responsible for them throughout the visit.

The educational team is here to answer your questions and advise you about your accompanying role.

In this guide, you will find the following information:



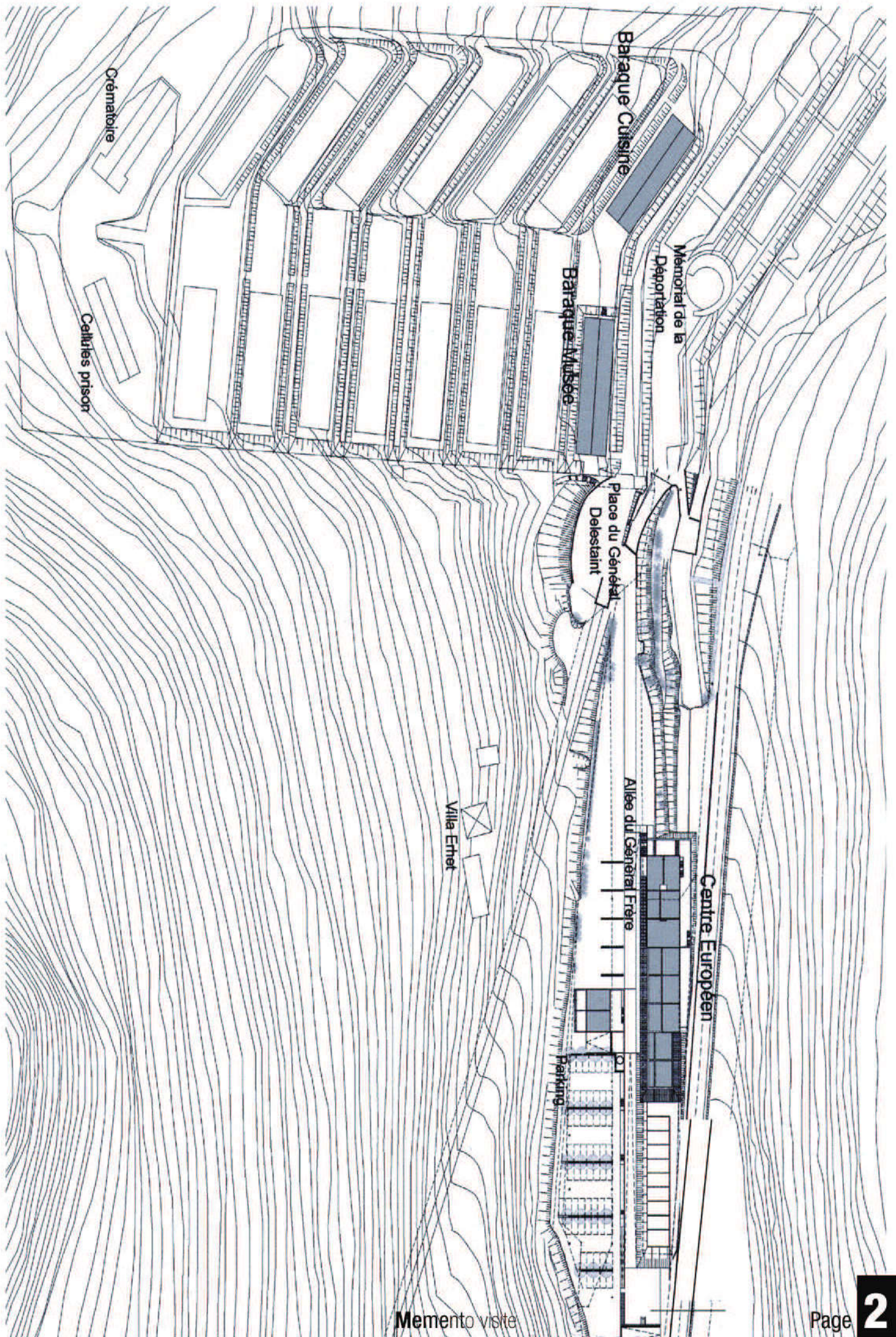
average visiting time of each space and each site
(please bear in mind the closing times of the European Centre and of the site)



the images may be disturbing for young visitors



educational development and information



Your visit to the European Centre of Deported Resistance Members

The European Centre is a **bridge** to history and remembrance, a **beacon of vigilance** that requires **reflection** prior to the visit of the former concentration camp.

It shows the implacable, murderous organisation embodied by the Nazi concentration camp system and presents the history of European resistance to oppression.

The European Centre of Deported Resistance Members is structured into spaces delineated by **illuminated floor markings**, which you may explore freely, at your own pace,

before going to the historic site and the camp museum.



Due to crowding, the staff may encourage you to begin by visiting either the museum or the buildings at the bottom of the camp.

In the hall,

The camps



Large transparent images

illustrate 14 of the main concentration and extermination camps in Europe.



These 14 modules remind visitors that the camp at Natzweiler was part of a vast, organised system: the Nazi concentration camp system;

the **animated map**

shows the chronological development of the Nazi camps and their subcamps in Europe.

Touch-sensitive displays

present the history of the camps through themes: the origins of the camp, the arrival, daily routine and work of the inmates; death, the death count, trials, remembrances.

Objects

bear witness to the fate of the inmates in the camps.



The objects presented enable visitors to get a feel for what life was like in the camp, and the omnipresence of death.

Auschwitz Melted cutlery Flossenbürg Shoe soles Bergen Belsen Hook from a drying cupboard Sachsenhausen Number plate	Arrival in the camp Plundering of property Loss of identity Explaining the difference between a concentration camp, an extermination camp and a death camp
Majdanek Zyklon B container	Death The extermination camps (Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek) and death camps (Belzec, Chelmno, Sobibor, Treblinka)
Dachau Book from camp library Oranienburg Camp currency note	The camp was a “micro-society”; an organised and hierarchical world
Gross Rosen Shovel Natzweiler Granite Neuengamme Bricks	The work The suffering of the inmates The labour of the prisoners in the service of the war industry and the SS
Buchenwald Small objects that belonged to inmates Stuthof Small objects secretly kept at the camp Ravensbrück Small dolls secretly made at the camp	Life whatever the cost Resistance and solidarity in the camps Deportation of women and children
Dora Bowl	Food, hunger and disease in the camps

Listen...



As you come up from the cellar - built by the inmates themselves - you will hear voices reciting a poem written by a Natzweiler inmate, Eugène Marlot.



"Greetings, dear brother"...

Cruelty, barbarity, sadism, call it what you will

It is so hard to believe, yet that is just how it is.

You still don't believe me, then look, look around you

Look at them all, my friends, all of them, then take a look at me,

What am I? A bag of bones, a human wreck, just a number

Or all that rolled into one, making zero plus zero, equals zero

(...)

No, say nothing, nothing, just go, if that is your future

I'm glad for you if that is so, **you will be a good witness**

But I beg of you, **do not forget**, never forget a thing, never, ever

And **shout the truth**, no matter how disturbing, no matter how unpleasant,

(...)

Not out of hatred, but only out of Justice, out of simple Humanity

So that at last Man and Freedom can triumph the whole world over."

His universal message of **vigilance** and hope encourages us to reflect and meditate, as we look on the wall at the prisoners' faces and gazes.

On a regular basis, the European Centre offers temporary exhibitions and conferences...

go to the **forum**, in the mezzanine of the hall.

Now cross the hall

and go back to the **permanent exhibition.**

Against Barbarism: Commit, Resist, Fight



You who live...



This film questions us all:

What have we done with the legacy of those who fought for Freedom?

The images evoke all the forms of commitment, resistance and fighting, everywhere in Europe.



Go down the stairs and you will discover the



Kartoffelkeller



Take the first alley, facing you as you go down the stairs



The exhibition
is a timeline;

a themed, chronological presentation
of the major stages of Nazi expansion,
and all the forms of commitment, resistance and fighting
in Europe,
against Nazism.

**Cross the cellar and stop for a moment to look from the inside at this impressive
succession of arches and the thickness of the reinforced concrete walls.**

The exit staircase leads you to the historic site.



Kartoffelkeller means “potato cellar” in German

This large concrete structure constitutes the core of the European Centre.

Built under the orders of the SS by the Nacht und Nebel prisoners beginning in mid-1943, this huge cellar was not designed to store potatoes.

What was it for?

Today no one knows.

Camp archives show that the inmates worked every day on constructing this building that the SS had officially named the *Kartoffelkeller*. But there are no documents recording what it was really for.

The *Kartoffelkeller* is a symbol of the oppression, exhaustion and degradation of the prisoners through the work they were forced to perform and the physical abuse that was inflicted on them. It also symbolises the Nazis' ultimate goal of annihilating all resistance and all hope.



On the tables, some of the documents have a **blue border** :

Each of these documents reflects a form of

commitment, resistance or fighting
against Nazism throughout Europe.

At the beginning of the exhibition, there are not many of them, but there are more and more as the Resistance gets organised or takes on importance in other European countries.

The **vertical panel** gives an overall framework,
and the **tables** provide more detailed information.

Your visit to the former concentration camp *KL-Natzweiler*



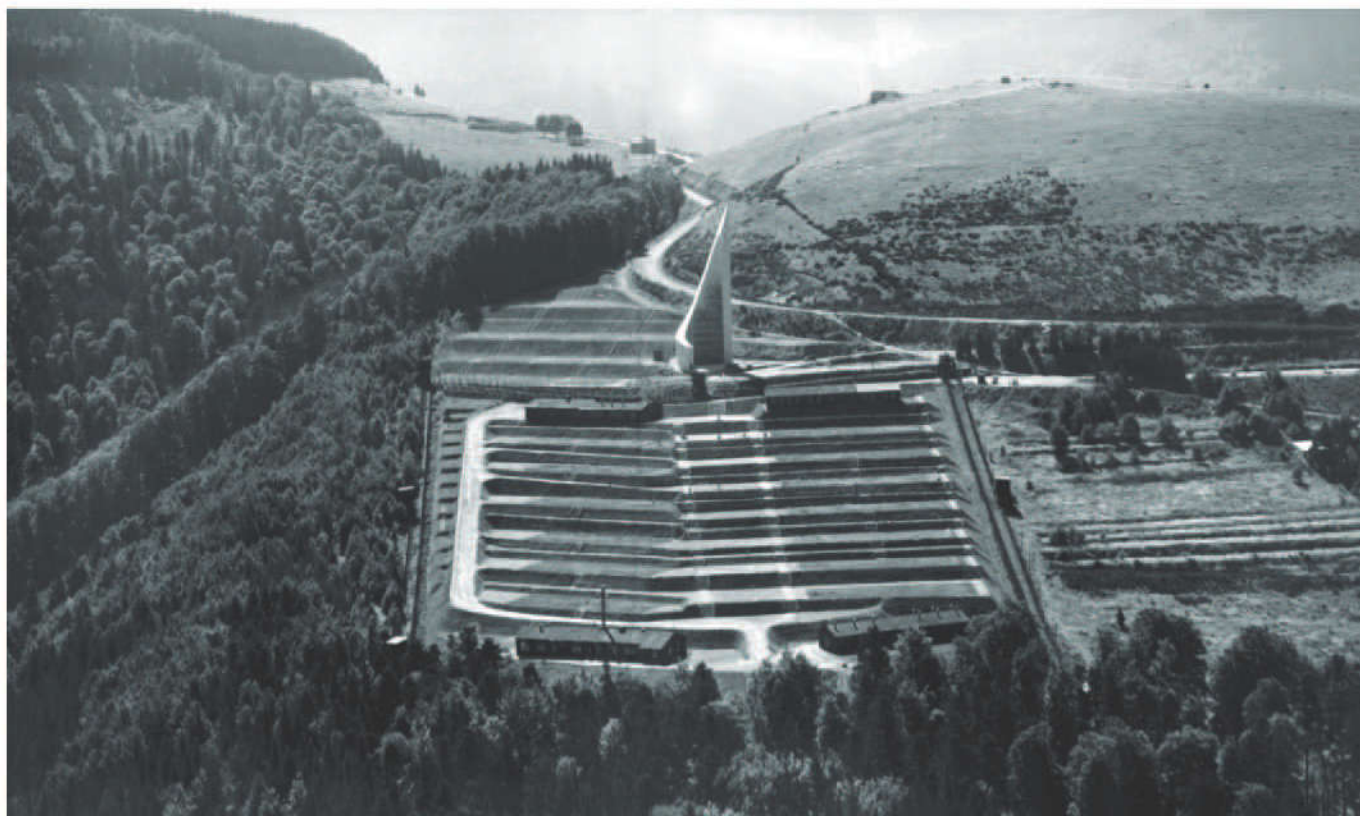
We suggest that you **stop** at different places in the camp as you visit the site.



These stops will give you an opportunity to review **history**

30'
For the
museum
in the
former
camp

and read **personal accounts** by prisoners.



The former camp in 1959, photograph presented in the camp museum, all rights reserved



APPROXIMATE TIMELINE OF THE HISTORY OF THE CAMP

September 1940	SS Engineer Blumberg discovers a vein of pink granite on Mount Louise.
March 1941	Himmler decides to open <i>KL-Natzweiler</i>
May 1941	Arrival of the first German and Austrian inmates transferred from <i>KL-Sachsenhausen</i> to build the roads and the camp
February 1942	Installation in the first barracks of the camp
February 1943	13 youths from Ballersdorf (Haut-Rhin), having resisted forced conscription, are shot at the sand quarry
June 1943	Arrival of the first NN prisoners Beginning of the construction work on the <i>Kartoffelkeller</i>
July 1943	Arrival of the first French NN prisoners
August 1943	86 Jews are gassed in a former outbuilding of the Struthof Hotel for the pseudoscientific experiments of Professor Hirt.
October 1943	Last stage in the construction of the camp; installation of the crematorium
6 July 1944	Execution of 4 SOE (Special Operations Executive) resistance fighters, by injection.
1-2 September 1944	107 members of the Alliance network and 35 members of the Groupe Mobile Alsace-Vosges are taken in lorries to the camp and executed.
2-5 September 1944	Evacuation from the main camp to Dachau and Allach
11 November 1944	Transfer of the administration of the camp to the subcamp of Gutenbach. Following the evacuation from the central camp, the subcamps east of the Rhine River continue to operate.
23 November 1944	The KL-Natzweiler is the first concentration camp discovered by the Allies in Western Europe (6th American Army)

THE SITE AFTER THE EVACUATION BY THE NAZIS

December 1944	The main camp becomes a detention centre of the French Interior Ministry
April 1945	Evacuation of the subcamps, as part of the "Marches of Death"
8 May 1945	Capitulation of the Reich
1946-1949, 1946-1950	The Rastatt Trial, where people in charge of the subcamps were judged

REMEMBERING THE CONCENTRATION CAMP

December 1949	The management of the camp is entrusted to the French Ministry of War Veterans
1950	The site is classified as a "Historical Monument"
1952-1954	Metz Trial, where people in charge of the main camp are judged
1954	13 out of 17 barracks are destroyed
23 July 1960	The National Deportation Memorial and the National Necropolis of Heroes and Martyrs of the Deportation are inaugurated by General de Gaulle, French President
1965	The first museum of the camp is opened in a former barracks building
1976	The museum is totally destroyed by arson. A new museum is opened in the 1980s and remains open until 2004.
2005	The European Centre of Deported Resistance Members is inaugurated by Jacques Chirac, French President, and the renovated museum is opened in the camp.

Stop 1 - Place du Général Delestraint, in front of the camp gate

The site

Here, you are at an altitude of 800 meters, on the north face of Mount Louise, which overlooks the Bruche Valley and faces Mount Donon in the Vosges.

At the beginning of the 20th century, this was a holiday destination for Alsatians, where they could take walks in the woods in summertime and go skiing and sledding in wintertime.

As early as 1829, an inn opened in the place-name *Le Struthof*, downhill from the site. A hotel with a restaurant was built there in 1906.

The context

In 1940, Alsace and Moselle were de facto annexed by the Third Reich, which imposed a vast policy of Germanisation and Nazification: the people were forced to adopt the German language, culture and lifestyle and the Nazi way of thinking.

An internment and security camp was opened in Schirmeck-Vorbrück (now called La Broque) to "retrain" and "re-educate" Alsatians who were uncooperative and resisted Germanisation, Nazification and forced conscription into the *Wehrmacht* in particular.

Why was there a concentration camp on Mount Louise?

In 1940, the SS Engineer Blumberg discovered a **vein of pink granite** there, which could be used for the major construction projects of the Reich, led in particular by the architect Speer. The granite was to be extracted by the inmates.

Forced to do extremely exhausting work, the prisoners were subjected to the full force of the dreadfully difficult conditions of this mountain face, where the weather conditions are very rough.

By way of illustration, at the present time, the thermal amplitude at the site is approximately 60 degrees; this means that the thermometer climbs to 40°C in summertime and can go down as low as -20°C in winter. The camp was isolated -the village of Natzwiller is 2.5 km away, Rothau is 8 km away- and it became a "*forbidden zone*", hidden from view by a 3rd barbed wire fence, which has since disappeared (see the models at the museum).

The construction of the camp

The first prisoners, who were German and Austrian, were transferred from the Sachsenhausen camp and arrived at the site on 21 May 1941.

Up until February 1942, the prisoners carried out the work of setting up the camp's infrastructure: roads, excavation, buildings etc. Throughout this time, the 400 prisoners and the SS administration were lodged at the Struthof Hotel, requisitioned for this purpose. This explains the name given later on to the camp by analogy, but at no time in the official Nazi documents were any references made to *Struthof Camp*, but rather to **Natzweiler Camp** and KL-Natzweiler (*Konzentrationslager Natzweiler*) in Nazi terminology.

From May 1941 to October 1943, 17 buildings were constructed. Eight observation towers connected to each other by a double electrified barbed wire fence nearly 3 meters high enabled non-stop, intersecting surveillance of the prisoners, including at night, with the help of powerful searchlights.

Outside of the barbed wire enclosure, where the Necropolis and the European Centre stand today, certain buildings were designed for specific purposes: offices, warehouses, workshops, armoury, laundry etc. There were also the kennels and Ehret House, named after its former owners (residence of the camp commander). The site covers a surface area of approximately 4.5 ha.

The granite quarry is 800 meters away from the camp. It has two entrances, the first one connected to the road built by the prisoners, by which the equipment and civilian labour arrived; the second one provided direct access to the camp's prisoners. In addition to facilities for granite extraction, there were 13 buildings for the work of the prisoners and civilians. These were large workshops in which German military aircraft engines were repaired, amongst other things.

The gate you are going to go through is not the original one. From 1941 to 1944, it was a double gate, much lower (see the models in the museum.) It was probably transformed when the camp became a detention centre and definitely when the American film "The Young Lions" was shot here with Marlon Brando.

Arrival at the Camp

Arrival at Rothau Station - Dehumanisation before the camp

"We were ordered to immediately get out of the cars. A tall SS man, Hermanntraut (...) was gesticulating with his huge legs and arms and waving a whip in one hand.

Life in hell began. We moved quickly, quickly - schnell, always schnell, the word we constantly heard all day long from then on. We quickly lined up on the railway platform (...).

They pointed to three lorries and a frantic race ensued through lines, tracks and platforms to reach them and climb on, fast, fast, schnell, chased by dogs and SS armed with clubs (...).

The lorries struggled to climb up a steep hill with lots of switchbacks. We reached the snow (...). I just had a suit on, no overcoat, and started to feel cold. I said "Kalt" [cold] to an SS, who let loose a torrent of insults against me. I couldn't understand a word he was saying. That would come later. Every day we lived in an atmosphere of continuous, brutal shouting (...).

We reached the top of the hill, which was completely bare of trees. The cold wind was howling, kicking up whirlwinds of snow. On our right we passed a big farm with lots of outbuildings - Struthof- before walking near a little villa on the left, with a swimming pool, if you please! That was the commander's house... and a few hundred meters later we were at the camp's gate, staggered on the hillside."

André RAGOT

Arrival at the camp

"Two rows of black barracks, which looked as though they were stacked on top of each other because the hillside was so steep, were slightly to the left in front of us. They were surrounded by a double fence of barbed wire several meters high, so thick they made me think of fishing nets or a spider's web. No doubt about it, this was a camp. Here, in Alsace, so close to Strasbourg! Powerful floodlights cast the entire camp in a harsh, garish light.

We entered and felt as though we were descending into hell, particularly since we were walking downhill. Woe to he who fell down on the way! Our tormenters had no pity for him. All of them would shout and hit him with the same gusto, the same sadistic joy.

Then we were in a sort of office in the first barracks on the left after entering. All of us were scared witless (...).

This was the intake office where we had to state our names to bureaucrats who looked as though they were prisoners like us (...)"

"(...) Last barracks at the bottom of the hill, a few metres from a pine wood. But the spider's web between it and us shattered any dreams of escaping under cover of night. We had to be realistic. Then we were in the shower room. 'Everybody off with your clothes! And fast!' It was one of our fellow inmates who yelled that order. He looked well-dressed and well-fed (...). We obeyed him as though we were a single man, in a hurry to wash off all those insults, all those blows, all the shame of our pitiful condition. Ah, the water felt so good! We didn't know then that it was heated by the crematory oven in the room next door from which we were separated by just a span of wood (...).

We became, or we were going to become, robots. Rags were thrown down in front of each one of us. A pair of trousers, underwear, a shirt, a jacket, a cap, two rags - one for each foot - and a pair of 'tap shoes', wooden soles surmounted by braids to keep them on. Our clothes were as mismatched as you could imagine. There was every colour (...) And it was absolutely forbidden to exchange them with each other. Now we looked like scarecrows (...).

They gave each of us a red fabric triangle with an F in the middle, and a small white fabric rectangle with a number on it. The next day we had to sew them over the heart on our ragged uniforms (...).*

Numbers, that's all we were then. We were no longer men. I was no longer Eugène Marlot, I was number 6149. The time of degradation had come (...)"

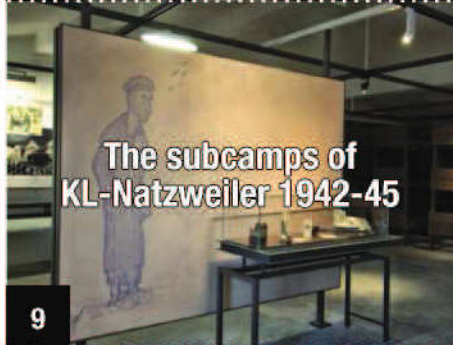
Eugène MARLOT

* NB: Eugène Marlot was designated as a "political prisoner", identified by a red triangle, and the F corresponded to his nationality. You will find a table in the museum, explaining the different categories used by the Nazis.

Stop 2 - The Museum

This museum, located in a reconstructed barracks building, is dedicated to the history of the camp and the subcamps.

OUT

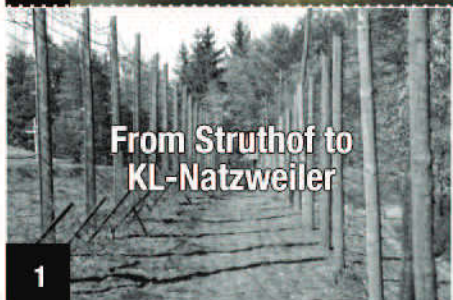


5 Gallery Gayot

THE DAILY LIFE OF THE PRISONERS



ARRIVING AT THE CAMP



CREATION OF THE CAMP

IN



The witness and the historian... what about the future?

"I was fortunate to find a new reason to live in my family life and my professional activities. I dedicated myself to this fervently. I would lose myself in my work. I thought that, this way, I would move away from the past, obscure it, but forty years after my return from deportation, I had an irresistible urge to bear witness. This was the beginning of a second life (...)

In the end, what does "bearing witness" mean? Does it mean to flesh out history? Historians reconstruct the past. Witnesses incarnate it, interpret it, explain it in their own way, with their own experience, and, if possible, with a certain amount of distance.

Hand in hand, historians and witnesses commit history to memory.

Our most precious property is life and liberty.

*Any infringement of human **dignity**, and of this fragile edifice we call **democracy**, must compel all well-meaning men and women to act.*

Vigilance is the only weapon of peaceful citizens.

Let us act before it is too late.

Let's alert the unaware. Let's root out what might endanger democracy!

*Let's seize every opportunity that life gives us **to learn about being good citizens: a long, endless task.**"*

Roger BOULANGER,

Exerpt from

La Déportation racontée à des jeunes, Parole et témoignage d'un ancien déporté

"Histoire en mémoire" Collection

SCEREN, CRDP Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, 2004

Stop 3 - At the roll call square, in front of the gallows



You are at one of the roll call squares of the camp.

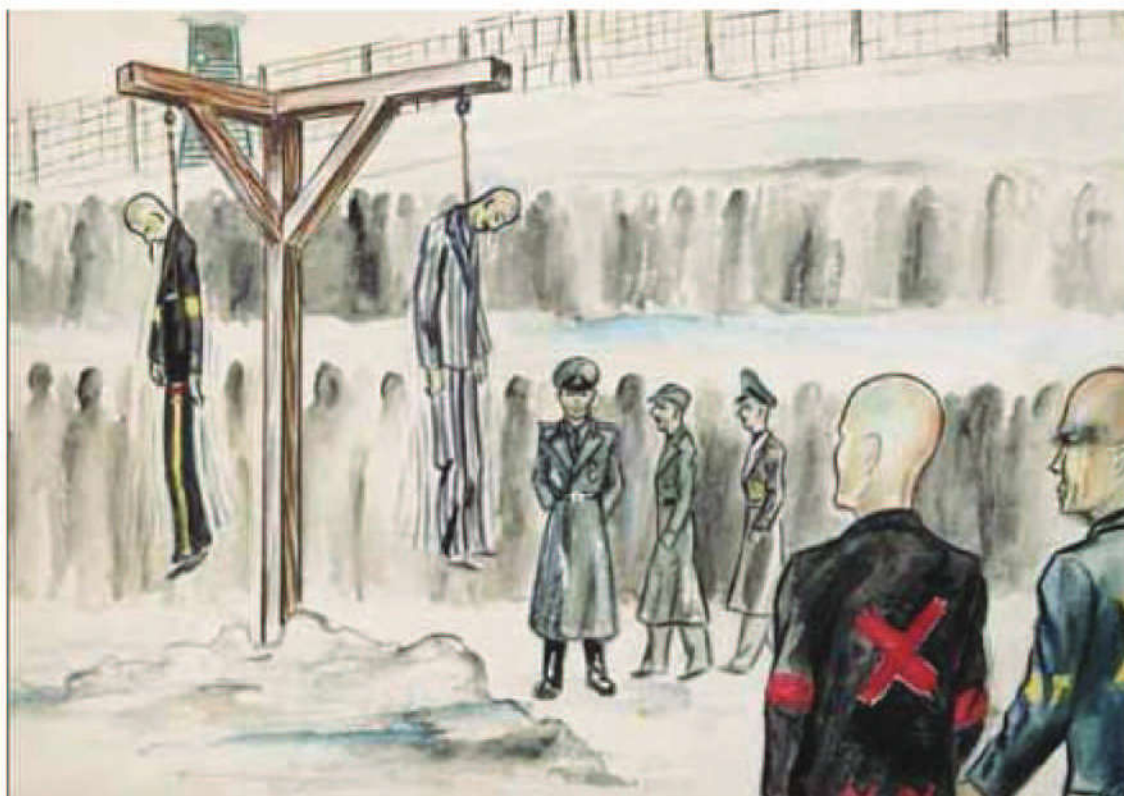
Located between the barracks, this was where the prisoners would assemble several times a day and sometimes at night, so that the SS could endlessly count and recount them.

Prisoners were no longer people, they were *Stück*, pieces that were counted like when checking a tool box or the receipt for a potato order.

So the inmates were counted, by rows of five, living and dead, held upright by their fellow prisoners. The roll call could last for hours, in the cold, the heat, the rain, the icy wind.

Hangings

The roll call square at the top of the camp was also the place where hangings were performed. The inmates were forced to attend the executions of their fellow prisoners.



Hanging at KL-Natzweiler, drawing by Rudolf Naess, Norwegian prisoner
© Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo.

Daily Life

Awakening, washing up

"We went (...) to the wash basins (...). The block leader forced us to be bare-chested and wet down to our waists. The water was ice cold, and anybody who could not get to the wash basins fast enough was immediately beaten with a club (...). There were 140 of us [in the block] and it was physically impossible for us to wash ourselves at the same time."

* you can see the original sinks at the camp museum.

René FERON

"This was the life we were going to live.

For us from Monday, the normal routine began. At 4:15 in the morning the room leader, a fat, heavy-handed, imperious German Communist who had been interned for eight years but wasn't such a bad chap, would shout at us to get up. Then we would run naked to the sink to wash ourselves with ice-cold water."

André RAGOT

Roll call

"The outlook wasn't very bright: we had to stand still outside for at least three-quarters of an hour, because the block leader was always so afraid we wouldn't be perfectly lined up or that somebody would be missing! (...).

Each block had to line up at its designated spot for roll call. The scene looked unworldly, especially in the morning, because it was still dark and we had to be at work before daybreak (...).

It was an incredible spectacle, but it was very cold. Waiting for roll call to start, everybody stamped their feet.

Some of the men got into pairs and rubbed their backs together, hands in their pockets. Sometimes a shadow would collapse: a prisoner who passed out. The wait for roll call was always endless and extremely hard to bear (...)."

André RAGOT

Meals and Hunger

"(...) No sign [in a museum] could ever put across the state of mind of an individual who thinks his neighbour got a drop more of yellowish liquid in his tin bowl. Sure, you can show his eyes and that special stare caused by hunger.

But you can never recreate the mouth's anxiety or the oesophagus's stubborn greed (...).

At noon a crowd of heads, propelled by an instinct increased a hundredfold, swarmed and moved about between the wooden partitions burning frantic energy just for a ladle of hot liquid they awaited like the source of life (...)."

Boris PAHOR

"(...) At the door one of us would hand out a ticket to everyone that would then be given to the head of the table in order to obtain the morning ration: barley water or soup that (☒) was nothing but water but better than the 'coffee'. Some men chewed on a little slice of bread that they had carefully saved from the previous day's ration and hid from thieves during the night."

André RAGOT

Hardships

"Being a prisoner at Natzweiler-Struthof meant constantly having to climb up steps, which were especially high.

The prisoners knew that after a while they wouldn't have enough strength to lift their legs normally, so they ended up walking in an odd way: in front of each step they gathered momentum, put their hands behind one knee and lifted it up to put the foot on the next step. They did the same thing with the other leg and continued in the same way until reaching the block (...)."

Kristian OTTOSEN

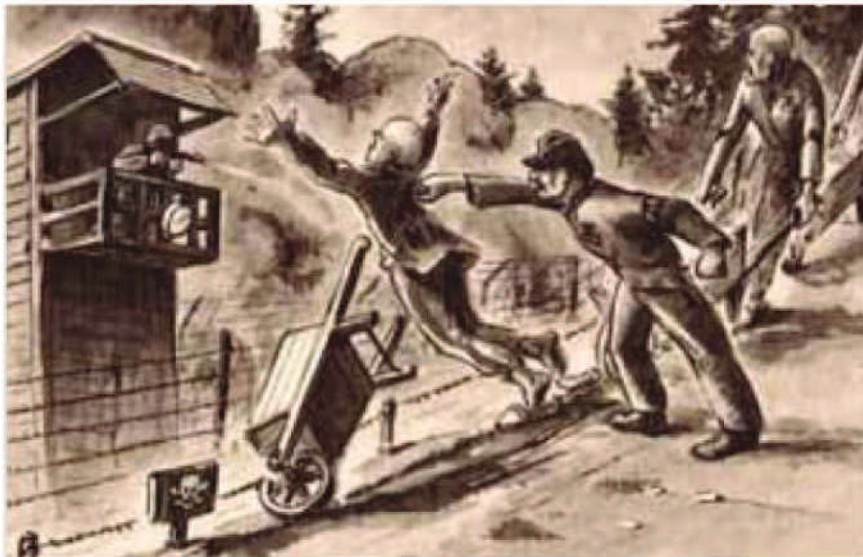
Stop 4 - The Ravine of Death (going down to the bottom of the camp)

The “Ravine of Death” was given this name by the prisoners. This path, which led from the entrance gate to the crematorium, was a place of work, suffering and death.

Work in a concentration camp had a dual objective for the Nazis: coercion and production. The prisoners were used as labour, limitlessly workable.

In the central camp as in the subcamps, the production was performed for the benefit of the SS, the Wehrmacht or for companies working for the Reich.

The inmates were employed, as work “kommandos”, to construct buildings, quarry stones, repair aircraft engines etc. and for the most useless tasks, solely intended to weaken and demean them. Underfed or even malnourished, often ill, they would carry out work that was always tedious and often exhausting.



The “wheelbarrow kommando” and the “Ravine of Death”

“When we arrived, barbed wire held up by poles about 30 centimetres high with signs on top that were smaller but just as black ran along the downhill part of the road. They had a skull and crossbones on them, the S.S. emblem⁽²⁾. We had been warned: ‘if one of you crosses that line, it will be considered an attempt to escape and in that case the guard has strict orders to shoot immediately. Be careful!’ This was one warning that didn’t need to be repeated.

(...) The July N.N. (...) often worked in this spot, building the big platform above and outside the camp on which the S.S. barracks had been built. The Deportation Memorial and Necropolis, places of pilgrimage and reflection, were built there⁽³⁾. That is also where several French N.N. deportees were murdered in July-August 1943. Pushing wheelbarrows or carrying big stones on the platform, they were tripped or pushed down to the bottom. Escape attempt, the guard opened fire. Hitting his target (...).”

Eugène MARLOT

(2) The Totenkopf, ‘death head’, was the emblem of the S.S., who were assigned to guarding and running the camps.

The Work

Working conditions

"You had to run under a hail of very painful blows to fetch a spade and a pickaxe, run again to gather in small groups, run some more to reach your designated spot and start picking immediately (...).

The blows doubled (...) raining down hard. Everybody took turns being in the wrong spot so that the same guy wasn't always the one to get it. Alex, Fernandel's [SS Ehrmanntraut's nickname] dog, was often in on the fun. Following orders, he bit all the calves within his reach, except the kapos. When the guards broke a pickaxe or spade handle across our backs, they would deftly and quickly replace it with another one and start all over again or, rather, continue."

Max NEVERS

The Kartoffelkeller (potato cellar) kommando ⁽¹⁾

"Kartoffelkeller is German for 'potato cellar'. Nobody ever gave us any other explanation, but based on rumours that were going around the camp we eventually realised that the plan was to dig a huge cellar to store potatoes overlooked by S.S. barracks (...). What an idea.

What awaited us was sheer slavery. It consisted of hacking away at a huge mound that stood before us with picks. First we had to level part of the mountain, then dig the cellar out of solid rock, granite (...).

With picks and spades? Yes! And while being hit with those tools' handles. The spades and picks were stored at the worksite. The tools also included eight little wagons that rolled on rails.

The French in the first convoy, who had borne the brutal brunt of the fury of the S.S., 'inaugurated' the Kartoffelkeller worksite on 12 July, in particular by laying the rails for the little wagons."

Max NEVERS

(1) This was the large building you saw when you visited the European Centre

The road kommando

"I had been assigned to the kommando in charge of building the road from the camp to the quarry (...). It was sheer slave labour. Building a road while the sand and stone were frozen, digging holes in solid rock and ice to plant electric poles, carrying everything and anything, being busy, or trying to look as though we were to avoid being kicked and beaten with pickaxes by the kapos or bitten by the S.S. guard dogs: that was our daily life. We had to work at a brutal pace. There was no concern for profitability, the only goal was our physical exhaustion.

The purpose was to select, by physical elimination, those who would be sent to work in industrial wartime production (...)."

Roger BOULANGER

The quarry

"(...) Our work consisted of quarrying the famous pink granite in the mountain that was highly prized by the Third Reich's masters (...). A Berlin company, the Deutsche Erde und Steinwerke (DEST), quickly appropriated the site of the quarry, the camp and its surrounding area (...).

The DEST already operated similar quarries in Germany and conquered territory in order to extract granite blocks to build colossal monuments and outsized palaces to the glory of the thousand-year Reich."

Roger LINET

Stop 5 - The cell block

Beatings

(1st room on the right when entering the block: the beating rack)

When Boris Pahor returned to the place where he was deported, the memories came flooding back:

"And now that I'm standing here in front of these open cells, before the wooden rack where he whose back they were going to lacerate with a bullwhip had to lie, stripped to the waist, I feel no compassion for him, no pity for the blows he received. I find myself in the motionless silence that in such circumstances gripped the ranks lined all the way up to the top of the terraces. When somebody sneaked away to have a rest, he would lie down someplace without realising that he'd let his exhausted eyelids close; enraged men would look for him in the wooden bunks and closets while a German shepherd, nervous because of the sudden tension, would shatter the thick silence with its fierce barking. At that moment, none of us standing in tight ranks on the flat parts of the slopes in the dead of night would think of the wooden rack with a sign that said: whipping rack. In fact we didn't think of the punishment that awaited the unfortunate; instead, we waited for the moment when, accompanied by the heavy, brutal sound of boots, he would emerge from someplace behind us, invisible, and find himself alone in the hollow atmosphere, alone in front of the silent ranks that rose to the sky in a pyramid (...)."

Boris PAHOR

Imprisonment

"The prison sentences went from 3 to 42 days in cells, where sometimes more than 20 prisoners were crowded in. In the most serious cases, the prisoners were locked up in small cages, in total darkness, almost without air, barely able to crouch (...)."

Robert STEEGMANN
Historian



Slow death

"Each of us had lost around a quarter of his weight in less than three weeks (...). The food portions were very poor in quality and quantity, especially considering the terribly exhausting work we had to do.

Our weight dropped precipitously the first month. Fifteen or 20 kilos was the norm. Although the weight loss rate slowed down after the first or second month, added up over time the results were spectacular. One of us who weighed 90 kg when he arrived had dropped to just 40 kg by the end of the year... That's what killed him, by the way (...)."

Roger LINET

Stop 6 - The crematory block



This building had a three-fold function:

- deportee arrival block: this is where they were showered, shaved and numbered.
- place of cremation: the furnace was installed just above the morgue. The corpses were brought up on a stretcher placed to the right of the furnace.
- place of pseudo “medical” or “scientific” experiments on the prisoners, practiced in particular by Nazi medical professors from the *Reichsuniversität Strassburg* (autopsy room, guinea-pig room etc.)

The experiments and diseases

“A few days later, one morning, on waking I felt unwell, feverish, with a heavy head. Most likely alerted by my bed neighbour, Ludwig, the Austrian nurse, came to see me, took my pulse, examined my tongue and asked me to go straight to the left corner of the room. And I went to the right.

I went back to bed. Little by little, my head got heavier, my thinking got foggier. After my sense of direction, it was my sense of things themselves that I lost. Without realising it, I was entering into a critical period, that of exanthematic typhus, the extremely epidemic disease (...). I learned later that the specialist of this disease, Professor Haagen, did not need lice to propagate it and even that an infirmary block had been reserved for typhus patients (...).

It was also much later that I remembered that I had been given a shot one evening, after having taken a bath in a real bathtub, with really hot water. There were several of us who were subjected to this treatment. And it was the day before Ludwig gave me the orientation test that reveals this disease (...).”

Eugène MARLOT

“He was in a room, at the bottom [of the camp], lying down. He had no saliva in his mouth, he was like a fish that gets thrown out of water and tries to breathe (...). And I didn’t know what to do, I just passed by because I had my work, and I had nothing to say to him. Maybe he got gradually better, or maybe he died a fortnight later (...).”

Boris PAHOR

The dead

“... And this is how I was chosen, after the morning roll call, to do a job I never expected: I was an ‘undertaker’ for two days. Three other comrades were picked to work with me.

We had to move bodies from the ‘infirmary’ block to the crematory block. To do that we took a long wooden crate with a lid and handles on both sides to carry it. (...)

The bodies were in the infirmary’s shower. There was a label tied around the big toe with a number written on it and a purple ink stamp, exactly the same as the one used for marking the quarters of slaughtered animals, on the skin.

We delicately laid four bodies in our makeshift coffin, or sometimes even five because they were so thin. We put them in a white-walled room in the crematorium and went back to the infirmary to pick up other unfortunates with faces drawn by suffering.”

Roger MONTY

The ashes of the incinerated corpses were then scattered in the “ash pit”, which was also the excrement pit; or on the vegetable gardens of the SS, which is where the Lantern of the Dead is located today.

Mass executions

Starting in 1942, the KL-Natzweiler also became a site of execution for the Alsace-Moselle and Baden-Württemberg areas.

The prisoners were brought to the camp and executed at the sand quarry or the crematorium.



Starting on 25 August 1942, the young Alsatians and Mosellans were subjected to forced conscription into the Wehrmacht, the German army.

On 17 February 1943, 13 youths from Ballersdorf (Haut-Rhin), opposed to forced conscription, were shot at the sand quarry.

On 6 July 1944, four female resistance fighters, members of the SOE, the British Special Operations Executive, were arrested in France and then assassinated with phenol injections in a wing of the crematorium. They were incinerated in the camp's furnace.

In the night of 1 to 2 September 1944, 107 members of the Alliance network and 35 members of the Groupe Mobile Alsace-Vosges were executed in the crematorium building and incinerated immediately.





Nearly 52,000 people from thirty different countries were deported to KL-Natzweiler or its subcamps.

Over 20,000 never made it back home

Nationalités

	Nombre
Pologne	13606
URSS	7586
France	6781
Lorraine	821
Alsace	231
Hongrie	4403
Allemagne	3703
Italie	1690
Yougoslavie	872
Pays-Bas	676
Norvège	579
Lituanie	555
Luxembourg	416
Lettonie	390
Belgique	387
Estonie	312
Tchécoslovaquie	254
Grèce	169
Slovénie	125
Espagne	80
Roumanie	37
Albanie	17
Autriche	13
Royaume-Uni	11
Ukraine	10
Finlande	7
Suisse	7
Turquie	6
Danemark	3
Bulgarie	2
Portugal	1
Suède	1
Non renseignés	8985
TOTAL	51684

Catégories

	%
Déportation politique	60
Politique	46
Politique juif	6,5
NN (Nacht und Nebel)	4,9
Soviétique (catégorie jusqu'en 1942)	1,3
Polonais (catégorie jusqu'en 1942)	0,8
KGF (Prisonnier de guerre)	0,5
SAW (Réfractaire à la Wehrmacht)	0,1
Déportation raciale	11,03
Juif	11,02
Asocial juif	0,01
AZA (Travailleur civil étranger)	6
BV 175 (Déviant sexuel)	2,6
Asocial	1,3
SV (Déporté en internement de sécurité)	0,7
Tzigane	0,6
Homosexuel	0,42
Témoin de Jéhovah	0,05
Apatride	0,004
Non renseignés	17,7

Stop 7 - The gas chamber (1.5 km downhill from the camp)

In 1942, Professor August Hirt decided to start an anatomy collection of the "Jewish-Bolshevist race". An experimental gas chamber was installed especially for this purpose in an outbuilding of the Struthof Hotel, downhill from the camp.

At the beginning of 1943, Jews were selected at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Transferred to Natzweiler, 86 men and women were gassed by Kramer, the camp commander, between 11 and 19 August. The corpses were then transported to the Anatomy Institute of Strasbourg, where they were preserved in alcohol. One year after the gassing, Hirt still had not conducted any experiments on the cadavers.



"I would then place a handful of the chemical into the hole cut out in the floor. I would have the women come into the gas chamber and then close the door. Then the women would start crying and screaming.

Outside, I would pour water into the prepared funnel. This water flowed through a pipe with a closure in the hole where the little crystals were.

After half a minute, the screams would stop in the chamber."

Excerpt from the second deposition of **Josef KRAMER**, head of the Natzweiler-Struthof camp, before the Military Tribunal at Lüneburg, 6 December 1945

Faced with the threat of the arrival of allied troops from Strasbourg, Hirt gave the order to have the 86 corpses cut up and incinerated in the municipal crematorium. Most of the bodies were dismembered and decapitated. There was not enough time to finish this gruesome task; 16 or 17 corpses remained practically intact at the bottom of the alcohol tanks. Some were still wearing their registration number, while others had undergone scarification to make their numbers disappear.

The gas chamber did not serve for the systematic or mass gassing of the camp's prisoners. The building was a place of pseudo-medical experimentation (on phosgene and mustard gas and on typhus), conducted in particular by the three Nazi doctors Hirt, Bickenbach and Haagen.

A German reporter and doctor, Hans Joachim Lang, managed to find the names of the victims, using the list of registration numbers of the 86 prisoners.

Plaques commemorate their memory in the gas chamber, at the Cronenbourg Cemetery, where they are buried, and at Louis Pasteur University in Strasbourg (former hospital), where the Anatomy Institute run by Hirt was located at that time.

The SS *Hauptsturmführer* (captain) professor August Hirt, director of the Anatomy Institute of the *Reichsuniversität* of Strasbourg from 1941, killed himself with a bullet through the heart on 2 June 1945. Judged by the Military Tribunal of Metz during the "Struthof Camp Doctors' Trial", Hirt was sentenced to death in absentia on 16 December 1952.

NB: There are special opening times for visiting this building. Please enquire at the European Centre reception. Plan to arrive **before 4pm in wintertime and before 5pm starting on 1 May.**



The Nazi doctors at *KL-Natzweiler* and at the *Reichsuniversität Strassburg*

Professor Otto BICKENBACH, 1901-1971

He joined the University of the Reich in Strasbourg when it was opened in 1941, where he was in charge of the medical section of the Research Institute (*Forschungsinstitut*).

He had been a member of the Nazi Party and of the SA (*Sturmabteilung*, or Storm Troopers) since 1933, and specialised in the study of war gases, especially phosgene.

Like Hirt, Bickenbach was a member of the IWZ (Institute for Military Scientific Research) through the *Ahnenerbe* (the Nazi Ancestor Heritage programme). In 1943, fearing a chemical attack by the Allies, Himmler showed a great deal of interest in the work of Bickenbach, who put his skills at the service of Nazi ambitions. He led a series of experiments on phosgene at *KL-Natzweiler* starting in the spring of 1943.

Professor Eugène HAAGEN, 1898-1972

He ran the Hygiene Institute of the University of the Reich in Strasbourg from 1942. An internationally renowned virologist, in 1933 he joined the Hygiene Department of the Reich, but belonged neither to the SA, nor to the SS. He discovered a vaccine against typhus, for which he was included on the list of Nobel Prize candidates in 1936.

The following year, he joined the Nazi Party. He conducted experiments on hepatitis in Strasbourg and on the flu in Schirmeck, and on typhus at *KL-Natzweiler*.

Professor August HIRT, 1898-1945

From the 1920s, Hirt began conducting anatomy research that earned him international renown.

He joined the SS in 1933 and the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in 1937. In 1941, he went to Strasbourg. When the *Reichsuniversität* was inaugurated, he met Wolfram Sievers, head of the *Ahnenerbe*, who proposed that he continue his research on hyperite. The work on human guinea-pigs began in November 1942, at *KL-Natzweiler*.

At the same time, Hirt continued his research at the Anatomy Institute that he ran at the university. Himmler authorised him to make a "collection of skulls of Jewish-Bolshevist commissars". Hirt committed atrocious crimes, in the name of Nazi, racist and anti-Semitic pseudoscience.



Joseph Kramer, commander of *KL-Natzweiler*

Born in 1906, Kramer became an accountant and enlisted in the SS in June 1932.

In February 1934, he was named sergeant and was posted at the camps of Dachau, then Sachsenhausen and Mauthausen.

In May 1940, he was posted to Auschwitz.

After a brief time spent at Dachau, he was posted to Natzweiler in April 1941, where he assisted Egon Zill, whom he replaced in October 1942. It was Kramer who carried out the gassing of 86 Jews for the purposes of Hirt's experiments in August 1943.

He stayed in his post until May 1944, and then was named commander of the Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp, where in June 1944 he organised the mass extermination of Hungarian Jews.

In December 1944, he was named commander of Bergen-Belsen. He was taken prisoner there when the camp was liberated by the British.

Judged at the trial in Lüneburg, in the British occupation zone, he was hanged in December 1945 in Hameln.

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Roger BOULANGER

At the age of 17, Roger Boulanger refused to be conscripted by force into the *Wehrmacht*, the German army. In 1943, he was imprisoned in Sarreguemines, deported to the Natzweiler camp, and then transferred to Germany in a kommando belonging to the Flossenbürg camp. He survived the evacuation of the camps and the “*Death Marches*” by managing to escape.

Roger LINET

Roger Linet was a French NN prisoner at Natzweiler from 1943 to 1944. He was President of the Amicale Nationale of Natzweiler-Struthof, Officer of the French National Order of Merit and Officer of the French Legion of Honour. He passed away in 2003.

Eugène MARLOT

Eugène Marlot was born on 19 November 1900 in Quincey (Côte-d'Or). He was a resistance fighter in the “Libération Nord” movement, arrested on 11 August 1943 and transferred to Natzweiler. Marlot has since died, but his testimony lives on: one of his poems, “Greetings, dear Brother”, is published by the European Centre of Deported Resistance Members.

Roger MONTY

Born in Paris, Roger Monty lived with his parents and brother in the Marais district, where a large Jewish community was established. Incensed by the occupation of France and by the fate reserved for Jews, Monty engaged in the “Défense de la France” movement, in whose name he distributed journals and pamphlets. He was arrested on 4 August 1943 after being denounced, and then he was imprisoned in Fresnes before being deported.

Max NEVERS

Max Nevers was born on 2 March 1920 in Lézennes (Yonne). He was deported as an NN prisoner to the Natzweiler camp in July 1943. He was Secretary-General and then President of the Amicale Nationale of Natzweiler-Struthof Deportees, and of the International Committee uniting the Committees of Foreign Deportees of Natzweiler.

Kristian OTTOSEN

Kristian Ottosen was born in Solund in 1921, in western Norway. He was a resistance fighter, arrested by the Gestapo in 1942. He became an NN prisoner and, until the end of the war, was imprisoned in various concentration camps in Germany: Sachsenhausen, Natzweiler, Dachau, Ottobrunn, Dautmergen, Vaihingen and Neuengamme.

Boris PAHOR

Boris Pahor was born in Trieste in 1913. A resistance fighter, he was arrested on 21 January 1944 by collaborators, and handed over to the Gestapo. He was deported on 26 February to Dachau and then Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, a subcamp of Natzweiler, and then to Natzweiler until the evacuation of the camp. He was then sent to the Dora camp. He was freed from Bergen-Belsen on 25 April 1945. Today his works have been translated into some thirty languages.

André RAGOT

A physician and a resistance fighter, André Ragot was deported to Natzweiler from 1943 to 1944. His testimony was one of the first to be published about the deportation to KL-Natzweiler.

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