



Galleries Lafayette isn't just another department store. Galleries Lafayette's enchanting world of fashion transforms shopping into pure enjoyment, making for an exquisite delight for the senses.

The history of Galleries Lafayette, Paris

In 1893 the cousins Théophile Bader and Alphonse Kahn decided to open a store in Paris selling the latest items the market had to offer. They began in premises measuring just 70 square metres in a shopping district near the Opéra de Paris Garnier and the station Gare St. Lazare.

Business was *formidable*, and so in 1896 Théophile Bader, who hailed from Alsace, promptly decided to rent all six storeys of the building. Its address was no. 1, Rue La Fayette, a street named after the French general and politician Marquis de la Fayette.

This marked the birth of the Grands Magasins "Aux Galleries Lafayette"! Trade in frills, cuffs, braiding, lace and haberdashery flourished so much that during the next few years the neighbouring buildings had to be purchased to allow for expansion. However, moving into a building especially designed and built for the Galleries Lafayette became inevitable. And that is why the new house at Bd. Hausmann was built in an orientalic-byzanti by the renowned architect George Chedanne

A whole chain of stores emerged with branches in every major town and city in France – from Monoprix in Lille to the Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville in Paris and Galleries Lafayette in Bayonne. And in 1996, Galleries Lafayette opened its first store outside France – on Friedrichstrasse in central Berlin.

The history of Galleries Lafayette in Berlin

In 1996 Galleries Lafayette branched out from Paris to Berlin when its first German store was opened on Friedrichstrasse, at the junction with Französische Strasse. The Parisian parent store was quickly proved right in its bold decision to back the development of the new German capital.

After seemingly endless demolition, excavation and construction activity, the old boulevard has finally regained its former lustre. Jean Nouvel's temple of glass containing Galleries Lafayette was the first perceptible sign of life of the Friedrichstadt Arcades – and an early ray of hope for all the other businesses set to follow.

Much has changed here since then. Applying the maxim "Commerce means change", above all the range of fashion stocked has become increasingly varied and international.



Facts and figures

Galeries Lafayette Deutschland GmbH
Französische Strasse 23
D-10117 Berlin
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Opened: 29 February 1996
Manager since 2008: Alexandre Liot
Personnel: 320 (approx.)
Total retail area: 9,000m on five storeys
Gourmet sales area: 1,550m

Dining capacity: 370 seats

ARCHITECTURE

Architect: Jean Nouvel
Foundation-stone laid: 9 October 1992
Topping-out ceremony: Autumn 1994
Height of upper conical spire: 37m
Height of lower conical spire: 11m
Distance between tips: 50m

Facts and figures on Galeries Lafayette International

Galeries Lafayette (S.A.) 40, Bd. Haussmann
75446 Paris Cedex 09
Established: 1896
Président Directeur Général: Philippe Houzé

Business activity: 70 department stores (Galeries Lafayette,
Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville)
200 other stores (Monoprix, Inno, Prisunic)
Business services (Laser – data-processing;
Cofinoga - financing)

Total personnel: 32,000 (approx.)



L'ESPRIT FRANCAIS

As soon as both Germany and Berlin were reunited in 1990, one thing was certain – that the old Friedrichstadt district around the world-famous Gendarmenmarkt was set to be reborn. Above all the district's former boulevard, Friedrichstrasse, attracted investors from Germany and abroad. An international competition for Quartier 207 was won by a spectacular design for Galeries Lafayette submitted by star architect Jean Nouvel, who had originally risen to fame for Lyons Opera House and the Arab World Institute in Paris. When the foundation stone was laid on 9 October 1992, this was the first major project on the famous Friedrichstrasse. The topping-out ceremony was celebrated in autumn 1994, and Galeries Lafayette was finally opened on 29 February 1996.

Architecture

Twelve glass conical spires and cylinders lend Quartier 207 – and hence also Galeries Lafayette – an elegance and lightness which sets it apart from the closed construction style typical of Berlin. Nouvel's now legendary conical spires and the bold glass facade have since become attractions in their own right.

The modern architecture continues inside on all the storeys of Quartier 207, which in addition to Galeries Lafayette also harbours other offices and luxury housing. Variations in the light combine to produce an exclusive shopping and working experience.

The construction of Quartier 207 and Galeries Lafayette was nothing less than the creation of a new, unique landmark for central Berlin.

Location

Stations

- 1.) Französische Str. (underground)
- 2.) Kochstr. (underground)
- 3.) S-Bahnhof Friedrichstr. (railway)
- 4.) Unter den Linden (railway)
- 5.) Potsdamer Platz (railway)

Parking is available in Quartier 207's multi-storey car-park and elsewhere in the vicinity.



Friedrichstrasse

Only few roads in Berlin can look back on such an eventful history – for Friedrichstrasse experienced all the ups and downs of what was first the Prussian and later the German capital. Take a stroll from Hallesches Tor to Oranienburger Tor, and it doesn't take much effort to conjure up some of the ravages of German history. Yet in the central area between Kochstrasse and Friedrichstrasse Station, the phoenix has long since arisen from the ashes. Those who nowadays talk of the "New Berlin" doubtless also mean the new Friedrichstrasse.

The first boom period

Let's cast our minds back to the late 19th century, when central Berlin underwent a construction boom. At that time Berlin was at the centre of a breathtaking upsurge – much as it is today, in fact. The new capital of the German empire showed off its prosperity in Wilhelminian facades, exclusive shopping arcades, and elegant cafés and restaurants. Luxury hotels and palaces of entertainment such as the famous Kaisergalerie and the legendary Wintergarten stocked everything the turn of the century had to offer.

Decline and decay

The late 1920s marked the decline of what had been described by Alfred Kerr as the "boulevard of iniquity and luxury" – a state of affairs which was accelerated by the world economic crisis in 1929. The sparkle of the pioneering years finally disappeared with the rise of the Nazi regime, which was strongly opposed to so much luxury and uncontrolled entertainment. What followed was a period of destruction and decay.

Division

After the capitulation of Germany, the famous boulevard was soon at the centre of Berlin divided. And until the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, Friedrichstrasse was reminiscent of nothing more than a ghost-town guarded by grey uniforms, not so much famous as notorious for the gunfire at Checkpoint Charlie. The attempts by the East German regime towards the end of its lifetime to revitalise Friedrichstrasse by erecting the Grand Hotel and the Friedrichstadtpalast cabaret venue were merely brief episodes; the genuine renaissance of the "grand old lady" had to wait until the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Peaceful Revolution. On 9 October 1992 the foundation-stone was laid for Quartier 207 and Galeries Lafayette – marking the architectural go-ahead for the reconstruction of Friedrichstrasse and the genesis of Berlin's brand-new centre.