

## Welcome to Gerhard Fort!

**Out of concern for the safety of our visitors, we kindly request that you do not enter rooms outside the visitor route, be especially careful on the entire premises of the Fort and take special supervision over the youngest cadets.**

You have just entered the fort via **an earth causeway 1** formed across a moat. Before the causeway you passed a unique **position with a "Panther" tank turret A** found near Szczecin. On the other side there is **a type B-13 130 mm cal. naval gun. B** originating from a post-war 19th Coastal Battery in Kołobrzeg. The sightseeing tour begins at the building situated in front of the entrance, whose bomb-resistant interiors served as **guardroom and latrine. 2** The latter one, located in the right part of the building, was divided into two sections – separate for officers and soldiers. Inside, the original toilet bowls are preserved along with authentic hand written inscriptions made by the soldiers telling about life in the fort during the years 1886-1914. (Rating warning! Smut!) Embrasures directed at the causeway secured the immediate access to the fort's premises. Finds from the area of the fort are displayed on the window sills.

We are leaving the latrine and turning right into the so-called covertway shielded from the outfield by an earth embankment. We are passing through a postern (tunnel), turning left and entering the fort's largest powder magazine through an original 19th-century sliding door. This is the so-called **war powder magazine 3**, which was filled with gunpowder barrels only in times of mobilisation. When you go in, turn right – towards the burning light – and walk down four steps and further down and forward. After about 20 metres we find ourselves in a huge vaulted room, which once housed 660 wooden barrels filled with black gunpowder. Extremely strict safety measures were observed here because a single spark could cause a gigantic explosion. Thus, soldiers who worked in this magazine were wearing special wooden clogs or felt slippers and all tools were made of bronze which cannot produce sparks. The magazine was lit by oil lamps placed in two closed niches which, for safety reasons, were accessible only from the back. The hallway through which we have entered into the magazine provided air conditioning – constant circulation of air maintained a stable temperature of c. 10 degrees Celsius and humidity of about 60% all year long. Black powder was very sensitive to moisture.

The next building on the way is the so-called **at hand powder magazine. 4** It stored fuse charges ready for quick use and detonators based on nitro-glycerine. It is worth noticing how huge and sturdy the hinges and bolts on which were once mounted heavy doors. Powerful gates protected the soldiers working outside against the effects of a potential explosion in the middle of the magazine.

The next building is of an experimental structure, unusual for its time, made of concrete. It is **the munitions lab 5** where gunpowder was made, portioned and place inside canon shells. The façade features a medallion with a lion's head – the symbol of valour, might, and courage, which was to remind the soldiers what virtues they should exhibit while serving.

When we leave the laboratory to the left, we enter the fort's largest square, the so-called **parade ground (maidan). 8** From the front we can notice **the lower artillery terrace, 7** where four canons were once located. In the second half of the 19th century, the fort's basic weaponry consisted of 15 and 21 cm calibre cannons mounted on a coastal-type gun carriage. The largest gun: the 21 cm Ringanone on an 1873 carriage weighed almost 20 tonnes and fired 80 kg shells over a range of more than 9 km into the sea! In between the barbettes (gun positions), shielded from the sea by a huge wall, there are bunkers used for munitions storage and as shelter for the crew. From the River Świna there are three earth positions for light 9 cm guns of **the barrage battery, 6** whose job was to prevent smaller enemy ships from entering the harbour. The former battery commanding position, nowadays **a view point E** with a beautiful view of the mouth of the Świna, which is called the "Crown of the River Odra", is a must-see on this tour.

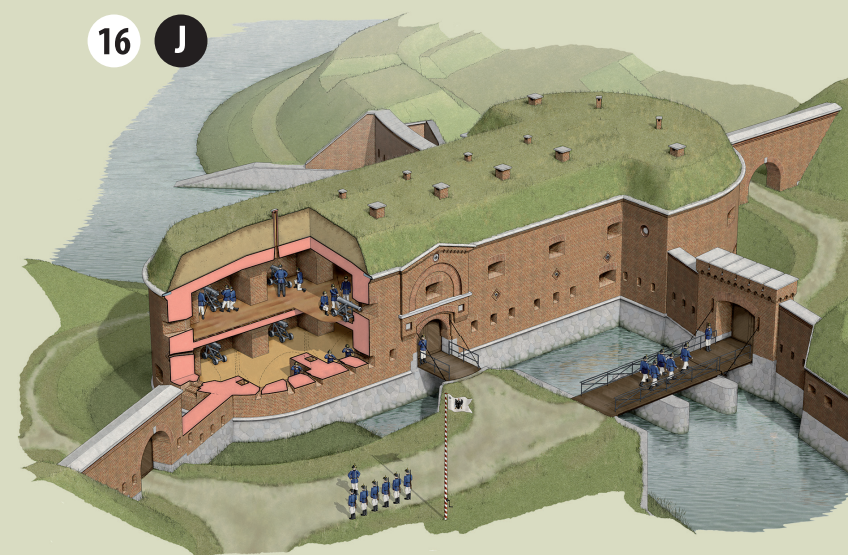
On the right wing of the terrace there is **a central munitions magazine 9** connected by munitions lifts, with a bunker on the upper terrace.

**The upper artillery terrace 10** features another 7 gun positions. Several types of cannon fixtures have been preserved on granite plinths with masonry breastwork. Until 2002, the foot was completely covered in earth and wild greenery. When the earth and trees were removed, it turned out that the green carpet hid the bases and remains of fixtures preserved in an excellent condition that cannot be found in other such fortresses around Europe! In between the artillery positions there are bunkers-earth walls for munitions and crews. To protect the structures against increasingly powerful shells, their ceilings were reinforced with concrete domes in the early 20th century. At the western end of the upper terrace, two **artillery garages 12** have been preserved – brick bunkers for storing field guns. We are now going down the steep external staircase to the alarm square. **The barrack and munitions complex 11** (casemate) is one of the fort's largest buildings. The underground vaulted rooms housed, apart from the artillerymen's quarters, canon munitions magazines. In the ceilings of the magazines and the encircling hallway are munitions lifts which were used to transport shells and gunpowder explosives to the gun positions. In the middle section of the casemate, there is a staircase leading to the upper terrace and a passage to an underground postern that leads into the caponier. Please mind the slippery stairs and low-flying bats! **A caponier 13** is a building used to defend the moat with two-directional fire. Along with a twin southern caponier, it enabled coverage of a long section of the moat with rifle fire.

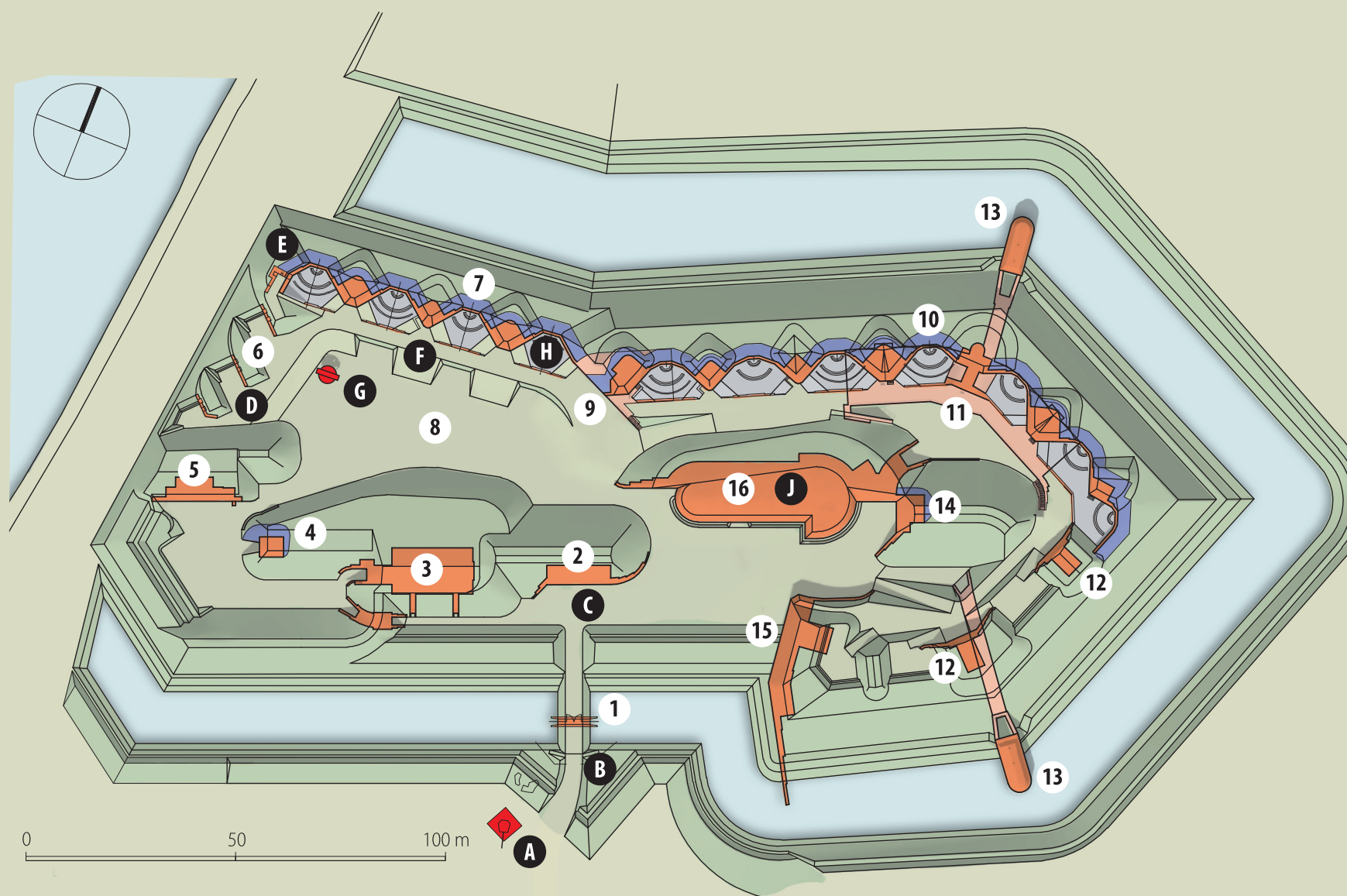
We are returning to the alarm square and entering the fort's main square via a wide postern. We are now going to **the half-caponier, 15** another defence structure shaped as a shooting range that also served the purpose of defending the moat and the area around the fort's entrance causeway. Apart from rifle embrasures, two Gruson-Hotchkiss 3.7 cm calibre Revolver Cannon were also mounted here. In the interwar period the half-caponier was adapted as an air-raid shelter. Currently, the building serves as an exhibition space for military items found on the fort's premises.

**The reduit 16** is the fort's main building and the core of its defence. Construction of this beautiful two-storey brick building was completed in 1859. Originally, it was surrounded by a water-filled moat and armed with 22 smoothbore guns. Additionally, the access to the reduit was guarded by 30 rifle embrasures. In the

years 1876-1877, during a major remodelling of the fort, the reduit ceased to play a combat role and was turned into a barracks. The moats were filled-in, the drawbridge removed, and the building was shielded with a huge earth wall from the sea. Also, the façade from the yard was altered and the embrasures were replaced by full-size windows so that the crew lodging inside could enjoy the best living conditions. In the ceiling of the ground floor are two openings in which lifts were installed to transport gun barrels and other heavy objects to the upper floor of the reduit. Within the building's interiors, a fort well, embrasures for smoothbore guns, and hooks mounted in the ceiling, used to transport guns between the positions, have been preserved. Inside the pillars there are fireplaces that heated the rooms. Currently, the reduit houses the museum's permanent exhibition which features, among others, uniforms from various periods and artillery weapons such as the 8.8 cm SK C/35 gun from a German submarine type VII C, the 5 cm KWK 39 L/42 gun on the fort base and a number of rifles and a field kitchen from 1916 and military carriages from 1915.

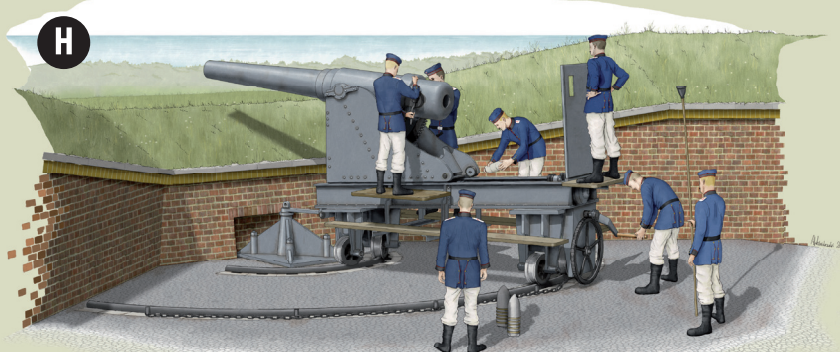


Reconstruction of the original state of the reduit from 1859



- |                               |                                       |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Entrance causeway           | 9 Large munitions magazine            |
| 2 Guardroom with latrine      | 10 Upper artillery terrace            |
| 3 Main powder magazine        | 11 Barracks and munitions complex     |
| 4 At hand powder magazine     | 12 Wall garages                       |
| 5 Munitions laboratory        | 13 Caponiers                          |
| 6 Barrage battery             | 14 Powder magazine                    |
| 7 Lower artillery terrace     | 15 Half-caponier with powder magazine |
| 8 Main square (parade ground) | 16 Barrack reduit                     |

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|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A The "Panther" position          | F Goat regiment's quarters       |
| B 130 mm calibre B-13 naval gun   | G Rangefinder dome               |
| C Pass office, recruitment office | H Reconstructed 15 cm canon      |
| D Toilets                         | J Museum – permanent exhibitions |
| E Viewpoint                       |                                  |



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Gerharda**  
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## Historical note

*The fortifications of the Fortress of Świnoujście makes it now one of the best preserved and most interesting coastal fortification complexes in Poland. They were erected in mid-19th century and were expanded and modernised over the years. The former Eastern battery, currently called the Gerhard Fort, houses the Museum of Coastal Defence.*

The core of the Świnoujście fortress comprised two coastal batteries and three forts. On the seashore, to the right of the mouth of the Świna, is an Eastern earth battery with an adjacent pentagonal fort II, whose job was to protect it against an attack from the land. The fort, along with the battery, was surrounded with a water-filled moat. In the years 1856-59, several brick buildings were erected in the fort: a two storey reduit, two caponiers guarding the moat, and two powder magazines. From the side of the batteries, the access to the inside of the fort was closed with a wall and a gate. In the 1860s, within the battery area, a large powder magazine and a munitions laboratory were erected using new experimental technology – a concrete structure.

Since 1873, the stationary coastal guns were mounted on special fire positions along the wall, and adjacent munitions magazines and shelters for the crew were built.

In the years 1876-77, the complex underwent a major remodeling; both parts were combined into one large coastal battery equipped with seven 21 cm guns and four 15 cm guns. The reduit was turned into a barracks and surrounded by an earth embankment from the sea. A large munitions and barracks unit and a smaller munitions magazine were constructed and topped with gun positions. Due to the varied levels of the wall of the former fort I and the battery, guns were placed on two levels, commonly called artillery terraces. In addition, the rear of the battery was expanded to include a guardroom with a latrine, an additional powder magazine, and gun garages located on the wall from the land's side.

In 1882, two 15 cm guns were converted into 21 cm ones and so their positions on the upper artillery terrace along with the shelters were altered. In 1900, from the side of the harbour canal, three positions were built for 9 cm guns that served as a barrage battery. It was supposed to fire at enemy ships if they managed to enter the river mouth. Around 1905, to provide better protection against fire, all of the brick buildings housing munitions were reinforced with a thick concrete jacket. Before World War I, the battery was rearmed with four more modern guns positioned on the upper terrace. According to the provision of the Treaty of Versailles, the fort was disarmed and it played an auxiliary role only.

After World War II Russian troops were stationed here and since 1962 the complex served as a warehouse. After the fort was abandoned, its condition started to deteriorate gradually until it was properly renovated and made available to tourists in 2001. Since 2010, the fort houses the Museum of Coastal Defence which exhibits a rich collection of nearly 2,000 military exhibits connected to the Fortress of Świnoujście.



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# Gerhard Fort

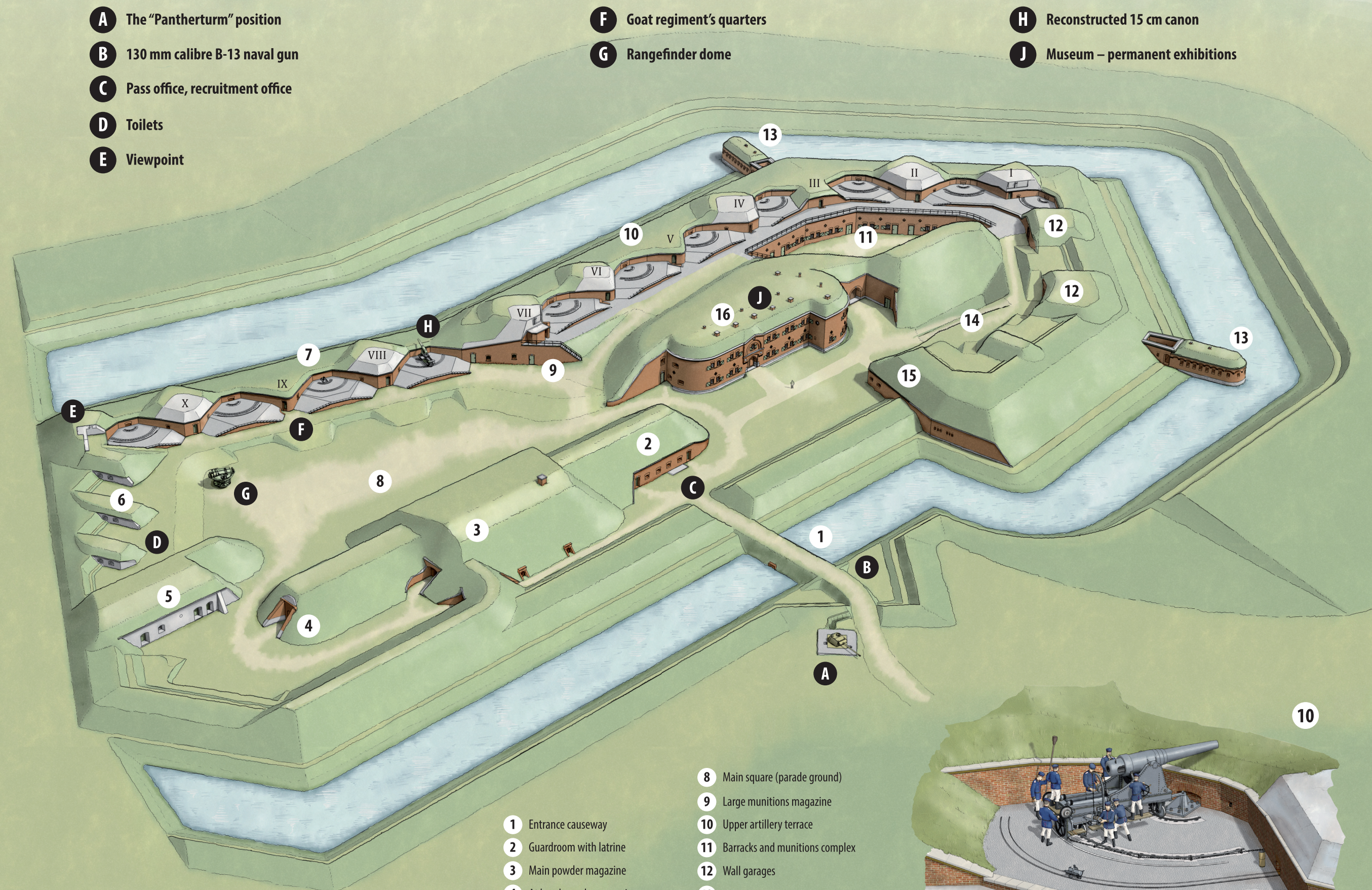
Eastern Battery

Museum of Coastal Defence  
in Świnoujście

- A** The "Pantherturm" position
- B** 130 mm calibre B-13 naval gun
- C** Pass office, recruitment office
- D** Toilets
- E** Viewpoint

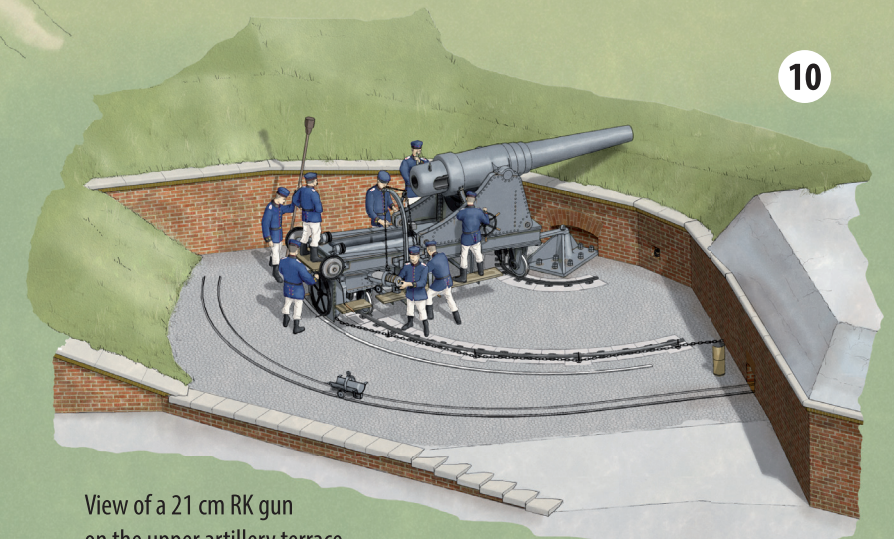
- F** Goat regiment's quarters
- G** Rangefinder dome

- H** Reconstructed 15 cm canon
- J** Museum – permanent exhibitions



**I - X - Wall shelters**  
(I, II, IV, VI, VII, VIII i X - for ammunition; III, V, IX - for crew)

- 1** Entrance causeway
- 2** Guardroom with latrine
- 3** Main powder magazine
- 4** At hand powder magazine
- 5** Munitions laboratory
- 6** Barrage battery
- 7** Lower artillery terrace
- 8** Main square (parade ground)
- 9** Large munitions magazine
- 10** Upper artillery terrace
- 11** Barracks and munitions complex
- 12** Wall garages
- 13** Caponiers
- 14** Powder magazine
- 15** Half-caponier with powder magazine
- 16** Barrack reduit



View of a 21 cm RK gun  
on the upper artillery terrace.