



Ocean Museum Germany

PRESS RELEASE

MEERESMUSEUM

(Revision date: May 2025) The MEERESMUSEUM has resided in the former Dominican St Catherine's Monastery in Stralsund's historic city centre since 1951. It is the oldest of four locations of the Ocean Museum Germany, which also includes the OZEANEUM on Stralsund's harbour island, the NATUREUM at Darßer Ort and the NAUTINEUM on the island of Dänholm. Before St Catherine's was adapted for museum use, it served as an armoury and later as a school. The city's natural history museum, founded by Dr Otto Dibbelt, took up residence in the hallowed halls in 1951. During major renovations between 1972 and 1974, a unique free-standing steel frame was added to the interior to create space for large-scale exhibits on three levels.

Starting in 2020, the MEERESMUSEUM underwent a comprehensive modernisation to update its exhibits and aquariums, improve accessibility, and promote energy efficiency. The Stuttgart firm Reichel Schlaier Architekten won the European-wide design competition in 2017 with an impressive plan that combines sensitive treatment of the historic building fabric and bold new architecture. The result strikes a fine balance between heritage conservation and the demands of a modern cultural institution with a well-established identity. The MEERESMUSEUM reopened its doors to visitors on 17 July 2024.

The museum now unfolds across 7,500 square metres of usable space. Visitors are greeted by a spacious new entrance zone, extending from the foyer through the covered west courtyard and museum shop to the west portal of the church hall. A spectacular multimedia staging of a sardine run sets the tone. The visitor route explores marine biodiversity and the origin of all life in the ocean, examines the relationship between humans and the sea, and presents strategies for sustainable fisheries. Display cases form visual waves that sweep across two stories. On the upper level, visitors can wander from Antarctica to the Arctic via authentic habitat reconstructions with carefully crafted animal replicas and preserved specimens. A 15-metre-wide biodiversity wall highlights the often overlooked world of marine invertebrates – from octopuses to jellyfish and crabs. Old favourites have also found a home in the new museum, including Marlene the leatherback turtle, the five-metre-tall Red Sea tropical coral display and the monumental fin whale

One museum – four locations:

MEERESMUSEUM

Katharinenberg 14–20
18439 Stralsund
Tel.: +49 3831 2650-210
Fax: +49 3831 2650-209

OZEANEUM

Hafenstraße 11
18439 Stralsund
Tel.: +49 3831 2650-610
Fax: +49 3831 2650-609

NAUTINEUM

Kleiner Dänholm
18439 Stralsund
Tel.: +49 3831 2650-355

NATUREUM

Darßer Ort 1–3
18375 Born
Tel.: +49 38233 304
Fax: +49 38233 70448

deutsches-meeresmuseum.de/en

Directors

Prof. Dr. Burkard Baschek
Andreas Tanschus

Press contact

Diana Meyen
Communication and Marketing
Tel.: +49 3831 2650-621
diana.meyen@meeresmuseum.de

Almut Neumeister

Communication and Marketing
Tel.: +49 3831 2650-672
almut.neumeister@meeresmuseum.de



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skeleton in the choir. The globe that used greet visitors at the museum entrance has re-emerged as a digital projection space for topics related to marine sciences.

The original free-standing steel frame has been modified to allow a 14-metre opening for the installation of life-sized models of giant marine animals. Master craftsman Peter Ardel from Dresden created replicas of sharks, dolphins and a Bryde's whale. The centrepiece is a ten-metre whale shark, which now floats under the vaulted ceiling surrounded by smaller shark species.

On 5 May 2025, the modernised aquarium route was opened to the public. A glass bridge leads into the new museum wing housing the largest aquarium in the MEERESMUSEUM. The Caribbean Reef is a 800,000-litre aquarium with a tilted viewing pane eight metres high, 53.5 centimetres thick and 80 square metres in size. Seen from three gallery levels, the aquarium offers a diver's-eye perspective from the water surface to the seabed. Transporting the 60-tonne glass elements from Japan to Stralsund's city centre, and installing them, was one of the most complex logistic and technical feats of the entire project. Within the reef, artificial replicas show the fascinating diversity of endangered Caribbean corals. The barrier-free route continues onward to a section with smaller aquariums presenting other tropical marine habitats, such as seagrass meadows, the Sargasso Sea, and mangroves.

The museum route continues in the historic vaulted cellars of the monastery. Visitors follow the currents of the Pacific Ocean from the cold waters and kelp forests off California's coast to Hawaii's dark volcanic seascape with a water temperature of 25 degrees Celsius. The colourful, bright underwater world of Fiji is recreated in an 85,000-litre tank with bluespotted ribbontail rays, oriental sweetlips and fusiliers swimming among light-coloured rocks and white sand.

A few steps further on, visitors are greeted by the underwater worlds of Australia and the Indo-Pacific with spiny lobsters and zebra fish. The exceptional biodiversity of the Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Triangle is illustrated by a wealth of colourful corals bred in-house and unusual fish species such as longhorn cowfish. One aquarium showcases the phenomenon of coral fluorescence in which corals glow under ultraviolet light in the dark. Poisonous lionfish and pufferfish, along with

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ever-popular sea turtles, await visitors in the waters of the Maldives at the final stop on this tropical journey.

For the initial filling of the 30 new aquariums and the renovated Maldives turtle tank, 45 tonnes of sea salt were added to 350,000 litres of fresh water. In total, 1.4 million litres of water circulate through the aquarium systems in front of and behind the scenes at the MEERESMUSEUM. Many animals – including the three decades old sea turtles, the bluespotted ribbontail rays and other tropical fish – were already housed at the museum before the modernisation. The corals are either bred in-house or acquired from other aquariums. All purchased animals fall into the IUCN Least Concern category. Each tank is labelled with hand-drawn animal illustrations and information on the conservation status of the species.

Together with the OZEANEUM, the MEERESMUSEUM now forms one of Europe's most comprehensive educational centres for the world's seas and oceans.

Presenting the wealth of colours and forms of marine life by means of exhibitions and aquariums has been the mission of Ocean Museum Germany for decades. Experience gained in marine organism breeding and husbandry, particularly for tropical corals, provides a vital foundation for current and future conservation and reintroduction projects.

Ocean Museum Germany warmly thanks the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building for their generous funding of the MEERESMUSEUM modernisation as well as the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media and the Hanseatic City of Stralsund for valuable support.

For more information:

www.deutsches-meeresmuseum.de/en/meeresmuseum

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