

Natzweiler-Struthof

German concentration camp near Natzweiler, south of Strasbourg. The site was chosen because it contained granite quarries, mined for German construction projects.

The first 500 prisoners arrived at Natzweiler in May 1941. A year later the camp was ready to house a large number of prisoners. By the end of 1943 the main camp contained 2,000 inmates who worked at arms production and in the quarries. Prisoners also built deep underground tunnels to make space for factories that would be safe from air attacks.

Natzweiler was expanded in 1944 as part of the underground factory plan by adding several satellite camps. By that time, there were 7,000--8,000 inmates in the main camp and 19,000 in the satellite camps. A special category of prisoners was brought to Natzweiler, called night and fog. These were Western European resistance fighters who were punished by being placed in terribly harsh working conditions.

A gas chamber was built at Natzweiler in August 1943. Jews and Gypsies brought from Auschwitz were gassed there as part of pseudo-scientific medical experiments conducted on behalf of the University of Strasbourg.

The main camp was emptied in August--September 1944; most of the satellite camps were evacuated in March 1945. Prisoners were sent on death marches towards Dachau.