

Kaiserwald

(in Latvian, Meza-Park), Concentration camp in Latvia, situated in a recreation village near Riga. Kaiserwald was established in March 1943; the first prisoners to arrive were several hundred German criminals. After June 1943 most of the remaining Jews deported from Riga were brought to Kaiserwald. In November of that year the remnant of Latvian Jewry, along with the survivors of the Vilna ghetto, were deported to Kaiserwald, as well. A small group of Jews were taken to work at nearby forced labor camps that, over time, became satellites of Kaiserwald.

In 1944 thousands of Jewish women from Hungary and a group of Jews from Lodz, Poland were deported to Kaiserwald. In March of that year the camp housed almost 12,000 inmates, nearly all Jews. The inmates at Kaiserwald were used as forced laborers in mines, factories, and farms. They suffered from terrible cold, hunger, and overcrowding.

In July 1944 the Soviet army was drawing near, so the Germans began evacuating prisoners from Kaiserwald. First, thousands of Jews who were deemed unfit were murdered in a series of brutal *aktionen*. The evacuation was over by September 1944; the prisoners were sent by train or ship to the Stutthof camp near Danzig. Over time, they were sent to various camps inside Germany.