Ebensee

Sub-camp of the Mauthausen concentration camp. Located in Upper Austria, Ebensee was established in November 1943 to house inmates forced to build a tunnel system in the side of a mountain that would eventually contain a rocket-research factory.

Most of the prisoners came to Ebensee from the main camp at Mauthausen or from its other sub-camps. At its peak, Ebensee held 18,437 prisoners. The first Jews arrived at Ebensee in early June 1944. They were subjected to extremely cruel treatment, and as a result their mortality rate was much higher than that of the rest of the camp population. By April 1945 the overcrowding was so bad at Ebensee that more prisoners died daily than could be handled by the crematorium. That month, 4,547 prisoners out of a total population of 16,000 perished.

On April 30 the Nazis released most of the German prisoners and halted all forced labor. On May 5 the camp commandant tried to get the remaining prisoners to enter one of the mountain tunnels; they refused, and the camp staff left. On May 6 American troops liberated Ebensee, and found that same tunnel full of explosives. By refusing to enter the tunnel, the prisoners had saved themselves from being blown up by the Germans.

Altogether, about 11,000 prisoners died at Ebensee