

UNESCO World Heritage in Germany

History full of life

In 2001, the German UNESCO World Heritage Sites joined to form an association, attracting as members, besides the local tourism organisations, the German UNESCO Commission, the German National Tourist Board [Deutsche Zentrale für Tourismus] and the German Foundation for Monument Preservation [Deutsche Stiftung Denkmalschutz]. This association named "UNESCO-Welterbestätten Deutschland e.V." [UNESCO World Heritage Sites Germany (Reg. Soc.)] has been a full member of the German UNESCO Commission since November 2002. The association's headquarters are located in the historical Salfeld Palais in Quedlinburg.

The aim of the association "UNESCO World Heritage Sites Germany" is to promote the German World Heritage Sites and to improve coordination between monument preservation and tourism. Fostering in particular gentle and high-quality tourism that still allows for monument preservation has become one of the association's priorities. Last year's annual conference of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites association and the German UNESCO Commission was held in Völklingen from October 12th to 14th 2005. The main topics addressed were cultural tourism as a growing market and the related increased demands on monument preservation and protection. Following the convention's motto "Success through Partnership", exemplary co-operations between the tourist industry, cultural institutions and monument preservation organisations were presented, as were some weaknesses in the collaboration of these bodies. One example of outstanding co-operation is the association itself, where responsables and decision-makers from tourism (German National Tourist Board), historical building conservation (German Foundation for Monument Preservation) and the German UNESCO Commission address common aims.

Protecting and preserving historical buildings, cultural and natural heritage requires sufficient funding. Low public spending and budget deficits require new ways of funding to be found. Here, the tourist industry itself can make a contribution. Implementing a sophisticated visitor management that is compatible with monument preservation can ensure sustainable and long-term conservation of the Heritage Sites by using tourism as one of the main and major sources of income.

Another intention of the German UNESCO World Heritage Sites association is to present Germany's outstanding cultural assets under one umbrella organisation and use them specifically to attract national and international visitors to travel Germany. From Maulbronn Monastery Complex to the old Hanseatic City of Lübeck, from Völklingen Ironworks to the Berlin Museum Island – for international tourists and for tourists from overseas in particular, inviting routes connecting various World Heritage Sites or theme tours represent attractive products in the field of cultural tourism. Tourist experts agree that cultural tourism conforms to current travel trends and acknowledge an enormous growth potential.

The association's aim is to develop ideas for routes to selected World Heritage Sites in co-operation with local institutions, the German National Tourist Board and other co-operation partners; to arrange theme trips and tours to certain types of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, such as sacred buildings, industrial monuments, historical old towns or extensive cultural landscapes which have been put under protection under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

Over the last two years, representatives of the association have, in collaboration with the German National Tourist Board, presented the German World Heritage Sites as cultural tourist destinations to interested parties in New York, Boston and Chicago. The extremely positive response of US-American tour operators to this new idea of a high-quality product encouraged the association to continue this kind of activity on the US market. In 2005, German World Heritage Sites were first presented to the travel industry on the US West Coast. Another emphasis was laid, when in 2005 and 2006 the Swiss market was worked for the first time in co-operation with the German National Tourist Board. Here, activities have steadily continued and been expanded to Austria, thus opening up a new market.

On 5th June 2005, Germany's first "World Heritage Day" was organised on initiative of the German UNESCO Commission and the UNESCO World Heritage Sites Germany association, with the central event being held in Völklingen. It was a resounding success. This event has been given a fixed date in the calendar: the first Sunday in June.

This year, the central event of World Heritage Day was held in Dessau on 4th June 2006. Other World Heritage Sites offered various activities for visitors during that day. The main intention of World Heritage Day is to introduce the UNESCO World Heritage Programme to the public at large and to achieve a stronger identification with the World Heritage Sites.

Internet: www.unesco-welterbe.de

Contact details: UNESCO-Welterbestätte Deutschland e.V. [UNESCO World Heritage Site Germany (Reg.Soc.), Kornmarkt 5, 06484 Quedlinburg,

Phone: +49(0)-3946 81 00-41/-42, Fax: +49(0)3946 81 00 32, E-mail: info@unesco-welterbe.de

For press information contact: Horst Wadehn, Chairman, Phone: +49(0)2232-50 77 35,

E-mail: wadehn@unesco-welterbe.de