



GREAT
SPA TOWNS
of Europe



MEDIA KIT

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www.greatspatownsofeurope.eu

INTRODUCTION

The Great Spa Towns of Europe is a 'Serial Transnational' World Heritage Site, made up of 11 famous historic thermal spa towns and cities in seven European countries. This exciting and complex site was inscribed on the World Heritage List on 24th July 2021.

The 'Great Spa Towns', in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom represent a unique cultural achievement which reached its height in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Great Spa Towns of Europe is inscribed on the World Heritage List with Outstanding Universal Value for these reasons:

- Criterion (ii) Influence on Modern European Towns
- Criterion (iii) Taking the Cure; human health and mineral springs.

“Not just a monument but a whole philosophy.”

Each of the 'Great Spa Towns' developed around natural mineral springs which were the catalyst for an innovative type of town which included large areas which were dedicated to health, wellness and social functions.

These fashionable resorts of health, leisure and sociability created particular types of architecture and town planning that had never been seen before.

The 'Great Spa Towns' were early pioneers of modern tourism, and were unique in being able to compete with the great capital cities of Europe, with the volume and quality of cultural activities and facilities available to guests.



11 towns

7 countries

1 World Heritage Site



*Continuing
a living
tradition.*



WHAT MAKES A GREAT SPA TOWN OF EUROPE?

The 'Great Spa Towns' share many common features:

- Springs and sources and spa buildings enabling people to 'take the waters'. These include:
 - baths
 - pump rooms and drinking halls
 - colonnades and springs
 - and social buildings such as the 'kurhaus' and 'kursaal'.
- Places to take gentle exercise – walking and promenading to meet people and be seen by others as well as to drink the waters or simply to enjoy a view:
 - paved and covered colonnades and galleries
 - landscaped parks and gardens
 - extensive networks of footpaths and trails in the surrounding woods and landscape
 - golf, tennis and horseracing.
- Social activity – where “diversions” kept people occupied while taking the cure:
 - facilities developed for mixing and socialising in assembly rooms and conversation rooms, and dance halls
 - casinos, theatres, opera houses and concert halls
 - bandstands for live music and food kiosks and cafes in parks were also a feature of spa town life
 - later, lecture theatres and scientific institutions
 - many famous and world-class festivals developed in the Great Spa Towns of Europe.
- A range of accommodation was important to house large numbers of guests, and this is still important today:
 - large and innovative hotels were developed using the latest building techniques, some with spa water piped to the rooms
 - grand private villas in leafy neighbourhoods are a distinctive feature of the Great Spa Towns of Europe.
- The urban landscape includes infrastructure that is especially linked to spas, such as:
 - hospitals based around curative and mineral springs
 - funiculars that lead to lookout towers or restaurants in the landscape
 - river transport
 - railways - often with imposing stations to impress visitors
 - facilities to bottle and export the water and its by-products
 - even the pipework transporting the all-important water.
- Vistas: buildings and spaces connect visually with their picturesque setting of idealised nature:
 - places where the surrounding landscape can be seen from the centre of the town
 - towers and special viewing platforms sometimes known as “gloriettes”.
- The 'therapeutic spa landscape' – a green environment used regularly for exercise as a contribution to the therapy of the cure, and for relaxation and enjoyment.



GREAT SPA TOWN FACTS

- **11** towns, **7** countries, **ONE** World Heritage Site
- inscribed on the World Heritage list on 24th July **2021**.
- **162 springs** containing hundreds of minerals and salts used for health and leisure.
- Karlovy Vary and Vichy have the **hottest springs** at 73.4 and 73 deg C.
- Approx 3 million **guests** per year stay 13 million nights.
- Spa guests 'take the waters' by bathing, drinking, and inhaling in buildings that span hundreds of years. Some of the waters have been in use for over **2000 years!**
- Famous **bottled water** brands include Spa Monopole and Vichy Célestins.
- There are 14 **railway stations** in the 11 towns - most opened between 1840 and 1874 - some of the world's earliest rail connections.
- Towns range from **5 to 101** thousand inhabitants.
- Bad Kissingen's revolving stage, allows music **indoors or outdoors** depending on the weather.
- Never be bored with international festivals, world-famous racetracks, concerts, theatre and opera, all attracting the **best artists**.
- Journey through the ages: Baden bei Wien was known in **Neolithic times** and Mariánské Lázně only officially became a town in **1865**.
- City of Bath, Baden-Baden, Vichy, Baden bei Wien, Montecatini Terme and Spa were **Roman spa towns**.
- Frequent **famous guests**: England's Edward VII, Ludwig Van Beethoven and J.W. Goethe .
- Famous **products** made from the waters include Vichy Pastilles, Emser Pastillen and Becherovka, as well as world-famous cosmetic brand Vichy.
- Austria's Baden bei Wien has a **thermal beach**, and in Františkovy Lázně you can **bathe in CO₂!**
- **5 funicular railways**, and one ski lift transport guests to dozens of historic viewpoints in stunning landscapes, and thousands of kilometres of forest paths.





DISCOVER THE GREAT SPA TOWNS OF EUROPE

- Well-connected by train, and with many green initiatives, they are attractive to responsible travellers.
- Quality accommodation including luxury and spa hotels.
- Never more than 2 hours' journey from a major airport.
- Culture, history, heritage mingle with wellness and health offers - the perfect package for curious guests.
- Connect 2 or more towns for a great story.
- Check out some of our projects with Globetrotter TV, @SpaTravelGal and Moshia Lundström Halbert of Vogue Magazine.
- See our [Google Map](#) for more details of locations.

Baden bei Wien, Austria: Spa of Emperors

- Just 30km from Vienna - connected by train and by an historic tram line from the Vienna opera house.
- A favourite summer resort of one of the world's greatest imperial dynasties - the Habsburgs.
- The spa district revolves around a spa garden that contains the Kurhaus and Casino, Trinkhalle, Sommerarena and music pavilion.
- Home to the Gacilly-Photo competition, and numerous festivals and cultural events, including Baden in White.
- Important musical heritage is linked Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven and Johann Strauß.
- Some great wines are to be found here!



Spa, Belgium: Café of Europe

- Spa sits in the gently rolling hills of the Belgian Ardennes.
- Spa's carbonated drinking waters have been widely distributed across Europe ever since the 17th century.
- An extensive network of walks links the various springs and connects them to the town.
- Spa became internationally-renowned as the 'Café of Europe', and a pioneer of gaming.
- One of the smallest Great Spa Towns its name is globally recognised as a by-word for health and well-being.
- Today, thermal tradition and know-how is sustained by the addition of a new thermal centre overlooking the town.



Františkovy Lázně, Czech Republic: A European Model Spa

- A planned ideal nineteenth century 'new (spa) town' in the 'West Bohemian Spa Triangle'.
- 24 springs and their pavilions are linked by long and level promenades within extensive parklands.
- Surrounded by forest and moorland that inspired it to become one of the earliest peat spas in the world.
- Its historic specialism in treating women's illnesses prompted ladies to visit without accompanying men, and so it became an early place of emancipation.
- Musical and literary works were created by composers and authors of international renown.



Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic: Europe's Open-air Salon

- Karlovy Vary is known as 'the largest open-air salon of Europe', and has hosted royal families, European heads of state, and prominent artists including Antonin Dvořák.
- Famous for its geyser-like hot spring, unique thermal water composition, innovative methods in balneology and colourful Art Nouveau buildings lining the river valley.
- Home to the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.
- See the 'drinking cure' being practised in the numerous beautiful colonnades where thousands of daily visitors drink from traditionally-shaped porcelain spa cups.



Mariánské Lázně, Czech Republic: Grand Harmony with Nature

- Mariánské Lázně, the 'spa in the park' is an early nineteenth century 'new (spa) town' in the 'West Bohemian Spa Triangle'.
- From the 1870s it gained an international reputation as a meeting place of royals and the aristocracy, a venue for important global political negotiations, for scientific gatherings, and as a place of inspiration for high art.
- Mariánské Lázně remains a significant centre of European balneotherapy - 'taking the cure' in original spa buildings with preserved interiors and equipment.
- Must see: the main Colonnade with its singing fountain.



Vichy, France: Queen of the Spa Towns

- Vichy is the most prestigious and well-known French spa town, and greatly contributed to the creation of nineteenth century European spa culture.
- Napoleon III encouraged the building of a new spa town laid out with parks and boulevards, a cosmopolitan 'Little Paris' of grand bath complexes, pump rooms connected by covered promenades, casino, theatre, hotels & villas.
- The waters are the basis for trademark cosmetics and skin care products of the Vichy Laboratories, the leading skincare brand in European continental pharmacies.



Bad Ems, Germany: The Picturesque Imperial Spa

- Bad Ems, is a compact 'Great Spa Town', set in a deeply cut valley of a tributary of the Rhine, the River Lahn.
- This 'Imperial Spa' became an important venue for major political events and decisions, pioneering gaming and a vibrant musical heritage.
- Thermal springs are clustered by the river where the spa quarter has continually occupied the same site.
- The spa landscape has challenging therapeutic trails and superb views over the town.
- Bad Ems mineral water has a long bottling history, and its salts are still used in the famous 'Emser Pastillen'.





Baden-Baden, Germany: Summer Capital of Europe

- Baden-Baden, on the western edge of the Black Forest, became one of Europe's largest and most fashionable spas with an unbroken tradition of using mineral water for healing from antiquity to the present.
- Baden-Baden acquired a worldwide reputation as the supreme example of the German gaming spa
- It was a place of inspiration for major artists and works of universal significance and still has an outstanding tradition of music and theatre.
- Bathing is popular today in both historic and new thermal establishments.



Bad Kissingen, Germany: Between Classicism and Modernity

- Bad Kissingen, in Bavaria, is outstanding for the reform era of the early twentieth century.
- Architect Max Littmann built and rebuilt almost the entire spa in exceptional architecture using innovative forms and materials: the Wandelhalle pump room is the largest structure of its kind in the world.
- Internationalism increased from 1874 with visits by German Imperial Chancellor Otto von Bismarck.
- The Upper Saline is a second spa quarter with early industrial-scale facilities for the production of brine, an important feature of European spas.



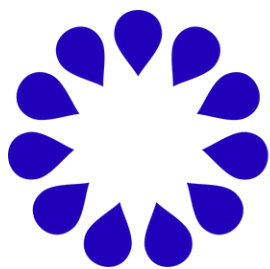
Montecatini Terme, Italy: Garden Spa of Europe

- the Tuscan town of Montecatini Terme, played an early role in the recognition of the medical properties of mineral water.
- The town is an ambitious regeneration project transforming a late-eighteenth century 'garden spa' into a 'landscape spa'.
- Famous visitors of the past are commemorated in a "walk of fame" long the Viale Verdi.
- Monumental spa architecture, centred on four main springs, punctuates an oasis of gardens, parkland and promenades.
- Olive groves and the historic funicular railway, ascend steep slopes to the medieval town of Montecatini Alto.
- With its eclectic and liberty spa architecture reinterpreted in Tuscan style, Montecatini Terme continues to serve as a centre for balneological treatment.



City of Bath, United Kingdom: Georgian Spa City

- Bath has managed its hot springs for 2000 years.
- One of the earliest and most influential 'Great Spa Towns', this grand "Georgian Spa" with its Palladian architecture and crescents and squares was created from a medieval walled city during the 18th century.
- Bath doctors pioneered diagnostic medicine, and the surrounding landscape was managed as part of 'the cure'.
- 'Masters of the Ceremony' devised and policed the 'Rules of Bath', a model for continental spas, and contributed to the creation of a polite society, helping to shape European democratic traditions and ideals.
- Today, it is a living thermal spa town, with new bathing facilities created within historic buildings in the spa quarter.



GREAT SPA TOWNS *of Europe*

USEFUL LINKS & CONTACTS

Media enquiries: comms@greatspatownsofeurope.eu

Our LinkTree site has all the important links you'll need.

Scan the QR code, or go to: https://linktr.ee/great_spa_towns_of_europe



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