



GREAT  
SPA TOWNS  
of Europe



Cultural route  
of the Council of Europe  
Itinéraire culturel  
du Conseil de l'Europe



## Joint Media Release

7<sup>th</sup> March 2023

# Great Spa Towns of Europe and European Route of Historic Thermal Towns are together at ITB Berlin this week.

**The European Route of Historic Thermal Towns** and the **Great Spa Towns of Europe** are attending **ITB Berlin** (the world's biggest travel and trade fair) together this week. For both organisations it's an important milestone for many reasons, and another great example of working together, after several significant joint projects in the last 18 months, including attending ITB online together in 2021 and 2022, where both organisations have developed a strong partnership with the ITB Berlin Organisers and the "Medical and Health Pavilion" partners.

Delegates can attend ITB Berlin in person for the first time in three years, and this is an exciting joint venture for both Associations, as well as their co-exhibitors, **Baden bei Wien** (Austria), **Caldes de Montbui** (Spain), **Pozar Thermal Baths** (Greece), and the **Province of Ourense** (Spain). The stand is in the **Medical & Health Pavilion in Hall 26c**, alongside many big names in the world of spa town travel and accommodation.

**Simone Zagrodnik**, the Executive Director of the **European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA)**, which is responsible for running the **European Route of Historic Thermal Towns**, a **Cultural Route of the Council of Europe**, said, "All members of the Great Spa Towns of Europe are also members of EHTTA, and this kind of promotional activity is perfect for us all. We are very excited to have a stand together where we will invite ITB delegates to "Immerse yourself in the Spa Culture of Europe". All our spa towns, whether in the 18 countries of EHTTA or the 7 of the Great Spa Towns of Europe are perfect destinations, combining wellness and health, culture and heritage with a centuries-old tradition of welcome. We also have an entertaining and fun space promoting "**Les Acros du Peignoir**", or #Bathrobe Addicts, a movement that originated in the **Route des Villes d'Eaux du Massif Central**, and is migrating through Europe – first to Spa in Belgium, and then to Ourense in Spain, and next to Baden bei Wien in Austria. Look out for the bathrobes – a symbol of relaxation and healthy lifestyles the world over!".

Health and wellbeing are more important than ever before and are proving to be significant themes in tourism right now, and so more visibility in this area was seen to be important. For this reason both the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns and the Great Spa Towns of Europe will be present as partners at the Media Lunch on Tuesday as well as at the Medical night on Wednesday evening in downtown Berlin. They and their co-exhibitors are also making several presentations and attending panels throughout the three days of ITB, giving delegates a flavour of the breadth of the wellness, cultural heritage and tourism offer available in these remarkable towns (see below in notes to editors for more details).

**Chiara Ronchini**, the new Secretary General of the **Great Spa Towns of Europe** said, “the Great Spa Towns of Europe were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2021, partly because they tell the story of all spa towns in Europe. These towns developed around curative mineral and thermal springs and developed a whole way of life based around health, wellbeing, heritage and culture, as well as a very particular urban landscape. While the “Great Spa Towns of Europe” are the outstanding examples of this phenomenon, the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns represents the wider movement with towns stretching from the Ukraine to Portugal. We are proud to represent members of a UNESCO World Heritage Site AND a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe side by side – something we believe is totally unique. ITB Berlin is also a great chance to continue a very special partnership that has already seen us working together with the European Travel Commission on our “Thermal Travels” campaign, with UNWTO for the Thermal Congress and on other press and tourism initiatives over the past few years. We are looking forward to being together on the stand in person for the first time since our inscription, and to being present with our Chair Mr Stefan Szirucsek, the Mayor of one of our co-exhibitor and sponsor towns, Baden bei Wien.”

Simone Zagrodnik added “As partners at ITB, the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns and the Great Spa Towns of Europe are presenting joint branding, from the stand design to contact cards to a brand-new joint **Tourism Packages** brochure, which will be presented at ITB for the first time, to inspire tour operators and travel writers to consider our spa towns as the perfect destinations for post-pandemic travel. As an **Affiliate Member of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation**, and having recently presented a major international conference on “Thermal Tourism” with the UNWTO, we also welcome the opportunity to connect health and sports tourism, and to show that our destinations, which in some cases have been connected to certain sports since they were invented, and which treat world-class athletes in their thermal spas and clinics have the perfect infrastructure for high-end sports tourism.”

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## EHTTA/GSTE Programme at ITB

### Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March

14.00 “Health Tourism – A true 365 product for Mediterranean Countries?” Panel with Ivana Kolar (365 Turizam conference), Markos Danas (H.A.M.T.S. Greece) and Marta Luque (Caldes de Montbui).

### Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March

10.00 “The Bathrobe Addicts” – Marion Vansingle, Route des Villes d’Eaux du Massif Central

12.30 “Promoting Thermal Towns as a Transnational European Product” – Simone Zagrodnik, EHTTA

### Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March

11.30 “The world’s most complicated World Heritage Site? Communicating the Great Spa Towns of Europe” – Catherine Lloyd, Great Spa Towns of Europe

15.00 UNWTO Roundtable discussion: “Connecting Sports Tourism to Health”. EHTTA will be represented by Simone Zagrodnik in ITB Convention Hall 3.1

### Notes to Editors (European Route of Historic Thermal Towns)

1. EHTTA is a membership organisation representing over 50 members in 18 countries.
2. EHTTA was certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2010 and is one of 48 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe which provide a wealth of leisure and educational activities for all citizens across Europe and beyond and are key resources for responsible tourism and sustainable development. The certification “[Cultural Route of the Council of Europe](#)” is a guarantee of excellence.
3. EHTTA was founded in 2009 with six Founding Members: Acqui Terme (Italy), Bath (UK), Ourense (Spain), Salsomaggiore Terme (Italy), Spa (Belgium) and Vichy (France).
4. In September 2022, EHTTA signed the Glasgow Declaration.

### Notes to Editors (Great Spa Towns of Europe):

1. The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* is a ‘Serial Transnational’ World Heritage Site, comprising 11 famous historic thermal spa towns and cities in seven countries. The site was inscribed on the World Heritage List at the 44<sup>th</sup> World Heritage Committee meeting in on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2021.
2. The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom represent a unique cultural phenomenon which reached its height in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as a particular urban type and form which deserves global recognition as a phenomenon which helped to shape Europe.
3. Inscription on the World Heritage List is the highest international recognition for global cultural and natural heritage sites. It is managed by UNESCO (the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) on behalf of the United Nations from its headquarters in Paris.
4. There are over 400 working spa towns across Europe and those selected are the *crème de la crème* of Europe’s best. The eleven *Great Spa Towns of Europe* possess architectural ensembles, parks, gardens and landscapes which are maintained to the highest standards. They also maintain a wide range of outstanding cultural activities, welcome an international clientele and provide a continuing living tradition of leisure, health and well-being.
5. All of the *Great Spa Towns of Europe* are easily accessible, often by rail, and offer a wide range of quality accommodation. Cultural activities and heritage attractions compliment the health and leisure treatments traditionally associated with spa towns. Local gastronomy and wine present a distinctive feature of each spa town along with more contemporary well-being programmes. Rural pursuits, walking, hiking and cycling in the surrounding therapeutic spa landscape are available for all visitors.