

*Media Release from the
Great Spas of Europe*

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GREAT SPAS *of Europe*

The Great Spa Towns of Europe are a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Today, at its 44th session, in Fuzhou, (China), the intergovernmental World Heritage Committee decided to inscribe *the Great Spa Towns of Europe* on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The nomination was prepared jointly by Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Czech Republic which managed and coordinated the entire project. This new transnational serial World Heritage Site is composed of the most significant spas in Europe: Baden bei Wien in Austria, Spa in Belgium, Vichy in France, Baden-Baden, Bad Ems and Bad Kissingen in Germany, Montecatini Terme in Italy, Bath in the UK, and Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně and Františkovy Lázně in the Czech Republic.

The Great Spa Towns of Europe, which were founded around natural mineral springs, together provide an exceptional testimony to the phenomenon of European balneology which reached its heyday between the 18th century and the early decades of the 20th century. A characteristic feature of this phenomenon is the combination of indoor and outdoor spa and therapeutic facilities with a wide range of leisure activities, reflected in a specific form of spa towns and their associated architecture. Ensembles of spa buildings including bathhouses, pump rooms, drinking halls and colonnades are complemented by assembly rooms, casinos, theatres and other cultural facilities, all integrated into a carefully maintained therapeutic landscape with mineral springs, parks, gardens, promenades and sports grounds. The surrounding landscape is used for physical activities as part of medical therapy, relaxation and entertainment. The spa towns were the only places in Europe that culturally rivalled major metropolises and became a source of intellectual, artistic, social and political inspiration, thus contributing to the democratization of European society.

The inscription on the World Heritage List will bring to the *Great Spa Towns of Europe* not only confirmation of their exceptional values, but also better protection and enhanced cooperation in the

fields of heritage conservation, balneology/health, tourism and promotion. This responsibility is a major commitment of the participating States Parties and municipal authorities, all of which recognise the importance of sustainable protection and presentation of this World Heritage Site and its preservation for future generations.

Lubomír Zaorálek, the Minister of Culture of the Czech Republic said “The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* project is an excellent example of international cooperation between ministries and institutions, experts and representatives of municipalities in seven European countries. I greatly appreciate the support of the Mayors of the towns involved who have tirelessly supported this project and provided financial resources over the extensive period of its demanding preparation. At the same time, I am proud that the Czech Republic was chosen as the coordinator of the entire project and, as a leader of the European countries involved, brought it to a successful inscription”.

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Media kit, images and logo available at www.greatspasofeurope.eu

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Notes to editors overleaf

Notes to Editors:

1. The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on 24th July 2021. The original nomination was called the Great Spas of Europe, and the Committee decided that the name should be changed to the *Great Spa Towns of Europe*.
2. The site fulfils UNESCO criteria (ii) and (iii):
 - (ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.
 - (iii) bear a unique or at least an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or a civilisation which is living or has disappeared.
3. The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* is a ‘Transnational Serial’ site comprising 11 famous historic thermal spa towns and cities in seven countries. The Great Spas, in Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom represent a unique cultural phenomenon which reached its height in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as a particular urban type and form which deserves global recognition as a phenomenon which helped to shape Europe.
4. 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.
5. The eleven spa towns in this nomination form a **series** which have been carefully selected from the many hundreds of thermal spa towns across Europe. Collectively they best illustrate the many attributes of a Great Spa town and are found across seven different countries therefore the nomination is ‘**transnational**’ by nature. UNESCO welcome such examples of cross-border cooperation. There are just **36 transnational** World Heritage Sites in the world.
6. The *Great Spa Towns of Europe* exhibit a “**continuing living tradition**” today, which means that the attributes that make them “great” can still be enjoyed to the full. As well as being able to bathe in or drink the waters in traditional and modern facilities, visitors can enjoy walking, hiking and other activities in the “therapeutic landscape” consisting of parks and gardens and the wider countryside surrounding the town. Historic buildings with high quality interpretation are available for the historically curious, while the “diversions” that were so important to those staying in the towns for long periods of time in the past, are still there today: theatres, concert halls, opera houses, art galleries, good restaurants, and casinos, along with horse and car racing, tennis, golf, and many other sports.



The Great Spas of Europe

(in alphabetical order by country):

1. Baden bei Wien, AUSTRIA
2. Spa, BELGIUM
3. Františkovy Lázně, CZECH REPUBLIC
4. Karlovy Vary, CZECH REPUBLIC
5. Mariánské Lázně, CZECH REPUBLIC
6. Vichy, FRANCE
7. Bad Ems, GERMANY
8. Baden-Baden, GERMANY
9. Bad Kissingen, GERMANY
10. Montecatini Terme, ITALY
11. City of Bath, UNITED KINGDOM

7.