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# 51 UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

SUSTAINABLE EXPERIENCES



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# UNESCO World Heritage sites as symbols of German history and culture

Dr Sabine Hepperle, Director-General responsible for SME policy at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK)

Germany is a cultural hotspot. With around 500 theatre ensembles and orchestras, we have the highest concentration of theatres in the world. Over 6,500 museums attract around 15 million visitors every year, and more than a million events boost the appeal of our towns, cities and regions. Over 1.8 million people working in the culture sector and the creative economy generated around €164.7 billion in revenue in 2021, making culture a key locational factor for Germany.

UNESCO World Heritage sites are symbols of our history and culture. To date, Germany is home to 51 UNESCO World Heritage sites, placing us among the few countries in the world that can boast such a high number of these universal reminders of global and human history. Add to that our UNESCO biosphere reserves, our intangible

cultural heritage and our entries in the Memory of the World Register. Fifteen German UNESCO Chairs participate in the global network of 850 UNESCO Chairs and the 45 UNITWIN networks, which have the common goal of promoting collaboration between researchers in the fields of gender studies, media studies and information and communication technologies.

Our strength when it comes to history and culture is reflected in Germany's appeal as a travel destination. Germany's many different types of World Heritage site are a magnet for cultural tourists, nature lovers, academics and students from around the world.

Innovative tourism marketing is also important from a financial perspective, as maintaining this heritage requires a lot of resources. Sustainable tourism can play an important part in generating the necessary funds.

*“The GNTB’s campaign for the German UNESCO World Heritage sites has great potential to further boost Germany’s positioning in the international market as a destination for sustainable cultural and nature-based travel.”*



**DR SABINE HEPPERLE**

Director-General responsible for SME policy at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK)

Opening up UNESCO World Heritage sites to tourism combines all these elements of preservation, promotion and bringing people together. It also presents opportunities for sustainable travel. The sites thus support a key aspect of international travel: fostering cultural exchange that helps to make the world a more open and tolerant place.

At the same time, we are aware that tourism accounts for a significant share of carbon emissions, which mainly arise in connection with the journey to and from the

And that's just one  
of 51 reasons you'll want  
to stay a while longer.\*



UNESCO-listed Berlin Museum Island, key visual of the GNTB's 2023 UNESCO campaign

destination. We must redouble our efforts to protect the natural environment – the basis of life for all of humanity. The federal government has set out a clear goal of making Germany climate-neutral by 2045. Delivering on this ambitious goal will require policymakers, businesses and science and academia to pull together to cause a shift in thinking and get all sectors on track for the 1.5°C target.

*“Our strength when it comes to history and culture is reflected in Germany’s appeal as a travel destination. Germany’s many different types of World Heritage site are a magnet for cultural tourists, nature lovers ...”*

The UNESCO World Heritage sites open up a whole host of possibilities for expanding sustainable quality tourism. For example, by combining city breaks with tours to the surrounding areas and rural regions. Attractive offerings help to extend the length of stay and thus avoid the emissions caused by repeated arrivals and departures.

The GNTB’s campaign for the German UNESCO World Heritage sites has great potential to further boost Germany’s positioning in the international market as a destination for sustainable cultural and nature-based travel.

This report provides a new perspective on how UNESCO World Heritage sites can act as a catalyst for inbound tourism.

I hope you will find it an enjoyable and interesting read.

# Germany's UNESCO World Heritage

The cultural heritage of Germany includes historical buildings and collections of cultural assets, but also traditions and forms of cultural expression such as performing arts, customs, rituals and festivals, traditional crafts, and knowledge and practices relating to the management of nature.

Landmarks and landscapes, but also acquired knowledge, skills, traditions, customs and even documents. They all reflect the spectrum of human creativity and experiences throughout the history of the world and humankind. Researching, analysing and preserving them, and making them available to the general public, is the key to history. This heritage connects people across borders. It is a symbol for diversity and openness, and a source of identity, dignity and peace. Ongoing engagement with human heritage paves the way to sustainability and the future.

## UNESCO AND THE GERMAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

UNESCO is the United Nations organisation for education, science, culture and communication. It is the only UN organisation with a global network of national commissions, of which there are currently 199 around the world. The German Commission for UNESCO acts as the interface between government, civil society and UNESCO, and helps to shape Germany's UNESCO membership. The principles guiding the work of UNESCO and its national commissions can be found in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through their programmes, UNESCO and the German Commission for UNESCO contribute to the achievement of the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs).

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention was adopted by the UNESCO member states in 1972 as an international instrument for the protection of outstanding natural and cultural heritage. So far, a total of 194 countries have signed up to the convention.

## THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

The World Heritage Committee (Welterbekomitee in German, Comité du patrimoine mondial in French) manages the World Heritage List. It meets once a year in different locations, during which it decides on the granting or withdrawal of World Heritage status, and on the List of World Heritage in Danger.



1



2

# Architecture

Grand ideas that are far ahead of the aesthetic language of their time become visible and tangible in the architecture and design of the various eras. They combine the practical necessities of buildings as places to live and work with innovative ideas that open up new horizons. They highlight how green spaces and close proximity to nature were identified early on as essential to making urban life worth living, and how culture can contribute to the harmony between mind and body.

1 The architectural work of Le Corbusier – an exceptional contribution to Modernism 2 The Bauhaus and its sites in Weimar, Dessau and Bernau 3 Europe’s leading spa resorts 4 Fagus Factory in Alfeld 5 Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt 6 Berlin Modernism Housing Estates



3



4



5



6

# Design

## THE ASSESSMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL TOUR OPERATORS



**GARY MURPHY**

Co-owner of AMA Waterways

### USA

At AMA Waterways many itineraries cruising German rivers feature UNESCO World Heritage throughout the country. The major highlight for our guests is sailing between Koblenz and Bingen, the Rhine Gorge. Preserving the historical aspect of the countless castles along the Rhine Gorge insures that future travelers will be able to enjoy this magnificent part of the Rhine. Equally we integrate many other UNESCO World Heritage Sites in our itineraries, like Trier, Cologne Cathedral just to name a few. The UNESCO World Heritage site designation is significant for marketing to our potential travels and complements our own sustainability efforts. All our ships cruising the Rhine earned the Green Award. We will continue integrating and highlighting UNESCO sites in our itineraries.



## Sustainable development goals (SDGs)



## UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

World Heritage sites are monuments and ensembles (World Cultural Heritage) as well as geological and physiographical objects and natural sites (Natural World Heritage) of outstanding universal value. UNESCO supports the signatories to the World Heritage Convention in their efforts to protect and conserve them. UNESCO World Heritage sites are symbols of Germany's history and culture. Every year, millions of culturally minded tourists from around the world are drawn here by more than 6,500 museums, by the highest density of theatre and opera venues in the world, and by internationally renowned events.

The countries with the most World Heritage sites

- Italy (58)
- China (56)
- Germany (51)

## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003. Germany signed up to it in 2013. In addition to confirmed expressions of intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO also maintains a list of intangible cultural heritage in urgent need of conservation (currently 59 entries). There is also a register of model projects that are exemplary in the way that they implement the goals of the convention.

Examples of intangible cultural heritage in Germany

- The cooperative principle (2016)
- Falconry (2016, with 17 other countries)
- Organ craftsmanship and music (2017)

## MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

The purpose of UNESCO's Memory of the World Register is to conserve humanity's documentary heritage and provide unrestricted access to important documents.

Examples of German entries in the Memory of the World Register

- The original manuscript of Beethoven's Symphony no. 9, d minor
- The Gutenberg Bible
- Negative of Fritz Lang's classic silent movie Metropolis



## THE ASSESSMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL TOUR OPERATORS



**HIROSHI  
SHIGA**

Operations Manager at  
JTB Germany GmbH  
(Kuoni Tumlare)

### JAPAN

UNESCO World Heritage sites often feature prominently in Japanese travel brochures, and even for ad hoc tours are considered highlights that boost the appeal of a town, city or region. Interest in sustainable travel is rising in the Japanese market too. Awareness of the SDGs is very high in Japan, and linking sustainable travel (lifestyle and society) with the SDGs would increase interest in relevant packages.

On 'staying tours', the visitors remain in one place for longer – in contrast to multi-destination tours – and discover more. Staying tours could also lead to repeat trips to Germany as visitors may feel they have missed out on a lot of what the country has to offer.

**KUONI** global destination  
management by JTB  
**TUMLARE**

# Dear reader,

A turning point. That is one of the key phrases that is currently dominating public discourse. Given the many crises that we are facing – war in Europe, climate change, inflation, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic – people are increasingly looking for stability and direction. The international travel industry can sense this too. We are taking these challenges and turning them into opportunities for inbound tourism to Germany. We will do this by combining the excellent image of our rich cultural heritage with the power of travel to unite people and the strategic task of making tourism more sustainable.



**PETRA HEDORFER**

Chief Executive Officer of the GNTB

*“They are reminders of human history, amazing natural landscapes and evidence of our country’s rich cultural traditions.”*

Thanks to their universality and historical significance, the UNESCO World Heritage sites have a relevance that reaches far beyond the crises we are currently experiencing. They are reminders of human history, amazing natural landscapes and evidence of our country’s rich cultural traditions.

With this in mind, we have developed a campaign that aims to inspire people around the world to visit Germany and see its World Heritage sites in a sustainable way.

We want to do more than merely preserve our heritage; we want to open it up for us and our international visitors. Simply inspiring. We would like to invite you – decision-makers, members and partners – to consider the following points and join us in a dialogue.

**1. Recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage site provides a boost to cultural life and therefore to Germany as a destination for cultural travel. It shapes and enhances our image.**

Germany is in an excellent position as the top cultural travel destination for Europeans, and the number two for nature-based travel. The 51 UNESCO World Heritage sites, in particular, are a huge draw for international tourists.

The high number of entries on the World Heritage List is reflected in Germany’s brand image. According to the Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index, which ranked Germany’s brand in first place for the eighth time in 2022, we score particularly highly in the international market in the categories Historic Buildings, Vibrant Cities and Contemporary Culture (ranked 7th in each), and Cultural Heritage (ranked 9th). The key attributes that respondents associate with Germany are ‘educational’, ‘fascinating’ and ‘exciting’.



The Hercules fountain is part of Augsburg's UNESCO-listed water management system

**2. A volatile environment often provides fertile ground for outstanding intellectual and cultural accomplishments. Our World Heritage sites are synonymous with new eras, radical change and new ways of thinking. These values compel us to see history as a source of inspiration.**

Many of today's UNESCO World Heritage sites were originally the result of disruptive change. The architectural masterpieces, for example, or the medieval churches and cathedrals are prime examples of this. They owe their existence to the fact that their creators wanted to push the limits of what was technically possible at the time. The Bauhaus movement was founded in the period of upheaval at the end of the First World War, reached its height during the Roaring Twenties and spread across the world after many of its luminaries had to emigrate from

Germany. Monuments such as the Zollverein mine and the Völklingen Ironworks are reminders of the dawn of the industrial age, the foundations of which were laid by the coal and steel industry. The closure of these sites and their reinvention marks the shift from an industrial to a service-oriented society. They are now landmarks and regional focal points that preserve history and act as vibrant cultural venues.

**3. UNESCO World Heritage sites are symbols of a united Europe.**

Significant universal reminders of intellectual and cultural history emerge and grow across borders. Beethoven emigrated from his home in the Rhineland to Vienna, at

the time one of Europe's cultural hotspots. Unfettered by dogma, this free spirit became a leading light in classical music, and 250 years later, Ode to Joy, the final movement in his Ninth Symphony, becomes the anthem of the European Union. UNESCO added the work's manuscript to the Memory of the World Register in 2001. The manuscript is preserved in the Beethoven Collection of the Berlin State Library – Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation; other parts are in Beethoven's House in Bonn and in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

*“The unique spirit of the World Heritage sites continues to offer inspiration for new ideas. The sites are part of our identity, after all.”*

Experiencing World Heritage brings people together and gets them talking. A growing number of UNESCO World Heritage sites are transnational, a clear sign that universal heritage is not restricted by national borders. Examples include Muskauer Park / Park Mużakowski, the Erzgebirge / Krušnohoří Mining Region, Europe's leading spa resorts, the architectural work of Le Corbusier and the various sections of the Roman Limes, the boundary of the Roman empire. Neither the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests nor the Wadden Sea belong to one country alone;

rather, they connect nations, place collective responsibility on them, and benefit from expertise on both sides of the border in how to manage and maintain these precious environments.

This is particularly true for immaterial UNESCO World Heritage that Germany shares with other countries, such as blue dyeing, falconry and timber rafting, and the cathedral workshops (Bauhütten) on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

**4. The magnetism of UNESCO World Heritage sites extends far beyond the times that they were created in. They teach each generation lessons in history from which it can learn and create its own legacy.**

Depending on your point of view, the past, present and future all meet at World Heritage sites. Events and developments from the past are transported to the present, and if we engage with them, we can gain new perspectives.

A good example is Wartburg Castle with its many historical roles: as myth-enshrouded edifice, venue for medieval singing festivals, home of Elisabeth of Thuringia and refuge for Martin Luther, who started his translation of the Bible here and sent a signal that would span borders and generations. On the 300th anniversary of the Reformation, students gathered at the first Wartburg Festival to speak out against Germany's profusion of minor

## GERMAN UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES ASSOCIATION

The German UNESCO World Heritage Sites Association was founded in Quedlinburg in 2001 by the then 24 World Heritage sites, the GNTB and many other stakeholders with the aim of stepping up tourism marketing.

The association's mission

- To raise the profile of UNESCO World Heritage sites in Germany.
- To promote low-impact and specialised tourism to World Heritage sites on a sustainable scale.
- To better coordinate heritage preservation and tourism.
- To continuously support the preservation of World Heritage sites through funds generated by tourism.
- To advise World Heritage sites in matters related to tourism marketing.

Members alongside the tourism marketing organisations include the German Commission for UNESCO, the German National Tourist Board, the German Foundation for Monument Protection and an array of sponsors.

principalities and in favour of a nation state with its own constitution.

The unique spirit of the World Heritage sites continues to offer inspiration for new ideas. After all, the sites are part of our identity. But that also places an obligation on us to take care of them.

**5. UNESCO World Heritage sites are an excellent asset when it comes to marketing Germany as a travel destination.**

UNESCO World Cultural Heritage, the natural heritage sites and intangible cultural heritage are all firmly embedded in the GNTB's global marketing. Over two decades ago, for example, we launched a marketing platform in conjunction with Germany's UNESCO World Heritage sites and the World Heritage Association. We also collaborate with the German Commission for UNESCO and integrate the UNESCO themes in all other global marketing activities.

In doing so, we are able to draw on an ever-changing and modern product portfolio. Responsible management of our World Heritage and the innovative way in which the sites present themselves ensure that travellers can expect an authentic cultural tourism experience.

Today, around 7,000 key accounts at tour operators and online travel agencies worldwide market travel to Germany as partners of the GNTB. For many of them, UNESCO World Heritage sites are an important asset when it comes to inspiring their customers to holiday in Germany and maintaining a steady flow of interest in Germany as a travel destination.

**6. #WirSindWelterbe has also reached many young people on social media.**

Social media is not a one-way street – listening is an important part of using social media professionally. It allows us to draw interesting conclusions that can be used strategically. The GNTB's social media listening activities on Twitter in 2022 revealed that around 700 authors, mainly in the UK, followed by Austria, the USA, Switzerland and France, were tweeting about UNESCO World Heritage. They generated 4,800 mentions and an estimated reach of over one million. The hashtag #WirSindWelterbe performed particularly well on Twitter and Instagram in the run-up to World Heritage Day on 5 June. The top three hashtags relating to the UNESCO theme this year, #visitgermany, #unescoworldheritage and #welterbe, were almost all regarded positively or neutrally based on what people were tweeting.

**7. The GNTB's UNESCO campaign in 2023:**

**Experience World Heritage the sustainable way**

The 2021 Destination Brand survey revealed a close link between the affinity with sustainable travel and the interest in cultural experiences. 83 per cent of the respondents interested in sustainable tourism were also keen on nature holidays, 74 per cent liked to visit castles, palaces and cathedrals, and 71 per cent said they enjoyed visiting cultural institutions and other cultural offerings.

*“For many of them, UNESCO World Heritage sites are an important asset when it comes to inspiring their customers to holiday in Germany and maintaining a steady flow of interest in Germany as a travel destination.”*

In order to target this audience specifically, we will be rolling out a campaign this year that focuses on Germany's position as a sustainable travel destination with a wealth of UNESCO World Heritage sites. Entitled '51 UNESCO World Heritage Sites – Historic.Modern.Germany', the campaign will present the many facets of our country's cultural offering, including in rural areas that can be easily reached by climate-friendly public transport.

We firmly believe that this will boost Germany's image as a country that is strong on culture, and as a sustainable, high-quality travel destination.

In this magazine, we will be joined by experts from academia and the travel industry to analyse background details, market insights and examples of best practice to provide a contemporary picture of our multifaceted World Heritage as highlights of our tourism offering. I would like to take this opportunity to thank these experts for their insightful contributions.

I trust you will find this a stimulating and engaging read.

**Yours,  
Petra Hedorfer**

# UNESCO World Heritage sites as symbols of German history and culture

Dr Peter Reuss, Head of the Permanent Delegation of Germany to UNESCO, Paris

When the founders of UNESCO signed the constitution of a multilateral organisation with responsibility for culture, education and the sciences, their aim was to secure and maintain global peace by facilitating education and the sharing of knowledge and culture. The document's first sentence declares that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

In 1972, the UNESCO General Conference adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage. World Heritage sites are either historic, artistic or architectural masterpieces, or exceptional natural landscapes of outstanding universal value to humankind. This universality is a key characteristic of World Heritage, as it implies that it belongs to all people, irrespective of where in the world it is located.



**DR PETER REUSS**

Head of the Permanent Delegation of Germany to UNESCO

Today, exactly 70 years later, there are 1,154 UNESCO World Heritage sites across 167 countries. They bring the history of humankind vividly to life. Germany is currently home to 51 World Heritage sites, both national ones – spread right across the country – and transnational ones that we share with our neighbours. That is why each and every one of us can identify with a World Heritage site in our region.

Germany's World Heritage sites are a living, tangible symbol of the country's contribution to global cultural heritage. They enable us to identify with reminders of our history and our culture, but most of all they are a gift for all people around the world.

Germany's World Heritage takes many forms, from industrial sites, quaint old quarters and romantic palaces to exceptional natural landscapes. It is this variety that sets them apart and underlines the singular nature of our history and culture. Germany's industrial history, for example, still shapes the landscape to this day. Zollverein mine in Essen was the largest and most modern colliery in the world until 1986, and reflects the economic and political changes of the time. It is a shining example that there is more to World Heritage than art and architecture.

***"Germany's World Heritage sites are a living, tangible symbol of the country's contribution to global cultural heritage."***

The ShUM sites in Speyer, Worms and Mainz are the latest additions to Germany's World Heritage list. These cities were the beating heart of medieval Jewish life in Europe, and thus comprise the oldest evidence of Jewish culture in Germany. The sites include Jewish community centres, monuments and cemeteries that show how Jewish life was and remains an important part of Germany.

Germany is also home to exceptional natural landscapes that can only be found here, such as the Upper



\*Old Town Bamberg,  
Bavaria



And that's just one  
of 51 reasons you'll want  
to stay a while longer.\*



51

UNESCO WORLD  
HERITAGE SITES

Historic.Modern.Germany.

UNESCO-listed Bamberg Old Town, key visual of the GNTB's 2023 UNESCO campaign

Middle Rhine Valley, which embodies the considerable influence the river has on the region. The Wadden Sea, shared with the Netherlands and Denmark, has been UNESCO-listed since 2009.

In addition to the Wadden Sea, Germany is also part of several other transnational entries on the list, which

*“UNESCO World Heritage sites show us who we are, where we have come from and what being human means. Our World Heritage, with its many facets, defines Germany as a cultural destination and showcases our rich cultural history and identity.”*

shows how universal and international World Heritage is. Muskauer Park, for example, is a bi-national World Heritage site with Poland. We are also home to three leading spa resorts – Bad Kissingen, Baden-Baden and Bad Ems – which bear witness to Europe's exceptional spa culture as part of an international entry alongside Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Italy and the UK.

UNESCO World Heritage sites show us who we are, where we have come from and what being human means. Our World Heritage, with its many facets, defines Germany as a cultural destination and showcases our rich cultural history and identity. Whether landmarks or landscapes, we take pride in preserving these sites for all humanity to enjoy.

# UNESCO insights into the German inbound tourism industry

International holidaymakers love to visit Germany’s UNESCO World Heritage sites, but where exactly are they from? What are the motives behind their decision to travel, and in which way are these visitors different from other inbound tourists in Germany? In addition to IPK International’s research in the source markets, further interesting insights are provided by the GNTB’s Quality Monitor survey of the German tourism industry, for which visitors answer questions during their stay in Germany. The views of the international travel trade are reflected in the GNTB Industry Expert Panel.

And that’s just one of 51 reasons you’ll want to stay a while longer.\*

 \*Prehistoric Pile Dwellings, Baden-Württemberg



UNESCO-listed Prehistoric Pile Dwellings, key visual of the GNTB’s 2023 UNESCO campaign

## INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL INDUSTRY

According to the Travel Industry Expert Panel, for which the GNTB regularly surveys more than 250 CEOs and key accounts in the international travel trade, the top decision-makers at tour operators and online travel companies value UNESCO World Heritage as a strong asset in their German portfolio. And there is a correlation between business climate, sustainable image and appreciation of cultural offerings: the business climate improved over the course of the year, while a growing number of CEOs value Germany as a sustainable destination.

## VISITOR PROFILES ARE VARIED

Of the foreign visitors to Germany who visited UNESCO World Heritage sites during their trip, 70 per cent named sightseeing as the reason for their choice of holiday destination, while 61 per cent cited townscapes and architecture. 60 per cent chose Germany for its cultural offerings.

Among the types of holidays preferred by visitors to UNESCO World Heritage sites, city breaks dominate with 61 per cent, followed by sightseeing trips with 51 per cent and cultural holidays with 46 per cent. Walking and climbing holidays (12 per cent) and nature-oriented holidays (13 per cent) were named more often than average, whereas family holidays (13 per cent), other personal travel, for example to see family and friends (7 per cent), and health & fitness holidays (11 per cent) were named less often.

In addition to visiting the World Heritage sites themselves, 91 per cent of respondents take in the sights, 61 per cent visit museums/exhibitions and 37 per cent go on guided tours.

With an average age of 40.7, international visitors to World Heritage sites in Germany are slightly younger than the average of all foreign holidaymakers in Germany (41.7 years). The age groups 20–29 and 30–39, in particular, are more strongly represented. More than half (51 per cent) have a university or college degree, whereas that figure is only 43 per cent for all foreign visitors to Germany. There are no significant differences in monthly household net income.

## HIGH LEVELS OF SATISFACTION AMONG INTERNATIONAL VISITORS TO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Scale: 1 = delighted, 6 = disappointed



Foreign holidaymakers in Germany who are visiting UNESCO World Heritage sites  
 All foreign holidaymakers in Germany

Source: Quality Monitor survey of the German tourism industry, May 2015–April 2022.

# The significance of Germany's UNESCO sites in the international context

Professor Maria Böhmer, President of the German Commission for UNESCO

## How do Germany and its 51 World Heritage sites compare in the international market?

We have a total of 51 World Heritage sites in Germany, and these 48 cultural sites and three nature sites are very varied.

The first cultural site to be added to the list was Aachen Cathedral, for example, while the Wadden Sea became the first transnational nature site. And if you consider other examples, such as the Zollverein mine in Essen as a monument to industrial culture, or the ShUM sites in Speyer, Worms and Mainz as witnesses of Jewish tradition, you can see how diverse our heritage is. Besides showing us exceptional architecture or amazing natural phenomena, the sites also remind us of our history. There are 1,154 cultural and natural heritage sites worldwide in total, spread across 167 countries. And Germany is home to more of them than most other countries. But numbers are not what is most important. These sites are universal symbols of the accomplishments of humankind, and of our planet's evolution over time. They also reflect the world's cultural and natural treasures.



**PROFESSOR MARIA BÖHMER**

President of the German Commission for UNESCO

## First and foremost, World Heritage status confers recognition and prestige. What obligations does this imply for Germany's reputation as a cultural destination?

Being named a World Heritage site means recognition, yes. Recognition that the sites are outstanding and important for all of humanity. But the title also confers responsibilities: we all have to play our part in protecting our heritage for future generations. And it is not enough to simply hand the sites over to the next generation. It is also important to raise awareness of the sites and to ensure that anyone in the world can experience them. The sites thus become places where people of different cultures can come together and engage with each other. This is how we can ensure that visitors appreciate the sites' value, move our heritage forward and keep it alive.

Further development of this heritage within the current context is hugely important. If we look at the challenges of climate change, for example, which is also a threat to World Heritage, then it becomes clear that the sites can serve as testing grounds for sustainable development, as we can see in Augsburg's water management system. They can provide practical solutions in the fight against

*“These sites are universal symbols of the accomplishments of humankind, and of our planet's evolution over time. They also reflect the world's cultural and natural treasures.”*

climate change. Some World Heritage sites, for example, already offer guided tours and workshops that focus on climate change and its impact, and highlight local solutions. The sites are also the ideal destination for sustainable tourism. Thanks to the high profile they enjoy through their UNESCO status, they are able to not only manage visitor flows but also use them to foster a shared sense of responsibility.



UNESCO-listed Wartburg Castle, key visual of the GNTB's 2023 UNESCO campaign

### Has the perception of World Heritage changed in recent years? And if so, how?

World Heritage in Germany enjoys high levels of awareness and is considered of great importance. Our understanding of World Heritage has evolved in recent years and decades, and the sites have become more diverse as a result. In the early days, it was mainly religious buildings and other large monuments that were added to the list. Since then, many cultural and natural sites have been added, such as Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt, the Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz, and the Upper Middle Rhine Valley.

The concept of World Heritage is now also more closely linked with the idea of a network. The number of transnational sites has increased, such as the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe, and the Lower Germanic Limes. The World Heritage programmes are also more closely linked to each other: the Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří Mining Region is synonymous with mining innovations, for example, but it also brings intangible cultural heritage to life during the mining parades and processions in Saxony.

And more recently, the coronavirus pandemic has changed perceptions, with Natural World Heritage sites coming into their own as places for relaxation and recreation. Digital access also received a boost, for example, in

the shape of drone flights above Aachen Cathedral and virtual tours of Bremen town hall. These can inspire tourists to visit the site, make people who are unable to travel feel integrated and motivate the younger generation to engage with heritage.

### Alongside important buildings, urban ensembles and natural landscapes, we also have a rich intangible cultural heritage. What opportunities do you think this offers Germany as a travel destination?

Intangible cultural heritage provides a tremendous boost to our shared heritage by expanding its profile. It includes traditions passed down the generations, as well as human knowledge and skills that are still in use today, such as organ craftsmanship and music, bread making, the Oberammergau Passion Play and the East Frisian tea-drinking culture.

It has the potential to make Germany even more appealing as a travel destination; and not just for international visitors but also for domestic tourists. Together with Germany's World Heritage sites, these customs and traditions show just how multifaceted our country is. At the same time, they highlight what distinguishes us from other countries, and what we share in common. In doing so, they give locals and visitors the opportunity to engage with this heritage, and to learn about and preserve traditions.

From magnificent palaces to impregnable castles, our UNESCO-listed sites are a delight for nature lovers and anyone fascinated by history. The elaborate restoration work on exteriors and interiors often goes hand in hand with the cultivation of traditional crafts. Discovery trails, themed walking trails and cycle routes lead into the surrounding countryside or to fair trade towns.

**1** Würzburg Residence Palace and Gardens, and Residenzplatz square **2** Castles of Augustusburg and Falkenlust at Brühl **3** Palaces and Parks of Potsdam and Berlin **4** Wartburg Castle



# Castles and palaces

## THE ASSESSMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL TOUR OPERATORS



**ROBERT  
ERMERS**

Adjunct directeur  
SCR Reizen

### NETHERLANDS

Thanks to its extensive cultural heritage, including many UNESCO-listed sites, Germany is a veritable treasure trove for culturally minded travellers.

If you add to that the country's numerous museums, stunning natural scenery and friendly hospitality, it is easy to see why SRC Reizen has been offering a wide-ranging programme for Germany for almost 40 years.

Our neighbour will once again feature prominently in our cultural travel offering in 2023, and we invite all interested travellers to have a look.



**M. GRÉGOIRE  
TCHÉKAN**

Responsable Édition-  
Communication  
Arts et Vie

### FRANCE

Germany's many UNESCO World Heritage sites are a real draw for French travellers. Arts et Vie has included most of these sites in its programme, most notably as part of our 'Route through Southern Germany' and 'Treasures of UNESCO' tours, as well as excursions to Rhineland-Palatinate and a themed tour of the Hanseatic cities. We'd also be happy to consider tours in Germany dedicated entirely to UNESCO.

As a company that is committed to sustainability, Arts et Vie prefers travel by rail. We have introduced a carbon levy to offset the emissions generated by our flights where it is not possible to travel by train.



# Tourism Committee of the German Bundestag

## HOW CAN UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES HELP TO BOOST INBOUND TOURISM TO GERMANY?



**JANA SCHIMKE,  
MEMBER OF THE  
GERMAN PARLIAMENT**

Chair of the Tourism Committee (CDU)

Over the centuries, our ancestors and Mother Nature have left us with a rich legacy of exceptional treasures. They are witnesses to the events of the time and give our country an identity. I am very grateful that we have this heritage, as it reminds us of who we are and where we come from. In times of ever-greater upheaval, it is important to have fixed points that we can use to find our way. Our World Heritage sites highlight this, and they are our showcase to the world. Germany was welcoming around 40 million international visitors annually before the coronavirus pandemic hit. We want to reach that figure again with the help of our tourism allies in business, culture, government and the voluntary sector. The interaction between these various actors will strengthen our World Heritage sites and provide opportunities to protect them. Our work in the Tourism Committee of the German Bundestag creates the framework to achieve this and gives the sector a voice for the benefit of our cultural and natural treasures.

UNESCO-listed Zollverein mine, key visual of the GNTB's 2023 UNESCO campaign

And that's just one  
of 51 reasons you'll want  
to stay a while longer.\*

\*Zollverein Coal Mine,  
North Rhine-Westphalia 

51

UNESCO WORLD  
HERITAGE SITES

Historic.Modern.Germany.

## HOW CAN UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES HELP TO BOOST INBOUND TOURISM TO GERMANY?



**STEFAN ZIERKE,  
MEMBER OF THE  
GERMAN PARLIAMENT**

Spokesperson on Tourism Policy for the SPD

UNESCO World Heritage sites are an important anchor point for climate change mitigation and the kind of sustainable tourism needed to strengthen the regions, especially rural areas. Brandenburg is home to three sites, of which two are in and around my constituency in Uckermark and Barnim. Grumsin beech forest, for example, covers well over a thousand square kilometres of the UNESCO-listed Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve. This is where city-dwellers and locals come to relax in peaceful natural surroundings. Younger visitors can learn about the environment here as part of holiday camps and trips for children and young people from near and far. Local businesses such as Brodowin eco-village and Grumsiner Brennerei distillery in Altkünkendorf, and nearby Lake Werbellin with its wide-ranging activities, all benefit from the many visitors who generate added value and business opportunities. At the same time, the sites highlight how important nature and the forest are for the climate and for our life in general. As multifunctional destinations, the World Heritage sites are a real plus.



**STEFAN SCHMIDT,  
MEMBER OF THE  
GERMAN PARLIAMENT**

Spokesperson on Tourism Policy for Bündnis 90/DIE GRÜNEN

UNESCO World Heritage sites act like magnets, with lots of people making plans to visit almost as soon as a site is listed. These sites are places of outstanding cultural or natural significance. The title World Heritage is a reliable seal of quality and a good reason to visit. The World Heritage sites in my constituency of Regensburg are prime examples. Until the pandemic struck, people came in record numbers to see the medieval old quarter with its Gothic cathedral and Stone Bridge. Unsurprisingly, retaining the title and using it in its marketing is hugely important to the city. Since 2021, the region even has a second World Heritage site, the Danube Limes, which provides a major boost to inbound tourism. To ensure that the sites can be enjoyed sustainably, it makes sense to incorporate attractions and activities in the surrounding regions into the site's tourism offering. This helps to lengthen the stay and make it more sustainable, while also tapping into new target groups.



**NICO TIPPELT,  
MEMBER OF THE  
GERMAN PARLIAMENT**

Representative of the FDP parliamentary group in the German Bundestag

World Heritage sites have always inspired people and attract large numbers of visitors. While some regions are generally well known, many people are unaware that Germany is home to a significant number of World Heritage sites. The 51 sites across Germany include numerous churches, castles and palaces, gardens and parks, and extensive natural heritage sites. It is precisely these places that can best illustrate our country's history, rich culture and identity. Ideal for generating interest internationally in a trip to Germany. We have two World Heritage sites here in beautiful Saxony. The first, in the Erzgebirge region with its strong Christmas traditions, is a reminder of Germany's long-standing mining history; the second, shared between Germany and Poland, is one of Europe's most stunning landscaped parks. Both sites cross national borders, making them a symbol of European partnership.

Hamburg’s historical Speicherstadt warehouses, the Wadden Sea and Cologne Cathedral are just three of the World Heritage sites that are testament to our ancestors’ exceptional building skills and innovation, and to the natural beauty of our countryside. The 51 World Heritage sites are a beacon for Germany as a tourism destination. Selfies in front of Neuschwanstein Castle, Berlin Museum Island or Goethe’s home in Weimar are making their way around the world. Advertising by smartphone, easily shared.

So taking an even more professional approach to exploiting the tourism potential of these exceptional treasures is definitely worth it. There are so many attractive destinations nearby, and tying them in with the World Heritage sites is key. From our point of view, this means better accessibility. Faster road and rail connections, and better networking on the data highway are all essential too. Specifically, the CDU/CSU is calling for the introduction of a single ‘UNESCO World Heritage ticket’ that combines the transport with the tourism. Our ancestors have shown us how sustainable and innovative we can be. They should be an example to us to be bolder.

Europeans have regarded Germany as a destination for cultural travel for a long time, and the UNESCO World Heritage sites have played no small part in this. Cologne Cathedral, Wartburg Castle, the Palaces and Parks of Potsdam, and all the other German World Heritage sites are landmarks of our country and its rich history. Even young people are keen to see these exceptional monuments, with many taking selfies in front of them so that they can post it on Instagram, say.

Each UNESCO World Heritage site has its own story, and we only need to tell it using modern media – i.e. digitally – in order to inspire the younger generation to travel to Germany. Let’s make the most of social media and virtual reality to give people around the world the opportunity to explore Speyer Cathedral or fly above the Limes. These journeys to our cultural roots will enable us to expand inbound tourism on a sustainable scale.

Our World Heritage sites are a treasure that we must look after, but one we can also use. For example, by integrating them more meaningfully into school trips and thus boosting the cultural and historical education of our children and young people. It is also important to take the lead in making our World Heritage sites barrier-free so that everyone can access and enjoy them. If it has not been done already, a first step is to ensure the sites are ‘Travel for All’ certified, and making this information available via as many channels as possible.



**ANJA KARLICZEK,  
MEMBER OF THE  
GERMAN PARLIAMENT**

Spokesperson on Tourism Policy  
for the CDU/CSU



**SEBASTIAN MÜNZENMAIER,  
MEMBER OF THE  
GERMAN PARLIAMENT**

Spokesperson on Tourism Policy for the AfD



**THOMAS LUTZE,  
MEMBER OF THE  
GERMAN PARLIAMENT**

Representative of Die Linke  
on the Tourism Committee

# Inspiring international tourists in a sustainable way

A discussion with Claudia Schwarz, Chairwoman of the German UNESCO World Heritage Sites Association, and its Managing Director, Miles Spohr.

**CLAUDIA SCHWARZ** Following the UNESCO-themed campaign in 2014, it's great news that the GNTB is running another global campaign focusing on Germany's UNESCO World Heritage sites. Back then, we had 38 World Heritage sites ...

*“... we have made sustainability and accessibility the cornerstones of our future focus.”*

Claudia Schwarz

**MILES SPOHR** ... and now we have 51! A lot has changed since then. Digitalisation, in particular, has driven us onward, and the coronavirus pandemic has played a part in this. Amazing new digital offerings have been implemented at the World Heritage sites, and an encouraging number of members took part in our first digital UNESCO World Heritage Day, for example. The huge demand for this type of initiative shows how successful virtual mar-

keting can be in times of crisis when you cannot travel to where you want. What's more, these initiatives allow us to make World Heritage accessible to an even greater number of people, in line with the principle of '(Sustainable) Travel for All'.

**CLAUDIA SCHWARZ** What has not changed is how important sustainability is to our association and its members. As you say, we have made sustainability and accessibility the cornerstones of our future focus. There is still a lot to do, both within our office and at the World Heritage sites, but there already are some good models for delivering sustainability and being more sustainable, for example, in Regensburg and Lübeck.

**MILES SPOHR** And hopefully more World Heritage sites will follow. The fact that our association now has a full-time management team is a positive step, as “promoting a form of tourism to World Heritage sites that is specialised, considerate and sustainable, and has a low impact on



**CLAUDIA SCHWARZ**  
Chairwoman of the German UNESCO World Heritage Sites Association



**MILES SPOHR**  
Managing Director of the German UNESCO World Heritage Sites Association

*“... promoting a form of tourism to World Heritage sites that is highly professional, considerate and sustainable, and has a low impact on nature and monuments ...”*

Extract from the charter of the German UNESCO World Heritage Sites Association



The German UNESCO World Heritage Sites Association was founded in Quedlinburg in 2001 on the initiative of the GNTB, the then 24 World Heritage sites, and many other actors.

nature and monuments” – as stated in our charter – is a formidable task. The GNTB is an expert partner who can support us and help us to position the World Heritage sites as sustainable cultural destinations.

**CLAUDIA SCHWARZ** Awareness of the World Heritage sites has risen. What can we do to increase the visibility of our offering even further?

**MILES SPOHR** In my mind, the secret lies in how Germany’s World Heritage is presented and experienced. As long as people in the local area and surrounding regions fill the sites with living history, culture, festivals and food and drink, their profile will continue to rise. We will be working with the GNTB to accelerate this process through joint measures.

*“The GNTB is an expert partner who can support us and help us to position the World Heritage sites as sustainable cultural destinations.”*

Miles Spohr

**CLAUDIA SCHWARZ** Absolutely. It is in times like these that tourism plays a hugely important role. It arouses curiosity, brings people of different cultures together and is synonymous with tolerance – all of which fits in with the World Heritage idea.

In short:

We are very much looking forward to the GNTB’s new campaign!

# GNTB campaign for 2023

## 51 UNESCO World Heritage sites

The market for international tourism is volatile, with uncertainty in a number of areas – after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, energy crisis, climate change, geopolitical upheaval – pushing customers to look increasingly for stability. Consequently, brands that promote meaningful cross-generational change are gaining in status. In this context, qualities such as mindfulness, respect, authenticity, peace of mind and certainty when planning and organising travel are becoming ever more important.

Germany is able to meet these customer expectations with a wide variety of sustainable offerings, its rich heritage of listed sites, its exceptional natural landscapes and its extensive public transport network. The UNESCO World Heritage sites, in particular, are synonymous with high quality standards, heritage preservation and the observance of customs and traditions.

By tapping into this heritage sustainably, interpreting it in a modern way and presenting it as one of Germany's tourism highlights, we can build a bridge from the past via the present to the future. At the same time, we can send a clear signal for international understanding.

Following the 'time travel' campaign in 2014, this will be the second time that the GNTB is using the appeal of this universal heritage to boost Germany's global standing as a destination for sustainable cultural and nature-based travel.

The campaign promises travellers memorable, authentic experiences in the city and culture segment, and shows how city breaks can be combined with excursions to the countryside.

### SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY

The global campaign for the 51 German UNESCO World Heritage sites will help the German inbound tourism industry to meet the SDGs by:

- promoting sustainable offerings in urban and rural areas;
- increasing the length of stay, and promoting sustainable transport and slow travel;
- strengthening rural areas;
- supporting local economies in urban and rural areas;
- focusing on ease of access on public transport;
- raising awareness of the need to protect and maintain the UNESCO World Heritage sites, and of the local efforts of all parties involved;
- providing information about Germany's UNESCO World Heritage sites and how they contribute to international understanding;
- and allowing small and medium-sized partners in the German tourism industry to use the large reach to promote their products.

### SDGs of relevance to the campaign



And that's just  
one of 51 reasons  
you'll want to stay  
a while longer.\*



\*Stralsund,  
Mecklenburg-West Pomerania



51

UNESCO WORLD  
HERITAGE SITES

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## TARGETING AUDIENCES

The GNTB has recently updated the Sinus meta milieu model as the basis for its campaign advertising for each source market. Accordingly, the market-specific orientation towards the relevant meta-milieus will be as follows:

- **Intellectuals:** high affinity with pleasure, sensuality, arts and culture / critical of globalisation / committed to justice and the common good / take responsibility for themselves and others / affinity with personal development and zest for life
- **Performers:** liberal thinkers, especially regarding the global economy / affinity with discerning consumption and modern design / interested in technology and anything digital / career-oriented networkers / open-minded
- **Progressive Realists:** live sustainably but do not do without / catalysts of global transformation / progressive, optimistic / take responsibility for society / party and protest, seriousness and entertainment

## DISCOVER THEMED ROUTES

As a central element of the campaign, the GNTB is developing eight themed routes that combine sustainable travel to World Heritage sites with engaging experiences and added value for visitors while inspiring longer stays.

Each route follows an overall theme and thus addresses the specific interests of travellers.

In addition to the UNESCO World Heritage sites, the routes also incorporate other thematically related points of interest along the way. This makes it possible to raise awareness of lesser-known places and regions among potential travellers, and to advertise the wide choice that Germany offers as a travel destination.

The suggestions for the seven- to ten-day trips are presented on the campaign microsite with detailed travel tips, maps and numerous links to accompanying travel experiences. They provide inspiration and act as a practical guide for travel planning.

# Aims

**Increase the length of stay**  
of foreign visitors

Promote  
**certified packages**

Promote the close  
**connection between urban and rural areas**  
through a wide range of cultural offerings

Position Germany internationally as a destination for  
**sustainable cultural travel**

**Communicate how easy it is to access**  
the routes via public transport

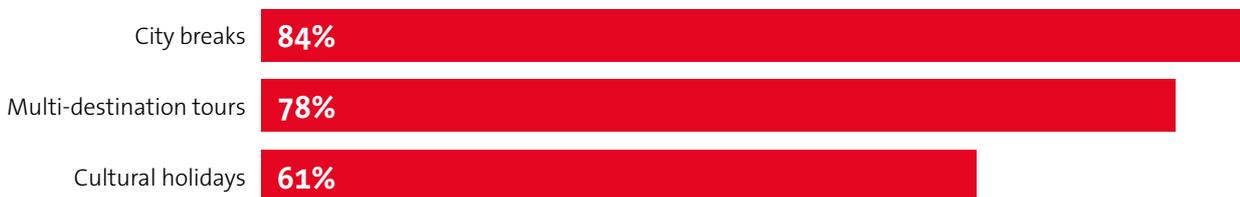
**Sustainable travel**  
with options for offsetting

## Germany's UNESCO World Heritage sites are a key marketing tool for the international travel industry

Over **78%** think UNESCO World Heritage sites are important for the marketing of German towns and cities

Over **2/3** offer trips to German UNESCO World Heritage sites

UNESCO World Heritage sites are often offered in conjunction with city breaks and sightseeing tours



Source: GNTB Industry Expert Panel, Q3 2022 survey (162–230 respondents).

# Activities

Innovative  
**video content**  
in first-person perspective

**Social media ads**

**Programmatic marketing**

**Market-specific offers for SMEs**

Content expansion by creating  
**8 UNESCO routes**

**Press conferences**

**Fact-finding tours to highlights**

**Visits to editorial offices**

**Microsite**  
as information hub

**Press work**

**Events**

# Slow tourism provides a richer experience

Professor Christian Antz, German Institute for Tourism Research, FH Westküste University of Applied Sciences in Heide

In the print issue of German rail operator Deutsche Bahn's dbmobil magazine in December 2022, a headline declared Urlaub plus Sinn (meaningful holidays) in large letters. And what better way to make a holiday meaningful than through 'slow tourism', a travel trend that takes the emphasis off speed and on to relaxation and the senses for an original and authentic travel experience. Based on the wellness trend at the end of the 20th century, topics relating to slow tourism are predicted to see further growth in the 21st century, especially among younger target groups. The more globalisation and individualisation take hold and new forms of media arise, and the bigger and more varied the climate, economic and energy crises become, the greater the desire for holidays that promise an alternative world. Faster-paced careers are already pushing generations Y and Z to seek out a better work-life balance, while leisure stress is causing people of all ages to look for places where they can truly escape the need to perform. In 2019, even before the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine, well over 80 per cent of Germans thought it important to get away from it all or recharge their batteries on holiday.



**PROFESSOR CHRISTIAN ANTZ**

German Institute for Tourism Research, FH Westküste University of Applied Sciences in Heide

*“This ‘multidimensionality’ represents the intellectual and economic added value of slow tourism. It also means that people are not put off sustainability by further regulations and requirements; instead, their needs and demands mean that they embrace it voluntarily.”*

More than 60 per cent wanted to experience moments of tranquillity and bring something back from their holiday to their everyday lives.

Back in 2009, when I conceived what is probably still the first and only professorship for slow tourism at FH Westküste University of Applied Sciences in Heide, academics and the tourism industry rolled their eyes at these exotic topics. Today, feeling that they are in good hands when they go on holiday is a must for travellers. The trend towards true leisure has already spread to many tourism segments, with the main focus being on the emotional quality of fewer, but more profound, travel experiences. The types of tourism that focus on walking, health, food and drink, water sports, culture, nature or spirituality are trends that can all be combined under the term slow tourism, both for travellers and the professionals that serve them. In 2019, 80 per cent of holidaying Germans wanted to spend time in nature, for example, 66 per cent wanted to enjoy regional food and drink, 61 per cent wanted to visit gardens, 47 per cent wanted wellness experiences and 44 per cent wanted to go walking. This ‘multidimensionality’ represents the intellectual and economic added value of slow tourism. It also means that people are not put off sustainability by further regulations and requirements. Instead, their needs and demands mean that they embrace it voluntarily.

The onus is now on providers to deliver what travellers are looking for. Germany's UNESCO World Heritage sites are particularly well placed to take the lead. Four examples spring to mind immediately. First, humanity's

And that's just one  
of 51 reasons you'll want  
to stay a while longer.\*

 \*Cologne Cathedral,  
North Rhine-Westphalia

51

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HERITAGE SITES

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UNESCO-listed Cologne Cathedral, key visual of the GNTB's 2023 UNESCO campaign

cultural heritage is better at telling stories than conveying factual knowledge; in this respect, archaeology leads the way at the Nebra Sky Disk World Heritage site. Second, better communication and networking between UNESCO sites, as is the case with Martin Luther in Wittenberg, the Bauhaus in Dessau and the Garden Kingdom in Wörlitz, can help to increase the length of stay, as can the third example, the potential tie-ins with cycle tours or kayaking on the Elbe river. Fourth, a UNESCO site such as Naumburg

*“The types of travel that come under slow tourism should not be regarded as a passing fad; these are long-term megatrends that will shape the travel industry for many years to come. Travel to Germany and its UNESCO World Heritage sites can benefit from slow tourism.”*

Cathedral can increase the appeal of the entire Saale-Unstrut region, alongside its wine, canoeing and walking. And Germany's first biosphere reserve, the Elbe River Landscape, can combine nature and culture from Havelberg to Tangermünde into a single offering that generates lasting interest under the banner 'beautiful wild world'.

The shift from an experience-driven to a more sensual society is reflected in almost all areas of life. After an age of excess, we are now moving towards an age of less. It is easy to imagine that simplicity will become tomorrow's luxury. The types of travel that come under slow tourism should not be regarded as a passing fad; these are long-term megatrends that will shape the travel industry for many years to come. Travel to Germany and its UNESCO World Heritage sites can benefit from slow tourism. On their travels, customers have so far often looked for the other in themselves. In the future, they are more likely to be looking for themselves in the other, or even themselves in themselves – the journey to the self.

Germany's UNESCO-listed old quarters bear witness to a rich cultural tradition, and what they all have in common is the modern way in which this heritage is managed. Green transport provides free or low-cost access to the towns, cities and surrounding areas, spectacular modern architecture meets historical buildings, and carefully restored houses and courtyards provide room for urban vitality and a place for visitors to relax.

**1** Town of Bamberg **2** Old town of Regensburg with Stadtamhof **3** Historic Centres of Stralsund and Wismar **4** Hanseatic city of Lübeck **5** Speicherstadt and Kontorhaus district with Chilehaus **6** Collegiate Church, Castle and Old Town of Quedlinburg



**1**



**2**



**3**



**4**

**Historic towns**



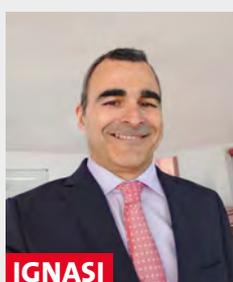
**5**

**Urban ensembles**



**6**

## THE ASSESSMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL TOUR OPERATORS



**IGNASI CANALS I BORRÀS**

CEO of Tourist Forum

### SPAIN

The topic of UNESCO World Heritage provides the ideal opportunity to showcase lesser-known places of interest. Highlights include the cathedrals in Aachen and Speyer, for example, and places such as Weimar and Wartburg Castle in Eisenach.

The fact that a trip is sustainable does not in itself influence a customer's decision to travel. I also do not believe that the customer is willing to pay more for a sustainable trip than for one that is not. That is why it is crucial that all travel is geared towards sustainability. It will no longer be possible to sell a holiday that is not sustainable, and that is a reality we have to adapt to.

**TOURIST FORUM**  
PASIÓN POR VIAJAR

# Historic cities as destinations in the context of sustainability

Professor Paul Zalewski, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt an der Oder

How important is World Heritage tourism in the context of sustainability discourse? The answer to this question is, as with all phenomena of modern popular culture, ambivalent, and contains at least two aspects. The first mainly deals with socio-economic questions and the uneven distribution of tourism flows. The second deals with the cultural impact of heritage sites. The first aspect is often viewed negatively. Traditional Mediterranean destinations for cultural travel such as Venice and Florence are prime examples of overtourism and gentrification. This happens for the sake of the economy, but it is not particularly sustainable, and always raises the question of the extent to which tourism income should be reinvested in protected resources. In the face of a growing focus on global tourism, questions are being asked about how authentic – both tangibly and intangibly – these places are. Germany's UNESCO sites are certainly far removed from the extraordinary situation in the Mediterranean.



**PROFESSOR PAUL ZALEWSKI**

European University Viadrina

*“In this context, the historic cities are more than just the bearers of our identity; they are an exemplary resource with a 500-year guarantee.”*

The second aspect is much more positive. In order to visualise the cultural significance of the built environment, we must first point out the inescapable fact that it has been shaped by human hand, as much can otherwise be ignored. Many people might avoid books and performing arts, but the built environment is always there. The culture of remembrance and identity is linked not only to eras and moments of radical change, but also to specific places. In this context, historical buildings can provide a platform for societal discourse and the transfer of knowledge across generations. World Heritage sites have an important role to play here, as they have great potential to generate interest while conveying a range of content that can be assimilated in educational processes. In addition to the many traditional ways of reading historic cities, there is now also the aspect of sustainability that these places embody. After all, our exceptional cathedrals were built in a pre-digital and pre-electric age. The choice of building materials could often be described as rational and regional, and recycling these materials was common. In this context, the historic cities are more than just the bearers of our identity; they are an exemplary resource with a 500-year guarantee, as an exhibition at the Germanic National Museum in Nuremberg once put it.

# UNESCO-listed Wadden Sea An example of balancing tourism and protection

Q&A session with Christoph Heinrich, Managing Director of World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Germany, Peter Südbeck, Director of the Lower Saxony Wadden Sea National Park, and Mario Schiefelbein, Managing Director of Tourismus-Agentur Nordsee GmbH, a newly established destination management organisation

## How important are Germany's Natural World Heritage sites in the international market?

**MARIO SCHIEFELBEIN** Being awarded World Heritage status is a major boost for any destination. The fact that other sites such as the Great Barrier Reef or Machu Picchu receive more international attention due to their spectacular appearance in no way diminishes the quality of our Natural World Heritage.

**CHRISTOPH HEINRICH** Germany's three Natural World Heritage sites, the Wadden Sea, the Ancient Beech Forests and the Messel Pit Fossil Site, fully deserve their status.

**PETER SÜDBECK** The Wadden Sea is a key player in the international network of Marine World Heritage sites. It also serves as a model of coordinated management for conservation, research and international collaboration across national borders.

## What role does UNESCO Natural World Heritage status play in tourism marketing?

**PETER SÜDBECK** Our surveys tell us that a growing number of people from around the world visit Germany because Natural World Heritage status is synonymous with exceptional, protected natural landscapes.

**CHRISTOPH HEINRICH** I agree. But we have to responsibly manage the increased appeal as a tourist destination to ensure that we do not endanger our World Heritage. We have so far been able to avoid these dangers in the Wadden Sea National Park with the help of joint initiatives such as a sustainable tourism strategy.

**MARIO SCHIEFELBEIN** Yes, used in the right way, UNESCO status can bring many benefits, as tourists equate it with a high standard of quality. At the same time, it increases the pressure to invest as the expectations regarding cleanliness and sustainability rise.



**CHRISTOPH HEINRICH**

Managing Director of World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Germany



**PETER SÜDBECK**

Director of the Lower Saxony Wadden Sea National Park



**MARIO SCHIEFELBEIN**

Managing Director of the newly established Tourismus-Agentur Nordsee GmbH

Whether parks and gardens shaped by human hand or largely unspoilt ecosystems, UNESCO-listed natural landscapes offer extensive insights into the long history of our planet and our culture. One of the best ways to explore them, and to feel the soothing power of nature at close quarters, is on foot or by bicycle.

**1** Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe **2** Bergpark Wilhelmshöhe **3** Messel Pit Fossil Site **4** Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz **5** Muskauer Park/Park Mużakowski **6** Upper Middle Rhine Valley **7** Wadden Sea



# Nature and gardens

**Environmental protection and climate action are growing in importance for international travellers. Has this already had an impact on demand and consumer behaviour?**

**CHRISTOPH HEINRICH** Yes. In our surveys, a high proportion of visitors to the North Sea coast cite protection of the local environment as being important or very important in their choice of destination, and it's been that way for a long time.

**MARIO SCHIEFELBEIN** That's right. The immense popularity of the Wadden Sea is also reflected in the number of overnight stays. There is great potential for Lower Saxony's North Sea coast when it comes to sustainability, which has come to represent a mark of quality in the minds of potential visitors. That is why the structures for sustainable travel must be further improved.

**PETER SÜDBECK** We have also seen this interest in climate action, environmental protection and nature conservation. More and more visitors want to contribute, either as a volunteer, through donations or by taking part in community action such as cleaning up beaches.

**Has the perception of World Heritage changed in recent years? And if so, how?**

**CHRISTOPH HEINRICH** Yes, at WWF we get the impression that the Wadden Sea is becoming better known as a Natural World Heritage site, and that this status contributes greatly to its protection.

**MARIO SCHIEFELBEIN** The data bears this out too. According to a trilateral visitor survey, awareness of the Wadden Sea is as high as 90 per cent. It is Germany's best-known Natural World Heritage site and among the top ten overall in the German UNESCO ranking. And people visiting the North Sea for their holidays want to find out more about it!

**PETER SÜDBECK** We conducted surveys before and after the Wadden Sea was awarded UNESCO status, and the proportion of visitors who come here because of the national park or the World Heritage status has increased by almost 50 per cent.

**Where do you see opportunities for the preservation of Natural World Heritage with regard to international visitors, and where do you see risks?**

**MARIO SCHIEFELBEIN** Greater awareness puts sites on the political radar, and goes hand in hand with financial support and higher value creation. But if the interests of nature and local people are to be protected, fully integrated destination management must also mean habitat management.

**CHRISTOPH HEINRICH** To help mitigate climate change, the Wadden Sea should be specifically promoted in markets from which visitors can realistically travel by train, for example from Switzerland or Austria.

**PETER SÜDBECK** The international dimension is very important. After all, by awarding World Heritage status, UNESCO expects that we maintain this heritage for the rest of humanity. That is why it is good that the eyes of the international community are on us, for instance when it comes to plans for future energy supply from offshore wind power, hydrogen or fossil sources under the North Sea. That is a real challenge.

**What opportunities, especially those presented by digitalisation, do you see for protecting natural landscapes?**

**PETER SÜDBECK** Digitalisation has the potential to have a big impact on how we manage visitor flows, provide information and communicate with our guests. A lot is happening in this area, and our goal is to create digital offerings along the entire service chain. Most relate to travel to and from the destination, which has the largest environmental footprint, but also take the form of practical simplifications for visitors at the destination itself.

**MARIO SCHIEFELBEIN** We have already put many digital solutions in place for Lower Saxony's North Sea coast, for example, relating to bookings and the holiday preparations at home. At the destination, information provided by an app, digital visitor flow management and gamified solutions on digital signage and smartphones have the potential to be very popular with younger visitors.

**CHRISTOPH HEINRICH** Enhanced monitoring, efficient data sharing and better information for visitors can all contribute to conservation measures. Nevertheless, for all the advantages of digitalisation, facilitating a direct and personal experience of nature is very close to our heart at WWF. We believe this is the only way that people will continue to actively support nature conservation.

## THE ASSESSMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL TOUR OPERATORS



**MARISA DE LEÓN**

Director, Mundo Amigo

### SPAIN

Germany is one of the key travel destinations we offer our customers. In addition to Germany's many cultural treasures, we focus on the musical legacy that great composers such as Bach, Mendelssohn and Brahms left behind for us. Their music and compositions form the backbone of our music and opera tours in 2023, which take in various destinations that have been declared World Heritage sites by UNESCO. Including in Hamburg, Berlin, Bavaria and Thuringia.



# Cultural history



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From early settlements in Europe more than 7,000 years ago to defensive structures from the Roman and Viking periods, and even right up to modern times, UNESCO World Heritage sites are extraordinary reminders of human ingenuity and artistic creativity. Anyone who visits the sites will take with them a heightened awareness of environmental change, of international understanding and of the power of science and technical innovation. Visitor cards provide green and affordable transport to many sites, which can also be explored up close on well-maintained cycle paths and walking trails.

**1** Archaeological Border complex of Hedeby and the Danevirke **2** Frontiers of the Roman Empire **3** Frontiers of the Roman Empire – The Danube Limes (Western Segment) **4** Frontiers of the Roman Empire – The Lower German Limes **5** Caves and Ice Age Art in the Swabian Jura **6** Classical Weimar **7** Luther Memorials in Eisleben and Wittenberg **8** Margravian Opera House Bayreuth **9** Berlin Museum Island **10** Prehistoric Pile Dwellings around the Alps **11** Town Hall and Roland on the Marketplace of Bremen **12** Roman Monuments, Cathedral of St Peter and Church of Our Lady in Trier **13** ShUM Sites of Speyer, Worms and Mainz

# Intellectual history

# Marketing the tourism appeal of World Heritage for the long term

A talk with Petra Hedorfer, Chief Executive Officer of the GNTB, and Evelina Hederer, Director of Business Development at Expedia Group Media Solutions

## How do Cultural Heritage sites influence customer demand? What changes do you see emerging?

**PETRA HEDORFER** UNESCO World Heritage sites attract large numbers of visitors. Their global profile generates attention and provides inspiration. The awarding of World Heritage status is also a mark of quality, and signals to potential visitors that they can experience something universal and unique here. Which is why the GNTB has treated the World Heritage sites as a major asset of the Destination Germany brand for many years.

There has been a change in how the sites are perceived, and therefore how in demand they are. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people's values have shifted towards greater sustainability. This overlaps with our plans to strengthen Destination Germany's profile as a quality travel destination offering many sustainable activities. We know from various studies that awareness of sustaina-

bility is directly related to affinity with culture, and so we expect that the shift to more sustainable tourism will act as a catalyst for cultural tourism. And that, of course, has a big influence on the content that we want to publish and promote on global platforms, for example.

**EVELINA HEDERER** At Expedia, we are seeing growing interest in more sensible and responsible ways of travelling, from finding and booking deals with a better sustainability profile to efforts to lessen the impact of tourism on destinations and local people. According to a survey we conducted last spring on sustainable travel, sustainable offers are an important factor in travel decisions for 90 per cent of respondents. Cultural heritage is important when it comes to sustainable tourism, and almost half of respondents stated that they would like to visit cultural sites on their next trip. This presents a huge marketing opportunity.



**PETRA HEDORFER**

Chief Executive Officer of the GNTB



**EVELINA HEDERER**

Director of Business Development at Expedia Group Media Solutions

*“(...)we can see the increasing value of measures relating to sustainability, climate action and environmental protection very specifically in the source markets for inbound tourism to Germany.”*

Petra Hedorfer



And that's just one  
of 51 reasons you'll want  
to stay a while longer.\*



\*Bauhaus sites in Dessau,  
Saxony-Anhalt



UNESCO-listed Bauhaus and its sites in Weimar, Dessau and Bernau, key visual of the GNTB's 2023 UNESCO campaign

**In what market segments and source countries are you seeing the strongest customer demand?**

**EVELINA HEDERER** Expedia's data shows that consumers remain keen to travel globally despite economic turmoil, rising fuel prices, ongoing political conflicts and natural disasters. The Asia-Pacific (APAC) region saw a 20 per cent increase in international search volumes over several weeks in the third quarter of 2022.

We have noticed that consumers are looking for sustainable options across all regions. For example, 74 per cent would choose a destination, accommodation type or mode of transport that supports local people and culture, even if it was more expensive.

**PETRA HEDORFER** We have seen a significant recovery over the course of 2022, both in people's desire to travel and in the volume of business at our partners in the international travel industry, with the recovery in the European markets and the USA much more pronounced than elsewhere. Research by the European Travel Commission conducted in October 2022 showed that Europeans' travel preference in the following six months was for city breaks and holidays focused on culture or nature.

The trend for greater sustainability is particularly visible in the international travel industry. The number of international travel agencies that consider Germany a sustainable destination has increased considerably over the last year. More than half of them are explicitly marketing Germany as a sustainable destination.

## ANALYSIS OF THE GNTB INDUSTRY EXPERT PANEL: GERMANY'S REPUTATION AS A SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL DESTINATION IS GROWING

67%



Q1 2022

73%



Q2 2022

76%



Q3 2022

80%



Q4 2022

of respondents who regard Germany  
as a sustainable travel destination

**A growing number of  
CEOs and key accounts  
regard Germany  
as a sustainable  
travel destination**

**60%** of international experts market Germany as a sustainable travel destination.

Source: GNTB Industry Expert Panel, survey Q1–Q4 2022 (203–229 respondents).

And we can see the increasing value of measures relating to sustainability, climate action and environmental protection very specifically in the source markets for inbound tourism to Germany. Indeed, an exclusive survey conducted by IPK International on behalf of the GNTB confirmed that 79 per cent of potential travellers to Germany find these criteria important. But the availability of high-quality sustainable packages has to be there. Around 40 per cent of respondents expect a broader, more affordable range of offers as well as more detailed information. That is why we are specifically supporting tourism companies that are committed to more sustainable products, for example through certification.

### **What is the situation with customer groups who are particularly interested in cultural heritage?**

**PETRA HEDORFER** There is a significant overlap between groups who want to travel sustainably and those who are interested in cultural travel. This is confirmed by the Destination Brand 21 survey, according to which target groups interested in sustainability are particularly keen to be surrounded by nature, to visit castles and churches, and to immerse themselves in culture.

**EVELINA HEDERER** Our research shows that around 70 per cent of travellers are overwhelmed by information about sustainable tourism and cultural heritage. However, they often rely on recommendations from destination

marketing organisations. In fact, travellers indicate that they rely most on the destinations for information. Half of consumers want information about sustainable travel from the destinations themselves and from local tourism organisations. This is an opportunity for tourism marketers to make it easier for travellers to understand the importance of sustainable tourism, and to use visual formats to illustrate the difference it can make.

**What kind of marketing measures can target these groups most effectively?**

**EVELINA HEDERER** The Expedia Group is committed to working with travellers, partners and other companies in the sector to make the travel industry more sustainable. We aim to achieve this by offering better information and greener travel options that enable travellers to be more sustainable, and by focusing our business activities on innovative tourism concepts. For example, we have added over 30 new Travalyst-based sustainability attributes, which will allow accommodation providers to demonstrate how they are reducing their emissions and improving the environmental footprint of their operations. Our unrivalled media solutions, along with more than 70 petabytes of first-party data, enable our partners to target customers who are interested in more meaningful experiences.

*“Half of consumers want information about sustainable travel from the destinations themselves.”*

Evelina Hederer

**PETRA HEDORFER** We have a flexible and wide-ranging array of tools at our disposal, especially in online communication. It is important to provide information that inspires potential visitors, and then helps them to plan their trip right down to the services they will access while en route. For example, we are creating a microsite in support of our UNESCO campaign in 2023. To generate traffic on this site, we will combine programmatic advertising with various social media channels, the use of which we will tailor to each theme. In addition, we will make use of influencer marketing and selected events in the market. Another firm fixture in our campaign planning is the close cooperation with the online portals, which have access to large pools of high-quality customer data and achieve a high reach through their effective sales operations.

Important here is the precise definition and targeting of the intended audience, which is why we will examine lifestyles based on Sinus milieus in all relevant source markets from now on. We will also add specific questions relating to the potential travellers’ affinity with sustainability and culture to the general Sinus milieu indicators. The findings will enable us to deliver our marketing measures more effectively, thus contributing to greater sustainability in marketing.

**Expedia signed up to the UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge in 2021. What are the objectives of this collaboration?**

**EVELINA HEDERER** The travel industry helps people to explore the world and learn about foreign cultures. It is vital that this is done in a responsible and sustainable way so that future generations also have the same opportunities. The commitments made by the organisations that have signed up to the pledge will have a positive impact on the environment and the communities in which they operate. The objective of the UNESCO Sustainable Tourism Pledge is to promote sustainable tourism, boost the local population’s ability to adapt, and support the preservation of cultural heritage around the world. By signing up to the pledge, our travel partners are publicly committing to measures that will reduce the environmental impact of their operations. This raises travellers’ awareness and helps them make more sustainable travel choices – from reducing waste to saving energy – and ultimately work towards positive change. Over 10,000 organisations have signed up so far.

**PETRA HEDORFER** I have been following the development and positioning of Expedia in the context of the green transformation with great interest. After all, we tourism professionals share a common responsibility to help preserve our planet and our cultural assets. By facing and shaping this challenge together, we can make a significant contribution to responsible tourism in the future.



Germany's many UNESCO-listed monuments and religious buildings, including architectural masterpieces from the Middle Ages to the early Romanesque, Gothic and baroque periods, are symbols of a rich religious and spiritual heritage. To this day, pilgrimage routes offer visitors a place to find inner contemplation and spirituality in harmony with nature. In the surrounding regions, people who enjoy active pursuits can walk, cycle and even canoe their way between local organic markets, fair-trade towns and areas of unspoilt nature.

- 1 Aachen Cathedral 2 St Mary's Cathedral and St Michael's Church at Hildesheim 3 Carolingian Westwork and Civitas Corvey 4 Maulbronn Monastery Complex 5 Monastic Island of Reichenau 6 Abbey and Altenmünster of Lorsch 7 Cologne Cathedral 8 Naumburg Cathedral 9 Speyer Cathedral 10 Wies Pilgrimage Church



# Churches and abbeys

## THE ASSESSMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL TOUR OPERATORS



**SANDRA RÄBER**

Managing Director  
Baumeler Reisen AG

### SWITZERLAND

Germany boasts an amazing variety of UNESCO World Heritage sites. This gives us tour operators the opportunity to organise memorable trips to Germany. Coupled with Germany's sustainability efforts, this really captures the zeitgeist and is well received by travellers.

**baumeler**

# Preserving unique heritage

Dr Steffen Skudelny, Director of the German Foundation for Monument Protection

Only the most outstanding cultural sites are awarded UNESCO World Cultural Heritage status. Germany's 48 World Cultural Heritage sites are representative of the quality, diversity and significance of all the country's monuments. These sites are invaluable stores of knowledge that convey experiences, craftsmanship and historical wisdom to us in an authentic way across the generations. Increasingly, architectural monuments also provide answers to contemporary questions of sustainability and environ-



**DR STEFFEN SKUDELNY**

Director of the German Foundation for Monument Protection

mental compatibility. They can teach us about traditional construction methods that use local materials, require little embodied energy and can be repaired.

The appreciation that each generation has for our heritage is reflected in the strong public commitment to heritage conservation, a commitment that the German Foundation for Monument Protection (DSD) channels into its work as a private foundation. The nationwide Heritage Day organised by our foundation attracts millions of visitors every year. While the owners of the buildings are rightly proud and appreciative of the heritage of which they are custodians, they are also dependent on financial support, which the DSD is able to provide thanks to its donors and sponsors. Finding new ways to showcase cultural heritage is essential to preserving it. Enthusiasm, the hard work of volunteers and good outcomes all feed into each other in a virtuous circle, and our foundation plays a big part in this. From World Heritage sites to seemingly ordinary monuments tucked away in hidden corners, we help to preserve the extraordinary.

*“Germany’s 48 World Cultural Heritage sites are representative of the quality, diversity and significance of all the country’s monuments.”*



**GERT NIEUWBOER**

Director of SNP Naturreizen

## NETHERLANDS

The three-day cycle tour to the UNESCO-listed Zollverein mine in the Ruhr region has become a firm fixture in our portfolio. Exceptional architecture and imaginative cycle paths through surprisingly verdant landscapes, all within easy reach by train. Germany is an ideal destination for sustainable, active holidays.



# Digital tools adding a new dimension to the visitor experience

Digital megatrends such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), conversational interfaces and artificial intelligence (AI) are integral elements of the GNTB's digital agenda. The UNESCO World Heritage sites are a distinctive asset of Destination Germany and provide a strong foundation for integrating new digital tools into marketing. The GNTB is offering new ways of experiencing this amazing heritage by presenting these sites in the virtual realm

## A 'WINTER WONDERLAND' AND 'SPRING AWAKENING' WITH THE GNTB'S AR APP

The integration of the 'Palaces, parks and gardens' AR app into Facebook Spark was the GNTB's first foray into inspiring potential visitors via AR and encouraging them – with a little help from the UNESCO sites' international profile – to visit Germany.

UNESCO-listed Sanssouci Palace, for example, could be experienced virtually as a 'winter wonderland' in the UK, the USA, Poland, Italy, Hong Kong/China and Scandinavia. Augustusburg Palace and the Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz/Wörlitz House could be explored under the banner 'spring awakening/summer warmth'.

Further AR filters are in development for the GNTB's UNESCO campaign in 2023.

## THE MIXED REALITY APP 'PALACES, PARKS AND GARDENS' BLENDS VIRTUAL AND REAL WORLDS

Back in 2019, the GNTB started to showcase selected palaces, parks and gardens such as Neuschwanstein Castle and the UNESCO-listed Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz in the form of interactive holograms using a Microsoft HoloLens – a unique audio-visual experience that blends virtual and real worlds.

## EXPLORING THE GROPIUS OFFICE IN VR

The campaign marking the centenary of the founding of the Bauhaus featured a faithful virtual replica of Walter Gropius' legendary office. An HTC Vive VR headset gave an authentic feel for the space, and the experience was enhanced with interactive, informative and fun elements.

## GERMAN BREAD CULTURE – INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ON AMAZON ECHO

UNESCO World Heritage content is ideal for pilot projects involving the use of conversational interfaces. For example, the GNTB developed the culinary skill 'German Brotzeit' for the Amazon Echo smart speaker. It explores Germany's obsession with bread, an exceptional tradition that the German Commission for UNESCO included in the Nationwide Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

In its latest voice skill, German Travel Secrets, the GNTB showcases twelve UNESCO World Heritage sites.

## AI-ASSISTED CHATBOT ANJA ANSWERS QUESTIONS ABOUT 15 WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Text-based conversational systems, voice assistants and AI applications are already giving potential visitors a higher quality of service at the inspiration and planning stage. With the help of AI, these applications are getting better at recognising the intentions behind customer queries and are thus able to independently improve the user experience.

The AI chatbot Anja, available at [www.germany.travel](http://www.germany.travel), currently provides information about 15 UNESCO World Heritage sites.



Schloss  
Wörlitz



Mixed reality app 'Palaces, parks and gardens'

# Technology and the world of work shape cultural values

Industrial heritage reflects the complexity of our cultural heritage in its own unique way. It covers the history of technology and how technology shaped society, features reminders of social history and encompasses the emergence of extensive managed landscapes during the industrial age.

Many of Germany's cathedrals of industry are visible from far and wide. Not least the Zollverein mine, a monumental reminder of the coal and steel industry in North Rhine-Westphalia, the Völklingen Ironworks in Saarland, and parts of the Erzgebirge Mining Region. They are symbols of pioneering achievements in industrialisation, and have shaped the development of entire regions from Germany's industrial heyday in the 19th century until well into the 20th century. The awarding of UNESCO

status changes how the sites see themselves: as protectors of a culture, providers of experiences and promisers of a new economic future, one that is also relevant to tourism. UNESCO World Heritage sites also serve as a model for other post-industrial sites, for example, the Duisburg-Nord Industrial Landscape Park and the F60 visitor mine in the Lusatian open-cast mining region.

Closely linked to industrial heritage are architectural masterpieces such as the Fagus Factory in Alfeld, which in addition to its striking exterior is famous for providing a light and welcoming working environment inside.

UNESCO World Heritage sites such as the Water Management System of Augsburg document the development of technology and its influence on the design of urban living spaces from antiquity to the present.



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## Industrial heritage

Preserved and made accessible to posterity, industrial heritage covers the innovations and driving forces behind economic development from the Middle Ages to the present day. UNESCO World Heritage sites are more than just reminders of economic eras and feats of engineering; they also exemplify the application of aesthetic principles and social responsibility. Moreover, industrial monuments often have a direct link to the cultural identity of their region.



3

1 Water Management System of Augsburg 2 Mines of Rammelsberg, Historic Town of Goslar and Upper Harz Water Management System 3 Zollverein mine in Essen 4 Erzgebirge / Krušnohoří Mining Region 5 Völklingen Ironworks



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# World Heritage and digital transformation

**HARTWIG LÜDTKE** UNESCO's World Heritage initiatives are based on the idea of a shared global responsibility for human heritage. Taking this as the starting point, it is about promoting better international understanding, and ultimately about the idea of peace. A variety of digital channels have made it possible – in some cases for the first time – for people to learn about and understand these sites, which are of course spread around the world.

Another aspect is the deliberate, targeted destruction of these very sites in the current theatres of war, the aim of which is to break down the cultural bonds of a country's or region's society. Digital technologies ensure permanent, precise documentation of the respective sites, so that in many cases at least a partial reconstruction is possible, for example, the large Buddha figures of Bamiyan in Afghanistan.

For some time, online access to documents has been a prerequisite of the nomination for, and registration on, UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. Digital access enables the broad dissemination of information and protects sensitive archival records, as originals no longer need to be transported, presented and possibly exposed to damaging light and climatic conditions.

The future will show to what extent the digital realm itself enables and stimulates its own forms and formats of artistic expression, which may ultimately become the building blocks of a digital world heritage.

**CHRISTOPH WULF** The digital transformation of society presents many people with new ways of engaging with humankind's cultural heritage. It allows them to engage with this heritage and make it part of their own imagination. This can often spark a fascination with foreign cultures. We've seen that virtual encounters with world heritage have broadened many people's horizons, quite literally incorporating the 'foreign' into their worldview.

Thanks to digital access, increasing numbers of people are able to explore the sites listed under the World Heritage Convention of 1972, the aim of which is to preserve our shared natural and cultural heritage. And that's great because it has become clear that sustainability and global citizenship are of central importance, not least since the UN adopted its Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.

UNESCO has developed a range of initiatives that reflect the importance of natural and cultural heritage to the present and the future: the World Heritage List, the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Memory of the World Register, the geoparks, which teach how landscapes are formed and how soils determine land use, and the biosphere reserves as model regions for sustainable development. The many digital ways of accessing these initiatives allows more and more people to actively engage with the shared heritage of humankind.



**PROFESSOR  
HARTWIG LÜDTKE**

Vice President of the  
German Commission for UNESCO



**PROFESSOR  
CHRISTOPH WULF**

Vice President of the  
German Commission for UNESCO

*“A variety of digital channels make it possible to learn about and understand the sites ...”*

Professor Hartwig Lüdtke

*“We've seen that virtual encounters with world heritage have broadened many people's horizons.”*

Professor Christoph Wulf

# Striving for World Heritage status

Interview with Joachim Brenncke, Chairman of Welterbe Schwerin Förderverein e.V., the organisation behind Schwerin's bid for UNESCO status

**Schwerin's castle ensemble is without equal in northern Germany's architectural landscape. Can you outline for us the key steps in the process of obtaining World Heritage status for an architectural ensemble?**

The first step in achieving World Heritage status for a historical ensemble is not about bureaucratic processes. Initially, local residents need to be aware that there is something special that could form part of the world's architectural heritage, and be committed to this cause. This commitment was first expressed in Schwerin during a high-profile event organised by Pro Schwerin on 22 November 2000. Then followed the formal process with an appropriate resolution by the municipal authority, and the subsequent involvement of the state parliament and regional government.

As a result of these activities, the specialist advisors to the conference of the ministries of culture included Schwerin on Germany's Tentative List in 2014. At the time, the application was made as 'Residence Ensemble Schwerin –

Cultural Landscape of Romantic Historicism'. The final application as 'Residence Ensemble Schwerin' was submitted to UNESCO in Paris in January 2023. We hope that UNESCO will award World Cultural Heritage status in 2024.

**You are the chairman of a society that is supporting this application. How committed do you have to be to start such an application process – which can sometimes take years to complete – and keep it going?**

It requires a great deal of passion and perseverance, as well as the conviction that the awarding of UNESCO World Heritage status is worthwhile for the community and for society in general. What is also important is the belief that the past, our World Cultural Heritage, is important to the future success of a city or region. In this case, for Schwerin, for the Mecklenburg region and for the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

*“What is also important is the belief that the past, our World Cultural Heritage, is important to the future success of a city or region.”*

**What do you consider to be the biggest hurdles in the application process?**

An application process like this presents you with all kinds of hurdles. In the first instance, it was and is about ensuring that the various stakeholders in the application process collaborate as seamlessly as possible on organisational and procedural matters. The City of Schwerin is the applicant for the residence ensemble, but since the state owns many parts of the ensemble, including the castle, the regional assembly and the Ministry of Culture have a not inconsiderable role to play.

And for us as an organisation, it is important that the local residents are not just aware of this application but are



**JOACHIM BRENNCKE**

Chairman Welterbe Schwerin Förderverein e.V.



Schwerin Castle

actively engaged in it. Such engagement cannot be taken for granted; it has to be requested and encouraged again and again. This is our organisation's raison d'être, and its long-term mission.

**The awarding of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage status also entails an obligation to maintain the site. From today's perspective, what are the biggest tasks facing the city and the state?**

In Germany, and therefore in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, legislation already exists that deals with heritage preservation. I do not think that much will, or need to, change for the city and the state. Policymakers and the municipal authority will certainly have to be more aware of the requirement to bear World Cultural Heritage in mind in every decision relating to construction and use. But this awareness does not necessarily mean that all commercial or architectural development is a no-go from the outset.

**If the residence ensemble is awarded World Heritage status, then tourism to Schwerin is likely to increase. Are there any proposals for protecting the ensemble if visitor numbers rise?**

I certainly hope that more tourists will be drawn to Schwerin and the surrounding region by the outstanding qualities of the residence ensemble – whether it is on the

UNESCO list or not. For more than 20 years, the World Cultural Heritage sites in Wismar and Stralsund have shown that while international interest has noticeably increased, the growing number of visitors has not had a negative impact on the cities. I would also point out that visitor management is part of the management plan that is submitted with the application.

**The digital transformation is a central theme for UNESCO. Are there any thoughts about the role that digital tools could play – from application process to marketing and the management of visitor flows – in how a future World Heritage site is managed?**

Society in general has become much more digital in recent years, so if we want young people to engage with World Cultural Heritage, then digital options are a must. However, these tools have to be incorporated and developed in a targeted manner. As an organisation, we are engaging in a wide range of digital activities to promote the World Heritage application, and not just through our website, [www.welterbe-schwerin.de](http://www.welterbe-schwerin.de), and social media. We are also working with the city and the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania on an overall digital strategy that includes virtual guided tours and more. An audio version, CITYTOGO, is already available for many of the ensemble's buildings.



Baden-Baden, part of UNESCO's The Great Spa Towns of Europe

## FACTS ABOUT UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE IN GERMANY

Germany ranks **3<sup>rd</sup>** among countries with the **most World Heritage sites worldwide**, behind Italy and China

**7 entries** on the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage

- The cooperative principle
- Falconry
- Organ craftsmanship and music
- Blue dyeing
- Timber rafting
- The practice of Modern Dance
- Cathedral workshops (Bauhüttenwesen)

**131 entries** on Germany's Nationwide Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage

**16 UNESCO biosphere reserves** in Germany

**24 German documents** on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register

**5 German cities** in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network

- Potsdam – UNESCO City of Film
- Heidelberg – UNESCO City of Literature
- Mannheim and Hannover – UNESCO Cities of Music
- Berlin – UNESCO City of Design

**15 UNESCO Chairs** in Germany

**51 UNESCO World Heritage sites** in Germany

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