

Nomination of
The GREAT
SPAS *of Europe*



for inclusion on the
World Heritage
List

Volume I: Criteria and Statement of
Outstanding Universal Value

Criteria under which property is nominated:

ii, iii, iv, vi

Proposed Statement of Outstanding Universal Value.

a. Brief synthesis

Water has long been a catalyst for the development of significant cultural practices that have generated both tangible and intangible cultural values. This includes the use of water in spas. Natural mineral water (thermal and cold) has universal significance, from the *thermae* of Ancient Rome to the onsen of Japan, but it is mainly in Europe that its use has been medicalised. The result is a unique urban typology, the European spa, the only example of urbanisation around a medical practice.

The Great Spas of Europe is a transnational serial property of eleven spa towns located in seven countries: *Baden bei Wien* (Austria); *Spa* (Belgium); the ‘Bohemian Spa Triangle’ of *Karlovy Vary*, *Františkovy Lázně* and *Mariánské Lázně* (Czech Republic); *Vichy* (France); *Bad Ems*, *Baden-Baden* and *Bad Kissingen* (Germany); *Montecatini Terme* (Italy); and *City of Bath* (United Kingdom).

The property provides exceptional testimony to the European spa phenomenon, a complex urban, social and cultural phenomenon that has its roots in antiquity but gained its highest expression from around 1700 to the 1930s. *The Great Spas of Europe* developed around natural water sources, which were the catalyst for an innovative model of spatial organisation dedicated to curative, therapeutic and social functions. These fashionable resorts of health, leisure and sociability originated architectural prototypes and an urban typology that has no earlier parallel. They were pioneers of nascent modern tourism, and the only European settlement type to be in cultural competition with the great metropolises.

Ensembles of spa buildings include baths, pump rooms, drinking halls, treatment facilities and colonnades designed to harness the resource and to allow its practical use for bathing and drinking. ‘Taking the cure’, externally and internally, was complemented by related visitor facilities such as assembly rooms, casinos, theatres, hotels and villas, and spa-specific support infrastructure. All are integrated into an overall urban context that includes a carefully managed recreational and therapeutic environment in a picturesque landscape.

The Great Spas of Europe mark the international developments in the traditional medical uses of springs by Enlightenment physicians across Europe, including major contributions to the evolution of diagnostic medicine. As elite places in terms of scientific, political, social and cultural achievements, it contributed to the transformation of European society through the reduction of the gap between the social elite and a growing middle class. They hosted major political events and their special creative atmosphere inspired works of high-art in music, literature and painting that are of outstanding universal significance.

Effective protection and management, together with economic and/or medical success, succeeded in controlling growth and maintaining an original purpose and enduring atmosphere. Their sustainable function as dependable curative venues for body, mind and spirit ensures their continued contribution to European culture, behaviour and customs.

b. Justification for criteria

The Great Spas of Europe is testimony to the exchange of innovative ideas that influenced the development of modern European towns from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. This exchange included pioneering urban planning and architectural prototypes, together with an intimately associated development of medicine, arts and leisure activities. The ideas influenced the popularity and development of spa towns and balneology in other parts of the world, and are characterised by an almost continuous ease of flow across geographic boundaries, even in times of conflict.

Criterion (ii)

The Great Spas of Europe became centres for experiment, contributing to the eighteenth century Enlightenment and introducing radical change to the then prevailing attitude towards science, medicine, nature and art. Developments within the nominated property influenced the early development of sea-bathing, climatic and gaming resorts throughout the world.

The Great Spas of Europe bears exceptional testimony to the conscious care for human health that developed around natural mineral springs. This tradition was born of a remarkable cultural and social phenomenon which flourished from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century; and which continues to thrive today.

Criterion (iii)

The nominated property embodies a ‘culture-creating’ tradition as places for the origination, reception and transmission of transnational trends and new values of the Enlightenment. This commanded a fresh conception of relations between European citizens, between classes, and also between men and women. At the centre of spa culture is a philosophy of diagnoses and prescription, healthy diets and physical exercise that, together with exceptional hospitality, entertainment and leisure opportunities, combined as a prototype of a nascent European tradition of mass tourism.

The Great Spas of Europe is an outstanding example of a specific settlement type, a new urban typology centred on natural mineral springs and devoted to health and leisure that flourished from around 1700 to the 1930s. This developed to include architectural prototypes that are spatially arranged according to the distribution of springs and the regime of ‘taking the cure’. Unlike any other type of settlement from the eighteenth century, these towns combine architecture, innovative town planning and landscape design into the built environment both functionally, visually and economically.

Criterion (iv)

The principal spa ensemble includes springs, pump rooms and drinking halls, bathing and treatment facilities, ‘kurhaus’, colonnades and galleries, hospitals and sanatoria, assembly rooms, casinos, theatre and concert houses, arcades of shops, hotels and villas, churches of various denominations, and support infrastructure which are set within a green environment of promenades, parks and gardens, pleasure grounds, rides and woodland walks.

The nominated property served as a model for similar spas, and spa architecture, in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

The Great Spas of Europe comprised politically neutral nodes in an international network of health and leisure. They became vectors of a transnational culture.

Criterion (vi)

Elements of the nominated property are associated with, and directly linked to, social, political and cultural ideas that helped to shape European democratic traditions and ideals. As international meeting places the spas are distinguished as regular hosts to prominent figures in the arts and humanities, and also to European rulers, politicians and diplomats, national elites and international high society. The spas reflected the climate of the Enlightenment where the former barriers between class and gender were relaxed and religious freedom and equality prevailed. As preferred resorts of composers and musicians, writers and poets, painters and sculptors, they were sources of inspiration for artistic and literary works of universal significance. Here, many original works were conceived, performed or exhibited for the first time.

c. Statement of Integrity

The eleven component parts that comprise *The Great Spas of Europe* contain, as a whole, all interrelated elements necessary to express proposed Outstanding Universal Value. The series broadly represents a group of the most exceptional examples of European spa towns that is essential for the complete contribution of the range of attributes that fully define the unique urban typology and distinctive characteristics of a “great” European spa. All component parts share a set of determining characteristics formed during the most significant “culture-creating” phase of their history and development, the heyday period from around 1700 to the 1930s, and each continues to function in the purpose for which it was originally designed.

The series illustrates the continental spread of the European spa phenomenon through time, and the entire development of its range of most significant tangible features and processes, capturing the most significant, successful and fashionable ‘hotspots’ of a living cultural tradition with long-standing and enduring origin. Each component part makes a specific and essential contribution to overall compositional integrity through variable and unique combinations of attributes. These encompass the diversity of mineral springs and their water qualities (the *raison d'être* of the spa, which maintained a profound influence on development), corresponding spatial arrangements of the spa town that functions around the spa quarter (designed to harness the resource and to allow its practical use for bathing and drinking), characteristic facilities complementary to ‘taking the cure’ and related visitor facilities (assembly rooms, casinos, theatres, hotels and villas), and spa-specific support infrastructure (from water piping systems and salts production to railways and funiculars); all integrated into an overall urban context that includes a carefully managed recreational and therapeutic environment in a picturesque landscape. The historical relationship between component parts is akin to an international network of resort towns patronised by an international clientele, often moving from one spa to another (from emperors and royalty, to composers, artists and poets), with each spa town sharing functional linkages that range from a dynamic interchange of ideas (for example architects and spa physicians moving between the most innovative and successful spas) to special rail itineraries for spa tourism.

Boundaries are determined in a strategic manner: to be of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes which convey the significance of the nominated property, whilst also recognising the strength and specific contribution that each component part makes the compositional integrity of the series as a whole. Buffer zones are drawn not only for the direct protection of the nominated property, but also for the specific protection of spring catchments and of important setting.

All component parts and their constituent elements are generally in good condition. Elements requiring conservation either have works already planned or are awaiting alternative uses, with their current state of conservation maintained. None are threatened, and all are adequately protected and managed; key considerations in the selection of component parts during comparative analyses. There have been continued additions to the historic environment in all component parts (as with any living property), particularly in one where the contemporary function (sustainable, and enduringly consistent with its origins) is subject to modern health and other requirements and expectations.

d. Statement of authenticity

The Great Spas of Europe is a group of the most exceptional examples of a unique urban typology based on natural mineral springs. Together, the eleven component parts, in seven countries, contain the full range of attributes necessary to express proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

Such attributes are manifest in a range of highly authentic elements that combine to convey clarity of meaning and understanding: mineral springs, in great diversity, that maintain their natural physical qualities including substance, location and setting; the spa historic urban landscape with its distinctive designed form and highly legible spatial layout, together with a well-maintained location and setting that combine to retain an enduring spirit and feeling; spa architecture, in pioneering form and design, original material and substance, that remains authentic even though some buildings have experienced compatible change of use; the spa therapeutic landscape that retains its form, design and function and continues to be used for the purpose for which it was designed; spa infrastructure, much of which is either original or evolved on original principles and remains in use; continuing spa function where original use and function is sustained, and the consequent evolution of form, structures and technology is evident in successive phases that continue to be complemented by new facilities that not only meet today's standards but enable a continued contribution to the tradition of spa therapy and wellness and the many specific activities relating to the spa season.

The nominated property - as a whole, and at the level of component parts and their constituent elements - meets the condition of authenticity that is necessary to qualify for inscription on the World Heritage List. The truthfulness and credible expression of attributes embodied in structures that date from around 1700 to the 1930s, the principal period of contribution to Outstanding Universal Value, is further evidenced during substantial and sustained conservation works that are informed by expansive archival collections of plans, documents, publications and photographs held at each component part.

Requirements for protection and management

Responsibility for the protection and management of each of the eleven component parts of the property rests with the national/regional government and local authorities of that State Party. Each component part is protected through the law and spatial planning regulations applicable in its State Party or individual province, as well as by a significant degree of public/charitable ownership of key buildings and landscapes. Each part has a nominated property manager or coordinator and has a local management plan in place conforming to the overall Property Management Plan and Property Action Plan. Responsibility for contact with the World Heritage Centre for each component remains with its respective State Party. An overall management system for the whole property has been established, with a Property Management Plan and Action Plan agreed by all stakeholders. The *Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC)*, made up of representatives from each participating State Party, has an executive function including the representation of the property to UNESCO and ICOMOS. It guides and advises the *Great Spas Management Board (GSMB)* on matters relating to the Property Management Plan.

The Board is made up of the Mayors of the 11 components. The Board sets and manages the budget for the overall management functions, monitors and reviews the Action Plan, approves and publishes an Annual Report, employs the Secretariat, and directs other activities for the property as a whole, such as the marketing and communications strategy, and the risk register and risk mitigation.

The *Site Managers Group* includes site managers for each component, the *Secretariat*, and any specialist advisors. The *Site Managers Group* is essentially an expert group for debate and exchanges of experience and to advise the *GSMB* on relevant management issues. The international structure is supported and serviced by a Secretariat jointly funded by all the components.

The overall management system will develop over time; locally, nationally, and internationally. An important concern will be to continue to develop cooperation and cross-working between the individual components and to ensure that the property as a whole is adequately resourced. Development pressures may be an issue since these are living cities which will need to continue to adapt and change to maintain their role as spas. Managing tourism so that it is truly sustainable may also become a challenge. The potential impact of climate change and natural disasters such as wildfires on a property with such a significant landscape aspect will also require careful management.

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FRANCE

Bad Ems

Highest monument protection authority

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GERMANY

Specialist monument protection authority

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Baden-Baden**Supreme monument protection authority**

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