



GREAT SPA TOWNS *of Europe*

Media Release

18th October 2023

The Great Spa Towns of Europe Association is in Montecatini Terme, Italy for its General Assembly

The Italian town of **Montecatini Terme** will welcome delegates from the **Great Spa Towns of Europe Association** this week, when it hosts the Association's third General Assembly of 2023. Montecatini Terme is one of the eleven towns in seven countries which make up the Great Spa Towns of Europe (GSTE), a serial transnational World Heritage site which was inscribed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO in July 2021.

Montecatini Terme's Mayor, Mr Luca Baroncini, and the Municipality of Montecatini Terme will host members of the Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) who are representatives of the seven countries of the GSTE as well as the Board of the GSTE Association (Lord Mayors and Mayors of the eleven towns that make up the World Heritage Site). The GSTE's Site Managers, who are local government technical officers responsible for delivering the 'Property Management Plan' in each of the towns locally will also attend for the General Assembly and their own meetings.

Mr Baroncini said:

"I am looking forward to welcoming my fellow Mayors and Lord Mayors to Montecatini Terme this week, and it is a great honour to be able to host representatives from the seven states and eleven towns of the Great Spa Towns of Europe. The Great Spa Towns of Europe has been an incredibly important development for our town, and I am delighted to be able to show my colleagues the improvements that have been started since their last visit, for example the initial stages of the restoration of the Chini paintings in the Town Hall in collaboration with the prestigious Florentine school for art and restoration Palazzo Spinelli. We are also very proud to be able to show off the beginning of the project "Montecatini Terme, the City of Well-Being", financed by the Italian Ministry of Tourism. The overall vision of the project, which will be at the centre of the Strategic Development Plan, will be disseminated through a review of events and/or micro events structured on well-being and on the sub-themes of women, peace, earth/water and art. The project represents an evolution for the city and an opportunity to become a contemporary wellness city while maintaining the important values of our thermal tradition".

The 30-plus delegates will take part in the General Assembly, and other meetings, from the 18th to 20th October, and will also be able to participate in study tours to find out more about the town, the local area, and how the town contributes to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Spa Towns of Europe World Heritage Site. The group will have the opportunity to find out more about several key local sites including:

- Guided tour of the Terme Tettuccio and Terme Tamerici, two of Montecatini Terme's most impressive drinking spas.
- Visit to Montecatini Alto on the 125-year-old funicular, with a guided tour of the medieval hilltop town.
- Meetings will be held in the Town Hall, famous for its Art Nouveau frescoes by Galileo Chini.

Delegates will also visit the newly-refurbished Grotta Giusti just outside Montecatini Terme itself for an informal dinner and to try out the new thermal spa facilities.

Stefan Szirucsek, the Chair of the Great Spa Towns of Europe Association and Mayor of Baden bei Wien said:

“It will be wonderful to be back in Montecatini Terme for our General Assembly and to enjoy such fantastic Italian hospitality. I am very grateful to Mayor Baroncini and the Municipality for inviting us to hold our autumn General Assembly in Montecatini Terme, and to provide us with truly spectacular surroundings for our discussions.”

Chiara Ronchini, the new Secretary General of the GSTE who grew up not far away in Bologna, but who is now based in Scotland had been in Montecatini twice recently – very memorably for a special GSTE-themed horse race at the Hippodrome. The prize for the winning “Bad Ems” horse will be presented to the Mayor of Bad Ems, Mr Oliver Krügel at the General Assembly.

The Secretary General also visited in May, when Site Managers of the GSTE met in Montecatini Terme with planning officers and conservation colleagues for an important workshop on urban planning best practice in the Great Spa Towns of Europe.

Chiara Ronchini said:

“While I obviously can't have favourites among the Great Spa Towns of Europe, Montecatini Terme, as the only Italian member does hold a special place in my heart. We have a lot of important work to get through here this week and I am looking forward to a fruitful set of meetings with my colleagues. Study tours are also a key part of the meetings for all of us, as we learn in depth about the different component parts of the Great Spa Towns of Europe by experiencing World Heritage in action first hand.”

- ENDS -

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Notes to Editors:

1. The **Great Spa Towns of Europe** is a serial transnational World Heritage Site, comprising 11 famous historic thermal spa towns and cities in seven countries. The site was inscribed on the World Heritage List at the 44th World Heritage Committee meeting in on 24th July 2021.
2. **Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)**: The Great Spa Towns of Europe “bear an exceptional testimony to the European spa phenomenon, which gained its highest expression from around 1700 to the 1930s”. The Great Spa Towns of Europe is inscribed on the World Heritage List with **Outstanding Universal Value** on the following criteria:
 - Criterion (ii) Influence on Modern European Towns.
 - Criterion (iii) Taking the Cure; human health and mineral springs.

The full statement of Outstanding Universal Value can be found here:

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1613/>

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