



GREAT SPA TOWNS *of Europe*

Media Release

29th February 2024

THE GREAT SPA TOWNS OF EUROPE ARE AT ITB BERLIN

The **Great Spa Towns of Europe (GSTE)** will be exhibiting at **ITB Berlin** between 5th and 7th March, continuing a long-standing and valuable partnership with the **European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA)** and several members of both Associations, joining EHTTA on a very exciting stand in the **Medical and Health Pavilion**.

Representatives of the Great Spa Towns of Europe are also taking part in a number of panels and discussions, and of special note is the panel on Wednesday 6th March: “**Is sustainable tourism the best kept secret of European Spa Towns**”. GSTE Secretary General, **Chiara Ronchini**, will give the keynote address, and will be joined on the panel of experts by **Klaus Lorenz**, Director of Tourism in Baden bei Wien. (15.30-17.00)

Chiara Ronchini said:

“Responsible Tourism is a subject which is particularly important to our World Heritage Site, where each of the eleven towns are important tourism destinations, and have to be managed carefully to preserve the unique character of the site, while carrying on the “continuing living tradition” of being a spa town, welcoming guests as they have done for hundreds of years. We are proud to be able to showcase many innovative projects, which help to maintain our towns as sustainable destinations, from the use of heat from thermal waters for sustainable energy, to zero carbon and eco-friendly products and policies.”

Meanwhile, on the same day, Chair of the Great Spa Towns of Europe Association, and Mayor of Baden bei Wien, **Stefan Szirucsek**, will also take to the stage in the LGBTQ+ Pavilion from 16:00 – 17:00 as part of the “Love is everywhere. LGBTQ+ Wedding on the rise” panel, showing how Baden bei Wien has become an attractive wedding destination.

The 2023 theme “Immerse yourself in the Spa Culture of Europe”, is continued this year, reflecting aspects of heritage, culture, wellness and health, which together add up to “Spa Culture”. The stand is in a great position near the Medical Stage, and has a range of eye-catching activities to draw in visitors. These include:

- A fantastic “**Spa Cinema**”, supported by the Austrian Great Spa Town of Baden bei Wien, where visitors can relax in deckchairs and transport themselves to many of our famous European spa towns through the power of film.
- “**Aquaemotion**” aqua fitness demonstrations from Montegrotto Terme.
- The chance to test **thermal mud treatments** from Montegrotto Terme.
- A **special water bar** with water provided by Font Vella, Vichy Catalan and Budapest.

Simone Zagrodnik, Executive Director of EHTTA added:

“We are thrilled that the Great Spa Towns of Europe will join us on the stand, because the stories of all of our members share the same roots. As a World Heritage Site, the Great Spa Towns of Europe are the ‘icing on the cake’, the grandest, the most representative examples of European Spa Culture. The ‘cake’ itself is made up of hundreds of smaller towns which share many of the same characteristics when it comes to architecture, heritage, facilities for spa guests, and the “bathrobe attitude” which we present as a shorthand for enjoying life in our thermal towns.”

- ENDS -

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Find out much more about the Great Spa Towns of Europe on [LinkTree](#)

Check out our new Media Kit [here](#).

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.
7. Several different types of **responsible tourism** initiatives can be found in all of the Great Spa Towns:
 - Sustainable Tourism Products
 - Eco-Friendly Transport – including new mobility concepts
 - Preventing Mass Tourism
 - Environmentally-friendly public procedures
 - Re-use of thermal waters