

World Heritage and the Erzgebirge – its unique character in detail / ID 236

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“Outstanding universal value” – what does this mean? Or, to put it another way: What makes the Erzgebirge / Krušnohoří Mining Region unique in the world?

The cross-border character and the size of this area alone, an area which nevertheless shares one common set of roots, are distinctive features of the Erzgebirge for its application for World Heritage status. The decisive factor for achieving World Heritage status, however, is what is known as the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). For the Mining Region Erzgebirge / Krušnohoří, this value is founded solely in the association of all 22 component parts. Each component contributes specific elements of the following three determining principal characteristics – yet all 22 components only represent World Heritage in conjunction with each other.

1. The technological and scientific achievements which originated in Saxon-Bohemian ore mining between the 16th and 20th centuries. These were applied in other mining areas around the world.
2. The development of a state-organised mining industry with direct influence on mine administration and mining training as well as on social aspects. This system served as a model for other European mining regions.
3. The shaping of the region into a cross-border cultural landscape characterised by mining, a process which lasted from the 12th century until into the 20th century. The different stages of its development are still visible today in the original mining landscapes, mining and smelting complexes and mining towns as well.

The exceptional abundance of raw materials in the Erzgebirge was crucial to more than 800-year development of the entire region founded in mining, and led to the formation of today's mining cultural landscape. Rich findings of silver, tin, cobalt and uranium paved the way for scientific achievements and ground-breaking innovations in mining and smelting. In their wake, training and mine administration systems became established which served as blueprints for other mining regions around the world. The shaft and surface installations, sink-holes and waste heaps which were created, as well as the mining towns

with their administrative, sacred and secular buildings, bear visible witness to this era. Mining in the Erzgebirge not only left behind a rich material legacy but also an all-encompassing intangible legacy, which is reflected in the traditions which have been kept alive right until the present day.

Background information: the World Heritage criteria – which of these are fulfilled by the Mining Region Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří?

The UNESCO guidelines set out six World Heritage criteria (i to vi). The committee refers to these when proposing a nominated site for inscription. The Mining Region Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří fulfils three of these.

Criterion (ii) Innovations and worldwide knowledge transfer

Lively international exchange and knowledge transfer are demonstrated in particular by the worldwide dissemination of Agricola's "De re metallica" (1556), by the development of a system of mining education as well as by the continuous migration of miners from the Erzgebirge to other mining regions. Outstanding technological achievements with worldwide significance were developed in the Erzgebirge, above all in the areas of water-lifting and ore processing technology. The application, further development and dissemination of this expertise and these technologies in the period from the 16th to the 20th century are unparalleled.

Criterion (iii) Mining administration and cultural traditions

The Mining Region Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří bears exceptional testimony to the far-reaching influence of mining on all those areas of society which are also expressions of the immaterial dimension: the vibrant traditions, ideas and beliefs of Erzgebirge culture. The development of state-controlled mining, which served as a model for other European mining regions, not only revolutionised administration but also led to the emergence of a culture based in mining.

Criterion (iv) Mining cultural landscape and ore mining landscapes

The Mining Region Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří is an exceptional example of a cross-border region whose economy was largely driven by mining from the 12th century through into the 20th century. The unusual abundance of ores led to a gradual transformation of the landscape into a coherent cultural landscape shaped by mining. The mining region is the result of the socio-technological history of mining, which is still visible today in the mining towns and the ore mining landscapes which surround them and which is unique in the world.

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