

European Route of Historic Thermal Towns

The European Route of Historic Thermal Towns is a move to reclaim the scenic glory of European thermal towns, which have splendid architectural, mineral and cultural heritage of pre-nineteenth century. The recreation of these European towns is spearheaded by European Route of Historic Thermal Towns Association, abbreviated as EHTTA, which was formed in December 2009, in Brussels.

The founder members were Spa (Belgium), Vichy (France), Bath (United Kingdom), Ourense (Spain), Acqui Terme (Italy), and Salsomaggiore Terme (Italy). Other important members of the EHTTA are from France – Bagnoles-de-l'Orne, Luchon, Enghien-les-Bains, Evian, Châtel-Guyon, Royat-Chamalières, La Bourboule, Cauterets, Le Mont-Dore, and Route Saint-Honoré-Les-Bains of Spa Thermal Towns; from Italy there is Montecatini Terme, Bagni-di-Lucca, Fiuggi, and Montecatini Terme; as well as Budapest spa (Hungary), Karlovy Vary spa (Czech Republic), Techirghiol spa (Romania), Daruvar spa (Croatia), Wiesbaden (Germany), and Baden (Germany).



The foundational goals of the association were to recreate real and dynamic cultural cities and spas across Europe, promote inter-city exchange of valuable experiences, make the thermal cities conscious and focused at their goals, and market these cities at various international and cultural events. However, it was the retracing of a route across European spa towns that was identified as the initial and primary task of the organization, a task which was immediately ratified by the Council of Europe.

But what is a spa town? Spa towns are all local authorities that, since their foundation, have always been recognized as falling within the range of spa towns, have always set out activities related to water cures with tangible impacts on the architectural, town development, cultural, socio-economic and tourism growth. Such towns, according to the EHTTA criteria, must have a thermal history, which includes their origin and history in hydrotherapy, have a thermal landscape and environment features, leisure and sport related facilities, easy access and developed transport infrastructure, gastronomy and a list of famous visitors.

Thermal towns must also have operational facilities that rely on thermal waters from visitor management, cultural activities, corporate identity, logos, partnerships and trademarks; educational courses, professional career programs and commercial products linked to thermal activity and resources; and existence of partners or corporate sponsorship targeted at municipal authorities. Thirdly, spa towns must be having protected architectural and cultural heritage existing by or before the 19th century, a method

of protection of the heritage, parks, landscape and gardens; documented synopsis of the town's architectural and structural heritage; and a clear framework for managing structures and resources.

Spa towns are also selected on the basis of existence of cultural and entertainment structures such as organizations in charge of cultural events, existing cultural facilities, number and nature of annual cultural events, existence of thematic festivals and the status of the facilities, whether contemporary or old and restored.

The cities should also be hosting thematic festivals and cultural facilities museums, conference centers, galleries and concert halls, and having a clear framework on the integration of young people into cultural activities. The last criterion for defining thermal towns is quality accommodation consisting of numerous guest houses, self-catering services and comfortable hotel rooms that range from 3-star onwards. Proper inspection of the accommodation system including controls, logos, identification and symbols must also be in place.



The EHTTA promotes these spa towns most vividly through networking, exhibitions and shows, such as the Crossroads of Europe exhibition in Pavia and the International Heritage Show in Paris. Brochures explaining the features and attractions of every thermal town are also disseminated. While the association seeks funds for new ideas, it exploits social media networking, primarily Facebook, and Smartphone apps to ensure stronger international presence of the spa towns. Funding is sought through the European resource center, the interactive novel, the Les Grandes Eaux, and Café events.

Founder Members of EHTTA

1. Ourense, Spain

Ourense was established by the Romans and boasts of a name “spariensis” meaning the “golden waters.” The city is known to be standing over an ocean of thermal springs. The oldest testimony of Ourense's thermal patrimony is attested by a record of Calpurnia Abana offering a ring to the nymphs inhabiting the hot springs that was found on an altar by the fountain of Burgas. Presently, Ourense boasts of over 5 million liters of water daily that runs from numerous hot Chavasqueira thermal water springs. Beauty treatments under the comfy and exclusive Burgas spring atmosphere and well-open swimming pool at the Mino riverbanks keep the huge trails of local and foreign tourists in the spa.

2. Bath, UK

Bath city bears the marks of both Georgian and Roman heritage, made prominent through the stunning

architectural, healing and spiritual centers of the thermal mineral waters that have existed for more than 2000 years. Bath is a critical destination for spa tourism owing to the Thermae Bath spa rooftop pool, new spa facilities, hot mineral and healing water at about 45°C, complex Roman Baths where goddess Sulis Minerva was being worshipped and the Pump Room. Bath blends modern English architectural designs with ancient structures to put tourists and locals at the center of a blissful spa experience.



3. Vichy, France

Vichy has five noteworthy springs: Chomel, Hôpital, Lucas, Grande Grille and Célestins that have served to lend the city almost a miraculous reputation by attracting celebrities such as Louis XV's daughters Adelaide and Victoire, Madame de Sévigné, and Duchesse d'An-goulême. The city is idolized in the Grand casino that was built in the 2nd Vichy Empire and the Great Opera House. Tourists to Vichy discover superb eclectic architecture and the harmonious lovely thermal dome of Les Dômes.

4. Spa, Belgium

The city of Spa is one of the most popular thermal resorts in Belgium. It has fresh and pleasant relaxation baths and a blend of visions and projects, including gaming rooms, the Casino, concert halls and a number of theaters. It has always attracted huge investments in hotels. With unique gaming centers, green and neatly preserved environment, amazing wellness and hydrotherapy programs, the resort is an all-rounded full-potential thermal town.

5. Salsomaggiore-Terme, Italy

Salsomaggiore-Terme means saline water, a memorable reference to the thermal water that is the primary source of the town's livelihood. Before the Roman times, the town was home to a tribe called Galli Celelati, people who depended on the mineral water for livelihood. The town bears characteristic art-nouveau style, maximized in Terme Berzieri. On its architectural front stands thermal palace that was designed by Ugo Giusti in 1923 and decorated into vivid splendor by Galileo Chini.

6. Acqui Terme, Italy

The fortified town of Acqui Terme became a significant spa town thanks to its exceptional waters and strategic position on the Aemilia Scauria Road. At the beginning of the 20th century thermalism was vastly popular and the waters of Acqui Terme rich in sulphur, bromine and iodine were renowned all around Europe. The town is also rich in roman ruins and archaeological sites and thus offers widespread

options for spa goers and tourists.

Date: 2013-08-26

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-the-route-of-historic-thermal-towns-in-europe-article2179>