

TOP 5 LESS KNOWN OPEN-AIR MUSEUMS IN EUROPE



The second wave of the coronavirus has forced the closure or opening at a minimum capacity of museums and art galleries all around the world. Luckily, there is an alternative to enjoy art with little risk, while also taking the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors. Various sculpture parks are displayed in cities around the world where works of all sizes can be seen as though they were part of the autumn landscape. Tourism Review presents five of less known yet very interesting open-air museums that are safe to explore even in the time of restrictions.

Bomarzo Sculpture Park (Italy)

This is the oldest of all the sculpture parks. Created in the 16th century, this Renaissance garden is located in Bomarzo, a town 90 kilometers from Rome, north of the Lazio region. The Sacro Bosco ("Sacred Grove") is also called Park of the Monsters, and once you notice the dark mouth of Orcus, one of the gods of the underworld, you'll understand its name.

Designed by architect Pirro Ligorio, this sculpture park has mermaids, mythological beasts, nymphs, dragons and giant fruits, many of them sculptured in the Mannerist style. In the last five centuries, the vegetation tried to overtake the works of art, giving the entire park a decayed and somewhat disturbing air. In addition, Ligorio was in charge of following the orders of his sponsor, Prince Pier Francesco Orsini, so he filled the park with inscriptions, riddles and symbols. The 36 statues are spread across a wooded and humid path of enigmatic beauty, with sites as strange as The Leaning House that fools the senses.

Schlossgut Schwante Park (Berlin/Germany)

25 kilometers from the German capital, collectors and entrepreneurs Loretta Würtenberg and Daniel Tümpel bought a baroque castle with a 10-hectare park, and turned it into the Schlossgut Schwante Sculpture Park - now a fascinating open-air museum.

25 large works of contemporary art are displayed in the park, but they are not easy to find. About four or five are on plain view, but the rest have been integrated into the landscape, and searching for them combines a passion for art with the physical exercise of a healthy life. The glowing neon letters read "Everything is going to be alright", created by British artist Martin Creed; then there's the Carsten Nicolai-designed meditation space reminiscent of a Cambodian temple; the white neon hoops hanging from a tree by Björn Dahlem; and the twisted stairs designed by Monika Sosnowka, among other creations.

In addition to the open-air exhibition, the Schlossgut Schwante boasts a heavy-packed agenda with yoga and meditation days, art workshops, film screenings, concerts, and dance and photography events.

Ekebergparken (Oslo/Norway)

On top of the hills nearing Oslo and its fjord is the Ekebergparken Sculpture Park, opened in 2013 thanks to art collector Christian Ringnes. Among the pines, beech and other conifers are 42 works by Louise Bourgeois, James Turrell, Auguste Rodin, Marina Abramovic, Damien Hirst and Aristides Maillol, among others; as well as Spanish artists such as Salvador Dalí (with his Venus de Milo with Drawers, 1964), and Jaume Plensa (with the head of Chloe).

In addition, every Sunday you can visit the Skyspace exhibition by artist James Turrell, in which colors, perception and light take the stage. While you may need to climb some trails that are steadily uphill to be able to see the works of art, the effort pays off once you gaze down upon the views of Oslo at the foot of the hill.

Maeght Foundation (France)

In the 1960s, Aimé Maeght and his wife Marguerite created a foundation to house their fascinating collection of 20th-century art, located a few kilometers from the Côte d'Azur, in the village of Saint Paul de Vence. In addition to the paintings, prints and ceramics, the uneven-surface park features large-format works by Alberto Giacometti, Alexander Calder and George Braque (author of a beautiful drawing inside the park's pool); in addition to a labyrinth designed by Joan Miró (a close friend of the Maeght couple), where in addition to Miró's sculptures, one can find ceramics by Josep Llorens Artigas.

Chillida-Leku Museum (Hernani/Spain)

Hernani, in the province of Gipuzkoa, is home of an open-air museum that collects the legacy of one of the most important Spanish sculptors of the 20th century: Eduardo Chillida. This museum has 40 sculptures of abstract aesthetics scattered throughout an 11-hectare country house.

It also showcases more than a hundred small and medium-sized works created with materials such as alabaster, granite, iron, plaster and paper.

In the garden, among the beech, oak and magnolia trees, visitors are allowed to touch the sculptures in order to feel the different textures, and some can even be experienced from within since they have spaces inside that can be passed through. In the country house of Zabalaga, under carefully restored old stone walls, one may find more works by this artist who knew how to bring harmony to the hard forms of steel and granite.

Date: 2020-12-14

Article link:

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