

## 25 years UNESCO World Heritage: The historical city center of Salzburg

***In 1997, UNESCO officially recognized the Salzburg historical district as a World Heritage Site: The decision to grant this award was based on the uniqueness of the Old City and architecture shaped by the prince archbishops of former days, as it was on Salzburg's importance as a musical metropolis and the birthplace of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.***

As a member of UNESCO's World Heritage List, the historical district enjoys special protections. For guests this means being able to discover a Salzburg that, though it has adapted well to more modern times, has lost none of those characteristics which make it so memorably distinctive.

Downtown Salzburg is a unique example of a city which once served as the **seat of ecclesiastical power** in the heart of Europe. The surrounding nature, which shapes much of the city's appearance, the historical unity of a vibrant merchant town of the Middle Ages and former residence of prince archbishops, along with the high number of impressive sacred and secular buildings representing various architectural periods and centuries, all contribute to Salzburg's iconic ensemble. The cultural heritage of Salzburg is the result of a thriving exchange between northern and southern Europe, spurred especially by the Italian architects and artists who were invited to Salzburg. Aside from its architectural beauty, Salzburg's significance as a **musical and cultural metropolis** was also a decisive factor for UNESCO. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and the musical tradition which he inspired, as well as theatre director and producer Max Reinhardt, who founded the world-famous Salzburg Festival, are the two most brilliant leading lights in that regard.

### **Experience Salzburg, the World Cultural Heritage**

A number of urban planning innovations in recent years have upgraded the Old Town. In Getreidegasse, for example, the asphalt was removed and the "artery of Salzburg's Old Town" and replaced with granite paving. Access to the shops is now barrier-free. The pedestrian zone in the area of the lower Linzergasse was made particularly child-friendly: fountains, water features and water games make for a Mediterranean ambience give the district a new look. To mark the anniversary year 2017, the historic Dwarf Garden in the Mirabell Gardens was restored to its original state. The baroque stone statues made of Untersberg marble, which are up to 325 years old, have a chequered history.

### **Criteria for Salzburg's Acceptance**

The award given the Salzburg historical district was based on three of a total of ten UNESCO criteria: The role of the prince archbishops met the requirements under (ii) set forth by UNESCO, the architecture of the Old City and the authentic, uniquely preserved monuments met (iv), while the significance of music and Mozart fulfilled the criteria under (vi).

The Salzburg historical district was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in December 1996, with ratification occurring in 1997. The core zone comprises a total of 236 hectares

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and around 1,000 objects: the “Buffer Zone” (467 ha) is essentially a protective belt, intended to ensure lines of sight, fields of view and overall visibility, as well as permit only those construction projects which are in absolute keeping with the character of the core zone.

### **Advance urban policy**

The foundation for preservation of the city’s cultural and architectonic heritage, and thus for the World Heritage title itself, is provided by a number of statutes and declarations: The **Old-City Preservation Act** of 1967 divides the Salzburg historical district into two protected zones (Zone I corresponds to the Old City, Zone II comprises the areas with buildings dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> cent.). The goal of the law is to preserve and maintain the city’s unique architectural artistry. The Old-City Preservation Act was actually the first of its kind in all of Austria. Yet another factor in the preservation of Salzburg’s overall historical appearance has been the so-called **Grassland Declaration** of 1985, which protects, for example, the banks of the River Salzach, as well as tree-lined avenues and bodies of water as valuable green spaces.

### **World Heritage and UNESCO**

The fundamental idea behind the World Heritage program is to present selected locations against the backdrop of the history of mankind, and to give those locations special protection. Because all World Heritage monuments possess extraordinary universal value, the honor of receiving the award itself also comes with serious obligations. Sites must be preserved for future generations through measures supported by the nation as a whole along with appropriate management strategies. Austria is proudly represented with twelve World Heritage Sites.

### **The UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Since September 2016, the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage is one attraction richer thanks to Salzburg. The Salzburg Marionette Theatre was deemed an example of cultural heritage particularly worthy of preservation, due to its “highly developed form of puppet and marionette theatre”. “The Salzburg Marionette Theatre has been dedicated to this art form since 1913. Aside from performance skills, it also requires passing on the craftsmanship required to carve, paint, costume and move the puppets”, explains UNESCO in its justification. The Salzburg Marionette Theatre is the only one of its kind worldwide that is dedicated to the performance of opera.

In Austria, 133 traditions are featured on this list, including 28 in Salzburg province alone. These include the Salzburg-wide tradition of firing off celebratory salutes on important dates (*Festschützenwesen*) and the song “Silent Night, Holy Night”.

#### **Further Information:**

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