

## **The UNESCO World Cultural Heritage – Potsdam's Obligation**

The surface formations around Potsdam were created around 15,000 years ago during the Ice Age. The extensive river landscape of the Havel with its tributaries resembles a lake district and is located in a diverse topographical relief with variations in altitude of up to 80 metres. The Havel, one of Germany's slowest-moving rivers, surrounds Potsdam and a number of neighbouring land tracts in the west, the south and additionally in the east with Germany's largest fluvial lakes. This gives the impression that Potsdam lies on an "island" which is further separated from the neighbouring towns by swampland, a lake and a canal in the north.

The first documentation of the fortified settlement of "Potztupimi" dates back to the year 993. However, Potsdam first became important in the 17th century when Prince Frederick William (the Great Prince Elector) began consolidating his property in Potsdam from 1657, as the basis for building a second royal seat alongside the traditional court in Berlin. In the course of the creation of the absolutist state, the Great Prince Elector took his cue from the French, and especially the Dutch models of administrative organisation and economic improvement. The development of a royal seat fit for the times was an inevitable part of this. The city of Berlin did not provide sufficient scope for this new desire for prestige. Potsdam's advantages were based on its remarkably fine location. There were wide-branching, usable waterways, and the sovereign had access to rich hunting-grounds here. It was the governor of Kleve, Johann Moritz von Nassau-Siegen, a friend and ally of the Great Prince Elector, who gave him the keynote idea in a letter in 1664: "The whole island must become a paradise [...]". He meant the "island" of Potsdam. Succeeding rulers developed this idea into a creative programme, in different degrees and with different intentions right up to the 20th century. Gardens, parks, landscaped forests and shorelines, several palace complexes and separate buildings accentuated the numerous morphological advantages of the Potsdam area and made them stand out in the traditional cultural landscape. Right up to present day, the main buildings and/or lookout points in the area were linked by avenues and reciprocally interacting views extending several kilometres in some places. The deliberately composed series of vistas forms a large, accessible "landscape painting". A total work of art was created by the unity of systematic urban development and architectural, artistic and gardening creations in a synthesis with the surrounding contoured landscape of the 17th to 20th century. The scope of this "Potsdam cultural landscape" was basically identical to the "embellishment plan" drawn up by Peter Joseph Lenné in 1833. The World Heritage Site is embedded in this defined spatial unit and largely covers its most valuable core area.

The "Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" of 16.11.1972 (UNESCO Convention) came into effect in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) on 23.11.1976. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) only became a member of the World Heritage Convention at the end of 1988. In 1989 the GDR applied for the palaces and gardens of Potsdam to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In 1990 the FRG proposed the part of the Havel area containing the palace and garden complex in Klein-Glienicke with Peacock Island for inclusion. On January 1st, 1991, only two months after the reunification of Germany on 3.10.1990, the palace and gardens of Potsdam, along with the Berlin sites, were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The statement by ICOMOS (1990) included the following passage: "From 1945 to 1990, a border arbitrarily divided a landscape of unique historical and artistic homogeneity that had been assembled over several generations by sovereigns and princes of the Prussian royal family, architects and landscape designers on both sides of the River Havel and Glienicke Lake." Now what had always belonged together could be reunited. The "Palaces and Gardens of Potsdam and Berlin" were added under the number 532 c (cultural property) on the World Heritage List. On 14.12.1992 Sacrow Palace and Park was added to the monument. The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (February 1995), first

formulated in 1977 and continually updated, gave the criteria for inclusion in the World Heritage List. World Heritage Site No. 532 c was inscribed according to section 24a of the Operational Guidelines on the basis of criteria 1, 2, and 4 for cultural properties. ICOMOS support for the inclusion of this monument included the following explanatory statement from 1990:

#### CRITERION 1

*[... the property nominated should represent a masterpiece of human creative genius]:*

"In their entirety, the palaces and parks of Potsdam are an outstanding artistic creation [...] In the same place, masterpieces of architecture and landscape design follow on from one another, from Knobelsdorff to Schinkel, from Eyserbeck to Lenné. They represent mutually contradictory styles generally regarded as incapable of reconciliation, but this in no way disturbs the harmony of a progressively perceived overall composition."

#### CRITERION 2

*[... the property should exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture, monumental arts or city-planning and landscape design]:*

"Potsdam-Sanssouci ... incorporates a large number of influences from Italy, England, Flanders, Paris and Dresden. The palace and park are a synthesis of artistic styles ... , but in turn they wick were also models wick had a significant effect on the development of the monumental arts and the design of open spaces [...]"

#### CRITERION 4

*[the property should be an outstanding example of a type of building or an architectural ensemble or landscape which illustrates a significant stage in human history]:*

"Like Versailles, Potsdam-Sanssouci offers from a European perspective an outstanding example of architectural creation and landscape architecture against the intellectual background of the monarchical idea of the state."

Article 4 of the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage stipulates that each state party to the Convention should be responsible for the conservation of the World Heritage Sites on its own territory. In the Federal Republic of Germany, under the law of municipal self-administration, this responsibility is held by the municipalities where the World Heritage Site is situated. The responsibility for this particular site is held by the Stiftung Preussische Schlösser und Gä rten Berlin-Brandenburg (Foundation for Prussian Palaces and Gardens, Berlin-Brandenburg), the City of Potsdam and the Federal State of Berlin.

The legal basis for the protection of the World Heritage Site in the State of Brandenburg is the 1991 Act for the Protection of Historic Monuments of the State of Brandenburg. § 34 of this law stipulates that the monuments placed under protection in communist times should maintain this status. This means that Sanssouci Palace and Gardens an the New Garden, along with Babelsberg Park, have effectively been under protection since 1977. Sacrow Park was inscribed on the monuments list of the City of Potsdam in 1995. In other words, almost all the sections of the World Heritage Site included in the UNESCO list already have sufficient legal protection as monuments. The Statute on the Operative Area of the Monument being drawn up since the 1.11.1996 as additional protection for the UNESCO site creates "buffer zones" in the sense of the Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites, Nos. 8.1. 3.1. and 8. 2.4. This new Statute thus offers even more extensive protection for the World Heritage Site.

In addition, the extension of the World Heritage Site Potsdam was proposed by UNESCO'S World Heritage Committee at its session in Mexico in December 1996.

The numerous public discussions concerning threats to the World Heritage site as well as its extension, held from 1993 to 1996, eventually resulted in a proposal for the enlargement of the World Heritage site 'Palaces and Gardens of Potsdam and Berlin. The specific parts of the proposal are as follows:

“ This proposal concerns the extension of the World Heritage site to include buildings, parks and landscaped open spaces which are spatially and historically linked with the “Palaces and Gardens of Potsdam and Berlin”. These adjoin the Sanssouci Park, the New Garden, the Babelsberg Park and the Sacrow Park and together they form a spatially linked group.

With regard to their condition and the existing urban development plans the extensions are differentiated as follows:

core areas of the palaces and gardens  
core areas of the surrounding open landscape  
urban areas intended to be developed

The following areas adjoin Sanssouci Park:

Lindenallee

- 1.a Lindenallee to the west of New Palace
- 1.b Landscape adjoining to both sides of Lindenallee
- 1.c area at the eastern end of Lindenallee, currently used by Potsdam University

Former Gardeners' Training School

- 2.a buildings and gardens of the Gardeners' Training School
- 2.c Kaiserbahnhof, Wildpark station and its surroundings

3. Lindstedt

- 3.a Lindstedt Palace and Park
- 3.c open landscape around the Lindstedt Park

4. Bornstedt

- 4.a Bornstedt village, church, cemetery and landscape to the north of Sanssouci Park
- 4.c Northern part of Eichenallee between Bornstedt and Katharinenholz

5. Seekoppel

- 5.a open space between Bornstedter See and Ruinenberg

6. Voltaireweg

- 6.a road and its lining green line between Sanssouci Park and New Garden

7. Avenue to Park Sanssouci

- 7.c Entrance area of Park Sanssouci

The following areas are grouped around New Garden:

8. Alexandrovka

- 8.a The Russian colony of Alexandrovka and the Kapellenberg
- 8.c The land linking the colony of Alexandrovka and the Kapellenberg

9. The Pfingstberg

9.a The Belvedere at the top of the Pfingstberg, the Pomonatempel, the country houses and villas of the members of the court/royal household, the Villa Henkel as well as the parks and their landscaped surrounding, the so-called "Mirbach Grove" forming the connection between the Pfingstberg and the New Garden

10. Between Pfingstberg and New Garden

10.a The area landscaped by Lenne between the New Garden and the Pfingstberg (the so-called 'Mirbach Grove')

10.c The area north of 'Mirbach Grove' up to the shore of Jungfernsee and the area south to 'Mirbach Grove' up to the Grosse Weinmeisterstrasse and the Kleine Weinmeisterstrasse

11. The southern shore of Jungfernsee

11.a The garden of the former Villa Jacobs and the shore zones up to the dairy farm of the New Garden

12. Koenigswald

12.b Forested areas bordering both sides of the Palace and Park Sacrow, opposite the shores of Glienicke, Nikolskoe and Pfaueninsel which belong to Berlin and already form a part of the World Heritage Site

The following areas are grouped around the Park Babelsberg:

13. The area in front of the Babelsberg Park

13b The landscape of the former Nuthe meadow at Babelsberg Park

13c The remainder of this landscape

14. The area at the Babelsberg observatory

14a The area at the observatory, formerly belonging to the Babelsberg Park, which has been given back to the foundation

With the addition of these extension areas the World Heritage Site will be completed forming the core of the cultural landscape of Potsdam.

Justification for the enlargement of the World Heritage Site:

During the 19th century the baroque royal residence Potsdam with its royal palaces and gardens was systematically formed and extended by the Prussian kings to create an exceptional cultural landscape. This creation was based on the 'embellishment plan' drawn up by Peter Joseph Lenné for Potsdam island situated in the middle of the Havel river landscape. Areas of created landscape using the unique topography, united the town and adjoining royal palaces to form an exceptional composition. The areas designated for the extension of the World Heritage Site contain central elements of this development of a cultural landscape and comprise several separate outstanding creations of architecture and landscape design. Despite the urban development of the 20th century this landscape still exists and can still be seen.

From the European perspective the Potsdam cultural landscape is a unique example for the creation of a landscape against the intellectual background of the monarchical idea of state. Until now the World Heritage site has met the criteria I, II, III and IV for the inclusion of cultural properties in the World Heritage List. With the nominated extensions the site, in addition, now meets the criteria of being of outstanding universal value for a cultural landscape as set out in paragraph 39.I. of the Operational Guidelines (February 1996). At its session in Marrakesh in December 1999 the World Heritage Committee decided to include the nominated extensions for the Palaces and Parks of Potsdam and Berlin in the World Heritage List. As a result all parts of the World Heritage Site are now spatially linked with each other.

