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== *green pearls® - unique places* ==

12. March 2024

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES – THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND SUITABLE VACATION DESTINATIONS



Machu Picchu © Hanna Bossmann / Green Pearls®

UNESCO World Heritage Sites are not just silent relics of the past, but tangible chronicles of past cultures, artistic masterpieces and unique natural landscapes. In other words, places so beautiful and special that they should be preserved as a heritage for future generations. Sustainability in action. In order to ensure that this remains the case, we have taken it upon ourselves to explain the UNESCO concept to you and provide some tips and natural travel advice along the way 😊

WHAT ARE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES?

UNESCO, or the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is a sub-organization of the United Nations (UN) and, since 1978, has maintained a list of World Heritage Sites of special universal value to humanity as a whole, to be preserved for and by humanity. This includes tangible heritage such as natural landscapes, works of art and monuments, as well as intangible heritage such as crafts and customs. Over 1154 cultural and natural heritage sites from 167 countries are currently listed, and new sites are being added all the time. But some are disappearing as well...

HOW TO GET CERTIFIED AS A WORLD HERITAGE SITE?

To be included, a site must meet certain [criteria](https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/). (For example, it must be a “masterpiece of human creativity,” a “natural phenomenon of superlatives,” or an area “of outstanding natural beauty and aesthetic significance”.

Once a site has been designated as a World Heritage Site, UNESCO promotes protection measures (although the responsibility lies within the state) and monitors the condition of the World Heritage Sites.

LOSS OF WORLD HERITAGE STATUS

Some World Heritage Sites also lose their status. This happened in Oman in 2007 when the Arabian Oryx Wildlife Sanctuary was reduced in size.

EXPERIENCE A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE UP CLOSE – OUR TIPS FOR YOU

Of the more than 1000 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, here are 10 that are definitely worth a visit. And we wouldn't be us if we hadn't deliberately chosen the sites with sustainable Green Pearls® accommodations nearby. After all, UNESCO is all about preservation for future generations – and we, and probably you too, don't want to undermine that by traveling in a way that's harmful to the environment.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN YOU ARE VISITING A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE?

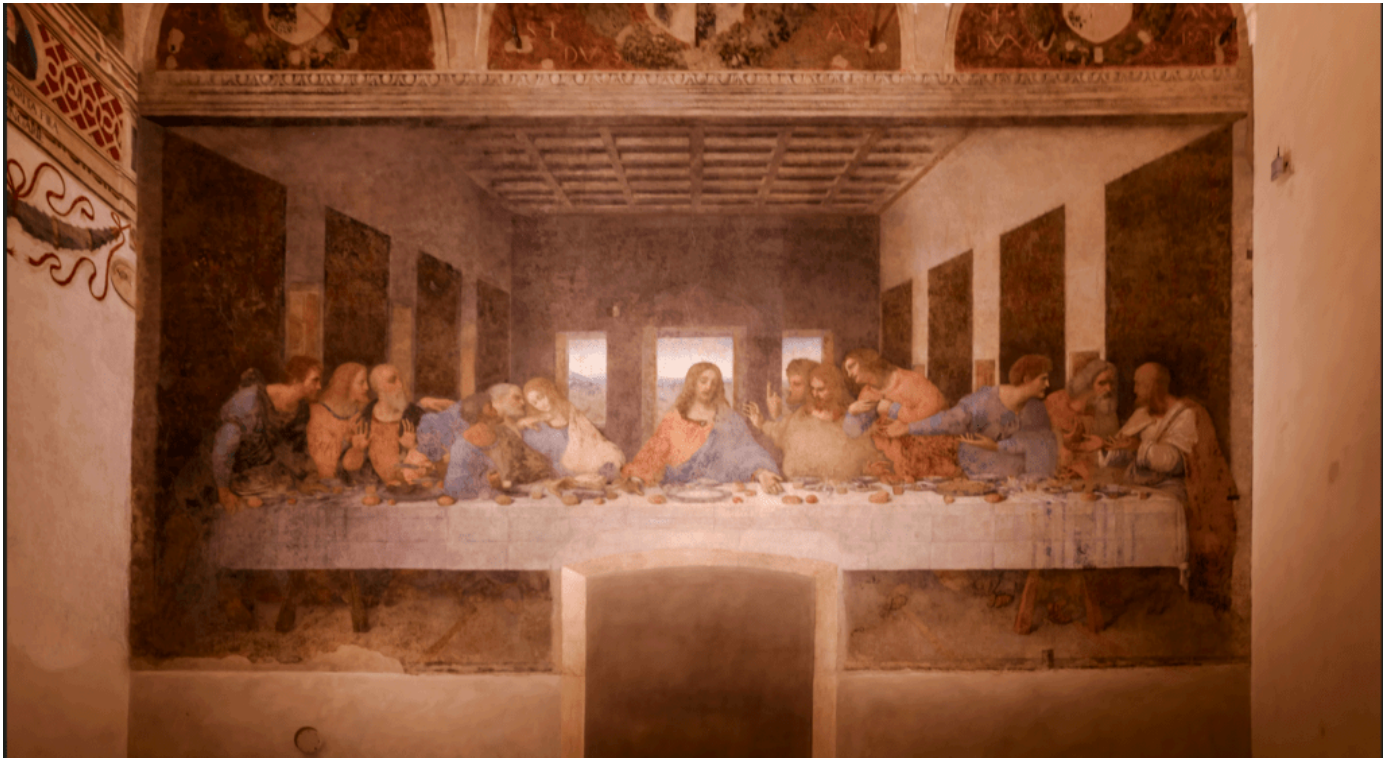
As you will learn from reading the list of individual sites, many of them are in danger of falling into disrepair, and some can only be visited under strict conditions. For example, Leonardo da Vinci's painting “The Last Supper” can only be viewed by a maximum of 25 people in a guided group, and Machu Picchu has even been closed to visitors at times. So wherever you go, follow the rules, be respectful of the site, the environment and the people, and don't leave any litter. Your footprint should be as small as possible.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN ITALY

Let's start with Italy, one of the most culturally rich countries in Europe. After all, it was the center of the Roman Empire, and all the great painters and sculptors of the Renaissance made pilgrimages here. There are currently 59 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Italy (as of 2023), of which 53 are World Heritage Sites and 6 are World Natural Heritage Sites.

FOR CULTURE LOVERS: MILAN

If you are in the mood for culture, Lombardy is the region with the most UNESCO sites – there are no less than 10 World Heritage Sites to visit!



The Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci is regarded a masterpiece of art. ©Torval Mork Stock.Adobe

The most famous of these is located in the heart of Milan, the capital of Lombardy. The painting “The Last Supper” by Leonardo da Vinci. It is located in the Renaissance church of Santa Maria delle Grazie.

Info: If you want to see the world-famous painting, you should book tickets in advance. A guided tour (about 45 minutes) costs about 45 euros and is only available on certain days of the week and for a maximum of 25 people. The goal is to preserve the 500-year-old masterpiece. Since dust stirred up by visitors accelerates the deterioration of the artwork, elaborate ventilation systems have also been installed to further protect the painting.

Brief facts about the UNESCO World Heritage Site The Last Supper

- **Country:** Italy
- **UNESCO World Heritage since:** 1980
- **Area:** Museo del Cenacolo Vinciano
- **Special feature:** Painting is considered “one of the highest forms of expression in art”.

Another UNESCO World Heritage Site in Lombardy that we can recommend is the Rhaetian Railway. This environmentally friendly transportation connects Italy with Switzerland. The small station of Tirano is located in Lombardy, from where you can travel to Switzerland. A highlight of the train is its panoramic roof.

Brief facts about the UNESCO World Heritage Rhaetian Railway

- **Country:** Italy
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site since:** 2008
- **Area:** 122 kilometers of railway network with a red train
- **Special feature:** Winding its way up the mountains, the train is considered a rare example of a man-made structure that blends perfectly with the environment.

A CARBON-NEUTRAL STAY AT THE HOTEL MILANO SCALA IN MILAN

Hotel Milano Scala (<https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/hotel-milano-scala/>) is an eco-friendly option for your overnight stay in Lombardy. It is the first zero-emissions hotel in Milan and is self-sufficient thanks to geothermal energy. It's also centrally located, right next to La Scala, one of the most famous opera houses in the world (even if opera isn't your thing, be sure to plan a tour of the building). In addition, there is a great roof terrace with an herb garden.

FOR NATURE LOVERS: THE DOLOMITES OF SOUTH TYROL



The Dolomites are a UNESCO World Heritage © Paradiso Pure.Living

If you are looking for nature and relaxation during your vacation, we have another recommendation for you: in 2009, nine mountain groups in the Dolomites were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List for their beauty and for their geological and geomorphological importance (study of landforms 😊), as anyone who has ever seen the Dolomites can vouch for.

Brief facts about the Dolomites UNESCO World Heritage Site

- **Country:** Italy

- **UNESCO World Heritage Site since:** 2009
- **Area:** 142,000 hectares (spread over several areas)
- **Special features:** The mountain range is made up of dolomite (hence the name) and the rocks form special rock formations.

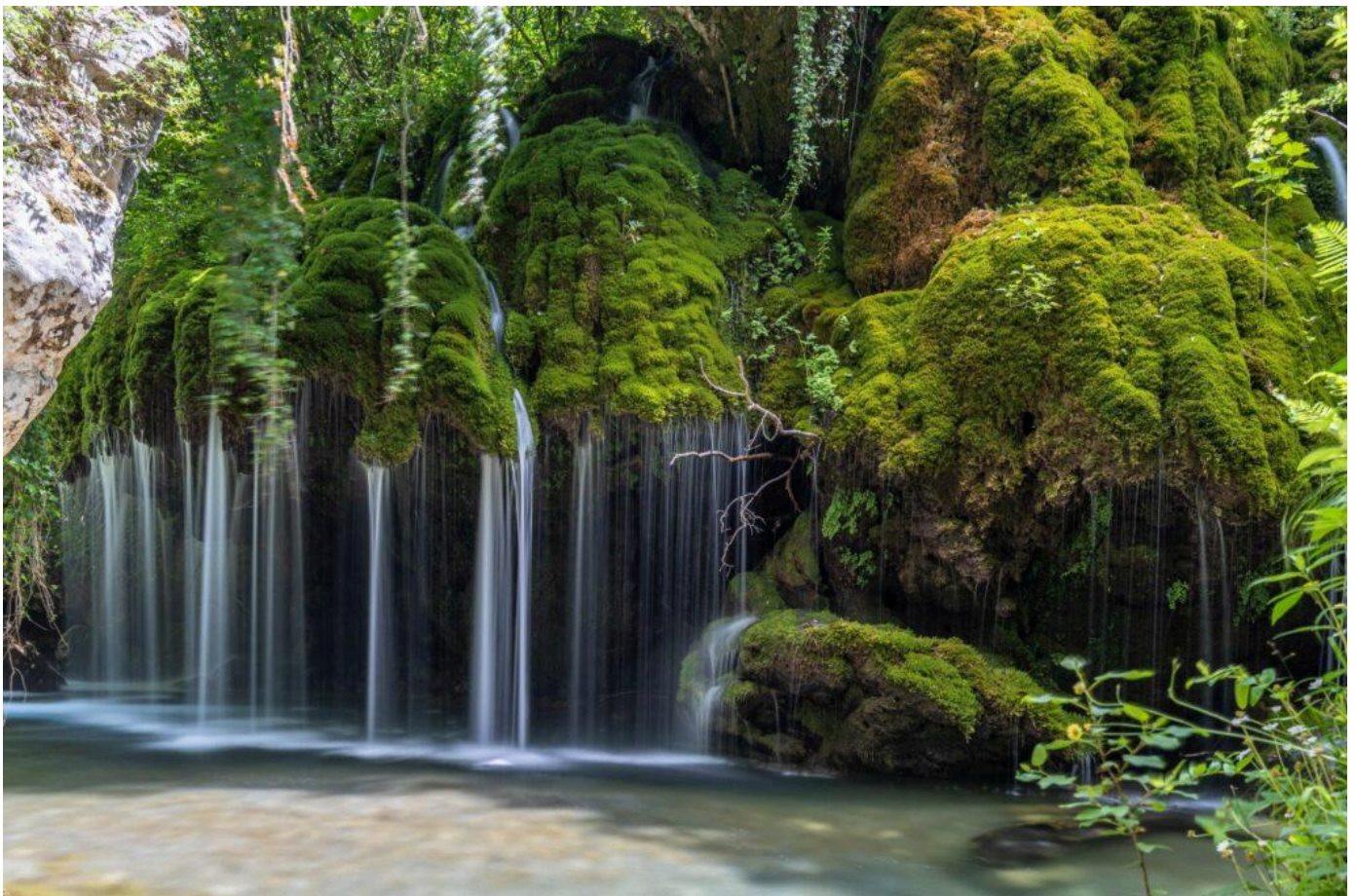
VACATION IN THE DOLOMITES

The Dolomites are a snow-sure area for winter sports as well as a wonderful place for hiking and mountain biking. In addition to active vacationers, the region also attracts people in search of (inner) peace and tranquility.

Paradiso Pure.Living (<https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/paradiso-pure-living/>) is located on the famous Alpe di Siusi (in winter directly on the slopes) and the first purely vegetarian-vegan hotel in the Dolomites. Here you will find regular yoga offers and changing art exhibitions.

"Words can't describe the beauty and the splendor of the Dolomites. You can only feel its majesty at the first sight being there." - Paradiso Pure.Living

ACTIVE AND ENJOYABLE IN THE CILENTO NATIONAL PARK



Nationalpark Cilentio © Francesco Bonino | Stock.Adobe.com

There is another unique natural landscape in the south of Italy. The Cilento National Park is a mountainous area that stretches from the Mediterranean coast (Tyrrhenian Sea) through the Vallo di Diano to the Apennines.

Brief facts about the UNESCO World Heritage Site Cilento National Park

- **Country:** Italy
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site since:** 1998
- **Area:** 181 hectares
- **Special features:** In addition to the natural beauty of the National Park, there are charming mountain and fishing villages with colorful house facades perched on the sea cliffs.

A vacation in Cilento is suitable for all types of travelers: Whether you prefer beach vacations or active ones, cultural or hiking excursions. Even lovers of Italian cuisine will feel like they're in heaven in this corner of southern Italy! Keyword: Neapolitan Pizza!

Brief facts about the UNESCO Intangible World Heritage of the art of the pizza maker

- **Country:** Italy
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site since:** 2017
- **Location:** Naples
- **Special feature:** Neapolitan pizza isn't fast food, it's a cultural treasure! It's not just about craftsmanship and dough twirling, but also about the songs, stories and lifestyles that have developed around Neapolitan pizza.

SUSTAINABLE VACATION RENTALS IN THE CLIENTO REGION

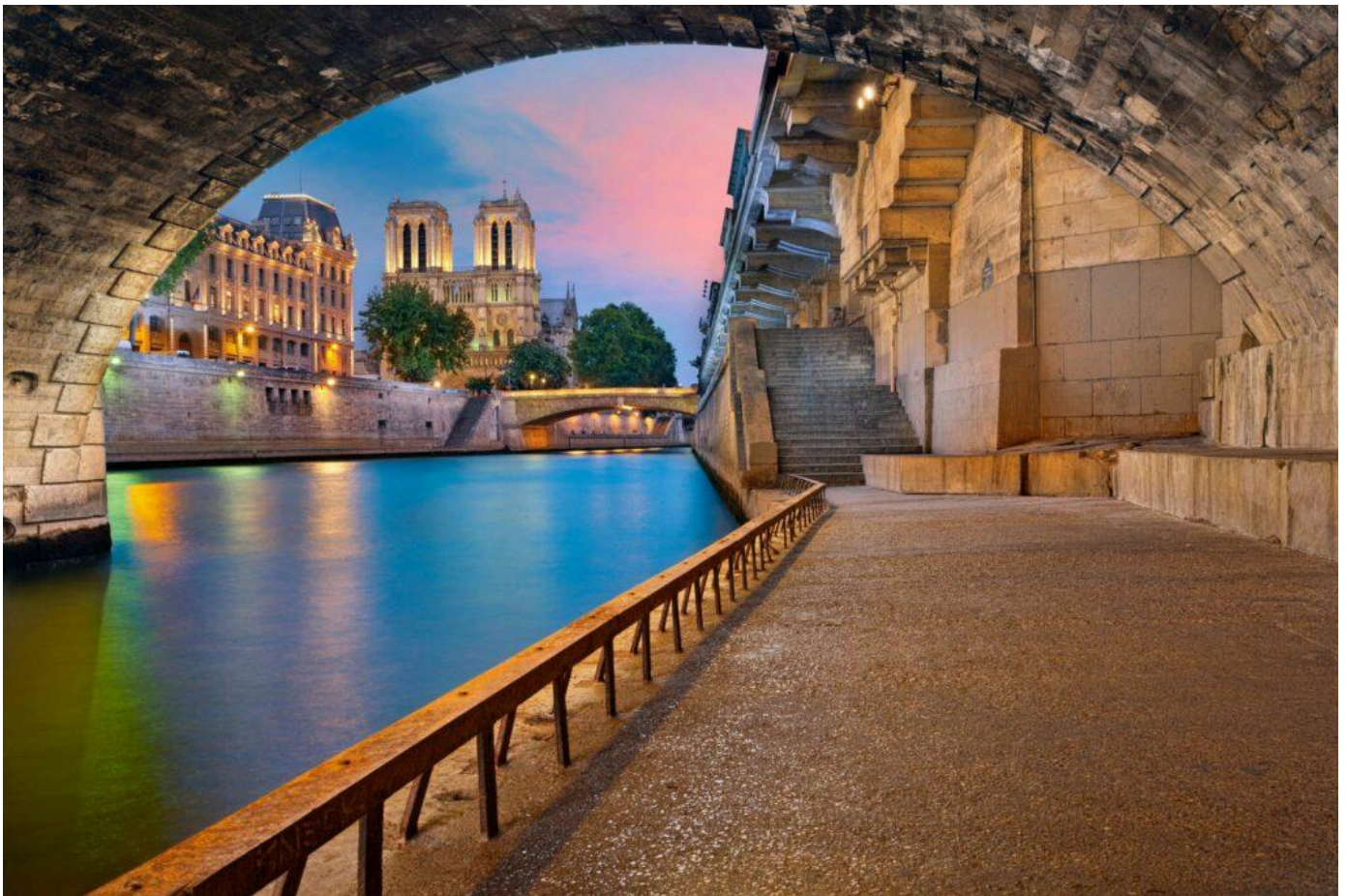
The **A' Crápa Mangia** (<https://www.greenpearls.com/vacation-rentals/a-crapa-mangia/>) apartments are located directly on the coast in a renovated old country house in the heart of Cilento. Each apartment has a terrace overlooking the Mediterranean Sea and the German-speaking owners take great care of their guests. For example, you can help prepare pasta in a mini cooking course ([LINK](#)) and get lots of valuable ideas for excursions. There is a lot to see in the area: There's Pompeii and Herculaneum, Paestum, the Amalfi Coast and Naples. The old town of Naples is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Brief facts about the UNESCO World Heritage Site historic center of Naples.

- **Country:** Italy
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site since:** 1995
- **Area:** 1700 hectares.
- **Special features:** A wide variety of cultures and civilizations have left their mark here. From the ancient Greeks to the Romans, the Byzantines, the Normans, the Spanish and the French. Naples was even once a kingdom in its own right. As a visitor, you will wander through the narrow streets, marvel at the various squares, palaces and monuments.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN FRANCE

France has a total of 52 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. 44 of them are World Heritage Sites, 7 are World Natural Heritage Sites and 1 is a mixture of culture and nature.



Both the banks of the Seine and Notre Dame Cathedral are World Heritage Sites. ©rudi1976 | Stock.Adobe.com

There are several World Heritage sites in and around the capital city of Paris. These include **Notre Dame Cathedral** (not only for its architecture, but also for its European historical significance in terms of the relationship between state and church), the **Palace of Versailles**, the former **abbey church** and current diocesan **cathedral of Saint-Denis**, and **Hangar Y**, the oldest airship hangar in the world. But did you know that the banks of the Seine are also a World Heritage Site?

Brief facts about the UNESCO World Heritage Site Seine Riverbank

- **Country:** France
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site since:** 1991
- **Area:** 365 hectares
- **Special features:** The historic section between the Pont de Sully and the Pont d'Iéna (including the Seine islands of Île de la Cité and Île Saint-Louis) was important in Celtic times. The city center of Paris, built around the river, influenced urban planning worldwide and is considered a symbol of the relationship between the people and the river. There are magnificent views and many Gothic buildings to admire.

VACATION IN THE HEART OF PARIS' WORLD HERITAGE SITES

There are three Green Pearls® partner hotels in Paris, which together form the Green Spirit Hotels group. They are the small 2- to 3-star hotels Hotel **Le Pavillon** (<https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/hotel-le-pavillon/>), **Hotel Marlar** (<https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/hotel-malar/>) and **Hotel Amélie** (<https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/hotel-amelie/>) in the 7th arrondissement, all artistically and individually decorated. This sets the mood for exploring the art-loving French metropolis. You can also enjoy a delicious breakfast on the terrace or in the courtyard. And with local (and sometimes organic) produce. The banks of the Seine and the Eiffel Tower are within walking distance.

VACATION IN A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE IN GERMANY



Industrial Heritage Völklinger Hütte ©Andreas | Stock.Adobe.com

There are 49 World Heritage Sites and 3 World Natural Heritage Sites in Germany, making a total of 52 sites protected by UNESCO. We would like to introduce two of them here

HANSESTADT LÜBECK

The North German city of Lübeck was one of the most important Hanseatic cities between 1230 and 1535. If the term Hanseatic League doesn't ring a bell, the Hanseatic League was a powerful association of merchants and held a monopoly on trade on the Baltic and North Seas and along some inland rivers during this period. Lübeck itself is well preserved to this day and a visit (preferably with a guided tour) will show you where the wealthy merchants lived and where the artisans had their huts.

Short facts about the UNESCO World Heritage Site Lübeck Old Town

- **Country:** Germany
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site since:** 1987
- **Area:** 115 hectares
- **Special feature:** The outstanding monument to the heritage of the Hanseatic seafaring merchants Lübeck's Old Town has an unmistakable silhouette with its 7 towers and typical brick architecture).

SUSTAINABLE VACATION AT THE BALTIC SEA



Restaurant SANDkulinarium on Timmendorfer Strand © Lifestylehotel SAND

Just a 25 minute drive from Lübeck lies the Timmendorfer Strand. Here you can relax on a beach by the Baltic Sea at any time of the year. An excellent choice for sustainable accommodation is the **Lifestyle Hotel SAND** (<https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/sand-lifestylehotel/>). It emphasizes naturalness, which means eco-friendly materials, local organic products, and relaxation near the beach and on the hotel's roof terrace – complete with a rooftop sauna and a wicker beach chair for sleeping under the stars.

VÖLKLINGEN IRONWORKS INDUSTRIAL MONUMENT AND BLIEGAU BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Saarland (<https://www.greenpearls.com/destinations/saarland/>) is Germany's smallest state and shaped by three major rivers: the Saar, the Moselle and the Blies. The UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Bliesgau is located in the southeast of Saarland. A biosphere reserve, as opposed to a cultural heritage site, is a model region for sustainable development with the aim of enabling people and nature to live in harmony.

The region is characterized by a hilly landscape with beech forests, meadow orchards and floodplains. The state itself has been recognized as a "sustainable travel destination in Germany" by TourCert and is a partner of Green Pearls®.

In addition to its natural beauty, Saarland is also known for its mining past and has preserved several industrial monuments. The most famous of these is the Völklingen Ironworks. It is one of the most important international monuments of the heyday of industrialization and is the only completely preserved ironworks from this period.

Brief facts about the Völklinger Hütte UNESCO World Heritage Site

- **Country:** Germany
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site since:** 1994
- **Area:** 7.46 hectares (the total area of the Völklingen-Saarstahl site is approximately 260 hectares)
- **Special feature:** Important monument of European industrial history. The Völklingen Ironworks was founded in 1873 and reached its production peak in the post-war period (1950s). The plant was shut down in 1986 and is now open to visitors daily as an industrial monument.

VACATION IN SAARLAND

Saarland offers several sustainable accommodations and camping sites. For tips and addresses, visit the official [website](https://www.visitsaarland.co.uk/) (<https://www.visitsaarland.co.uk/>).

+ VERLINKUNG zum NL sobald er draußen ist

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE IN PERU



View of Cusco © sharptoyou Stock.Adobe.com

Outside of Europe, we would like to introduce you to two World Heritage Sites from Peru. Peru has 13 World Heritage Sites, of which 9 are Cultural Heritage Sites and 2 are Natural Heritage Sites. 2 sites are mixed. Especially the remains of the Inca culture are world famous.

THE INCA EMPIRE

The Inca Empire was the largest empire in the early American continent and rose to power in the 13th century. They considered their capital, Cusco, the “center of the world” and built a civilization with remarkable stone buildings, bridges and roads, the ruins of which are still preserved today. The downfall of the Incas was brought about by the Spanish conquest in the 16th century.

Brief facts about the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Cusco

- **Country:** Peru
- **UNESCO World Heritage since:** 1983
- **Area:** 284 hectares
- **Special features:** The city of Cusco represents some 3,000 years of indigenous and autonomous Andean culture. The influences of Spanish colonial rule are also clearly visible.

SUSTAINABLE ACCOMMODATION IN CUSCO



The Inkaterra La Casona in Cusco is located in a converted old manor house. © Inkaterra Hotels

Our Green Pearls® partner, Inkaterra, is committed to preserving the cultural heritage and protecting the environment in Peru. An exclusive 5-star boutique hotel in Cusco. The **Inkaterra La Casona** (<https://www.greenpearls.com/hotels/inkaterra-la-casona/>), has only 11 rooms and feels more like a luxurious private villa. The history here has been specially restored and you can even admire frescoes that are over 500 years old!

Cusco is also known as the “gateway to Machu Picchu”.

Brief facts about the UNESCO World Heritage Site Machu Picchu

- **Country:** Peru
- **UNESCO World Heritage since:** 1983
- **Area:** 32,500 hectares
- **Special features:** The well-preserved Inca city of Machu Picchu is both a cultural and natural heritage site. Located high in the clouds, the mountain city is still a source of scientific interest today.

Beware of mass tourism: Machu Picchu is so impressive and famous that many tourists want to visit it. Too many. The ruins had to be closed in September 2023 due to erosion. The site will be fully reopened in January 2024. However, you can only visit the legendary site with a guided tour, and should follow the guide’s instructions to the letter.

You can read more about this in our article on [overtourism \(https://green-travel-blog.com/overtourism/\)](https://green-travel-blog.com/overtourism/), where Machu Picchu and the challenges of its fame are explained in more detail.

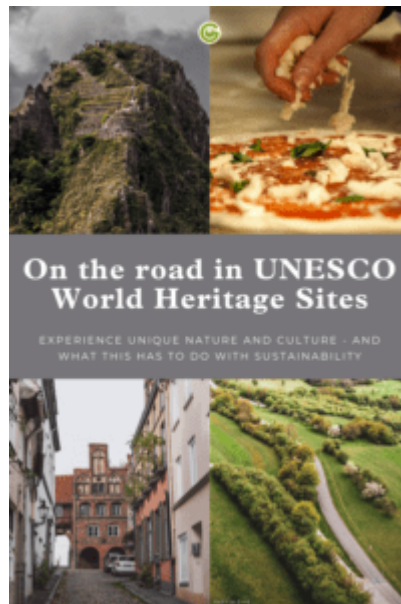
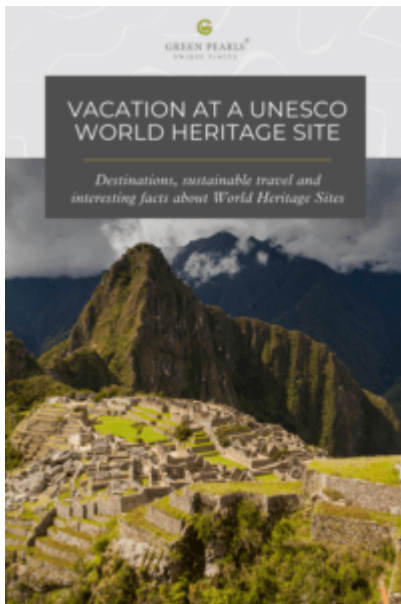
VACATION AT THE INKATERRA MACHU PICCHU PUEBLO HOTEL

If you want to spend your vacation in the vicinity of this extraordinary World Heritage Site – considered by some to be one of the wonders of the modern world – we recommend another Inkaterra hotel. The Inkaterra Machu Picchu Pueblo Hotel accompanies you with trained guides and is committed to clean water and waste prevention in the region. In addition, you will enjoy an authentic and luxurious 81-room hotel complex.

VACATION IN A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE – CONCLUSION

Thanks to the efforts of UNESCO, many places, buildings and customs have been given more “value”. In the sense of appreciation and preservation. And – let’s face it – tourism is part of the equation! You are supposed to visit these places and increase their value with your purchasing power as a tourist. However, this should not be at the expense of nature or culture and be done in the best possible way.

Save this article for your next travel planning session on pinterest!



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