

850 years of mining, mining towns and mining traditions

The Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří mining region: 22 constituent parts, two countries, one UNESCO World Heritage Site

The mining region: globally outstanding

Our region is globally recognised as an exceptionally well-preserved ensemble of montane landscapes, mining towns, monuments and cultural traditions. Since 2019, it has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Since mining has declined, the natural mountain landscape has been able to recover. Those who want to explore the German/Czech Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří mining region will need to get active. A spirit of discovery is required to enjoy the beauty of the landscape while walking, cycling, touring by rail or by motorbike.

The cultural landscape: shaped by mining

In the Erzgebirge region of Saxony and Bohemia, a diverse montane cultural landscape developed over the course of 850 years of mining activity. With the mining and processing of silver, tin, cobalt, iron and uranium from the twelfth century onwards, the montane cultural landscape grew to become a global centre for cutting-edge mining and metallurgical technologies, outstanding achievements in the mining sciences and also for the development of state-controlled mining administration. All these innovations had a major influence on other mining regions in Europe and around the world, and set new standards.

The mining town: settlements for mining

To meet the needs of miners and their families, a new type of settlement developed from the fifteenth century onwards: the “mining town”. From the sixteenth century, in contrast to the towns that were founded in the immediate vicinity of mines, mining towns were built on greenfield sites and followed Renaissance ideals. Today, the historical centres of over 30 mining towns are not museum-like relics, but thriving, inhabited centres: local people live in the middle of the World Heritage Site. The distinctive streets, listed buildings and fascinating art and culture of the mining towns bear witness to the wealth and importance of mining. The towns still invite in-depth exploration today, and are important focal points for our guests.

Traditions: it all comes from mining

The control of mining by the state (directorship principle) also influenced people's lifestyles. To this day, the people of the Erzgebirge see themselves as a strong traditional community with a distinctive identity. The hall churches of the mining towns reflect both mining pride and piety. Their furnishings, ornamentation and sacred art feature mining motifs. The rich musical heritage of the region resounds at many events: miners' marches, Christmas melodies and religious songs. Guests can experience the emotional atmosphere at the Bergstreitag (miners' dispute day), at festive services in the late Gothic miners' cathedrals, at Christmas markets, during miners' parades and at the Mettenschicht celebrations (marking the final shift before Christmas). Skilled crafts inspired by mining, such as candlelit arches and pyramids or figures of miners and angels, are part of the Erzgebirge's customs, which are unique in the world.

Culture of innovation: from the Erzgebirge to the world

Technological innovations in mining and metallurgy shaped a culture of innovation with European and global impact. The ability to innovate is a distinctive regional trait. Enter well-

maintained mines, admire working historic technology and explore landscapes along the old mining water systems: These are all ways in which our guests can take a fascinating trip through time, from the Middle Ages to the present day, discovering extraction and processing technologies, ingenious water management techniques and the precursors of today's pumping technology.

With its outstanding scientific achievements, the Erzgebirge region developed into a centre of mining science. At Freiberg University of Mining and Technology, the oldest mining academy in the world, intensive geological and mineralogical research was conducted, new chemical elements were discovered and new technical procedures, training systems and teaching methods developed.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site: an endlessly diverse, authentic experience

Our montane cultural landscape with its mining towns and mining traditions is unique in the world. That is why the Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří mining region has been awarded UNESCO World Heritage status. The 22 constituent parts in Saxony and the Czech Republic represent complex historical interrelationships with a high degree of authenticity and offer exceptionally diverse experiences for tourists.