

Cultural landscape: shaped by mining

UNESCO World Heritage Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří Mining Region: silver, tin, cobalt, uranium, iron

Silver, tin, cobalt, uranium and iron represent the five ore mining landscapes that characterise the mining region. Each one gives our visitors an insight into extraction and processing in the different periods and illustrates the region's global significance.

Silver (12th-20th century): It all began with the first silver discovery

The Museum for Medieval Mining in the Erzgebirge (MiBERZ) and the mining discovery trail in Dippoldiswalde shed light on the early days of mining. Silver production reached its peak in the 15th/16th century, when the Erzgebirge became the largest mining area in Europe. Pioneering technologies and scientific achievements were developed here, accompanied by the rapid settlement and transformation of the landscape. The Erzgebirgsmuseum with the "Im Gößner" mine and the "Markus-Röhling-Stolln" visitors' mine in Annaberg-Buchholz as well as the nearby heap landscape "Am Pöhlberg" are examples of this. The historical towns of Freiberg and Marienberg provide a vivid illustration of development over the centuries, as does the historical mining discovery trail nearby.

Tin (14th-20th century): the Erzgebirge periodically becomes the world's largest tin producer

The first tin mining areas were located in the western Erzgebirge at Ehrenfriedersdorf, now a visitors' mine, and Eibenstock, which can be explored on the mining and placer trail. With the discovery of new deposits in the upper layers during the 16th century, Bohemian/Saxon mining even outstripped British production. Periodically, the Erzgebirge was one of the largest tin producers in the world. The Mining Museum in Altenberg, the "Vereinigt Zwitterfeld" visitors' mine at Zinnwald and Lauenstein Castle (the former administrative centre) are eloquent witnesses of the age. Visitors are recommended to explore the tin landscapes via the educational trails.

Cobalt (16th-18th century): blue enchants the world

At the end of the 16th century, a new process made it possible to obtain a blue pigment from cobalt ore, used to dye ceramic and glass. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Erzgebirge grew to become the world's leading producer of this highly sought-after export. Local cobalt blue adorned Chinese and Meissen porcelain, glass from Bohemia and Venice, as well as Delft ceramics in the Netherlands. On a visit to the Schneeberg cobalt ore field, visitors will find all the stages of ore extraction and processing in the Museum for Miners' Folk Art with the monument "Siebenschleherer Pochwerk", in the "Fundgrube Wolfgangmaßen" stamp mill and on the Schneeberg-Neustädtl mining discovery trail.

Uranium (19th/20th century): a metal makes global history in the Cold War

Uranium was first discovered, obtained and processed in the Erzgebirge, initially as a pigment for colouring. After the Second World War, the volume of uranium mining surpassed anything the Erzgebirge had seen before in all its mining history. The Soviet mining firm SAG Wismut mined uranium ore to build nuclear weapons. After 1990, the mining landscapes were decontaminated. This process is globally regarded as the model for a successful clean-up operation. Visitors can learn more about this at the Aue-Bad Schlema spa and on the mining and rehabilitation trail. The trail begins at the Museum of Uranium Mining.

Iron (14-19th century): toolmaking in the oldest ironworks in the Erzgebirge

Iron mining and processing played a key role. Demand for tools surged as silver mining rapidly expanded and mining towns were established. Explore the history of iron in the “Rother Berg” mining landscape. Visit the “Erlahammer” manor house (17th century) to experience the oldest ironworks still in existence in the Erzgebirge.