

# A Cultural Route of the Council of Europe

The European Route of Historic Thermal Towns is one of 45 Routes certified by the Council of Europe, all based on themes which are important to the cultural heritage of Europe. The Cultural Routes Programme was launched by the Council of Europe in 1987 with the Route of Santiago de Compostela, perhaps Europe's most famous pilgrim route, chosen as a symbol of European unification and identity. Like Europe itself, the Compostela was built "on a shared history of exchanges and encounters between people with different backgrounds, nationalities and beliefs". Since then, linear paths and themed networks, such as the Route of Historic Thermal Towns have joined the Programme.

Being certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe is extremely important for the European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA). It values the exchange of good practices and ideas with other Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, the visibility of the Cultural Routes at a European level through the work

Baden bei Wien (Austria)



Bath (UK)

of the Programme, and the dialogue that it prompts between cultural institutions and tourism bodies.

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe encourage visitors to take "a journey through space and time" to understand Europe's shared and living cultural heritage. All the routes in the Programme are certified by the Council of Europe, and are re-evaluated every few years, so that a certain level of quality of experience is assured for visitors.

The certification "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" is a guarantee of excellence. The EHTTA Scientific Committee assesses all the potential members of the Association and the Route on strict criteria, to ensure this excellence.

The Cultural Routes Programme also aims to contribute to sustainable development in the regions and throughout the cultural routes, enriching the tourism sector with new products and jobs based on cultural and heritage tourism.

The story of the historic thermal towns of Europe is woven into the story of the continent of Europe and its people. It is part of Europe's shared memory, culture and traditions. As a cultural route of the Council of Europe, we continue to tell this story, to raise awareness of the importance our towns, in order to protect them for future generations, and to help young people to discover and understand traditions, heritage and culture that dates back hundreds of years, but which can also play an important part in their wellbeing and health in the future.



Ourense (Spain)

## Welcome

Since ancient times, people have been drawn to the hot healing mineral waters of Europe. Over the centuries, the Greeks, Romans, Ottomans and others established bathing traditions and built complexes to harness the water so that people could bathe. Subsequent civilisations established medical complexes, and ceremonies around their miraculous waters, and during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, "taking the waters" for health – drinking and bathing in it – became almost an art-form.

Caldas da Rainha (Portugal), Bursa (Turkey), Budapest (Hungary)



### For more information:

[www.historicthermaltowns.eu](http://www.historicthermaltowns.eu)

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[european-historic-thermal-towns-association](#)

Email: [contact@ehtta.eu](mailto:contact@ehtta.eu)

Trade and Media contact: Phone +49 6128 9803481

### European Historic Thermal Towns Association

Registered Office: Hôtel de Ville,  
Rue de l'Hôtel de Ville 44,  
4900 Spa (Belgium)

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## Discover the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns

A Cultural Route of the Council of Europe since 2010







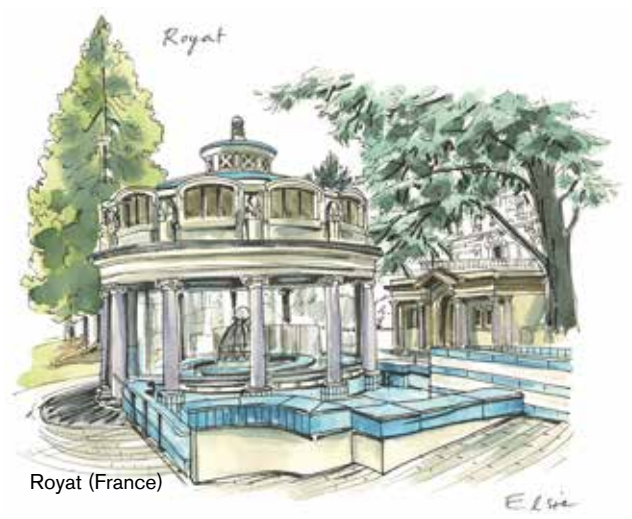
# A JOURNEY THROUGH SPACE AND TIME

## European Route of Historic Thermal Towns

At the heart of each of our member towns is a spring, or maybe several springs, which each come to the surface having undertaken an underground journey that may have lasted hundreds or even thousands of years, picking up minerals and thermal energy as they went. These springs were the catalyst for the development of small settlements which eventually became towns and cities – a unique kind of urban form that is slowly becoming recognised as having a special place in European history and memory.

The first tourists came to the springs and sources to seek better health, long before different faiths drew religious pilgrims across the globe to their shrines, as shown by archaeological evidence in a number of our towns. As buildings developed around the springs to harness them and allow their practical use, guest facilities developed in response, until the spa town as we know it today was developed with several elements all designed to facilitate the cure that visitors seek, not only in body, but in mind and spirit too.

In each of our towns, you will find a range of accommodation (often with waters available in thermal spa hotels); entertainment in the form of festivals, concerts, theatres and sporting events; historic monuments, often interpreted in innovative ways to help you to understand the past life of the town and its famous visitors; art galleries and museums; and historic and modern spa complexes.



Łądek-Zdrój (Poland), Daruvar (Croatia), Spa (Belgium)

## Cafés of Europe

The most important people in Europe gathered at the spas to see and to be seen, and as social barriers began to break down in the spas, artists, writers, philosophers, musicians and scientists rubbed shoulders with nobility and royalty, sparking creativity and discovery – this phenomenon was known in Spa in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the “Café of Europe”, a term that we have adopted in modern times to describe the huge creative potential in the spa towns of Europe.

## WATER IS THE DRIVING FORCE OF ALL NATURE

Leonardo da Vinci

