



MEDIA RELEASE

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EHTTA Signs Memorandum of Understanding with UNWTO

The 5th September was a significant day for the future development of thermal tourism, as EHTTA President, José Manuel Baltar Blanco met with representatives of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (**UNWTO**) in Madrid, to sign an official Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations.

The European Historic Thermal Towns Association is an Affiliate Member of UNWTO, and significantly is the only Cultural Route of the Council of Europe to be associated with UNWTO.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been developed to enhance cooperation between UNWTO and EHTTA. The MoU means that EHTTA and UNWTO will cooperate closely and consult one another on matters of mutual interest in order to achieve their common objectives, which include:

- The promotion of strategies and mechanisms to further develop the contribution of wellness and thermal tourism to the whole sector.
- The exchange of knowledge and good practices aimed to raise awareness on the importance of the spa industry.
- The development of a partnerships between the public and private sectors to exchange experiences at the European level and contribute to the recovery of the tourism sector.

EHTTA is delighted to be working with the UNWTO as part of its work package in 2022, developing and running the **International Congress on Thermal Tourism**, which will take place in Ourense at the end of September. The Congress, hosted by the Province of Ourense, of which Mr Baltar is also the President, and will attract over 300 delegates, to hear speakers who are joining the Congress from around the globe.

Speaking in Madrid, Mr Baltar said:

“The signing of this Memorandum of Understanding between UNWTO and the European Historic Thermal Towns Association is a huge step forward for the whole thermal sector, not just for our own historic thermal spa towns but for thermal destinations in general, and the whole ecosystem of health, wellness and thermal tourism. EHTTA brings an extra dimension too, with its member towns and regions, which not only developed because of the existence thermal and mineral water springs, but which have been in existence for hundreds and even thousands of years, welcoming visitors who came to take the waters and providing them with healing for body, mind and spirit – a tradition which continues to this day. Our towns are cultural and heritage destinations as well as health and wellness resorts, and I firmly believe that they deserve to be valued and understood more widely, especially as we recover from the pandemic.

As President of EHTTA, I am very pleased to be working with the UNWTO towards a future mutual understanding and benefit, exchanging experiences and best practices, and making this incredible thermal tourism sector in Europe better known on the world stage. This is a huge honour for EHTTA, and I am happy to sign the Memorandum of understanding on behalf of thermal towns and regions in our Association.”

Mr Baltar was accompanied to Madrid by the **President of the Xunta di Galicia, Mr Alfonso Rueda**. Galicia is not only an important thermal region, but also one of the most famous pilgrimage destinations in the world. The Way of St James, the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela was the first Cultural Route to be certified by the Council of Europe in 1987, and, with the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns and other Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe has a long pedigree in welcoming tourists who travel for their wellbeing and health, be that of body or spirit.

The opportunity was taken to link the Memorandum of Understanding to the International Congress on Thermal Tourism in September, organised with the Participation of the UNWTO, as not only is the host a thermal province, based in a thermal town, but the wider region, Galicia is famous for being a thermal province, with many small spa towns and destinations, and a region where Cultural Routes cross in a rich tapestry of heritage and culture.

For his part, the President of the Xunta, Alfonso Rueda, stressed that Galicia "is the first thermal power in Spain and the second in Europe, with authentic destinations such as Ourense". He also pointed out that this remarkable thermal town is one of the main assets of the quality tourist offer of the autonomous community, which this year is breaking all visitor records thanks to "the indisputable pull of the double Xacobeo".

More details about the International Thermal Congress, taking place in Ourense from 27th to 29th September 2022, can be found at <https://thethermalcongress.com>. It will be linked to the 20th TERMATALIA Fair of Thermal Tourism, Health and Wellness.

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See below for further information.

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Historic Thermal Towns on Social Media



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[European-Historic-Thermal-Towns-Association](https://www.linkedin.com/company/European-Historic-Thermal-Towns-Association)

#ThermalTravels #HistoricThermalTowns #Cultural Routes #MySpaTown

Notes to Editors:

1. EHTTA is a membership organisation representing nearly 50 members in 17 countries.
2. EHTTA was certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2010 and is one of 48 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe which provide a wealth of leisure and educational activities for all citizens across Europe and beyond and are key resources for responsible tourism and sustainable development. The certification "[Cultural Route of the Council of Europe](#)" is a guarantee of excellence.
3. EHTTA was founded in 2009 with six Founding Members: Acqui Terme (Italy), Bath (UK), Ourense (Spain), Salsomaggiore Terme (Italy), Spa (Belgium) and Vichy (France).