Las Medulas, Spain: Splendid Nature in Ancient Mines

The spectacular rock formations of Las Medulas in Northern Spain result from one of the largest gold mines in the Roman Empire dating back to the 1st century AD. Because of its outstanding cultural and natural values, the area is designated as UNESCO World Heritage Site and forms part of a larger Natura 2000 area of great importance for birds and bats in particular. The site is managed with the aim of ensuring the preservation of its significant cultural and natural features. It represents a good example of integrated management that takes into account both interests.

Matera, Italy: A Subterranean City Where Culture and Nature LIVE SIDE BY SIDE

The Italian city of Matera is located in the southern region of Basilicata. It is famous for its Sassi, literally ‘caves’, a spectacular system of dwellings and churches carved into the rock, inhabited since the Paleolithic age. This city is both a World Heritage site and part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, nest in the Sassi and work is underway to conserve these colonies. New standards have also been set in the construction regulations to ensure the use of sustainable roof tiles and green in buildings, thanks to integrated management planning.

Ukko-Saari, Finland: The Natural and Spiritual Home of the Lapps

Ukko-Saari is one of Finland’s most renowned ancient remains and the most famous sanctuary of worship for the Saami people. It forms an important part of the Sámi culture and identity. It is also an important Natura 2000 site situated in Lake Inari which is Finland’s largest lake. The area is being managed in an integrated and highly collaborative way, involving all stakeholders and authorities. This is helping to ensure that the natural and sacred values of the site continue to be protected while maintaining traditional land uses and encouraging tourism to develop in a sensitive and sustainable manner.

Mount Athos: A Perfect Balance between Nature and Culture

Mount Athos, the ‘Holy Mountain’, is located in north-eastern Greece. The peninsula, with its 20 ancient monasteries is only accessible by sea, contributing to its value as one of the largest gold mines in the Roman Empire dating back to the 1st century A.D. and part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, populate the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni and the lesser kestrel Falco naumanni, inhabit the peninsula, which is a part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare bird species, the lesser kestrel Falco naun...
Europe: a rich natural and cultural heritage

Europe boasts a stunning variety of plants, animals and landscapes for its small size. Much of its fauna and flora is found nowhere else in the world. Differences in climate, geography and biography have played an important role in shaping this unique biodiversity – so has Europe’s long association with the land.

From the Arctic Circle to the Mediterranean Sea, from the European Mountains to the Atlantic Coast, people have worked their land for centuries in accordance with local conditions. This has created an intricately woven pattern of semi-natural habitats that are exceptionally rich in wildlife yet entirely dependent on continued management for their survival.

This rich natural and cultural heritage is a defining element of our European identity. It brings communities together and builds shared understandings of the places we live in. It is also a very useful resource that can enhance social cohesion, employment and economic growth.

Throughout 2018 – the European Year of Cultural Heritage – events are planned all over Europe to encourage people to discover and engage with Europe’s cultural and natural attractions and to reinforce our sense of a European identity. The European Year will also be an occasion to shape this unique biodiversity – so has Europe’s long association with the land.

Natural and cultural heritage suffer from a similar range of threats and pressures and is best served by an integrated management approach to ensure their long-term sustainability. One of the main drivers of integration is due to the capacity of cultural and natural heritage sites to attract visitors, which can in turn have a cascading effect on the local economy through new opportunities for sustainable tourism, business, and produce development around the sites.

Strong heritage also offers important educational and volunteering opportunities for both young and old and encourages dialogue between different cultures and generations.

To explore these issues in greater depth, the Commission recently published a set of case studies on linking Natura 2000 and cultural heritage. These are presenting practical examples of how the management of nature and culture has been successfully integrated across Europe, highlighting the actual or potential role played by the Natura 2000 network.
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This rich natural and cultural heritage is a defining element of our European identity. It brings communities together, provides shared values and economic growth opportunities, while embracing important aspects of our rich and diverse cultural heritage.

As a major showcase of EU natural heritage, Natura 2000 also offers plenty of opportunities for tourism, recreation, as well as spiritual reflection in a healthy environment, incorporating related cultures and lifestyles. Indeed, many Natura 2000 sites are closely associated with cultural sites. For instance, the 805 World Heritage Sites in the EU, almost 20% are located in or directly on the border of a Natura 2000 site. A further 142 sites (or 42%) are within walking distance (2 km or less away).

Natura 2000 – a showcase of EU natural heritage

Europe has worked hard over the last 25 years to create a network of nature conservation areas across the EU, called the Natura 2000 network, in order to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity in Europe. We can be justly proud of the fact that this is now one of the largest coordinated networks in the world spanning all Member States.

The Natura 2000 network currently contains some 27,000 sites and covers almost 40% of the EU’s land area as well as a significant proportion of its marine waters. Thanks to its size and breadth it enables all EU countries to work together within a common legal framework to conserve our most endangered species and valuable natural habitats.

In reality, it is much more than just a refuge for endangered species or potential role played by the Natura 2000 network. The Natura 2000 network currently contains some 27,000 sites and covers almost a fifth of the EU’s land area as well as a significant proportion of its marine waters. Thanks to its size and breadth it enables all EU countries to work together within a common legal framework to conserve our most endangered species and valuable natural habitats.

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The Natura 2000 network currently contains some 27,000 sites covering almost 4% of the EU’s land area as well as a significant proportion of its marine waters. Thanks to its size and breadth it enables all EU countries to work together within a common legal framework to conserve our most endangered species and valuable natural habitats.

In reality, it is much more than just a refuge for endangered species and rare habitats. It also preserves countless other valuable species, healthy ecosystems, time-honoured land uses, while embracing important aspects of our rich and diverse cultural heritage.

As a showcase of EU cultural heritage, Natura 2000 offers plenty of opportunities for tourism, recreation, as well as spiritual reflection in a healthy environment, incorporating related cultures and lifestyles. Indeed, many Natura 2000 sites are closely associated with cultural sites. For instance, 20% of the 365 World Heritage Sites in the EU are located in, or directly on the border of a Natura 2000 site. A further 142 sites (or 42%) are within walking distance (2 km or less away).

In 2018 alone, 20% of the Natura 2000 sites have received a significant number of visitors, which can in turn have a cascading effect on the local economy through new opportunities for sustainable tourism, business, and produce development around the sites.

The development of new information technology, while decreasing in public budgets has also provided a further link between the two. The 2008 financial crisis and subsequent decreases in public budgets has also provided a further incentive to pool resources and explore potential synergies and opportunities for collaboration in terms of planning and management.

In recent years there has been a growing recognition within the European Union of the interplay between cultural and natural heritage and of the need for greater cooperation between the two. The 2008 financial crisis and subsequent decreases in public budgets has also provided a further incentive to pool resources and explore potential synergies and opportunities for collaboration in terms of planning and management.

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Natural and cultural heritage suffer from a similar range of threats and pressures and is best served by an integrated management approach to ensure their long-term sustainability. One of the main drivers of integration is due to the capacity of cultural and natural heritage sites to attract visitors, which can in turn have a cascading effect on the local economy through new opportunities for sustainable tourism, business, and produce development around the sites.

Synergy heritage also offers important educational and volunteering opportunities for both young and old and encourages dialogue between different cultures and generations.

To explore these issues in greater depth, the Commission recently published a set of case studies on linking Natura 2000 and cultural heritage. They are presenting practical examples of how the management of nature and culture has been successfully integrated across Europe, highlighting the actual or potential role played by the Natura 2000 network.

The study identifies a number of areas where synergies exist between natural and cultural heritage:

• Natura 2000 and historical and archaeological sites. The European territory includes insurmountable sites of great historical and archaeological importance, many of which have also natural values and are, for this reason, part of the Natura 2000 network.

• Natura 2000 and cultural sites in cities: most European capitals and many other European cities host both cultural heritage and natural assets, which are often protected as Natura 2000 sites. These sites can play a major role in raising awareness of urban wildlife through learning, exploration and recreational pursuits.

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LAS MEDULAS, SPAIN: SPLENDID NATURAL IN ANCIENT MINES

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MATERA, ITALY: A SUBTERRANEAN CITY WHERE CULTURE AND NATURE LIVE SIDE BY SIDE

The Italian city of Matera is located in the southern region of Basilicata. It is famous for its San Giovanni “Harmon”, a spectacular system of dwellings and churches carved into the rock, inhabited since the Paleolithic age. The site is both a World Heritage Site and part of the Natura 2000 network. Two very rare species, the lesser sand-finch and the orange hunting falcon occur here. The Mensola Masseria di Serra is an example of an integrated management planning.

UKONSAARI, FINLAND: THE NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL HOME OF THE SÁMI

Ukonsaari is one of Finland’s most renowned ancient remains and the most famous sanctuary of worship for the Sámi people. It forms an important part of the Sámi culture and identity. It is also an important Natura 2000 site situated in lake Inari which is Finland’s third largest lake. The area is managed in an integrated and highly collaborative way, involving all stakeholders and authorities. This is helping to ensure that the natural and cultural values of the site continue to be protected while maintaining traditional land uses and encouraging tourism to develop in a sensitive and sustainable manner that is well adapted to local conditions.

MOUNT ATHOS: A PERFECT BALANCE BETWEEN NATURE AND CULTURE

Mount Athos, the ‘Holy Mountain’, is located in north-eastern Greece. The peninsula, with its 20 ancient monasteries is only accessible by sea, contributing to its sense as an ancient natural landscape, as for its magnificent landscapes and high biodiversity. It is both a World Heritage Site and a Natura 2000 site. Thanks to EU LIFE funding and the successful and systematic implementation of an integrated and multidisciplinary management plan, the monks are restoring the peninsula’s flourishing virgin forests and in creating a landscape worthy of the spiritual and cultural importance of Mount Athos and its monasteries.

NATURE CONCERTHALL, LATVIA: USING CULTURE TO IMPROVE AWARENESS OF NATURE

Nature Concert Hall is an innovative approach to raising public awareness of nature conservation. The idea originally stemmed from musicians wishing to break out of traditional concert venues, and scientists wanting to find new ways to interest the public in biodiversity and conservation. The concept of Nature Concert Hall has proved to be a great success, with up to 10,000 spectators annually. The interactive approach has also inspired thousands of people from different backgrounds who would normally not be interested in nature conservation.

THE EUROPEAN GREEN BELT: NATURE ALONG THE FORMER IRON CURTAIN

An extraordinary ecological network and living memorial landscape has developed along the former Iron Curtain, which divided the European continent into east and west for nearly 40 years. Unwittingly, this inhospitable border region has conserved many valuable habitats and acted as a retreat for numerous endangered species. Recognising this valuable heritage, the European Green Belt initiative aims to protect, maintain, reconnect and restore natural and cultural heritage features over some 12,500 km and across more than 20 countries. Almost 150 governmental and non-governmental organisations are working together in the Green Belt, preserving a monumental landscape of immense natural and cultural heritage.

Linking nature and culture: factors of success: A number of elements have been identified from the Commission’s report Linking Natura 2000 and natural heritage case studies that can contribute to ensuring the visibility and accessibility of initiatives aimed at protecting, managing and utilising natural and cultural heritage features for the benefits of all.

- a single management body in charge of both natural and cultural aspects or at least an inter-disciplinary approach, a shared, long-term vision and harmonised legal frameworks for protection;
- sound knowledge of all assets that represent the cultural and natural heritage of a site;
- effective engagement of local residents and stakeholders;
- a precise assessment of ecological and cultural sustainability versus sustainable use (visitors, economic activities, etc.);
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- monitoring of impacts, e.g. of tourism on the overall sustainability and socio-economic viability of the initiatives.
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- integrated management plans and planning tools to combine different management prescriptions and objectives and overcome potential conflicts, e.g. use of zoning.

For further information:

- European Year of Cultural Heritage: https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage


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The European Green Belt: Nature along the former Iron Curtain

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