



## 14 European Sites shortlisted for 'The 7 Most Endangered' programme

### Roman Amphitheatre in Durrës, ALBANIA



Photo: Courtesy of the Association for the Development of Cultural Tourism, Tirana, Albania

The Amphitheatre of Durrës, dating back from the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, was discovered only in the 1960s. It is located in the very centre of the city, known in antiquity by the name of Epidamnos or Dyrrachium. It is one of the most remarkable heritage sites not only in Albania but in the whole Balkan region.

The Amphitheatre of Durrës, with a capacity for 15.000 to 20.000 spectators, was in use for more than three centuries. There is no precise information regarding the cause of interruption of its activities. This could have been caused by a devastating earthquake (345-346 AD) or an edict of the Emperor Theodosius ordering the closing of all pagan centres (391 AD). Later, the amphitheatre was used for Christian religious events, as testified, for instance, by a graceful early Christian chapel.

The experts have identified a variety of threats to this monument, ranging from water percolation, erosion, inadequate city planning, neglect and inadequate conservation and maintenance to lack of both financial resources and public awareness. There are a few interesting joint research projects in action, particularly with Italian counterparts, however more appropriate measures of research and conservation need to be implemented.

Given its outstanding importance and its exceptional stature and beauty, the amphitheatre already attracts numerous tourists. The nominator, the Association for Development of Cultural Tourism, is confident that the renovation and preservation of the site will have a big impact on the revitalization of the entire city, thus putting Durrës back on the map of historic sites in Europe.

## St. Paul and Peter Church, Aragatsotn, ARMENIA



Photo: Courtesy of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia

The church of St. Paul and Peter is a single-nave structure of the 5<sup>th</sup> century which was changed into a domed hall in the first quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It is the oldest example of this type in Armenia and one of the first in religious architecture in general. The church was repaired and extended in the 1890s, but lost its roof and southern wall in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What now stands is a partial ruin, but an important one, originally forming one part of a group of three monuments, including the church of Tookh Manuk (4-5<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the mortuary chapel of St. Vardan.

The two other monuments in the group were moved to higher ground with the flooding of the village during the construction of the Aparan reservoir in the 1960s. The church of St. Paul and Peter was carefully researched but left *in situ*. The waters of the reservoir rise and fall with the season, partially inundating the church. This is leading to increased instability in the remaining walls, and encourages the growth of vegetation, threatening to dislodge further stones.

The site has been nominated for 'The 7 Most Endangered' programme by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia. Rescuing the remains of this important church can only be accomplished with international expertise and support. The present alarming situation calls for urgent action.

## The Buffer Zone of the Historic Centre of Nicosia, CYPRUS



Photo: Courtesy of the Cyprus Architectural Heritage Organisation

The aftermath of the Cyprus dispute saw the creation of the Nicosia Buffer Zone in 1974, which cuts across the historic and architecturally rich centre and has disrupted the city's cohesion and continuity for almost 40 years. The corridor's heritage spans from beautiful medieval monuments to elegant neoclassical buildings and traditional workshops. Once the focal point of craft and trade, the historic heart of Nicosia is sadly today a lifeless corridor of 1.5 km.

These decades of abandonment have undermined the high architectural value of the buildings and have had a devastating impact on the environment and living conditions of the historic centre as a whole. It is due to its symbolic and historical significance and the preponderant collaboration between the two major communities of Nicosia, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, that the Nicosia Master Plan Project received a Grand Prix from the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra Awards in 2011. Initiated in the 80's, this master plan is crucial not only for the preservation of the historic centre of Nicosia as a whole but it also provides a vital resource for the future unification and integration of the city.

Despite 40 years of divisions, the local community is today more united than ever in wanting to reclaim their city centre. This extraordinary example of heritage acting as a force of peace and cooperation is in urgent need to be gradually implemented, and calls for action. It is now time for the master plan, which includes historical analyses, surveys, studies for emergency support of buildings, restoration proposals, and an enormous digital record, to be followed by specific projects of restoration and regeneration.

The nomination for 'The 7 Most Endangered' was made by the Cyprus Architectural Heritage Organisation.



## Vauban's Fortifications in Briançon, FRANCE



Photo: Courtesy of Europa Nostra France

The site of Briançon has been a strategic location since ancient times given that it is located at the crossroads of various valleys of Savoy (annexed to France only since 1860) and France, not far from Italy. During the 17th century, the renowned military engineer Vauban, was chosen to adapt his defense concepts and his experience to design elevated fortifications in this complex site of mountains. In order to complete this outstanding work, more fortresses were subsequently built.

Today, a combination of natural elements and human interventions are threatening this unique site.

- The degradation of the rocky foundation and the frost striking at 1600 meter of altitude put a great strain on these constructions.
- In addition to the devastating effects of the frost, one must mention those of lime. This natural fertilising agent that is used as a mortar, facilitates the development of roots which obstruct drainage pipes, penetrates walls and breaks the masonry.
- The lack of maintenance since the Second World War has accelerated the degradation of these gorgeous fortifications.

UNESCO recognized the importance of the Vauban's fortifications and in 2008 classified them as a World Heritage Site. For its part, the municipality has developed an active policy concerning the restoration and promotion of its heritage since 1984. Moreover, a local association (CVM) is working to restore and revitalize the site in cooperation with the city. The neighbouring regions are also committed to participate in the effort to restore the site, as much as the Ministry of Culture over the period 2012-2014.

Europa Nostra suggests that the fortifications of Briançon be included in the list for 'The 7 Most Endangered' sites in Europe, highlighting its historical, artistic, cultural importance and its fabulous tourism potential.

## Gaslight and Gas Lamps in Berlin, GERMANY



Photo: Bertold Kujath - Gaslicht-Kultur e.V.

The romantic, historically valuable and perfectly functional gas street lamps have been part of Berlin's cityscape for almost 200 years. No other city in the world has preserved gas lighting to such a scale which confers to the city its unique character.

Walking in the streets of Berlin at nighttime, illuminated by the soft yellow light diffused by thousands of gas lamps, give both residents and tourists the sensation of going back in time. In 1826 there were only 26 lamps. In 1939 there were 88.000. Today 42.500 gas lamps remain. In conjunction with gasholders, water towers, factory and administrative buildings of gasworks, they are outstanding witnesses of the industrial era. In several neighbourhoods of Berlin both the gas lighting and the buildings were constructed in the same period, constituting an identity ensemble of the urban landscape. The four original types of lamps (traditional, suspended, top-piece and in-line) followed in fact the trends of industrial design from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the post-World War II.

Berlin's gas street-lighting has been adapted over the decades and is currently in a good and well-functioning state. The proposed replacement of gas lamps with electrical lamps, which has already resulted in the conversion of 1.500 lamps since 2012, is opposed by the local community and numerous tourists.

The Association for the Promotion of Old Churches (Förderkreis Alte Kirchen) has been actively involved in the NGO campaign in support of gas lights and made the nomination for 'The 7 Most Endangered'. The organisation highlights the acute threat to these pieces of industrial heritage and calls for national and international support in order to stop or delay the conversion process. The nominator advocates, among others, that the use of gas lighting as a tourist brand would attract more visitors and therefore additional income to the city.

## Former Royal Estate of Tatoi, near Athens, GREECE



Photo: Dimitris Ioannidis

The formerly Royal Estate of Tatoi, which covers a protected area of 4.200 hectares, combines natural beauty with great historical and architectural interest. It was the creation of King George I (1845-1913), who reigned from 1864 and bought the estate in 1872. Under him and his successor the Estate bustled alike with activity and with eminent visitors but was also economically viable through the cultivation of a vineyard, the creation of a dairy farm and the operation of a small hotel.

The Estate's rapid decline began under the Junta (1967-1974). Tatoi became the property of the Greek state in 2003 and was listed in the same year, on the application of Elliniki Etairia to the Central Committee for Contemporary Culture. In parallel a two volume history and description was written by Dr. Kostas Stamatopoulos. Recently considerable conservation work has been undertaken. The overall condition, however, falls far short of what is required if the Estate is to contribute what it can to historical memory, to the pleasure of the many Athenians who flock there at weekends and to both the national and the local economy. Meanwhile new dangers have appeared as a result of the economic crisis in Greece.

Elliniki Etairia presented an outline plan for the management of the estate in 2005. It has now been nominated for 'The 7 Most Endangered' with the Tatoi Friends' Association as partners. The nominator argues the necessity both of retaining government ownership and of creating a new, centralized and effective, management structure that will support ongoing high standards of conservation while reestablishing traditional economic activity and increasing revenues from tourist visits. Thus Tatoi will once again become economically viable, avoiding the greatest danger of all, namely the destruction of the Estate's integrity, due to the economic crisis, and displaying to visitors both its natural beauty (as part of a National Park and Natura 2000 area) and its historical and architectural significance.



## Citadel of Alessandria, ITALY



Photo: CAST Archives, Università del Piemonte Orientale 'Amedeo Avogadro'

The Citadel of Alessandria, built in 1732 by Carlo Emanuele III King of Sardinia represents one of the greatest examples of 18<sup>th</sup> century fortifications with bastions in Europe. It was one of the most spectacular forts of the Napoleonic Empire and the scene of several important moments for Italian and European history.

The building was last used to host a regiment of the Italian army but following the restructuring of the military force in 2007, the Citadel ended its military function and thereafter the site began a slow decline. The future of this important 74-hectare site is now uncertain and is further threatened by the financial challenges that the City of Alessandria is facing. The Citadel is neglected and requires major interventions for the protection and restoration of its ancient structures, for example the windows of the buildings are broken allowing birds to enter and settle inside. Among the various urgent needs for maintenance, the threat represented by the proliferation of ailanthus, a highly invasive weed whose roots crept into the ground seriously undermining the walls and the very integrity of the Citadel.

Fondo Ambiente Italiano (FAI), which has nominated the site for 'The 7 Most Endangered' programme, believes that the site should not only be restored but brought back to life by promoting a new urban, economic, social and environmental use, such as a centre of education, university or housing. It believes that this can be achieved without spoiling the look of the citadel but by exploiting its characteristics and potential. FAI hopes that its inclusion on 'The 7 Most Endangered' will help raise the profile of the challenges facing these historic buildings and secure a viable future for them.

## Renaissance Monastery of San Benedetto Po, near Mantova, ITALY



Photo: Courtesy of Italia Nostra

San Benedetto Po, located in the northern Italian province of Mantova, owes its reputation as an outstanding example of artistic, architectural and religious importance to the namesake abbey complex founded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The main buildings were designed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Giulio Romano, who, apart from his architecture also exemplified by the Palazzo Te in Mantova, is the only Renaissance artist mentioned in Shakespeare's work. The small town is also remarkable for its efforts to preserve regional cultural and craft traditions displayed in the Polironiani Museum within the abbey.

During the last decade, the abbey underwent an extensive and costly restoration that returned this masterpiece to its former splendour, following a programme based on the best scientific and art-historical standards. The work had been largely completed when the earthquakes of 20 and 29 May 2012 struck, severely damaging the abbey and setting back the restoration already accomplished. Consequently, large parts of the abbey have become inaccessible due to the risks of falling debris or collapse.

In response to the nomination by Italia Nostra, this site was shortlisted for 'The 7 Most Endangered' in recognition of the existential threat caused by a natural disaster and of its uniqueness in Europe's cultural heritage.



## Manueline Style Monastery and Church of Jesus in Setúbal, PORTUGAL



Photo: Mario Peneque

The Monastery of Jesus in Setúbal, concluded in 1494, is one of the first examples of the Manueline or Portuguese Late Gothic style, which skilfully incorporates maritime elements and representations brought from the pioneer voyages of the Portuguese discoverers. Better known - and better preserved - examples of the Manueline architectural style include the Monastery of Jerónimos and the Tower of Belém in Lisbon.

Recognised as a symbol of Europe's history - the setting for the ratification of the signature of the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 between Spain and Portugal, which paved the way for Europe's expansion both to the Americas and to the Far East - the monument was attributed the "European Heritage Label" by the European Commission in 2011.

Despite its outstanding importance, this gem of our common heritage has been closed to the public for more than 20 years and is in an advanced state of decay, which urgently calls for European support and solidarity. Some currently ongoing restoration works are too limited to lastingly save this prime monument, including its remarkable columns and tiles. The complete restoration of this ensemble would act as a catalyst for a true renaissance of the important but neglected historic city of Setúbal.

The Monastery and Church of Jesus was nominated for 'The 7 Most Endangered' by the Portuguese Historical Houses Association (Associação Portuguesa das Casas Antigas).

## Roşia Montană Mining Landscape in Transylvania, ROMANIA



Photo: Ivan Rous

Situated in the western area of the Carpathian Mountains, the landscape of Roşia Montană has been gradually transformed by gold and silver mining, from prehistoric surface works to deep underground galleries, continued in medieval and modern times, up to the 1970's. Hence the subterranean heritage, consisting of a vast gallery network (some 150 km, out of which 7 km from Dacian and Roman times) and in situ equipments and artefacts, as well as surface habitation vestiges - Roman funerary sites, edifices and roads, medieval and modern areas - together with small towns and villages, nestled down in the mountain valleys.

Along centuries, the settlers coming from various parts of Europe created communities of an interesting cultural diversity, to mention only the 5 denominations (catholic, orthodox, greek catholic, unitarian, calvinist), whose churches and houses are still witnesses of their way of life. All the surface features - paths, roads, reservoirs, water channels, stamping areas and Roşia Montană in itself - demonstrate a positive interaction between man and environment, which has resulted in one of the most representative mining landscapes in Europe. The site as a whole and 50 of its components are listed as historic monuments and two geological formations as natural monuments.

A major threat to the site and the vast surrounding area is the large-scale open-cast mining project promoted by a Canadian company, which is the main shareholder of the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC).

The nomination for 'The 7 Most Endangered' programme was made the Pro Patrimonio Foundation. Together with other national and international organisations and various local NGO's they have campaigned over the years against the RMGC project. They advocate an alternative, sustainable, long-term development project based on the assets now in danger - the mining landscape, the cultural and natural heritage - which would lead to the re-emergence of social and economic models based on traditional building and farming.

## Neolithic Archaeological Site of Vinča-Belo Brdo, near Belgrade, SERBIA



Photo: Courtesy of the Association for Preserving and Fostering of Vinča's pre-Neolithic Culture

Vinča-Belo Brdo, located on the right bank of the Danube river to the southeast of Belgrade, is one of the most important neolithic settlements in Southeast Europe, giving its name to a neolithic and eneolithic culture (so-called Vinča culture) lasting at least from the 6<sup>th</sup> to end of the 5<sup>th</sup> millenium BC. Its stratigraphic deposits with remains of wattle-and-daub-houses and a millenium worth of material culture formed a settlement mound with several meters of cultural deposits. Vinča culture itself expanded all over Serbia and its neighbouring countries.

This prehistoric site is highly threatened not only by the structural lack of funds but also by its proximity to the Danube's river bank. The site's basic infrastructure needs to be improved to allow the continuation of scholarly excavations, access for tourists and enhanced interaction with the local community. With European expertise and funding, this site could develop into a valuable research and educational site on Europe's Neolithic era and a key tourist attraction in the Danube Valley.

The nomination for 'The 7 Most Endangered' was made by the NGO Association for Preserving and Fostering of Vinca's Pre-Neolithic Culture (Udruženje za očuvanje i negovanje vinčanske kulture Neolit). Its members are not archaeologists or specialists in site management but enthusiasts with a great feeling of responsibility.



## Neighbourhood of El Cabanyal-Canyamelar in Valencia, SPAIN



Photo: Vicente Gallart

El Cabanyal-Canyamelar is a residential area near the seaport of Valencia, Spain. On these old streets, running parallel to the sea, we encounter a traditional and vibrant working-class Spanish community. The municipality of Valencia is intending to build a road to the seaport whereby large areas of this district would disappear. The local community has for years tried to stop the infrastructural plans of the city. Although the individual buildings are not of a particular architectural interest, it is the social fabric of the neighbourhood which lies at the heart of this nomination.

With its closeness to the city, the harbour and the state university campus, there are opportunities to regenerate the area and so enhance the economic and social potential of this seafront district. As the discussions have been ongoing for 15 years, the uncertainty had brought the district into a negative spiral; buildings have deteriorated and some have been abandoned. It has attracted people who live on the margins of society, adding to a feeling of insecurity, degradation and real estate speculation. The ongoing dispute has also hindered the maintenance, conservation and renovation works of buildings by residents, local industry and business owners.

The Fundación Diego de Sagredo, which has nominated this neighbourhood for 'The 7 Most Endangered' programme envisions an evolutionary approach to make the area attractive for the inhabitants as well as for visitors. As the polarisation between the different stakeholders has only increased over the years, its inclusion on the shortlist for 'The 7 Most Endangered' may help to create new momentum.

## St. George Armenian Church in Mardin, TURKEY



Photo: A. Alkan

Mardin is a town with a very old Christian tradition, surrounded by many early Syriac Christian churches and monasteries. The local authorities, who are aware of the potential economic advantages from tourism, are supportive of restoration projects in the town.

St. George Church, a prominent landmark in Mardin, has been abandoned since the deportation of Armenians in 1915, an event which caused deep wounds that have not yet been healed. It is impressive that the nomination of this church for 'The 7 Most Endangered' has come from Europa Nostra Turkey, with the support of the owner, the Mardin Armenian Catholic Church Community Foundation. St. George Church is a Grade I registered historical building, which epigraphic evidence dates back to 420 AD but which attained its current form in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today the church is in such a bad state of preservation that it is not in use.

A scholarly conservation of St. George Church would not only preserve a fine building with a long history but would represent a major contribution to the enhancement of the distinguished town of Mardin. The continuation of the neglect would be disastrous for the monument itself and for the town as a whole.

## The Historic City of Hasankeyf and its Surroundings, TURKEY



Photo: Courtesy of the Cultural Awareness Foundation

Hasankeyf, for centuries a regional hub, bears testimony to the rule of Romans, the Byzantine Empire, the Artukids and Ayyubids (for whom it was capital city) and Akkoyunlu, before being absorbed into the Ottoman Empire. It sits between the Tigris river and the Tür Abdin plateau in southeastern Turkey. By the 1960s much of the lower city was ruinous, but it still contains a number of monuments including the citadel's Great Mosque (12<sup>th</sup> century), the majestic Artukid Bridge (12<sup>th</sup> century), 40m high and 200m long, the Koç Mosque (12<sup>th</sup> century Artukid or 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century Ayyubid) and the Zeynel Bey Tomb (15<sup>th</sup> century).

The construction of the Ilisu dam will result in the flooding of the entire city and its surroundings will be completely lost. The authorities have allowed little archaeological study of the site by foreign academics, as would normally be the case, meaning that if efforts to prevent inundation fail, the archaeological potential of the site, with all it could tell us about the history of this pivotal area, will be lost as well.

The site has been nominated for 'The 7 Most Endangered' by the Cultural Awareness Foundation. They are supported by a range of national and international bodies in their campaign to prevent the loss of this extraordinary city.

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### To find out more

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