MORE THAN JUST A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

In order to be included in the World Heritage List, an area must be of outstanding universal value. UNESCO uses several different criteria to assess whether an area merits World Heritage Site status. It deemed the Wadden Sea to be globally unique and in at least three of those criteria. It is outstanding in its global importance for the conservation of biodiversity and ecological and geological processes that prevail in the Wadden Sea. It is also unique and is a world-class example of a dynamic intertidal environment. This is ensured thanks to the nature conservation areas and the trans-boundary cooperation in the Wadden Sea.

Unique in its variety

The Wadden Sea has many different kinds of habitat and therefore offers a home to more than 10,000 species, from single-celled organisms to fishes, birds and mammals. Every year as many as 10 to 12 million birds on their way from their breeding areas in Siberia, Canada or Scandinavia to their wintering grounds in West Europe and Africa stop over in the Wadden Area for short or extended periods. Only here will they find enough food to complete their journey of thousands of kilometres. The Wadden Sea is thus crucial for the conservation of the global biodiversity.

Natural forces and dynamics prevail

The Wadden Sea is unique in the whole world in demonstrating how nature, plants and animals adapt themselves to constantly changing conditions, in an area where freshwater (from land) and salt water (from the ocean) meet. The continuous interplay between wind, sand and tides in the Wadden Sea has created an incredible range of plants and animals specially adapted to cope with these changes. This huge variety is the magnificent result of natural processes that have been at play since the last Ice Age.

Young and unique

The Wadden Sea is geologically a very young area. The landscape, including its mudflats and dunes, was formed and is being formed rapidly. At the same time, the area reveals a lot about our planet’s recent geological past, i.e. the era from the last Ice Age (10 to 12 thousand years ago) to the present. The Wadden Sea shows the dynamics of how entirely new landscapes take shape. Today, you can see with your own eyes how the landscape has evolved – and how it continues to do so.

More information?

Would you like to find out more about the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site?

Then visit our website:

www.waddensea-worldheritage.org

There you will also find useful links to other organizations that are active in the Wadden Sea Area.

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The Wadden Sea World Heritage Site

The Wadden Sea World Heritage Site encompasses almost the entire Dutch coast, the North Frisian Islands, Germany and Denmark, comprising more than 6,500 square kilometers along a coastal strip of about 300 kilometers. The Wadden Sea is a protected area where more than 100 years, diverse marine and coastal areas in the North Sea, Germany, and Denmark. The protection status as World Heritage Site has neither influence on the protection status of the area nor removes national regulations. The fact that the area has now become a World Heritage site is largely due to the efforts of the government and the involvement of the public.

The Wadden Sea is unique in the world!
The Wadden Sea forms an unparalleled, dynamic landscape. Nowhere in the world will you find such a vast, varied area, sculpted by the constant flow of tides. Even now, changes are noticeable on a daily basis. A complex system of channels and streams alternates with exposed mudflats and sand banks. You will find mussel beds, dense patches of sea grass and mud flats full of shellfish. On the low-tide shore, the islands and tidal flats, extensive flowering salt marshes alternate with white beeches and dunes. This unique varied landscape means the Wadden Sea provides habitats for more than 10,000 plant and animal species and is a crucial stopover for millions of migrating birds.

Experience the Wadden Sea – walking across the living seabed!
Low and high tide alternate every six hours in the Wadden Sea, bringing about stunning changes to the landscape almost every minute of the day. You can experience this the whole year round. During low tide, it is possible to walk far out onto the mudflats—and, in some areas, even from the mainland to one of the islands or Halligen. You’re actually walking on the living seabed! The best and safest way to experience the true magic of the place is under the leadership of an experienced guide. Walking on the mud flats, you will hear only the sound of wind and the calls of the birds. Here you can see for yourself how the constant interaction between wind, water, and land has shaped this landscape since the last ice age—and how it continues to do so. A skein of geese cackles in the air. A wader cautiously picks its way on the muddy-exposed seabed, looking for worms and shellfish. Cockles and worms under your feet, causing new formations in the sand and sand banks. Here you can see how the landscape has been shaped by the wind and water. The salty air and mud-rich waters fill your senses. Cockles and worms under your feet, causing new formations in the sand and sand banks. Here you can see how the landscape has been shaped by the wind and water. The salty air and mud-rich waters fill your senses. Cockles and worms under your feet, causing new formations in the sand and sand banks. Here you can see how the landscape has been shaped by the wind and water.

World Heritage Site since June 2009
In June 2009, UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, added the Wadden Sea to the World Heritage List. This puts the Wadden Sea on the same footing as other world famous natural wonders on the World Heritage List like the Grand Canyon in the USA and the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. The Wadden Sea is a unique and irreplaceable part of the world’s natural heritage, and its protection is essential for the preservation of biodiversity on a worldwide scale.

What is a World Heritage Site?
A World Heritage Site is a monument, area or landscape of natural and/or cultural-historical value which is of outstanding universal value and therefore needs to be protected as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole. Under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, adopted in 1972, member states committed themselves to protect the globally outstanding cultural and natural heritage within their boundaries and to assist other states in the preservation of such areas. Germany, Denmark and Denmark have also signed the Convention.