



PRESS RELEASE

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European Heritage Days 2017: Celebrating the intrinsic relationship between people and nature

The [European Heritage Days](#) (EHDs), a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, are the most widely celebrated participatory cultural events shared by the citizens of Europe. The pan-European nature of the events contributes to bringing citizens together and highlighting the European dimension and the value of cultural heritage in the 50 signatory States of the [European Cultural Convention](#). Over 70 000 events are organised every year in order to help raise awareness of Europe's common heritage and the continuous need for its protection, as well as to create shared cultural heritage experiences, promote inclusiveness and foster creativity and imagination.

In this year's edition of the [#EHDs](#) we are celebrating the intrinsic relationship between people and nature under the common theme: "[Heritage and Nature: A Landscape of Possibilities](#)". Emphasis is given to heritage values embodied in nature and to the extent to which the environment shapes people's lives and lifestyles and its contribution to their well-being and socio-economic growth.

Join in the adventure across Europe and "go back to nature" with a technology-free day or adopt a protected area or a place of biodiverse significance in your community. Perhaps you would prefer to venture out on a geocaching treasure hunt, or plant a tree as a natural monument, or maybe even build your own weather station?

How about visiting a tree with the largest number of owls in Kikinda, Serbia or strolling through an exhibition dedicated to water as an energy source in Bologna, Italy? Or visiting Scotland to see the Moray Firth Dolphins in a Pictish fort? If sport is your game, trek over San Marino and discover breath-taking landscapes such as the Canepa Cave, the complex of the ancient mills and the Sanctuary of Tanaccia.

If music is your passion, you can witness a picnic concert in Glasgow where classical chamber music will be performed in the Hidden Gardens, or join a tribute to Finnish nature by four different choirs in Koli National Park. In Sweden you can enrol your child in a competition to create houses for bees and butterflies or join in discovering the diversity of potatoes and old heritage species.

"This year's theme encourages citizens to look closer at the space around them, appreciate its beauty, be inspired and find new values of nature around them. It allows them to look at all the different places that are bringing meaning, value and joy to their everyday lives. It is a great opportunity to help people acknowledge how human culture shapes the environment and how nature's processes reshape culture. The European Commission is supporting policies focusing on the need to manage and care for natural landscapes as composites of both natural and cultural heritage,

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as well as on the links between cultural and natural heritage," said Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport.

Would it surprise you to learn that there is the Bear Festival organised within the EHDs? We have heard that sculpting wooden bears – using a chainsaw! - is the most natural form of self-expression among Finnish self-taught artists. Or that swans, geese and ducks swim towards predators such as foxes in order to avoid being preyed upon by surprise? Visit England and find out about 'duck decoys' – their Dutch origins, how the decoys worked, tricks of the trade, and why so many fell into disrepair.

In Russia, visitors can play games in Atazhukinsky Garden, the largest park in the North Caucasus, and learn about the 156 species of trees and shrubs brought here from all over the world. Austria's "Green Belt Center" in Windhaag showcases how an area which once marked the divide between East and West has become a belt of life and the biggest protected natural reserve in Europe.

"The European Heritage Days are a unique experience for celebrating cultural diversity and the colourful stories of a vibrant and diverse Europe. As the most widely celebrated cultural programme in Europe, the EHD festival acts as a powerful tool to inspire the imagination and build true participation in cultural life. The Council of Europe is dedicated to its vision of raising awareness about our shared values and the challenges that communities are confronted with in a rapidly evolving Europe including, not least, the threats to our natural environment," said Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

If you are into nature, there are too many examples to even begin with. Why not visit the Blaca's Desert in Croatia and see how the eco-systems of both cultivated and wild landscape co-exist, or see the Japanese garden of Varga Marton Horticultural School in Budapest. In France, you can try your hand at stonemasonry in Oise's historical Sarazin quarry or go on a story-telling trek in the mountains of Alsace.

In fact, nature-seekers can choose from an abundance of organised events. Hands-on activities for all the family include wool-spinning, corn-thrashing, bread-baking, soap-making, bat-watching, star-gazing, kite-flying, roof-thatching, wood whittling, wild-food-foraging, pollination-promotion, beehive-weaving, insect-identification and hedgerow-treasure-hunting!

About European Heritage Days

Celebrated in 50 signatory States to the European Cultural Convention, European Heritage Days highlight the diversity of local skills, traditions, architectural styles and works of art that constitute shared European Heritage. Launched in 1985 in France, the festival has been organised as a joint initiative of the European Union and the Council of Europe since 1999. Enabling citizens to explore a wide range of cultural assets through a number of themed events organised for free, European Heritage Days help uncover hidden histories of people and places that have helped shape the culture and heritage of Europe.

The events take place from late August to October, when local skills, crafts and traditions are put into focus at cultural events all over Europe. The aim is to increase understanding of a shared European past, encourage appreciation of traditional values and inspire new heritage conservation and education initiatives. Cultural heritage is a priority under [Creative Europe](#), the EU's programme for the cultural and creative sectors. The European Heritage Days receive €200 000 in support from Creative Europe and €200 000 from the Council of Europe, with most events being funded with national or regional backing.

To find out more

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