

SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE TOURISM STRATEGY FOR THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF STRALSUND AND JASMUND NATIONAL PARK



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Commissioned on the basis of the Subsidy Contract No. STHB.02.01.00-SE-0091/16 for the ERDF co-financing of DUNC - Development of UNESCO Natural and Cultural assets, a project of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020

This Strategy is prepared within the implementation process of DUNC - Development of UNESCO Natural and Cultural assets, a cross-border cooperation project of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020

Part-financed by the European Union (European Regional Development Fund)



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FOREWORD

As of 2020, there are 1121 World Heritage sites listed by UNESCO in 167 countries worldwide. Of all this abundance and diversity of the sites, we have elicited and focused on the coastal cultural World Heritage ones. A UNESCO-listed property is considered as coastal if it was established or flourished thanks to the sea, maritime trade or coastal processes, even though today it might be further away from the sea (e.g., Ostia Antica, Bruges or Vanha Rauma). Currently, there are 258 coastal and hinterland cultural World Heritage sites: 127 - in Europe, 52 - in Asia, 47 - in the Americas, and 32 - in the rest of the World.

A vast Eurasian continuum of maritime civilizations, crafts, industries, trade, commerce, warfare and other sea-related activities - from Europe to the Far East - has engendered the largest number of coastal cultural UNESCO World Heritage sites. It comes as no surprise that almost half of all coastal cultural World Heritage sites are in Europe bearing in mind a long cultural tradition of coastal and maritime economy and a very indented coastline of Europe. Most of these coastal cultural World Heritage sites throughout Europe are, well-preserved, restored, and became appealing assets for tourism development of various kind - from cultural tourism to cruise ship calls.

Five of the 258 coastal cultural World Heritage sites in the World are either transboundary ones or listed in more than one country, including the Curonian Spit, a transboundary coastal cultural landscape in the South Baltic Area shared by Lithuania and the Russian Federation. Altogether, there are 17 coastal and hinterland cultural UNESCO World Heritage sites in the South Baltic Area: one heritage city of European naval history, two prehistoric cultural World Heritage sites at the seaside, three cultural landscapes at the seaside, three properties of modern coastal architecture and industry, and eight properties of the classical European coastal cultural heritage.








The South Baltic Area is a region where coastal cultural World Heritage sites, without exaggeration, are unique on the World scale. Throughout the Middle Ages and the Modernity, it was the playground of several Northern European superpowers (including the Hanseatic League). Nowadays, there is a clear added value in coastal cultural World Heritage sites in the South Baltic Area since these are valuable assets for sustainable tourism development. A South Baltic seaside-heritage-experiential tourism cluster emerges comprising World Heritage sites, seaside resorts, coastal cities and creative sector outlets sharing a common vision, the key brand elements, unique selling points, and iconic images.

Promotion of sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in the South Baltic Area is among the key priorities of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020. The Programme aims at unfolding South Baltic's potential for blue and green growth through cross-border cooperation between local and regional actors from Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. Regarding tourism, the Programme aims to increase the development of the South Baltic area's natural and cultural heritage assets into sustainable tourist destinations. In this effort, the Interreg South Baltic Programme focuses on blue and green tourism services, products and tools that help to increase the number of visits in cultural and natural heritage sites.

DUNC (Development of UNESCO Natural and Cultural assets) is a three-year project of the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020 jointly implemented by seven partners in three South Baltic coastal regions of Sweden, Germany and Lithuania and focusing on four coastal cultural World Heritage sites: the Naval Port of Karlskrona (Sweden), the Historic Centres of Stralsund and Wismar (Germany), as well as two cultural landscapes - the Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland (Sweden) and the Curonian Spit (Lithuania/Russia). The strategies and action plans for the South Baltic coastal cultural World Heritage sites comprise one of the main deliverables of the DUNC project aimed to facilitate the South Baltic collaboration in building synergies between World Heritage conservation and tourism interests.

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INTRODUCTION

DUNC (Development of UNESCO Natural and Cultural assets) is a three-year project of the 2014-2020 Interreg South Baltic Programme, part-financed by the European Union (European Regional Development Fund). It is a cross-border cooperation effort of seven partners located in Germany, Lithuania and Sweden. Five of the project partners - Municipality of Karlskrona (Lead Partner, Sweden), Municipality of Mörbylånga (Sweden), Curonian Spit National Park Administration (Lithuania), Hanseatic City of Stralsund (Germany), and Hanseatic City of Wismar (Germany) - represent four South Baltic coastal cultural UNESCO World Heritage sites: the Naval Port of Karlskrona, the Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland (both in Sweden), the Curonian Spit (Lithuania/Russia), the Historic Centres of Stralsund and Wismar (Germany). The other two project partners, EUCC Germany and EUCC Baltic Office (Lithuania), represent EUCC - Coastal and Marine Union, which is the Europe's largest coastal and marine conservation network.

The overall objective of the DUNC project is to achieve that these coastal cultural UNESCO World Heritage sites in the South Baltic Area jointly develop a concept which makes use of the World Heritage sites and their Outstanding Universal Values as catalysts for developing sustainable tourist destinations. To achieve the main objective of the DUNC project, altogether there are over 30 activities planned throughout the three-year project implementation period. All the activities within the DUNC project are divided among six work-packages: WP1 is dedicated to Management and Coordination, WP2 - Communication and Dissemination, WP3 - Joint Quality Management, WP4 deals with Identification of synergies and collaboration on development and provision of products/services, WP5 - Stakeholder involvement, and WP6 - Long-Term Governance.

The main objective of WP3 is to jointly form strategies and action plans for sustainable tourism through exchanging good practice, learning from other South Baltic coastal cultural UNESCO World Heritage sites and

cross-border sharing of best expertise. It is directly linked to the Main Output 1 of the DUNC project: Strategies for sustainable tourism and accompanying action plans jointly produced and integrated in or added to management plans. Relying on the definition of main output provided in the Interreg South Baltic Programme Manual, the Main Output 1 of the DUNC project represents the main achievement of the WP3 activities: its main product and the main contribution of the product in achieving the overall DUNC project results and objectives.

Referring to the Main Output 1, and to the WP3 of DUNC, the project description explicitly states, that there should be site-specific sustainable tourism strategies and action plans jointly developed for all the five target coastal cultural UNESCO World Heritage sites of the DUNC project, and those should be integrated into the management plans or added to existing UNESCO-implied management plans of the target sites. The strategies and action plans, as well as the cross-border activities, were partly tested and implemented during the project lifetime.

To achieve the main objective of WP3, as well as the main project objective, two project deliverables (intermediate steps of the project that can be both tangible and intangible) were delivered in WP3:

- Deliverable 3.1. Producing a baseline for the partners in the project.
- Deliverable 3.2. A cross-border framework for sustainable tourism strategy implementation in the South Baltic Area.

It is clear from what is said above, that delivering the Deliverable 3.2 (A cross-border framework for sustainable tourism strategy implementation in the South Baltic Area) is the pivotal project activity in the final phase of the DUNC project implementation providing a solid basis for continuity of project achievements.

There are two UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania:

- Historic Centres of Stralsund and Wismar;
- Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe.

Parts of two UNESCO World Heritage serial properties are in a single administrative district of Western Pomerania-Rügen (Vorpommern-Rügen) of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. These are the Historic Centre of Stralsund and the ancient beech forests of Jasmund National Park on the Island of Rügen.

The ancient beech forests of Jasmund National Park on the Island of Rügen were designated by UNESCO in 2011 as a Nature World Heritage Site along with other European Primeval beech forests. The Historic Centre of Stralsund and the ancient beech forests of Jasmund National Park formally do not comprise a single UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, the geographical proximity, administrative and tourism integration of these two UNESCO World Heritage sites encourages both sites to function as the centres of a single UNESCO World Heritage tourism region.

These two UNESCO World Heritage tourism centres, as well as their seaside and hinterland resorts and national parks, are the core zone of the Northwest Pomeranian tourism region where 2.2 million tourists spent 10 million nights in 2018. A well-developed comprehensive system of sustainable heritage tourism in the Northwest Pomeranian tourism region has excellent prospects. By its very nature, a sustainable heritage tourism network of Southwest England is a model to follow for the Northwest Pomeranian tourism region. It includes two UNESCO World Heritage sites of Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape, as well as Dorset and East Devon Coast. Regarding the tourist offer, these two sites are in a close relationship with famous seaside resorts of the Celtic Sea.

Previous research has shown that both the Historic Centre of Stralsund and the ancient beech forests of Jasmund National Park enjoy good management as UNESCO World Heritage sites. On the other hand, in the absence of a timely action to promote sustainable heritage tourism based on a clear vision and strategy, with the rising popularity of Northwest Pomerania as a tourist destination, it is easy to lose control of tourist flows. It is what happened during a hot summer of 2018 in other coastal World Heritage sites of Europe, e.g. on the Adriatic coast of Croatia when it was challenging to manage tourist flows sustainably. This situation is likely to recur ever more often in the face of climate change.

COVID-19 poses a severe threat for sustainable tourism. Too strict anti-pandemic measures may ruin the tourism and hospitality sector. However, 50% of Germans love to spend their holidays in their own country. Hence, COVID-19 gives new opportunities for Vorpommern-Rügen to benefit from the domestic tourism rise.



1. NORTHWEST POMERANIA AS A WORLD HERITAGE TOURISM DESTINATION

The district of Vorpommern-Rügen is a newly-created administrative entity existing since 2011. The outline of the modern Vorpommern-Rügen district is similar to that of the early Medieval Slavic Principality of Rügen. It was a pagan prehistorical quasi-political entity since the 10th century best known for its legendary pagan temple on Cape Arkona dedicated to the chief Slavic pagan god Svantovit.

The core zone of the district of Vorpommern-Rügen, namely the coastal area of the Baltic Sea along the Western Pomeranian Bodden chain, the Strelasund Sound, and the entire Island of Rügen belonged to the same tribal and, later, political entities for many centuries.

In 1168, King Waldemar I of Denmark allegedly destroyed the great idol of Svantovit at the temple on Cape Arkona and Christianised the local Slavic population. As a result, the Principality of Rügen became a fiefdom of Denmark still ruled by the local Slavic dynasty. In 1325, the Duchy of Pomerania annexed the Principality of Rügen and gained control of the territory. It happened when, after the death of Prince Wizlaw III of Rügen, the Slavic line of the princes of Rügen died out, and the Griffins, the ruling dynasty of the Duchy of Pomerania, its eastern neighbour, wrestled the principality after a war with the Duchy of Mecklenburg, its western neighbour. The region was greatly affected by numerous calamitous conflicts and border changes since the Middle Ages, but also saw prolonged periods of prosperity, mainly due to maritime trade.

In that very time, the Hanseatic League emerged as a powerful commercial and defensive confederation of northern German merchant guilds and trade hubs. The league, which emerged from a few north German cities by the end of the 12th century, dominated maritime and inland trade in the

vast area of Northern and Central Europe for three centuries. Merchants from the Hanseatic port cities of northern Germany, trading with their counterparts from London, Bergen and Bruges in the west to Reval (Tallinn) and Novgorod in the northeast, formed guilds to protect and further their interests. The network of Hanseatic trade hubs extended in the late Middle Ages from the Baltic Sea to the North Sea and inland and gradually decreased by the mid-1500s. Yet, the legacy of the Hanseatic period persists in Europe.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Duchy of Pomerania which was ruled by a princely dynasty of Griffins belonged to the Holy Roman Empire and was a significant regional political entity or several entities after a few partitions. Although its territorial and political configuration and borders changed often and quite drastically from the 12th to the 17th century, the Hanseatic City of Stralsund and the Island of Rügen remained closely related through all political, religious and economic vicissitudes of Northwest Pomerania also known as Pomerania-Wolgast. Yet, Stralsund and other cities of the Duchy of Pomerania which were members of the Hanseatic League acted independently from the princely court, and quite often conflicted with the dukes.

Founded as a Slavic fishing settlement in the 10th century, the town of Stralow became a significant coastal trade hub in the 12th century already. Prince Wizlaw I of Rügen awarded the Lübeck law to Stralow in 1234. After six years, in 1240, when Wizlaw I granted additional land for the development of the town, he already called it Stralsund. The success and rapid growth of Stralsund disturbed the mighty Free City of Lübeck, whose fleet under the command of Alexander von Soltwedel (ca. the 1230s - ca. 1291), a prominent councillor of Lübeck burnt Stralsund down in 1249. After the fire, Stralsund citizens had rebuilt the town and enclosed it with a massive defensive wall having eleven gates and 30 watchtowers.

Stralsund became a member of the Hanseatic League in 1293. Since the city was in the area of a Danish fief by then, it was almost natural that the Stralsund merchants made their first trade connections there. The maritime trade with the distant Reval, which was also under the Danish rule by then, flourished. As the medieval Baltic World opened up, Stralsund began to establish links with other parts of the Baltic Sea Region. The northern Russian port of Novgorod was a long-haul destination for cogs, but a very appealing one for business due to high profits from the trade of squirrel skins, the essential commodity of that remote area.

Large shipments of the squirrel skins were exported from Novgorod to meet the voracious demand of the Western European nobility for fur-trimmed mantles and other trendy garments of high Middle Ages. As a result, trade relations with merchants from Flanders, Spain, Italy, France and southern Germany also became vital for the merchants from Stralsund at that time. Close trade connections also existed with England (London) and Sweden (Visby). The growing economic power enabled the Stralsund citizens to purchase far-reaching privileges from their sovereigns which led almost to full autonomy. However, the citizens of Stralsund never succeeded to gain the legal status of a Free City, enjoyed by the citizens of Lübeck or Hamburg.

Due to its convenient position, Stralsund played a crucial strategic role in the plans of the respective rulers of the Principality of Rügen and, later, of the Duchy of Pomerania. The 'change of hands' when in 1325, the Duchy of Pomerania annexed the Principality of Rügen, was very beneficial for the Hanseatic city of Stralsund. After Stralsund became one of the essential western maritime outposts of the Duchy of Pomerania, it had entered its 'Golden Age'. As already mentioned, Stralsund and other cities of the Duchy of Pomerania, which were members of the Hanseatic League, have managed to keep considerable autonomy throughout the entire Hanseatic period.

Between the late 13th Century and late 15th Century, the Old Market Square (Alter Markt), with the Gothic Town Hall (13th Century), which was the heart of the Historic Centre, was planned and developed. Behind the Town Hall soars the monumental St. Nicholas' Church (Nikolaikirche), constructed in 1270-1360. Houses of wealthy merchant families and guilds surround the Old Market Square. St James Church (Jakobikirche), St Mary's Church (Marienkirche) and many more impressive edifices were built in the brick Gothic style by then.



Stralsund in 1611

Stralsund had the trade monopoly on the Island of Rügen and the bid on both ferry services between Rügen and the mainland (the inn 'At the Old Ferry' established in the 1330s is functioning as an inn still today). The construction industry experienced a massive upswing in the 14th and 15th Centuries, both through the renewal of existing and the construction of other fortifications as well as the construction of magnificent gabled houses by Stralsund merchants. The grand façade of the Town Hall also appeared at the end of the 14th Century. Likewise, in the 15th Century, the Stralsund merchants invested money to expand the Gothic churches (and to rebuild the St Mary's church).

Stralsund's economic role in the Wendic quarter of the Hanseatic League was undoubtedly almost equal to Lübeck at that time. The political significance of Stralsund and its ambitious mayor Bertram Wulflam (ca. the 1320s - ca. 1393) found its expression in the choice of Stralsund for the sealing of the results of the Hanseatic League's negotiations with the Kingdom of Denmark, which went down in history as the Stralsund Treaty. The well-preserved Wulflam House on the Old Market Square of Stralsund is an impressive reminiscence of that period.

Since the mid-14th Century, Stralsund was the second most important Hanseatic city in the South Baltic Area after Lübeck. 300 cogs flying the flag of Stralsund sailed the Baltic Sea. The Hanseatic upheaval period of Stralsund was crucial for the Gothic architectural heritage of the city.



A reconstructed Hanseatic cog

At the beginning of the 1520s, the Reformation overwhelmed northern Germany. In 1523, the Stralsund City Council accepted Luther's teachings. By the end of 1525, the Diet of the Hanseatic League allowed each member city to decide on its official faith and Stralsund opted for the Reformation. In spite of the German Peasants' War of 1524-1525 which caused a lot of havoc around and within the city, Stralsund's trade with the ports along the Baltic Sea coast and with Northern Europe continued to flourish. Above all, agricultural products from Western Pomerania were traded and sought after. Fish, spices, salt and wine were the primary imported commodities.

Against the interests of Lübeck, trade and customs freedoms were negotiated between Stralsund and Sweden. Stralsund became the bridgehead of Sweden on the continent. After the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, the Stralsund Council was in secret negotiations with the kings of Denmark and Sweden, who were both Protestants and professed opponents of the Catholic Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1628, King Gustav Adolf of Sweden landed with his army at Stralsund and took the city by surprise to the great joy of its citizens. Each year, the citizens of Stralsund celebrate the retreat of Imperial troops led by Albrecht von Wallenstein during the Wallenstein Days festival.

The period of Swedish rule (1628-1814) left many impressive buildings throughout the Historic Centre of Stralsund as well as the fortifications surrounding the city. Particularly impressive Baroque edifices appeared around the Old Market Square after the siege of Stralsund in 1678 and the fire of 1680.

The Meyerfeld Palace, also known as the Swedish Government Palace, was completed in 1730. The front façade is overlooking the Old Market Square since it was built on a larger joined property instead of the former four Gothic gabled houses destroyed in 1678. Similarly, the front façade of the Artus Court in Stralsund is also overlooking the Old Market Square. The Artus Court was rebuilt in 1702 in the Northern Baroque style.



The Artus Court

For the last thousand years, beech forests prevailed on Rügen. The beech forests are very competitive and today would occupy almost all areas in Europe without human exploitation. They thrive on fertile limestone soils and barren sandy areas alike, in dry and damp locations, in the mountains as well as in

the lowlands. However, beech timber was the most readily available raw material and therefore used for many human purposes since the pre-historic times, including the production of red clay bricks for the impressive Medieval Gothic cathedrals of the Hanseatic port cities of the South Baltic Area.

By the end of the 18th Century, the acreage of primeval beech forests along the South Baltic seacoast has shrunk to the last final patches of nature sanctuaries. Currently, the ancient beech forests have survived only on 0.02% of their former habitat in Europe, including a deeply hidden and remote Jasmund National Park on the Island of Rügen. Jasmund is a peninsula in the northeast of the island. Here a 7.5 km long and up to 4 km wide patch of an ancient beech forest remains to represent a tiny part of an intact ancient beech forest of northern Germany, in which the natural cycle of growth and decay is undisturbed and which once covered the entire continent.

The history of nature conservation on Jasmund dates back as early as the 16th Century. The Duke of Pomerania issued the first Forest Protection Act in 1586. The conservation aim was protection of the forest as a game habitat for deer hunted by the nobility.



Ancient beech forest on Jasmund

The last patch of the ancient beech forest on the Island of Rügen was able to survive for centuries and preserve its pristine character due to a long history of nature conservation in the north-eastern corner of the island. Yet, the frequent changes in the ownership didn't change the conservation status of the

Jasmund Peninsula. Finally, in the early 1800s, Wilhelm Malte I, Prince of Putbus (1783 - 1854) acquired Jasmund from the Swedish Crown and turned it into one of his favourite possessions due to its magnificent chalk cliffs.

In the Age of Romanticism, the popularity of the white chalk cliffs frequented by Pomeranian nobility and even the members of the royal family of Prussia was instrumental in preserving the surrounding ancient beech forest as an integral part of the iconic coastal landscape.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, the plans for industrial exploitation of chalk at Jasmund started threatening the integrity and even the very survival of the white cliffs of Jasmund. This threat has prompted the nature conservation activists to lobby towards the Government of Prussia for designating a nature reserve in Jasmund. The lobbying process was successful, and in 1926 the nature reserve Jasmund was officially established. In 1934, the Government of Prussia upgraded the conservation status of Jasmund Nature Reserve by a special decree. It almost reached the category of the national park except for the name.

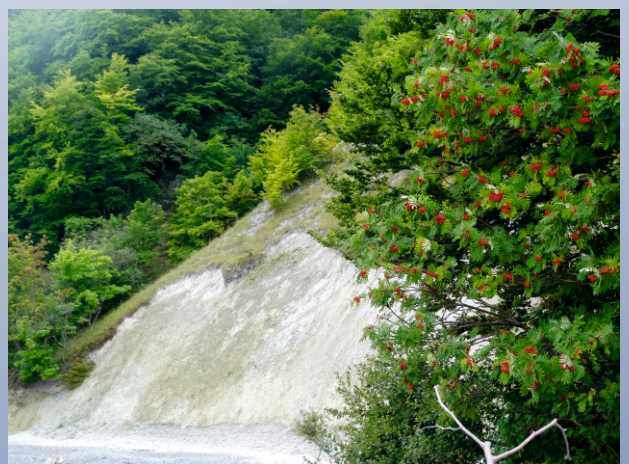
As the rapid political change of 1990 in the former East Germany threatened the formerly restricted areas with uncontrolled tourism development, efforts were taken to designate the most valuable nature areas as national parks or biosphere reserves before the large-scale land restitution and privatisation took place. The GDR national park program was a one-off process to award the highest possible

Jasmund National Park was created by the last government of East Germany in 1990, just before the German reunification. It became the smallest, but one of the most popular national parks in the Federal Republic of Germany each year attracting ca. 1 million visitors.

In 1945, after the World War II, Stralsund and Rügen became part of the Soviet Occupation Zone in Germany. During the era of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) numerous prefabricated panel housing estates were built in Stralsund, but, differently from Greifswald, the historic centre of Stralsund was spared both from major destructions during the World War II and from major reconstructions during the GDR time. Economically, the city flourished mainly thanks to shipbuilding at Volkswerft Stralsund shipyard.

After the political changes of 1990, Stralsund was designated a model city for sustainable urban reconstruction by the Federal Government of Germany. The historic city centre was completely renovated with the help of the federal financing programme for urban sustainable reconstruction and conservation.

nature protection status to 14 large natural areas in the new federal states of the reunified Germany. This process resulted in five national parks, six biosphere reserves and three nature parks designated in less than a year.



Jasmund National Park

2. GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES OF THE REGION

As part of the district reform in the German federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania in 2011, the previously independent city of Stralsund and the counties of Rügen and North Western Pomerania were merged into a new district of Western Pomerania-Rügen (Vorpommern-Rügen). It is a district in the very north of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania bounded by the Baltic Sea to the north and the district of Rostock to the west, the Mecklenburg Lake District (Mecklenburgische Seenplatte) to the south and Vorpommern-Greifswald to the east. The district of Vorpommern-Rügen includes the northern part of Western Pomerania and a small part of Mecklenburg west of Recknitz and Trebel. Vorpommern-Rügen is by area the fifth largest district in Germany. The district seat is the Hanseatic city of Stralsund.

The climate of Vorpommern-Rügen is in the temperate zone. Summers are mild and moderate, with a mean temperature in August of 16.3 °C and winters are not very cold, with mean temperatures in January and February

of 0.0 °C. Rügen enjoys the average annual rainfall of just 520-560 millimetres and ca. 1800-1870 hours of sunshine annually, which is relatively much. In Stralsund, annual precipitation is 656 mm, which is also low, falling within the lowest third of all precipitation values in Germany. February is the driest month; the most rainfall is in July. The rainfall varies relatively moderately throughout the year. Only 40% of weather stations in Germany exhibit lower seasonal variation.

Very diverse coastline features the Germany's largest island of Rügen. Königsstuhl is one of the highest cliffs in the Baltic Sea (118 m above sea level). Rügen also claims the highest number of sunshine hours in Germany. Therefore, the island is sometimes called a 'German Riviera'.



Hooded beach chairs on the Island of Rügen

Varied coastlines feature Vorpommern-Rügen with many boddens (lagoons), sandy and shingle beaches and some of the highest cliffs in the whole Baltic Sea Region, part of them protected in the two national parks - Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft and Jasmund. Meanwhile, the nearby lesser

Hiddensee Island is an idyllic narrow barrier island with white sand beaches, and without any motorised traffic. The Strelasund Sound separates the Western Pomeranian mainland from Rügen.



The bodden coast of Rügen

The Hanseatic city of Stralsund is the largest city of Vorpommern-Rügen, which together with the nearby Greifswald forms a regional center of the larger Western Pomeranian region. On 1 August 2016, Stralsund was awarded the status of 'state-designated leisure resort', except of its four industrial boroughs. Stralsund is also the administrative centre of Vorpommern-Rügen. Branches of the district administration are in Bergen on Rügen, Grimmen, Ribnitz-Damgarten and Barth. The district is a member of the transnational federation of the Euroregion Pomerania. The western part of the Vorpommern-Rügen district also benefits from its proximity to the Regiopole Rostock with its diverse economic opportunities. Ribnitz-Damgarten, Bergen on Rügen and Grimmen are medium-sized towns in

Vorpommern-Rügen designated as medium level development centres. The Regional Spatial Development Program of Western Pomerania (RREP) of 2010 also identifies the following towns as local level development centres in the district: Bad Sülze, Barth, Binz, Franzburg/Richtenberg, Garz/Rügen, Marlow, Putbus, Sagard, Samtens, Sassnitz, Sellin/Baabe, Tribsees and Zingst. Notably, the absolute majority of these local-level development centres in the Vorpommern-Rügen district are state-designated health or Baltic seaside resorts aiming to gear their development towards sustainable wellness and wellbeing tourism services. This feature of the Vorpommern-Rügen district could facilitate building strong synergy with the proposed sustainable heritage tourism development strategy.

Rural areas of the Vorpommern-Rügen district are traditionally specialising in agricultural production. However, with every year ever more rural tourism farms offer their services for tourists interested in visiting the hinterland of the Baltic seacoast. In a region with a long agrarian tradition, there are many historical manors, palaces and estates which are often listed as cultural heritage properties testifying the historical role of Vorpommern-Rügen as an outstanding agricultural region, not only as a coastal area. Furthermore, modern urbanites ever more tend to live in rural areas of the district due to peace, quiet and convenient conditions for commuting to work in the Regiopole Rostock or the regional centres of Stralsund and Greifswald.

The 1000-km-long Baltic Sea coastline in the Vorpommern-Rügen district is one of the most diverse and attractive in the Federal Republic of Germany in environmental and tourism aspects. There are many state-designated health or Baltic seaside resorts and two national parks - Jasmund and Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft - in the district.

The district includes Rügen, the largest island in Germany with the two offshore islands Hiddensee and Ummannz. Also, the peninsula chain of Fischland-Darß-Zingst south of the Baltic Sea, which represents an essential seaside tourism area, belongs to the Vorpommern-Rügen district. Besides the two national parks - Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft and Jasmund with a total acreage of 835 km², there is also a Biosphere Reserve Southeast Rügen on this large and diverse island. The Baltic Sea coastline in Jasmund National Park is a real gem of Vorpommern-Rügen.

Jasmund is best known for some of the highest cliffs in the Baltic Sea. The ancient beech forests behind the cliffs are also part of the national park. These cliffs are bright-white, looking particularly appealing in the sunshine and from the Baltic Sea because they are made of chalk. However, as this material is very loose, the chalk cliffs constantly collapse and retreat, especially after a major storm or a winter thaw. The Wissower Klinken, which was one of the most scenic and well-known chalk outcrops, collapsed into the sea on February 24, 2005, in a landslide caused by spring-thaw.



The chalk cliffs of Rügen

Twenty municipalities comprise the district of Vorpommern-Rügen. Their size ranges from the community of Zingst with 3000 inhabitants to the Hanseatic city of Stralsund with 58000 inhabitants. In 1989, the population of Stralsund reached its peak with over 75000 inhabitants. After that, the population started to decline due to the enormous structural changes following the reunification of Germany. After the political change in the GDR in 1989/1990, between 1990 and 2008 the city lost well over 20% of its inhabitants. In the last years, however, a turnaround has become apparent, i.e., the decline first slowed down, and in 2012, there was a slight increase in the population of Vorpommern-Rügen for the first time since 1990. Stralsund was able to maintain its population growth also in the following years, and by December 31, 2018, its population has reached 59421.

A very similar picture regarding population dynamics was characteristic for the entire district of Vorpommern-Rügen: first a sharp decline and then, starting from 2012 - stabilisation followed by a slight increase. Of course, being the largest city of the district, Stralsund, naturally, has a significant impact on the overall picture of population dynamics in Vorpommern-Rügen. There are many remote rural areas which still suffer from protracted depopulation. According to a forecast by the Ministry of Energy, Infrastructure and Digitisation of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the population of Vorpommern-Rügen will further drop by 6.7%, i.e., from current 225 thousand to less than 210 thousand by 2040. According to the forecast, 36.5% of people in Vorpommern-Rügen will be over the age of 67 by 2040.

The maritime industry, especially shipbuilding and ship repair, and the port industry plays a significant role in Vorpommern-Rügen, particularly in Stralsund, which is the engine of the regional economy. There is also a large seaport for cargo ships with 25 cargo loading berths in the Stralsund Maritime Port. Besides the port sector, Stralsund enjoys a well-developed machine-building industry producing food processing machines, precision devices, agricultural machinery.

The relatively convenient transport links with the mainland, the fishing traditions and the support of the European Union and the German Federal Government have enabled Sassnitz to remain competitive in the fish processing sector. Rügen fish AG (formerly Rügenfisch GmbH) has its head office in Sassnitz. The company modernised after the German reunification employs about 200 people and produces an extensive range of canned fish.

Tourism is one of the sectors of economy in Vorpommern-Rügen with a long history and deep regional roots. Stralsund has a municipal port which has several marinas suited for yachts, river cruise ships and fishing boats. Sassnitz is an economic centre of the Island of Rügen.



Sassnitz

3. OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUES OF THE WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTIES

According to the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO, founded in the 13th Century, the medieval city of Stralsund on the southern Baltic Sea coast was a key trading centre of the Hanseatic League in the 14th and 15th Centuries. Stralsund represents complementary although different trading structures as a leading centre of the Wendic quarter of the Hanseatic League from the 13th to 15th Centuries. In the 17th and 18th Centuries, it became an administrative and defensive centre of the Swedish Crown for the Pomeranian territories. In this way, Stralsund contributed to the development of the characteristic building types and techniques of Brick Gothic in the Baltic Sea Region, using fired brick.

Fired bricks could be moulded in different forms, thus permitting some very elaborate architecture as exemplified in Gothic brick cathedrals of St Nicholas and St Mary, the Town Hall of Stralsund, and in the series of houses for residential, commercial and crafts use, representing the city's evolution over many centuries. In the 17th and 18th Centuries Stralsund contributed to the development of Swedish military art integrating another layer of cultural influences. The typology of merchant houses was developed here in the 14th Century and later became a characteristic feature of many Hanseatic towns.



The Historic Centre of Stralsund

The island location of Stralsund remained unchanged since the 13th Century. To this day, the distinctive silhouette of Stralsund is characterised by the outstanding buildings of Brick Gothic architecture and the layout of its medieval quarters. All features to convey the city's significance as one of the leading centres of the Hanseatic League are preserved. According to the official description of the Outstanding Universal Value of the UNESCO World Heritage property "Historical Historic Centres Stralsund and Wismar" pertinent to the Historic Centre of Stralsund:

Criterion (ii): Stralsund, a leading centre of the Wendic quarter of the Hanseatic League from the 13th to 15th Century and major administrative and defence centre of Swedish Pomerania in the 17th and 18th Centuries, contributed to the development and proliferation of brick construction techniques and building types, typical features of Hanseatic towns in the Baltic Sea Region, as well as the development of defence systems in the period of Swedish Pomerania.

Criterion (iv): Stralsund has crucial importance in the development of the building techniques and urban form that became typical of the Hanseatic trading

towns, well documented in the major parish churches, the Town Hall of Stralsund, and the commercial building types, such as the Dielenhaus.



The Dielenhaus (Hall House)

Owing to the city's position, the valuable silhouette of Stralsund has been well maintained and the boundary of the medieval town can still be traced well. It is thus possible to appreciate the silhouette of the Historic Centrescape without major changes. The area is however susceptible to visual disruption by new development. The damage suffered in World War II was relatively minor, and a large amount of original architectural substance from the Middle Ages and subsequent periods has survived.

Stralsund contains a large number of authentic historic structures representing the evolution from the Hanseatic period to the Swedish age. As a centre, which was continuously inhabited and always the heart of urban life, Stralsund has continuously preserved the original use and can therefore be described as authentic.

All features and structures to convey the sites significance as a leading centre of the Hanseatic League are preserved. Today's high standards with regard to the preservation of monuments have been applied, whereby highest priority is attributed to the preservation of the authentic material. The Historic Centre of the Hanseatic City of Stralsund is protected in its entirety as an area of historical value in the context of the laws on the protection of historical buildings and monuments of the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, which require that all building measures are subject to approval.

Additional protection is ensured by the respective regulations on areas of historical value and the preservation, design and redevelopment statutes adopted to secure integrity and authenticity. Designated buffer zones surround the components of the World Heritage property. Stralsund has a management plan for the World Heritage property, which is updated regularly. The municipality involves local and external experts who encourage consistency and appropriate solutions in building and town-planning practice (Architectural advisory

board and World Heritage council). The city also has a local coordinator for the World Heritage management.

The main challenge, considering the heritage tourism development is that while taking care of the World Heritage promotion, the municipality doesn't regard Stralsund as a tourist destination of its kind. Therefore, it doesn't put many efforts in making the city core more attractive for tourists.

Tourists gaze at the City Hall, at the warehouses and the Gothic brick churches, and enjoy their beauty but without any more in-depth understanding about their history and heritage value. They consume the city just by seeing it when they are on vacation on Rugen. And this attitude poses a challenge for tourism business in the centre of the town. It is a genuinely tremendous challenge to direct the community's view on the World Heritage values into one of an asset for tourism development securing higher income and better living conditions in the town that has no more profound tourism traditions.



The Old Market Square of Stralsund

The inhabitants of Stralsund are employed in various industries and services and don't need employment in the tourism sector too much, which is difficult, unstable, low paid, and seasonal. Another challenge for Stralsund as a tourist destination is that the World Heritage status does not play a significant role in attracting tourists to the city. Although the World Heritage designation is supposed to be related to the tourist appeal of the site, in the case of Stralsund, it is not. Yet, as a recent development in Stralsund shows, private HORECA businesses can be activated and become interested in providing their ideas and participating in decision-making related to the World Heritage management if they unite into an association.

In 2003, one year after UNESCO-listing, the World Heritage Advisory Board was appointed by the mayor of Stralsund to advise citizens and the municipal administration in matters related to World Heritage. The Advisory Board consists of 15 members and meets once per month in a closed session. The members

discuss various issues related to the World Heritage, make suggestions, give valuable input to the work of the municipality and promote the World Heritage idea. HORECA business association should also have a position on the municipal World Heritage Advisory Board.

“Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe” is a transnational property which covers 12 countries. Under this name, UNESCO lists numerous spatially separated beech forest areas in Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Austria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Ukraine world natural heritage. Primeval forests in Slovakia and some of the forests in Ukraine were included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage in 2007 as a transnational natural heritage known as the Beech forests in the Carpathians. In 2017, the list was supplemented by 63 further entries, so that it now contains 78 entries.



Ancient beech forest on Rügen

The UNESCO World Heritage list includes beech forests from various phytogeographic zones. An initial designation of five German beech forests took place in 2011. While the stocks in the Carpathians are referred to as real virgin forests, in Germany, apart from tiny Primeval relic areas, it is a natural, old-growth forest. In addition to the 500-hectare core area in Jasmund National Park, further large-scale, uncultivated beech forests are well protected in Kellerwald and Hainich National Parks, in Müritz National Park and Schorfheide-Grumsin biosphere reserve.

the Baltic wood barley beech forest, accompanied by orchid beech forests on steep limestone escarpments, with ash-beech forest in brook valleys, as well as alder marshes and peatlands. On the chalk cliff faces, the beech forest gives way to a dynamic mosaic of open areas, bushland and primeval forest. The woods on the cliff faces remain undisturbed due to their steepness and inaccessibility. Due to the complex interactions between climate, landscape and soil, Jasmund National Park exhibits an extraordinarily broad range of habitats.

In Jasmund, the predominant forest type is

In 2011, UNESCO recognized the most valuable old beech forests in Germany as a World Nature heritage. The 3,000-hectare area in Jasmund National Park is home to the largest contiguous beech forest on the Baltic Sea coast, covering some 2,100 hectares.



Ancient beech forest on the chalk cliff in Jasmund National Park

The beech forests themselves inhabit a wide range of nutrient-poor to nutrient-rich and dry to damp sites on limestone and glacial deposits, in numerous different variants. Different types of peatland are scattered throughout the forest in a mosaic-like pattern, and the limestone plain is dotted with a network of streams. During the Ice Age, glaciers repeatedly crossed, flattened and compressed the Jasmund chalk block. As the Baltic Sea developed in the Postglacial period, this dynamic limestone coastline emerged from the forest landscape, rising steeply out of the sea.

The diversity of habitats provides the basis for a wealth of flora and fauna. Particularly noteworthy are the rare lady's-slipper, the giant horsetail and the coralroot. The limestone cliff face is a breeding ground for peregrine falcons and other birds, and there

are several colonies of house martins. The white-tailed eagle also regularly breeds here. A representative landscape section in the east of Jasmund National Park, part of which remains undisturbed by humans, has been designated as a part of the World Natural Heritage property. It spans ranging from the drift line of the Baltic Sea, across the steep coast to the plains, and covers an area of 493 hectares, surrounded by a 2,511-hectare buffer zone.



A White-tailed Sea Eagle over the Greiswald Bodden

4. WORLD HERITAGE TOURISM SUPPLY SIDE

WORLD HERITAGE ASSETS AND MUSEUMS MOST POPULAR AMONG VISITORS

Referring to the number of TripAdvisor reviews left in 2016 to 2019 by the visitors to the UNESCO World Heritage sites of the Historic Centre of Stralsund as well as Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe on the island of Rügen, the most popular heritage assets they visit are the following ones:

Jasmund National Park (429 TripAdvisor reviews). Jasmund National Park hosts a magnificent chalk coast of the Island of Rügen on the Jasmund Peninsula. Ancient beech forests, chalk cliffs and the Baltic Sea form

captivating scenery, which inspired the artists of the Romantic period and even today haven't lost their stunning appeal. Within the 3,102-hectare area under conservation, the largest contiguous beech forest on the Baltic Sea coast covers 2,100 hectares. As part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe", a representative section of ancient beech forests landscape almost unaffected by humans in Jasmund National Park was UNESCO-designated in 2011 extending from the coastline of the Baltic Sea, up the cliff to the plateau.



The Visitor Centre Königsstuhl of Jasmund National Park (374 reviews). The Visitor Centre of Jasmund National Park on the Island of Rügen opened in 2004. Its mission is to deliver information about the National Park and to provide education to visitors on the unique nature of the island of Rügen and the UNESCO World Heritage values. The centre offers an interactive exhibition, a multi-vision cinema and outdoor events. It is behind Königsstuhl, the highest chalk cliff of the Baltic Sea coast. The operator of the centre is the National Park Centre Königsstuhl Sassnitz gGmbH, whose partners are the environmental foundation WWF Germany and the city of Sassnitz. From the opening in March 2004 to July 2015, more than 3 million visitors visited the centre and its exhibition.



The Visitor Centre Königsstuhl

The Town Hall of the Hanseatic city of Stralsund (265 reviews). It represents the style of northern German brick Gothic building whose construction dates back to the years 1300 to 1310. Continuous extensions and renovations ensured an architectural style mix until the 19th Century. The building on the Old Market Square is one of the most important secular World Heritage buildings of

the Baltic Sea Region and is also the landmark of the Hanseatic city of Stralsund. It is located in the core area of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Historic Centre of Stralsund. The Town Hall of Stralsund is listed as number 10 in the list of monuments of the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania based on its patrimonial significance.



The Town Hall of Stralsund



St Nicholas' Church (Nikolaikirche)

St Nicholas' Church in Stralsund (182 reviews). It is the oldest of the three major parish churches of the Hanseatic city of Stralsund. It was first mentioned in documents in 1276. This impressive church on the Old Market Square was named after Nicholas of Myra, the patron saint of sailors. The church is 103 meters (south tower) tall, which is a bit lower than the St Mary's Church on the New Market Square. The total length of the church is 87 meters; the height of the central nave is 29 meters.

St Mary's Church in Stralsund (160 reviews). It is a three-nave church with a transept, a western pseudo-transept, an ambulatory and a chapel-wreath. The basilica at the New Market Square was first mentioned in 1298. It is the largest parish church in the Hanseatic

city of Stralsund. The church is considered a masterpiece of late Gothic in Central Europe. The 104-meter high tower of St Mary's Church offers a view of Stralsund, the surrounding area and the hinterland.



St Mary's Church (Marienkirche)

The German Maritime Museum (258 reviews), also known as the Museum of Oceanography and Fisheries and Aquarium in Stralsund is a museum in which mainly maritime and oceanographic exhibitions are displayed. It is the main building of the Stiftung Deutsches Meeresmuseum Foundation. There are also

three other Foundation sites in Stralsund, namely the Ozeaneum, the Nautineum and the Natureum. The German Maritime Museum is located in the hall of the former St. Catherine's Church.



*The German
Maritime Museum*

OTHER ATTRACTIONS PEOPLE VISIT IN THE WORLD PROPERTY

The Ozeaneum Stralsund (984 TripAdvisor reviews). The Ozeaneum in the Hanseatic city of Stralsund is a natural history museum with a focus on the sea, which belongs to the Stiftung Deutsches Meeresmuseum Foundation. In the Ozeaneum, five permanent exhibitions are shown on 8,700 m² exhibition space where marine worlds of the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and North Atlantic are presented in the aquariums. The largest aquarium holds 2.6 million litres of water. In 2010 the Ozeaneum was awarded the prize of the European Museum of the Year. From the inauguration in July 2008 to November 2017, six million visitors have visited the Ozeaneum.



The Ozeaneum Stralsund



Chalk cliffs of Jasmund National Park

Chalk cliffs of Jasmund National Park (494 reviews). There are several impressive cliffs beloved by visitors in Jasmund National Park. The highest one is Königsstuhl (118 m). The whole coastal area is named Stubbenkammer

and is well-adjusted for visitors with the vantage point Victoria-Sicht, several staircases and a well-marked network of hiking trails.

FOOD AND DRINK ESTABLISHMENTS

Judging from the online reviews left by visitors of many nationalities on the TripAdvisor online review platform in both core tourist sites of the Northwest Pomeranian UNESCO World Heritage tourism region - the Historic Centre of Stralsund and Sassnitz, the main focus and expectations of the visitors for local food and drink establishments is to taste traditional German food and world-famous German beer. These expectations in both places can be satisfied with varying success. The reviews range from 'Great traditional German food', 'Superb German cuisine' and 'Good German beer' to 'Quantity over quality', or 'Tasteless but otherwise OK'.

Many visitors associate their expectations for food and drink establishments with the traditional German hospitality and high-quality service and are very disappointed when they miss it (which might be justifiable in the peak tourist season). The reviews regarding experienced service quality range broadly from 'Bad service', 'Service is a trifle' to 'Great service', 'Staff was friendly' and

'Fantastic personnel!' Some aspects of food and drink establishments are characteristic for the Historic Centre of Stralsund and Sassnitz as peripheral heritage tourism destinations: 'cosy setting', 'views are great', 'good atmosphere and beer'. And yet: 'the harbour bars and restaurants favour groups and coach tours over couples', 'they don't take credit cards though and no English menus.'

The main focus and expectations of the visitors for local food and drink establishments is to taste traditional German food and world-famous German beer. The food and drink establishments in Sassnitz are valued higher on the TripAdvisor platform than the ones in the Historic Centre of Stralsund.

TOURIST ACCOMMODATION OFFER

In downtown Stralsund, the median prices for a double room on a weekend night in a shoulder season are in the range of 100 to 150 €. Most of the city visitors to Stralsund arrive from the nearby Island of Rügen by car, also in the shoulder season. It is reasonable to visit Stralsund and its attractions for a couple of hours on a rainy day when there is nothing to do on the seacoast. It's not surprising that Stralsund Brewery is one of the most popular attractions in the city.

Affluent visitors from Scandinavia, especially from Sweden, can afford to spend a few nights and days in the pricey hotels in downtown Stralsund famous for its beer culture. Sassnitz offers a wider choice of accommodation compared to other coastal South Baltic World Heritage tourism destinations.

The supply of accommodation in Sassnitz is very different from Stralsund because Sassnitz is a popular seaside resort, the capital of the Island of Rügen, which is one of the most popular islands on the German Baltic and North seacoasts attracting millions of holidaymakers from all over Germany throughout the year and from Austria and Switzerland as well. In Sassnitz, there are several hotels which offer accommodation in the double room on a weekend night in a shoulder season for less than 50 € per night. And there are plenty of different accommodation choices, of course again, geared towards the higher end there.



Promenade hotels in Sassnitz

The Top-6 food and drink establishments in the eyes of tourists of any nationality visiting the Historic Centre of Stralsund and Sassnitz who left their reviews are the following ones (in the order of scores). Remarkably, the food and drink establishments in Sassnitz are valued higher on the TripAdvisor platform than the ones in the Historic Centre of Stralsund:

1. **Osteria La Torre** (Sassnitz) - stylish interior, great Italian food and scenic views.
2. **La Bella Vita Restaurant** (Sassnitz) - absolutely very good food. Nice ambience and very friendly and attentive staff.
3. **König Gustav** (Sassnitz) - refined simple and original cuisine with regional and Scandinavian accents
4. **Restaurant Lara** (Stralsund) - bringing together European, German and Central European cuisine traditions into a creative fusion.
5. **Wulflamstuben** (Stralsund) - a cosy, rustic atmosphere in one of the oldest houses in the Hanseatic city of Stralsund, with a touch of history around the mayor Wulflam.
6. **Schipperhus** (Stralsund) - creative cuisine, large portions, chic décor.



5. WORLD HERITAGE TOURISM DEMAND SIDE

If we talk about the administrative district of Vorpommern-Rügen as a complex tourism destination, we have to split it into four different lesser destinations in terms of the number of tourists (staying at least one night) and their visitation patterns. All four destinations attract different tourists, and their role in terms of sustainable tourism development is very different throughout the year. The Historic Centre of Stralsund is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the city also hosts such appealing visitor attractions like Ozeaneum or Maritime Museum. The city attracts many summer daily visitors from the seaside resorts of Rügen, Hiddensee and Fischland-Darß-Zingst.

The Hanseatic City of Stralsund is a typical urban tourist destination, an urban tourist 'honey-pot', Rügen, Hiddensee and Fischland-Darß-Zingst and their seaside and health resorts are post-mass summer vacation destinations whereas the rest of the Vorpommern-Rügen district is the periphery in tourism terms.

The visitor numbers and their overnight stays in Stralsund were steadily increasing till the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, and the annual number of the overnights exceeded half a million in 2016 already. It is an excellent result and a remarkable achievement of tourism developers and service providers bearing in mind high accommodation prices in

downtown hotels. Yet it is also in line with the overall tourism upheaval in the entire federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania which enjoys a robust increase in visitor numbers establishing itself as a leading summer holiday destination of the international scale. Also, the tourist numbers visiting Stralsund have increased accordingly.



The annual tourist number visiting Stralsund and staying there at least one night reached 231'879 in 2018. The increase in the tourist number is 4.7% compared with 2017, while the rise in overnights is 6.0%. It is indeed a piece of welcome news as it means that the

length of stay of tourists in Stralsund might start growing. It was always an unfortunate situation that the duration of stay of tourists in Stralsund hovered around 2.2 to 2.3 nights for many years.

Weekend tourists and daily visitors are not very welcome in any urban destinations since they are not very loyal. They come to the city, enjoy its attractions, and then without delay, leave to another place, most probably, to the seaside or other urban destinations. Therefore, the challenge for Stralsund is to take adequate measures to prolong the stay of those visitors who come to Stralsund just for a weekend. The positive dynamics of tourist demand and especially, the faster increase in overnights than visitor numbers over the last five years might be indeed helpful to achieve this goal.



The tourism growth in Stralsund and the entire Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania didn't end even in the Great Recession of 2008 to 2009 and for good reasons. The analysts studying the global tourism trends in the years of the Great Recession noticed that during the financial crisis, people hadn't stopped travelling or didn't they move less. They just shifted from overseas destinations to domestic ones. It was precisely the case both for the whole federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and also for the district of Vorpommern-Rügen. The same pattern was noted in the dramatic summer of 2020 when the pandemic halted almost any international travel. Instead of foreign, particularly long-haul (Caribbean or Southeast Asian) seaside resorts, German tourists had to go for summer vacation, or a shorter holiday break to the domestic seaside resorts and heritage attractions. Thus, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, including Vorpommern-Rügen, turned out to be a winner.

The port of Stralsund is, moreover, an attractive maritime tourist centre as the main port for river cruise ships in the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, connected with the Spree, Elbe and Oder rivers. In 2018, 110 river cruise ships with 15 thousand passengers visited the port of Stralsund. The port of Sassnitz-Mukran offers ideal mooring conditions for large maritime cruise liners. Passengers walk through a

covered corridor of the ferry and cruise liner terminal directly to the modern reception building. A bus stop is right next to the quay from where regular buses run around the Island of Rügen. Unfortunately, DFDS had discontinued the Ro-Pax ferry line from Mukran to Klaipeda in 2013. Still, there is a regular ferry connection from Mukran to Trelleborg ('The Royal Line') and Ystad (Sweden), as well as to Bornholm (Denmark).



According to the data available from the Stralsund Visitor Centre, over 70% of all tourists visiting Northwest Pomerania as a tourist destination are domestic ones, i.e., they come from other places in Germany. The majority of foreign tourists visiting Northwest Pomerania come from Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland. The tourists and excursionists visiting the city are on average 53 years old (Average in Germany 45 years).

Jasmund National Park is in the hinterland of the many seaside resorts situated on the Baltic Sea coast of Western Pomerania. The visitor number (ca. 1 million annually) and dynamics throughout the year in the national park very much depends on the attractiveness of Rügen as a holiday island and a summer

holiday destination. Visiting the national park is a rainy-day alternative for beach-going as the decreased visitor numbers at the Königstuhl Visitor Centre in hot summer of 2018 compared to 2017 show.

The majority of visitors to Stralsund are German couples travelling without children (62%) and school classes on school vacation trips. In Jasmund, a more active visitor segment prevails with an increased share of couples going without children and school classes on school vacation trips.

The pattern of tourism seasonality is rather satisfactory in Stralsund compared to other South Baltic coastal World Heritage tourism destinations. The challenge for Stralsund is to take adequate measures to prolong the stay of those visitors who come to Stralsund just for a weekend.

In Stralsund, 40% of tourists who stay overnight tend to come in the summer months.

There is also a relatively significant number of guest nights in April to May and September to October, i.e., in shoulder seasons. Although it is a good seasonality pattern, it also reveals deeper problems related to the short stay of tourists in Stralsund. In summer, the majority of visitors to Stralsund are the vacationers who stay at the seaside resorts. When the weather at the seaside isn't fair, they come to Stralsund to visit the Ozeaneum or Marine Museum or to enjoy the World Heritage just for one day.



After visiting Stralsund just for a day, they go back to their seaside resorts to stay overnight. It is the main reason why the curve of guest nights is so smooth throughout the year in the case of Stralsund. Another reason for the smoothness of the seasonality curve is that schoolchildren excursions make quite a

significant share of the visitors to Stralsund. They also come to Stralsund just for one day, visit the Ozeaneum and Marine Museum and then go back home or travel to other destinations. They don't stay overnight in Stralsund either.

It is the infrastructure development issue in the Historic Centre of Stralsund with parking situation during the peak season which also causes a problem for the locals who have to go to their work or to cross the Historic Centre and experience problems with parking the car. Hence, in certain moments, Stralsund already has the same congestion problem as more prominent World Heritage coastal destinations, for instance, Dubrovnik, Barcelona or Venice. So, an important conclusion is that we should interpret Stralsund not only as an urban tourism centre of its kind.

Stralsund also serves as the hinterland for seaside resorts, for those on Rügen first of all. Therefore, the Stralsund tourism managers aim to take active measures to increase the number of visitors staying overnight in the spring shoulder season (April - June) to avoid congestion in the summer peak season. It is an explicitly stated goal by the Stralsund tourism officials which is very reasonable and justified. Eventually, the gained momentum could help to prolong the high season till the very 'velvet autumn'.

Regarding the transport arrival hubs, opportunities to visit Vorpommern-Rügen are much more favourable for motorised tourists and those travelling by train than those who wish to reach the Northwest Pomerania as a tourist destination by plane. As of June 2019, the nearest larger airport, which is Rostock-Laage, has just one regular flight to Munich operated by Lufthansa. Seasonal charters are linking the seaside of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania with Milan and Vienna, but that's it. Berlin, which is ca. 200 km away is the nearest large airline hub. Yet, Stralsund tourism managers rightly consider that bad connection by plane and good connection by train is an advantage regarding tourism sustainability.

The daily visitors cause the problem of congestion in the Historic Centre of Stralsund during the summer holidays and especially when the weather is bad (visiting the city instead of beach). Various incentives (e.g., festivals and fairs) could facilitate an earlier start of the high tourist season.

Stralsund is often called the 'gateway to Rügen'. Two bridges are connecting Stralsund and Rügen. The railways link Stralsund with Sassnitz, Rostock, Berlin, Greifswald and Szczecin. Stralsund is also connected to Berlin and Hamburg by the A20 motorway via the national highway B96. Other main roads are B105 to Rostock, B96 (main road to Rügen) and B194 to Grimmen. In 2007, a new bridge across the Strelasund Sound to the Island of Rügen was opened. As already mentioned, it is one of the longest bridges in all of Germany, which made Vorpommern-Rügen even more attractive for tourism.



The Rügen bridge

The profile of tourists staying at the seaside resorts of Northwest Pomerania is somewhat different. There middle-aged and young families with children prevail, but also many retired couples are travelling without children. More precise data of the visitor profile is missing and needs additional studies. Also, the level of guest experience satisfaction of Jasmund can be judged only from TripAdvisor reviews, which currently stands at 4.

The level of overall guest experience satisfaction of Stralsund as a destination was 3,5 in 2016. It is measured every year in a structured way. The main activities preferred by tourists in Stralsund are visiting the museums, walking or driven city tour and harbour cruises. The main attractions are the Ozeaneum, the Marine Museum, the Historic Centre of Stralsund and the Town Hall. The respondents indicated the top five main reasons for visiting Stralsund in the following order: 80% - attractions; 73% - landscape/nature (apparently having Rügen in mind); 72% - good air; 70% - recreation opportunities; 51% - diversity/quality of the offer.



The essential offers catering for the tourist demand are regionally brewed beer, coffee roasting, marzipan, socially sustainable tourism, educational offers in the museums (nature education), beach on-site, fishing from a sailboat. The interviewed guests noted that the quality of the offer is high in Stralsund. Independent observations indeed confirm this statement. The reason for the excellence of the tourist offer is regular care for its quality. The Stralsund Tourism Board has introduced the following benchmarking and quality assurance systems:

- i-Marke: Certificate for excellent handling with guests and high-quality education of the staff in the tourism information.
- Classification of hotels and accommodation (German hotel & restaurant organisation).
- “Initiative barrier-free” to open up and welcome everybody.

According to the 1096 visitor reviews for the Historic Centre of Stralsund uploaded on the TripAdvisor platform and analysed in the DUNC project, visitors to Stralsund are aware of the significant World Heritage landmarks of the Historic Centre of Stralsund: St Nicholas and St Mary's churches. Adjectives such as 'impressive', 'beautiful', 'large' describe the churches, along with the possibility of ascending to a 104-meter-high tower of St Mary's Church from where one can admire a panorama of Stralsund and the adjacent islands. These views provide a great attraction for tourists which point to the ascent of the church tower and the panoramic views as an indispensable attraction in the Historic Centre of Stralsund.

Also, visitors often mention the Town Hall of Stralsund with a particularly impressive Gothic façade along with the Old Market Square in their TripAdvisor reviews. They know that Stralsund is a Hanseatic city, while St Nicholas and St Mary's churches are red brick Gothic monuments. It is remarkable that, according to the content analysis, visitors are excited by an exhibition about World Heritage. Yet, only a few of them recognise that it is in an authentic Medieval Hanseatic merchant office and a warehouse that has survived till this day. The visitors from many countries who posted reviews on the TripAdvisor platform are unaware of the immense role played by

wealthy merchants in the development of the local economy, culture, history, and architecture. They tend to overlook the luxurious and authentic interiors of the merchant warehouses, although these are essential components of the Outstanding Universal Value. Tour guides do not emphasise this information during guided tours, and it is complicated to find plaques indicating the UNESCO World Heritage-listing of the objekt.

The visitors to the Historic Centre of Stralsund, who left their reviews on the online TripAdvisor platform, are aware of Medieval architecture and Hanseatic heritage of the city. However, only few of the visitors (5%) are aware of the UNESCO World Heritage status.

The limited knowledge of the visitors about the UNESCO World Heritage refers to the fact that none of the reviews mentions any of the impressive authentic Hanseatic merchants' offices and warehouses. At the same time, these are the essential elements of the Outstanding Universal Value of the UNESCO-listed Historic Centre of Stralsund. Visitors are unaware of the heritage features probably because tour guides or tourist brochures do not emphasise these. It might also be the case that visitors to the Historic Centre of Stralsund do not attend guided tours or read tourist booklets.



SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

1. Dedicated transportation planning, especially encouraging the use of local public transport in the city centre, which would mean fewer cars and less parking problems. Also, developing the network of the bike paths, signage and visitor guidance.
2. Promoting the worldwide trend for sustainable products in Vorpommern-Rügen (possible joining the international Cittaslow movement by Stralsund and Sassnitz).
3. The event and entertainment offer in the Historic Centre of Stralsund is currently not sufficient and must be further expanded to bring World Heritage to life and create awareness through events, e.g. Organ days or similar in the shoulder seasons, especially, in spring.
4. Improving quality of non-World heritage-related tourism infrastructure and services: facilitate the usage of reusable coffee cups in the city centre; reusable tableware at city events; training tour guides in nature education or for sustainable fishing tours; promotion of biking, sustainable fishing and other water-based activities; better use of many nature reserves in the immediate area of Stralsund and Sassnitz, recreation areas within the city of Stralsund - numerous parks and playground facilities; avoiding garbage especially in the sea.
5. Sustainable heritage tourism facilitation through dedicated conservation activities focus on enhanced efforts to cultivate traditional crafts both in Stralsund and areas around Jasmund National Park and preserve the historic fabric of the Historic Centre of Stralsund, and to broaden the scope of those activities.



SUMMING-UP

It is critically important how the local stakeholders perceive the Outstanding Universal Value of a World Heritage site. As a HORECA manager from Stralsund said in an interview: “I feel like being a part of this heritage. When I walk to my workplace across the historic centre of the city in the morning, it seems as if these ancient Hanseatic houses speak to me. They tell me their story. I don't care what these old buildings tell tourists.” It is one approach when heritage site managers ignore tourists and consider the Outstanding Universal Value from a conservationist's point of view. Or, conversely, they are nevertheless thinking about how they could appeal to visitors with the heritage values better, but then they need to take visitors' opinion into account as well.

Therefore, for visitors to understand the value and distinctiveness of the site, the communication strategy needs to be appropriate for the site, the community, and the local tourism sector. First, it is necessary to find out, how the site is seen by various target groups and how it relates to the Outstanding Universal Value. Then the message addressing the main tourist target groups must be developed and agreed with tourism service providers. As a private tourist guide from Stralsund emphasised in her interview, “The number of tourists in Stralsund has increased in the last decade because of the UNESCO-listing and large-scale restoration efforts. And it is important to convey a key message to them that Stralsund is a unique place as a World Heritage site because it has a very well-preserved Medieval Hanseatic townscape with impressive Gothic churches, rich merchant houses, and a Town Hall.”

