

P R E S S - I N F O R M A T I O N



VISITOR CENTRE



Organisation
der Vereinten Nationen
für Bildung, Wissenschaft
und Kultur



Buchenurwälder der Karpaten
und Alte Buchenwälder
Deutschlands
Welterbe seit 2007 / 2011

Nationalpark-Zentrum
Königsstuhl
Im UNESCO-Welterbe

KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre | Stubbenkammer 2 | D-18546 Sassnitz/Rügen | Tel. +49 (0) 38392. 6617-66
Telefax +49 (0) 38392. 6617-40 | info@koenigsstuhl.com | koenigsstuhl.com | facebook.com/koenigsstuhl

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KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre | Compact visitor centre

Be influential, enthuse and convince

The central information point for visitors to the Jasmund National Park and those interested in nature conservancy is the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre. It was founded on the initiative of the German WWF, the town of Sassnitz and the state of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania. The KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre is the information provider within the Jasmund National Park Concept. It conveys the beauty and unique wilderness of the Jasmund National Park at the highest possible level in order to achieve a lasting awareness of nature in all visitors.

The visitor centre was opened on 18.03.2004 and has around 300,000 visitors each year. The construction was supported with funds of approx. € 7 million. It is run by Nationalpark-Zentrum KÖNIGSSTUHL Sassnitz gGmbH. Its shareholders are the German WWF and the town of Sassnitz. With 40 employees, six trainees and eight volunteers, this non-profit-making company is operated without any public subsidies.

The corporate world and range

“Be influential, enthuse and convince” – Under this slogan, the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre has a very diverse range on offer. The communication radius extends far beyond the borders of the National Park. The KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre is where people come for information and answers. The nature-conservancy centre communicates to various stakeholders from the areas of the media, tourism and nature conservancy, as well as to guests to the visitor centre. The KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre uses multiform channels to access different stakeholders.

In addition to its visitors, the centre reaches the local population, hotels, holiday homes and gastronomic facilities, German and international travel agents, the daily press, general-interest media and specialist media.

Modern building

The building is a zero-emission construction. The building provides itself with the majority of the resources it requires through a photovoltaic system, a solar and geothermal system, and heat pumps. A reed bed filters waste water, which is then used for the water-saving vacuum toilets. Only natural resins were used for the interior and exterior paintwork. A green roof simultaneously insulates the ceilings, and cellulose wool from recovered paper insulates the external walls. The plaster boards for the internal walls are also the product of recycling. All of the cables for the building services are 100 percent PVC free, and only FSC-certified wood (FSC = Forest Stewardship Council) was used for all of the doors and parquet floors.

Welcome!

The KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre looks forward to receiving its visitors – every day, all year round.

More information is available by phone on +49 (0) 38392. 661766 or on the Internet: koenigsstuhl.com or facebook.com/koenigsstuhl.

KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre | General attractions

Adventure exhibition: Discover the natural world of the Jasmund National Park over 2,000 m² – its origins in the Cretaceous ocean, life underground and the life-cycles of various inhabitants of the National Park. You will be accompanied by an audio-guide system: three themed journeys (also in English translation) are available. Visitors are admitted to the exhibition every eight minutes; the lift can take 25 people per trip.

Multivision cinema: Gain an impression of the phenomenal ancient beech forests in the Jasmund National Park. An exciting and visually-stunning 15-minute film is shown on four screens. Admission is every 20 minutes for up to 70 people.

The Königsstuhl viewing platform: Enjoy the unique view of the Baltic from the world-famous 118 m-high Königsstuhl. The route on foot to the platform from the entrance of the National Park Centre takes around three minutes. There is sufficient space for around 100 people.

Short tour: Hear interesting facts on the Jasmund National Park and the UNESCO World Heritage Site “The Ancient Beech Forests of Germany”. There are fossils to touch, and a specialist guide will answer your questions on the National Park during the short tour, which takes around 25 minutes. A maximum of around 25 people are admitted per tour.

Outdoor site: Take the opportunity to let your children romp around our woodland playground with its adventure parcours in our 28,000m² outdoor site, whilst you relax on one of our numerous seats, enjoy the sun on the recliners or simply take in the unique view of the UNESCO World Heritage Site through our world-heritage window.

Catering: Our National Park bistro offers regional and ecological specialities, which you can also enjoy on the sun terrace; there are seats for over 100 people indoors and outdoors. By booking a bistro package, you can select your required meal in advance and receive reserved seats.

Souvenirs: In the National Park shop, you can find environmentally-friendly products on the themes of the Cretaceous coast, the Jasmund National Park and the island of Rügen, ranging from beautiful postcard images, through the Chalk-Coast Gift Pack to Caspar David Friedrich jigsaws and much more.

Walks: Walks in the Jasmund National Park provide a direct experience of nature. A vivid and thrilling presentation by the guides let all participants become part of the wilderness. When choosing a themed walk, you can decide whether to beachcomb, walk in the footsteps of Caspar David Friedrich or get to know the UNESCO World Heritage site of “The Ancient Beech Forests of Germany”.

KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre | Especially for families, groups & schools

Children and adults are welcome in the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre. Especially for our smaller guests we offer a special trip through the exhibition with the raven Krax and Mimi the mouse. Exciting information on the Jasmund National Park is provided here in a child-accessible way.

But it's not only the exhibition that has surprises for children. On our open-air site we have special climbing trees for children and more game options. Additional attractions in the summer make a visit a full day of adventure.

Forest adventure site

Here there are a large number of open-air activities on a 28,000 m² site. The play equipment can be used by children all year round. The climbing trees provide an opportunity for children over the age of four to let off steam. The Wendy house is available for smaller children. A swing rounds off the physical activities for small and large visitors.

National Park Theatre

In July and August, the open-air stage becomes the National Park Theatre. Time for our National Park heroes Mimi the mouse and Krax the raven. In a fun way, they explain the National Park and the UNESCO World Heritage Site in a daily theatre show for young and old. Come on in, listen and join in!

Explorer tent and themed workshops

Animal skeletons, antlers, feathers or skins: all of these things are waiting in the explorer tent to be discovered, tried out and touched. Additional provision can also be made here for school groups.

Until the end of the season, various themed workshops also take place in the explorer tent. You can find out everything about chalk, amber, fossils, the forest and even the UNESCO World Heritage Site. This additional offering, like all the other attractions, is included in the admission price.

Discover the UNESCO World Heritage Site

The informative and hands-on UNESCO World Heritage workshop with its various stations is dedicated to the subject of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The ancient beech forests are deeply hidden and well protected in the Jasmund National Park. A narrow strip extends to the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre. At this point is our UNESCO World Heritage window. Here you can experience the UNESCO World Heritage Site at close quarters.

KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre | Success story

1835	Construction of the “Swiss-style” Stubbenkammer inn and subsequent use from
bis 1892	Conversions and extensions until 1892, several fires
1893	Re-established; use as an inn and hotel, at times as a post house
1943	Hotel is used as the “Stubbenkammer hospital”
1945 – 49	Occupation and use of the hotel by the Russian army
1949/50- 1990	Use and conversion of the former hotel grounds by the coastal border brigade of the GDR navy
12. 09. 1990	Decision in the GDR Council of Ministers to designate Jasmund as a National Park; no further use until 1996, stood empty
1996-2001	Temporary information centre in the former hotel building
Sommer 2000	The former barracks demolished
01. 09. 2001	Stubnitzhaus Sassnitz gGmbH founded to construct and run the visitor centre in the Jasmund National Park
März 2002 – Nov. 2003	“Showcase” information pavilion with an audio-visual presentation and view of the construction site 180,000 visitors
Aug. 2002 – Okt. 2002	Ground-breaking ceremony, laying of the foundation stone and naming as the “KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre”
05.06.2003	Topping-out ceremony
05.11.2003	The building shell is handed over by the architects to the exhibition designers
März 2004	Opening of the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre with exhibition and multivision cinema; Family opening weekend on 20/21 March 2004
25.06.2011	Award of the Ancient Beech Forests of the Jasmund National Park, to the UNESCO World Heritage

Success in figures

The employees in the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre are committed to conversing with people, enthusing them and encouraging them to support nature conservancy. Figures show that the right route has been taken.

On-site visitors per year

300,000 people visit the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre.

20,000 people take part in the guided tours.

25,000 people explore together with us in the outdoor site

KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre | Success story

Virtual visitors each month

5,000 visit our website for comprehensive information.

16,000 use our messages on the digital network and share them with others.

The trend is upwards

Nach der Eröffnung des Nationalpark-Zentrums KÖNIGSSTUHL im Jahr 2004 stellte sich die anvisierte jährliche Besucherzahl von ca. 300.000 Besucher ein. In den Folgejahren wurde diese optimale Besucherzahl gehalten. Die Kapazitätsgrenze von 60.000 Besuchern im Monat wird regelmäßig in der Hochsaison erreicht. Die durchschnittliche Verweildauer der Besucher im Nationalpark-Zentrum verlängert sich hierbei von Jahr zu Jahr. Lag die durchschnittliche Verweildauer der Besucher vor der Eröffnung des Zentrums bei nur 0,45h, bleiben die Besucher heute durchschnittlich 3,5h!

After the opening of the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre in 2004, the forecast annual number of visitors was approx. 300.000. This optimal number of visitors was maintained in subsequent years. The total capacity of 60,000 visitors each month is regularly reached in the high season. The average length of stay of visitors in the National Park Centre has extended year by year. Before the Centre was opened, the average length of stay of visitors was just 0.45 h; today, on average, they stay 3.5 h! From the optimal number of visitors (300,000 per year).

KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre | Innovative technology

The snail-shaped new construction of the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre is a zero-emission building. Through a photovoltaic system, a solar and geothermal system as well as heat pumps, it provides itself with part of the resources it requires.

Energy-saving

The heat for the visitor centre is supplied without any emissions. No fossil fuels are used. Three heat pumps regulate the heat of the building through eight heat probes.

The probes work 150 m deep in the ground, where the temperature is around 13°C and infinite energy reserves lie dormant. Even a relatively small difference to the outside temperature is enough for the heat pumps to harvest the energy. This type of energy harvesting, with its 100% reduction in the emission of the greenhouse gas CO₂, is not only environmentally friendly but also cheaper in the long run, as there are no heating costs at all. Unlike solar energy, the geothermal probe system is mono-valent. This means that whilst solar irradiation changes throughout the year, ground heat remains constant from a depth of three metres. The energy can thus be used evenly all year round.

Water-saving

Eine Pflanzenkläranlage filtert Brauchwasser, das anschließend für die wassersparenden Vakuum-Toiletten verwendet wird. Sollte einmal zuviel Wasser vorhanden sein, z.B. in den besucherärmeren Zeiten, wird der Überschuss als Teichwasser für die Verschönerung des Außengeländes eingesetzt.

Environmentally friendly and healthy

In addition to the energy-saving construction method, attention was also paid to environmental sustainability. The environmental soundness of all materials was checked before their use. It can be proven that only 2 % of elements used in the construction of the Centre were not labelled as environmentally sustainable. And this was only because those types of products are not available on the European market.

Resource conservation

As few resources as possible were used for the construction. A green roof insulates the ceilings and additionally reduces the sealed ground area. Cellulose wool made from recovered paper insulates the external walls. Even the plaster boards for the internal walls are recycled products. All the cables for the building services are 100 percent free of PVC and only FSC (FSC = Forest Stewardship Council) wood was used for the doors and parquet flooring.

UNESCO World Heritage Site | General

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention

The “Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage”, also known as the World Heritage Convention, was adopted by UNESCO in 1972. It is the most significant international instrument for the protection of our cultural and natural heritage. Today, 187 states have ratified the Convention, including Germany (1976).

Unique protection and conservation

The central idea of the World Heritage Convention is “Considering that parts of the cultural or natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world’s heritage of mankind as a whole”. The unusual universal value thus describes an interest that is so outstanding that it penetrates national borders and is significant for both present and future generations. World Heritage Sites thus do not belong solely to the states in which territory they are located but are the spiritual property of all humanity.

World Natural Heritage Sites are unique natural phenomena; World Cultural Heritage Sites are outstanding human cultural works. These unique natural landscapes, habitats for animals and plants, geological formations, cultural landscapes and cultural property, together form the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites. It is the most important instrument of the World Heritage Convention. Conditions for inclusion in the List of World Heritage Sites primarily include the unusual universal value of a location, its intactness and the guarantee of its protection. Signatory states can apply to have sites included that are located in their sovereign territory. In making the application, they recognise its global importance. They are obliged to maintain it for future generations.

One further instrument of the World Heritage Convention is the “List of World Heritage in Danger”. This is a type of Red List of World Heritage Sites that are particularly endangered.

Their preservation may require the support of the international community of states.

The World Heritage List

Currently, the World Heritage List includes 936 sites in 153 states, of which 725 are Cultural Heritage Sites and 183 are Natural Heritage Sites

(photo: Victoria Falls), as well as 28 so-called “Mixed Sites” that are both Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites. The “List of World Heritage in Danger” comprises 34 sites, including the rainforests of Madagascar and the old town of Jerusalem (as at September 2011).

Natural World Heritage

The Geirangerfjord in Norway, Lake Baikal in Russia, the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador, the Serengeti in Tanzania – these are four of the sites currently registered by UNESCO as Natural World Heritage Sites. Not all of the areas are as famous as these. Natural World Heritage Sites also include less well-known natural treasures such as the Bwindi National Park in Uganda with its mountain gorillas, the Škocjan Caves in Slovenia and the Ogasawara Islands in Japan.

The World Heritage Convention defines “Natural Heritage” in Article 2 as

– Natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view

UNESCO World Heritage | General

- _ Geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation
- _ Natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

Increased efforts to protect natural assets

In 2004, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation on the orders of the Federal Ministry of the Environment had a research project carried out, in order to assess the World Heritage potential of German sites with outstanding natural values. The first step was to identify natural sites in Germany that were potentially suitable for nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The natural sites identified in this way were checked regarding their chances of success in the case of a nomination being made. During the investigation, so-called “serial nominations” were also considered. These include several individual areas. Several states together can also prepare a serial nomination.

This is particularly important for natural assets in Europe.

Due to intensive settlement, many natural habitats here are extremely fragmented and isolated, and their global significance can only be recognised when viewed from a Europe-wide perspective.

Numerous natural assets were assessed in this comparative investigation. The occurrence of German beech forest stood out as being particularly suitable. The chances of a nomination of the German beech forests were examined more closely in a feasibility study in 2006. This resulted in the proposal to nominate as a World Natural Heritage Site five German beech-forest areas in addition to the “Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians”.

UNESCO World Heritage | The Ancient Beech Forests of Jasmund

The Jasmund National Park is home to a unique piece of intact nature: ancient beech forests almost untouched by human hand. These are of such outstanding importance that UNESCO declared them, together with other selected beech forests, to become a World Heritage Site.

Why are ancient beech forests today a heritage for humanity?

The ancient beech forests on Jasmund are some of the last untouched forests in Europe. In them, the natural cycle of growth and decay continues undisturbed. They are even more precious thanks to their unique integration in the surrounding environment, associated with the broad view over the Baltic and of the chalk coast.

Hand in hand

It is its particular power of self-assertion that characterises the beech forest. After the ice age, beech trees were able to re-colonize large tracts of Europe from their little retreats. This process occurred in parallel with the human settlement of Europe. So grew the shared history of humans and the beech forest, which has now lasted more than 4,000 years. The postglacial beech distribution, the enormous competitive ability of the beech species and the wide variety of beech forests are a globally unique phenomenon

Protect and shape

Today, ancient intact beech forests can only be found in a few areas of Europe. Part of the UNESCO “Ancient Beech Forests of Germany” World Heritage Site lies well concealed and protected in the Jasmund National Park. Here, the beech forests have been able to last throughout the centuries and retain their natural character. For decades, they have been recovering from the traces of human use and, slowly, the undisturbed natural processes are reappearing. The forests are finding their way back to their own order and dynamics.

Do not intervene

Ancient beech forests are some of the most threatened habitats in the world. Unlike in many other UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites, where it is a case of intervening for conservation’s sake, the principle for protecting the beech forests is ‘do not intervene’. Only in this way can this wonderful inheritance be retained for future generations of humanity.

Official UNESCO title

“Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Ancient Beech Forests of Germany”

Size: Sub-area of Jasmund 493 ha

UNESCO World Heritage Site since: 25.06.2011

UNESCO World Heritage | European beech forests

In the Carpathian mountains grow the last extensive primeval beech forests of Europe. Since the end of the last ice age, forest development has been occurring here undisturbed. Mighty beeches, some over 50 metres tall, determine the complex structure of the forest landscape. The dynamics of the primeval beech forests and the natural cycle of growth and decay occur here completely uninfluenced by people. The lynx, wolf and bear are part of this fascinating beech-forest wilderness. The entire diversity of species, structures and processes has been retained.

Globally endangered species of flora, fauna and fungi have been able to maintain their natural gene pools. Since 2007, ten sub-areas in the Slovak Republic and Ukraine have been recognised as the World Heritage Site “Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians” by UNESCO. These areas, located at montane and subalpine altitudes of up to 1,940 metres, are predominantly represented by the mountain beech forest type.

By expanding to include the beech forests in Germany, the areas protected as World Heritage Sites now represent the different forms and locations at all altitudes, as well as their unique distribution history in the post-glacial age. The German beech forests are significantly younger and only a few sections have escaped human influence to a large extent. They are home to a wide variety of species. Beech forests with a high proportion of ancient trees, standing and lying dead wood and natural hollows provide the ideal habitat for cavity-nesting birds, bats and many other living things, which can find cover and space to brood here. A significant number of species only develop fully in the age phases found in the beech forest. The full tri-national World Heritage Site is now called “The Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Ancient Beech Forests of Germany”.

Trilateral collaboration between Germany – The Slovak Republic - Ukraine

In July 2007, the World Heritage Committee listed the “Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians” (Slovak Republic,

Ukraine) as a Natural World Heritage Site in the UNESCO World Heritage List. After this initial great success, the Slovakian-Ukrainian World Heritage Site was to be expanded to include the planned German cluster of beech forests. The agreement of both partner states was required for this, as well as diverse tri-lateral agreements in advance of the German application.

To this end, the first tri-lateral meeting took place back in May 2007 on the island of Vilm in Germany. At the meeting, more intensive tri-lateral collaboration in the field of UNESCO World Heritage was able to be agreed, with a focus on striving for a tri-national beech-forest World Heritage Site. This meeting was followed by others, including one in the Carpathian biosphere reserve in Ukraine.

Its beech forests are World Heritage Sites, as are those of Havešová in the Slovak Republic, which were also visited during the meeting. The tri-lateral meetings were important steps on the route to nominating the outstanding German beech-forest areas as an extension of the Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians. One of the most important results was the voting on concrete agreements for the management of the tri-national site for which we were striving. As the partner of a joint World Heritage Site, we are committed to their joint preservation. Thus the tri-lateral collaboration will also play an important role in the future.

UNESCO World Heritage | European beech forests

Realising the vision of a UNESCO World Heritage “European Beech Forests” Site

The increased protection of precious beech forests must also be given high priority in the future: The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has linked the World Heritage listing of the German areas with the commitment to a European process of guaranteeing the future preservation of the most valued European beech forests within the scope of a joint World Heritage Site. Germany, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine will support this.

Thus the expansion of the Slovakian-Ukrainian World Heritage Site “The Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians” to include “The Ancient Beech Forests of Germany” lends weight to efforts to protect beech forests across Europe. It is an inducement for other countries to effectively protect their remaining precious beech forests.

“The Ancient Beech Forests of Germany”

On 25 June 2011, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee included five beech-forest areas in Germany in the World Heritage List. The cross-border World Heritage “Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians” located in the Slovak Republic and Ukraine was thus expanded to include a German section. The World Heritage Site is now called “The Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and the Ancient Beech Forests of Germany”.

The German section comprises selected forest areas in the Hainich National Park in Thuringia, Kellerwald-Edersee in Hessen, Jasmund and Müritz in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania and the forest area of Grumsin in the Schorfheide-Chorin biosphere reserve in Brandenburg. They represent the most valuable remainders of wide-scale natural beech stands in Germany.

These German areas with their lowland and low-mountain beech forests ideally round off the mountain beech forests located in the Carpathians. Natural lowland beech forests are today limited to Germany, and beech forests in nutrient-poor locations have their global focus of distribution in the low mountains of Germany. Together with the primeval beech forests of the Carpathians, they reflect the broad spectrum of beech-forest types in Europe.

The history of post-glacial beech distribution, the enormous competitive ability of the beech and the variety of geographic and ecological types of beech forest are a unique global phenomenon. With the beech forests in Germany, the post-glacial distribution of the beech from south to north, from east to west, and the entire spectrum of various altitudes can be documented, from the sea coast, over lowland and hills, to the upper timberline in the mountains.

The German World Heritage areas embody the most important areas in the world for the respective types of beech forest. Each area has specific characteristics and local peculiarities that make it unique and irreplaceable. With the recognition of the “Ancient Beech Forests of Germany” as a World Heritage Site, Germany is making a decisive contribution to the protection of beech forests in Europe.

UNESCO World Heritage | Interesting facts about beech forests

Beech forests – the primeval forests of Europe

Beech forests – the primeval forests of Europe

However different their locations and the communities of species that live in them, beech forests have one thing in common: they are impressive forests. The appearance of large tracts of Europe is naturally characterised by its beech forests. This is why, for the majority of Europeans, they epitomise the forest.

Beech forests over the course of a year

Beech forests go through various processes and phases in the course of a year, but also throughout their entire existence. In spring, there is an impressive carpet of early flowers under the still-leafless beech canopy; this is followed by fresh shoots of chlorophyll and an unusual darkness on the woodland floor in the summer months. Now the dominance of the beech is clear: only a few species can thrive in the shadows of the beech at this time.

With the lively play of colour and the fall of leaves in the autumn, the beech forest again shows a completely different face.

The life cycles of a beech forest

No less imposing are the phases that a beech forest undergoes with increasing age.

Shoots, the tight scrum of young trees in their early years, decades of competition for space, water and light, maturing into imposing tree structures followed by death and decomposition. The sight of ageing and dying trees has become alien to us, because humans intervene and use the wood long before the trees start to decompose. But dead wood is just as much a part of the life of a beech forest as the little dark-green shoots, which take the place of the old trees. You can find the various phases of age directly adjacent to one another in primeval beech forests and natural beech forests. They develop their own dynamic and are characterised by a great structural diversity.

Beech-forest biodiversity

Beech forests are indeed shady and appear dark in the summer. Compared to some mixed woodland, they actually also appear to be species-poor. However, a natural beech forest certainly isn't. Beech forests with a high proportion of ancient trees, and standing and lying dead wood, provide the ideal habitat for many species of animals and plants. In one such forest there are many natural hollows in which cavity-nesting birds, bats and many other living things can find cover and space to brood. One significant part of the species variety in beech forests does not fully develop until the trees age. The entire cycle of regeneration of beech forests, which means the time in which a beech grows, bears fruit, ages, dies and decays, takes 250 to 300 years and occasionally even longer.

It is this cycle of regeneration and the wide range of locations of beech forests that allow the presence of almost all the Central European tree species in beech forests somewhere and at some time. So the total number of all plant species in the various local and geographical exterior forms of the beech forest is remarkably high. Numerous special locations such as springs, streams, pools, bogs, cliffs, hollows and rocky terrain additionally enrich the structural variety of the beech forest.

UNESCO World Heritage | Interesting facts about beech forests

The number of animal species in beech forests is estimated to be up to 10,000. Due to its significance for many species, some threatened with extinction, the beech forest was voted habitat of the year in Germany back in 1995.

Characteristics and distribution

Beech forests belong to the deciduous broad-leaved forests, which almost only occur in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere. The distribution of broad-leaved forests, dominated by the Common Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.), is restricted to Europe. Without human intervention, beech forests would characterise the landscape in Central and Western Europe and cover more than two-thirds of the land area of Germany.

Due to its great ecological assertiveness, the beech, also called the Red Beech due to its reddish-white wood, was able to settle on broad swathes of Europe after the ice age from its small areas of retreat in the south and south-east of Europe. It loves a cool, temperate climate. These are only available in Europe; its main area of distribution is in Germany.

There are 14 known varieties of beech around the world, including the Oriental Beech, closely related to our Red Beech, which is predominant in areas on the Black Sea, in the Caucasus and in northern Iran. The beech is highly competitive and has settled in almost every area: from rich chalky soils to poor sandy soils, from the mountains to the lowlands, and from damp to dry locations. Furthermore, it combines the ability to tolerate shade with a high rate of growth.

Only a few adapted plants can thrive in its shade. For this reason, it is generally more beech that grow under the beech canopy. In spite of the dominance of one tree species, the beech forest is the preferred habitat for several thousand species of flora, fauna and fungi. It is reckoned that the beech has not yet reached its climatic distribution boundaries. Its expansive force is therefore unbroken. The post-glacial reforestation phase is still underway – a process that cannot be documented in any other part of the world. What is also unusual is the distinct cycle of the seasons of beech forests with its spring flowers, autumn leaf colours and the fall of leaves.

Presenting the UNESCO World Heritage film | Dirk Steffens presents “The Migration of the Ancient Beech Forests”, UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2011

Where the ancient beech forests are almost untouched by human hand, the Jasmund National Park is home to a unique piece of intact nature. It is of such outstanding significance that UNESCO declared it a Natural World Heritage Site on 25 June 2011.

After 20 months spent on production, the film “The Migration of the Ancient Beech Forests” will be premiered on 25.06.2013 in the multivision cinema of the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre. The nature filmmaker and humorous presenter Dirk Steffens will explain the phenomenon of the ancient beech forests using impressive images, clear language and convincing animations. “I have never yet produced a film that will be projected onto four large screens in one room. This format offers great opportunities. It is ideal for visualising the spectacular ancient beech forests,” said Dirk Steffens. Carsten Gutschmidt, the director of the UNESCO World Heritage film, is enthusiastic about the film project. “It was truly a new and beautiful experience to convey a story, not through people and their emotions but principally through trees,” he said.

In order to impressively set the stage for the story of the ancient beech forests, the film team used very special film techniques such as macro images, time-lapse photography, special effects, and images of the forest from the water, the air and from the ground. The first scenes for the film were recorded in summer 2012, in order to show the ancient beech forests during all four seasons, which makes the film appear even more current and realistic.

Jasmund’s ancient beech forests are some of the last ancient intact forests in Europe. The eternal natural cycle of growth and decay continues here. On Jasmund, the trees are uniquely composed, with the distant view of the Baltic and its dynamic chalk coast. It is their special assertiveness that characterises the beech forests.

After the ice age, they were able to re-colonise large tracts of Europe from their small areas of retreat. This process occurred side by side with the human settlement of Europe. In this way grew the shared history of humans and beech forest, which has lasted for more than 4,000 years. Ancient intact beech forests can today only be found in a few residual areas in Europe. They are one of the world’s seriously endangered habitats. Together, we can now retell the history of the ancient beech forests.

Side by side and in all languages of the world.

“We make the invisible visible!” is the slogan of the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre.

And visitors can actually get to know every aspect of the Jasmund National Park in a 2,000 m² exhibition area and over four floors. Travel in time along with an individual audio guide system.

Experience the flora and fauna of Jasmund up close from primeval times to the present day. Children are accompanied by the little mascots Mimi and Krax. The odd mouse and her friend, the raven, appear everywhere there is excitement for children – like in the National Park Theatre on the open-air stage or in the explorer tent, where you look into natural phenomena.

The National Park Centre turns the ancient beech forests into an unforgettable experience.

Whether in guided tours through the UNESCO World Heritage Site, a hands-on World Heritage workshop or a unique look through the World Heritage window – everyone can experience the UNESCO World Heritage Site in his or her own way. The producer of the UNESCO World Heritage film is White Elephant Entertainment GmbH.

UNESCO World Heritage film | Production data

Title

The Migration of the Ancient Beech Forests, UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2011

Length

Approx. 20 minutes/ multiscreen

Format

XD CAM HD

Production location

The island of Rügen, Jasmund National Park Jasmund

Year of production

2012/2013

Premiere

25.06.2013

Presentation and concept

Dirk Steffens [White Elephant Entertainment GmbH]

Producer

Jens Afflerbach (White Elephant Entertainment GmbH)

Director

Carsten Gutschmidt

Production characteristics

High-quality content and visual documentation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site “The Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Ancient Beech Forests of Germany” using the example of the ancient beech forests of the Jasmund National Park for a multiscreen presentation in the Königsstuhl National Park Centre.

National Parks | Around the world

A project in which nature can be nature.

A National Park means the protection of nature by people in the shared interest of people and nature. This is why the following sentence applies to the National Parks in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, a sentence with which the first National Park was also founded: “For the wellbeing and joy of the people and future generations.”

National Parks are landscapes in which nature can also remain truly natural. Here, landscapes are protected by there being no interventions and retreat areas are created for wild plants and animals. In this way, National Parks secure unique natural discovery areas and set up explorer spaces for environmental education and research. This is why they are indispensable for biodiversity and the wealth of species on this earth. At the same time, National Parks increase the attraction of their region and contribute towards their economic development.

A multifaceted protected area

From an ethical point of view, National Parks should symbolise the intrinsic value of nature and people’s respect for it, as well as the recognition of how necessary it is that nature be preserved.

From an economic point of view, National Parks serve as exemplary and comparative areas in the acquisition of knowledge, showing how nature and landscape develop without economic use. In particular, this should facilitate the investigation of processes and regulatory mechanisms in less disturbed ecosystems and natural regeneration processes.

From an educational point of view, both locals and visitors should be familiarised with the ethical values and scientific acquisition of knowledge regarding the development of nature in the recovery of these areas through publicity work and environmental education.

How it all began

The first National Park in the world was established on 1 March 1872: Yellowstone National Park in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, USA. Even today in this context, people still talk about “America’s best idea”. The first European National Park, in Sweden, was not founded until 1909.

In order to introduce uniform assessment criteria, the IUCN (“International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources”) was created, which decided on the international definition of the term ‘National Park’ in 1969.

The Jasmund National Park counts as “the family silver of German unity”, as Klaus Töpfer, the former Federal Minister of the Environment, said. On 12 September 1990, shortly before the official end of the GDR, the National Park program was sealed by the first and last freely elected GDR government. East Germany thus contributed five National Parks, six biosphere reserves and three nature parks to reunification, around 4.5 percent of the land area.

Jasmund National Park | General

The Jasmund National Park is home to the magnificent chalk coast of the island of Rügen and the Jasmund peninsula with its hilly plateau. Beech forests, chalk cliffs and the sea form fascinating scenery, which cast its spell over the artists of the Romantic period and even today has lost nothing of its stunning attraction.

History

The worry that this impressive landscape could fall victim led to the area being placed under protection for the first time in 1929. Further protection orders followed in 1935 and 1954, until it was finally designated a National Park in 1990. From this time onwards, the forest was left to develop naturally.

Beech forest type

Within the 3,102-hectare protected area, the largest contiguous beech forest on the Baltic coast covers 2,100 hectares of land. The predominant forest type is the Baltic wood-barley beech forest.

It is accompanied by orchid-chalk beech forest on steep chalky slopes, with ash-beech forest in stream valleys, with alder spring bogs and moors. The beech forest breaks up on the chalky rocks of the cliffs into a dynamic mosaic of open areas, undergrowth and true primeval forest. Due to the steepness and inaccessibility, the forests on the cliffs were never exploited by foresters.

Habitats

Thanks to the complex effect of climate, relief and soil, the Jasmund National Park has an unusually broad range of habitats. The beech forests alone with their different variants colonise locations that are poor in nutrients, rich in nutrients, and dry or wet, on chalk as well as outwash. Different bog types are incorporated in the forest just like mosaics, and the chalk plateau is crossed with a network of streams. During the ice age, the Jasmund chalk block was covered, compressed and squeezed by glaciers several times. In the post-glacial period when the Baltic developed, the unusually dynamic chalk coast of the forest landscape emerged steeply from the sea..

Flora and fauna

This wide variety of habitats is the basis for the great wealth of flora and fauna.

Remarkable are the rare lady's slipper, the giant horsetail and the coralroot.

The peregrine falcon nests on the slopes of the chalk cliffs, as well as several colonies of house martins. The sea eagle also breeds regularly here.

UNESCO World Heritage Area

As a UNESCO World Heritage Area, a representative section of landscape, partially unaffected by humans, in the east of the Jasmund National Park was identified, which extends from the drift line of the Baltic, up the steep coast to the plateau. The size of the area is 493 hectares. This is surrounded by a 2,511 hectare buffer zone.

The Jasmund National Park | Seasons of the year

Spring

Nature awakes in the Jasmund National Park: The sun melts the last thin traces of snow from Stubnitz, warms the chalk cliffs, and lures the first green from the ancient beech forests. The sombre forest looks revived, decorated with a light green canopy of leaves. Frogs noisily embark on the journeys to the mating and spawning grounds, whilst cranes fly over Rügen to find their resting places and to feed. The chirruping of birds fills the coastal forest. Wild orchids stretch towards the light. Creatures start to crawl extensively in and on the forest floor. Even the dead wood is full of life. It's time for a voyage of discovery.

Summer

The large car parks are filling up. Cars and coaches stop at the edge of the Jasmund National Park, and let walking groups and families, children and pensioners, romantics and adventurous holidaymakers out into the great outdoors. And it's showing its most voluptuous side. Cameras are taken out. Those who take their time can discover habitats along the way that others rush by. Stubnitz is the home of over 10,000 species of flora, fauna and fungi. The 150-year-old beeches are full of sap. Even an 80-year-old tree with its 800,000 or so leaves can produce as much oxygen in one hour as is needed by ten people. It's high season in the ancient beech forests. It's also high season in the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre. At peak times, 3,000 people a day visit the exhibitions, the multivision cinema or are out and about in the open areas. Immerse yourself too in the secrets of nature: because we make the invisible visible for you.

Autumn

When the days get shorter, and the amphibians in the Jasmund National Park prepare for hibernation, mushrooms grow, wild boars wallow and dormice hide their hoards, then the ancient beech forests change again into a reverie of colour. The yellow, red and brown of the beech leaves, the soft light of the autumn sun, the white of the chalk and the blue of the Baltic are all eye-catching. Autumn on Rügen, an "Indian summer" in Stubnitz. And in this autumn it is certain that a new beech will come to life, which will one day bear fruit, grow, age, die and decay after 250 to 300 years, and give strength to new life.

Winter

Cold wind blows over the sea. The surf is milky white. Parts of the chalk coast have again broken off. The trees hold tight with their roots to the cliff. Their crowns are bare; the paths are empty. Leaves rustle underfoot. Snow rustles when wild animals search for food. The air is clear; the view extends far over the Baltic. Time to breathe deeply in the ancient beech forests; time to completely relax and enjoy the magical world of the KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre.

Get a foretaste now of the flourishing life in Germany's smallest National Park. Come and visit in every season. And get to know and treasure this World Heritage Site. It belongs to you. And us.

Key terms

Terms

Nationalpark Jasmund [never nature conservancy area, nature park, nature conservancy park or similar]

Synonym: Large nature reserve

KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre [never National Park office, national park centre or similar]

Synonym: Jasmund National Park Centre

[always on Jasmund; never in Jasmund]

Ancient beech forests [always plural; never just beeches; never red beeches or primeval forests]

Synonym: Ancient European beech forests; intact beech forests

UNESCO World Heritage [never Cultural World Heritage]

Synonym: UNESCO Natural World Heritage; UNESCO World Heritage Site

Slogans

National Park – “Let nature be nature”

World Heritage – “Where the ancient beech forests find a place of peace”

World Heritage National Park – “Deeply hidden and well protected in the Jasmund National Park lies the UNESCO World Heritage Site ‘Ancient Beech Forests’

Facts

Figures for the Jasmund National Park

Founded on: 01.10.1990

Smallest National Park in Germany at 3,102 ha

603 ha of Baltic (500 m wide coastal strip), 2,317 ha of forest, 200 ha of other habitats

13 km long steep coast is Germany’s only active chalk cliff

Height of Königsstuhl: 118 metres above sea level

KÖNIGSSTUHL National Park Centre, Visitor Centre

Opened on 18 March 2004

Visitors: Approx. 300,000 per year

Operated by: Nationalpark-Zentrum KÖNIGSSTUHL Sassnitz gemeinnützige GmbH/

Shareholders: WWF Germany and the town of Sassnitz

Telephone +49 (0) 38392. 6617-66

E-mail: info@koenigsstuhl.com

Web: koenigsstuhl.com

Social media: [facebook.com/koenigsstuhl](https://www.facebook.com/koenigsstuhl)

Marketing and press

Susann Flade, Management | Telephone +49 (0) 38392. 6617-30 | presse@koenigsstuhl.com

UNESCO World Heritage Site “Ancient Beech Forests”

Größe: Teilgebiet Jasmund 493 ha | UNESCO-Welterbe seit: 25.06.2011