



Media Release February 2021

The Swiss discover their heritage – UNESCO's World Heritage values are more important than ever

2020 was a special year, which proved to be particularly demanding and challenging for everyone because of the health emergency with which we had to contend. World Heritage Experience Switzerland (WHES), in its role as the umbrella organisation for the promotion and valorisation of World Heritage in Switzerland, thus sought to support the efforts of the partners, strengthening the proposals for the network and also contributing to the development of interesting activities, which proved to be appreciated. In this particular context, communicating the unique values of each site was essential, and the response from Swiss visitors proved WHES right in this regard.

The World Heritage Experience Switzerland (WHES) association has been supporting and promoting the interests of its members (managing bodies and tourism organisations) for more than 10 years, and has succeeded in establishing with its partners a network of cooperation and offers that has become increasingly established in the field of tourism communication. The efforts made by the WHES office and the network as a whole to communicate the offer of the sites and promote their unique values have been significant. Among the objectives achieved were the collaboration with the office of the Swiss Commission for UNESCO and the partnerships established with the umbrella associations in Germany, France and Italy, but also the partnership with Switzerland Tourism and the Grand Tour of Switzerland. In view of the good experience and the value of cooperation in the tourism sector, WHES has extended its proposals for cooperation with and for the partners to the areas of mediation and management from 2020. With regard to mediation in particular (www.whes.ch/learning), WHES, together with its partners and with the support of the Swiss Commission for UNESCO, has created a series of new information videos and structured a range of school trips that will be of interest to schools.

In 2019, WHES launched the "World Heritage ticket" with the aim of supporting and developing visits to multiple sites and allowing visitors to take advantage of a range of proposals such as excursions, entrances to visitor centres and museums, and city walks (www.worldheritageticket.com). Whereas in 2020 it considered it appropriate to propose further insights to better prepare and support visits to World Heritage properties in Switzerland and published the first edition of the World Heritage magazine, which can be downloaded from the WHES website, and presents information and advice, also introducing people working for World Heritage.

Both activities were particularly popular, and WHES is pleased to report that the number of paying visitors to World Heritage properties in Switzerland during the summer and autumn of 2020 reached more than 280,000 despite periods of closure and restrictions imposed by the authorities (survey with World Heritage properties). The health situation has prompted many Swiss people to seek out the most special and valuable places and thus to discover the offers that the various organisations have prepared in collaboration with WHES. The rural and alpine areas were very much in demand, but museums and visitor centres also saw a steady flow of visitors, despite the restrictions in force. The information centres, public facilities and museums presenting the values of the UNESCO World Heritage in Switzerland to the public, faced with the closures imposed by the authorities, were able to make the best possible use of the time available and invested in the development of skills, technologies and the development of their offerings. This has resulted in innovative approaches to mediation, such as virtual visits to museums or exciting podcasts allowing the public to discover the World Heritage from the comfort of their own homes: www.whes.ch and which have certainly helped to stimulate the desire to visit.



The World Heritage properties are unique and precious, WHES and its associates are aware of this and it is for this reason that they face with great enthusiasm processes of improvement for the management, transmission and communication of the values of these treasures that, now more than ever, prove to be places to be discovered.

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Images

www.whes.ch/gallery-en

Further information

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