

SPAIN

Monastery and Site of the Escorial, Madrid

Brief description

Built at the end of the 16th century on a plan in the form of a grill, the instrument of the martyrdom of St Lawrence, the Escorial Monastery stands in an exceptionally beautiful site in Castile. Its austere architecture, a break with previous styles, had a considerable influence on Spanish architecture for more than half a century. It was the retreat of a mystic king and became, in the last years of Philip the Seconds reign, the centre of the greatest political power of the time.

1. Introduction

Year of Inscription 1985

Agency responsible for site management

- not provided

2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (i), (ii), (vi)

Justification provided by the State Party

(i) San Lorenzo de El Escorial is a unique cultural monument and constitutes an example of human creativity.

(ii) It has had considerable influence on the subsequent development of Spanish architecture.

(iii) It is unique of its kind.

(iv) It exemplifies a particular type of structure.

(v) It illustrates a particular architectural style.

(vi) It can be associated with the ideas of the sixteenth century.

As provided in ICOMOS/IUCN evaluation

Recommendation: That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List based on the criteria (i), (ii) and (vi).

Few monuments respond as perfectly as the Escorial to the first criterion for inclusion on the World Heritage List: this royal monastery consecrated to Saint Lawrence is indeed a unique

artistic achievement. There is nothing in the project, in the form or in the destination of this monument which is not exceptional. [...]

As little in keeping as it may be with the national temperament, the Escorial exerted a considerable influence in Spain during nearly a half century: the gigantic unfinished cathedral of the Asunción of Valladolid was begun ca. 1580 by Juan de Herrera in the same severe style. A similar influence may still be distinguished in the work of Juan Gomez de Mora in Madrid. (criterion (ii)).

An exemplary votive monument, retreat of a mystic king, the Escorial was, during the last years of the reign of Philip II, the paradoxical centre of the greatest political power of that period (criterion (vi)).

ICOMOS, while recommending the inclusion of this cultural property based on criteria (i), (ii) and (vi), would suggest a better protection of the surroundings of the monastery, which is set in a site of exceptional beauty.

Committee Decision

Bureau (1984): The Bureau wished to draw the Spanish authorities' attention to the importance of strictly protecting the natural environment which is indissociable from this monument.

Session (1984): The Committee called the Spanish authorities' attention to the importance of strictly protecting the natural environment which is inseparable from this monument.

- UNESCO's official description of the site should be improved; State Party has provided suggestion

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: inadequate. State Party proposes enlargement of boundaries
- Buffer zone: no buffer zone has been defined
- Buffer zone needed
- Other measures include zoning, Cultural Interest Site/ Historic Territory declaration

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Laws and other legislation on protection of Historic Heritage
- Cultural Interest Site declaration

- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective
- Actions proposed: Measures are being considered for protection of the immediate surroundings. Maintenance and conservation with respect to buildings with National Heritage status. In the surrounding environment risk prevention and safety measures in plantations, gardens, orchards and woods and hills

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction, religious use, museum

Management /Administrative Body

- Legally constituted steering group
- Site manager on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national

5. Management Plan

- No management plan
- Management plan under preparation
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: National Heritage

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Public funds
- Sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, management, education, visitor management
- Average: promotion, interpretation

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Continuing education courses and specialisation

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 5,042,333 (entrance tickets)

- Visitor facilities: Reception, information, ticket Offices, cafeteria, shop, toilets including facilities for the disabled, first aid post
- Tourism/ visitor management plan

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, archaeological surveys
- Studies used for management of site; visitor management
- Other: historic document research, planning and topographical surveys, cataloguing of historical archives

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Not enough signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: local communities, businesses, local authorities,
- Need for more information
- Web site available:
www.patrimoniacionacional.es/escorial/escorial.htm

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Conservation; restoration works including systematic restoration of the state of the roofs, restoration of the basilica frescos, illumination of monuments and partial illumination of interiors, provision of protective/security systems, new museum of paintings, provision of visitor services (cafeteria, information room, library, additional toilets, new areas made available for visiting)
- Present state of conservation: Good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressures, environmental pressures, number of inhabitants
- Specific issues if mentioned: safeguarding the historic infrastructures in the immediate surroundings
- Actions taken: application of current legislation on the protection of historic heritage sites

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: social
- Weaknesses of management is excessive development of the area and urban pressures

Future actions:

- Since 1966 measures have been taken to provide the historic and artistic area and the surrounding landscape with the requisite legal protection