

Aranjuez (Spain)

No 1044

Identification

Nomination The Aranjuez Cultural Landscape

Location Aranjuez, Madrid

State Party Spain

Date 30 June 2000

Justification by State Party

Aranjuez has been witness to various cultural exchanges over a span of time, in a specific cultural area, that have had a tremendous influence in the development of its landmarks and the creation of its landscape. **Criterion ii**

Aranjuez offers a splendid example of diverse architectural styles and varied landscapes that depict key periods throughout the history of mankind. **Criterion iv**

Aranjuez represents a model for a given culture's use of its territory. However, the city has become increasingly vulnerable since the disappearance at the turn of the century of the Royal Court that had so much influence on its development. **Criterion v**

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*. It is also a *cultural landscape* as defined in para. 39 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

History and Description*

History

The Aranjuez area enjoyed a long history of human settlement before becoming a strategic stronghold during Roman times. Then its position at a river crossing and cross-

* Aranjuez and its history were elegantly synthesized by Carmen Añon Feliu in her contribution to von Droste B., Plachter H. and Rössler M., *Cultural Landscapes of Universal Value – Components of a Global Strategy* (Fischer Verlag, Jena, Stuttgart and New York, 1995), pp 295–306. The nomination elaborates on but closely follows her work, in particular using her categorization of the types of landscape present at Aranjuez (as does the Guidebook submitted with the nomination). The present "Description" therefore uses the same structure.

roads – a factor to be repeatedly influential - gave it a significance in the political geography of the time. It lay in a sparsely populated region thereafter and was eventually granted by the Crown to the military order of St James of Santiago in the medieval period. Towards the end of the 14th century, the knights built a palace in the middle of the woods, then replete with game.

Aranjuez became a Royal site in the 15th century, but it was Philip II in the 16th century who created the first period of splendour. He built a new palace and large ornamental and vegetable gardens laid out according to geometric principles, attempting to symbolize his world-wide imperial sovereignty based on a centralized state while at the same time celebrating a return to nature, its structure, and man's supremacy according to the canons of Humanism. It was also a private and personal retreat. Phillip meanwhile pursued botanical experimentation, acclimatizing plant species from all over the world, and introduced hydraulic engineering based on best practice in central Europe and Italy. During the 17th century Aranjuez prospered as the annual abode of royalty, a place of pageantry and hunting, and a source of inspiration for and patronage of some of the greatest Spanish poets of the Golden Age.

The continuing splendour of the 18th century culminated in the building of a new town close to the palace. During the reign of Charles III, the city and its surrounding area became an experimental ground for physiocratic, agricultural, scientific, and social ideas lying at the heart of the Enlightenment. The King sought to provide exemplars both for horticultural practice and in the design of model farms. Such cultural grandeur effectively died when, under external pressure from French Revolutionary ideas and Napoleon's ambitions, the Aranjuez Riot at the end of the century signalled the end of Spain's *Ancien Régime*.

After a brief revival which added a new element of modernism and eclecticism to the Royal Site during the first half of the 19th century, the end of the reign of Isabella II marked the close of the Crown's exclusive role in the history of this riverside complex and community. A City Council was established independent of Royal command (1836) and the Royal family's use of Aranjuez decreased. At the Revolution in 1868, all Crown property passed to the State and, although large parts of Aranjuez were initially excepted, all that was left in Royal hands by the early 1870s were fragments of their former estate. Meanwhile, the population increased and a railway line (1851) stimulated vigorous economic activity at the price of cutting the Palace's eastern vistas and bisecting the Picotajo garden. During the 20th century Aranjuez became a densely populated satellite city of Madrid, an industrial and cultural centre in which memory and maintenance of the Royal Site deteriorated. Nevertheless, the Site overall kept its integrity, and by the end of that century new assessments, policies, and programmes of works reflected new attitudes of respect for the Royal Site.

Description

The nominated property lies at the junction of the Rivers Tajo (Tagus) and Jarama, south of Madrid and north-east of Toledo. The buffer zone embraces parts of the valleys of both rivers upstream of Aranjuez itself and the south side of the valley downstream towards Toledo. The whole area "floats," as it were, beside and above hundreds of water-channels ranging in scale from waterways to narrow irrigation ditches. As a result, it appears as a green oasis in a

landscape otherwise of sierra type, dry, brown and fairly barren of vegetation as a result of climate, geomorphology, and over-exploitive land-use. This "natural effect" is based on the genuinely natural resources of the place but is actually artificial, the result of a conscientious effort to create a place of enjoyment and well-being, a sort of Eden for its inhabitants and visitors.

The site incorporates a planned town, large gardens, vegetable gardens and orchards, lagoons, rivers and waterworks, woods, and moors. The main elements are:

1. *The Palace and Island Garden* The Palace lies along the south bank of the Tajo, arranged around a plaza with, on the east, the King's Garden of irregular plan with fountains and, on the west, avenues and vistas eventually cut by the railway. Across a canal to the north, entirely within a sharp bend of the river beyond the Garden of the Statues and a fountain, is the geometric Island Garden full of fountains and other structures. Beyond that are kitchen gardens, with woodland occupying the end and sides of the peninsular.

2. *The Great Historic Garden (Huertas Históricas)* This consists of a series of gardens which together comprise the bulk of the area of the nominated property. On the west, at the junction of the rivers, is Legamarejo Garden, essentially a large number of small irrigated plots with boundaries connecting to the feeder channels following the river banks on either side and only in part related to a south-westerly axial line from the Garden of the Twelve Roads (*see below*). North-east of that is the Picotajo Garden with some irrigation channels but generally larger plots and much more closely related in its main subdivisions to the geometry of the axial line already mentioned. It is bisected by the main railway line to Madrid. North-east of that again is the Garden of the Twelve Roads, a roughly triangular area with a near-central point from which radiate twelve alignments marked by roads and tracks. The longest is that to the south-west through the two gardens already described. Four others link westwards to the adjacent Rebollo Garden, the whole of its southern edge along the north bank of the Tajo. Like the Legamarejo Garden, it is characterized by irrigation channels, most striking in plan being an extensive area of regular, rectilinear plots either side of a channel through its centre and parallel to the river.

3. *The urban area* For the purposes of the nomination, this is subdivided into two: an industrial area west of the Palace, incorporating the railway station and the gardens west of the Palace (*see 1. above*); and the 18th century town which is now the historic core of modern Aranjuez. The original town plan is intact, incorporating in particular, across its northern, riverside end, two broad avenues radiating from the east end of the Palace and earlier than, though apparently cutting, the urban geometric grid plan. In the town's north-western corner, adjacent to the Palace, is a complex of official buildings around the Plaza de San Antonio, with other major civic, religious, and private buildings, including five nobles' palaces, occurring throughout the measured symmetry of the urban fabric. The southern edge of the grid is marked by the Bull Ring.

4. *The Prince's Garden* This late 18th/early 19th century garden stretches along the south bank of the Tajo, north-east of the town. Its ruler-straight southern edge is along the *Calle de la Reina*, the third, and most northerly, of the easterly lines radiating from the Palace (*see 3. above*). It contains two distinct areas, each with further subdivisions

in terms of separate units of designed garden. The westerly half is subdivided into eight gardens, all essentially geometric to a greater or less extent except for one half of the *Jardín Séptimo* which is arranged around an irregular water feature with an island hermitage. Outstanding in the magnificent botanical collection are eighteen monumental trees. The eastern half, the *Parque de Miraflores* (1848), was a park in the English style, effectively an irrigated horticultural/nursery area where functionalism took precedence over ornamental geometry. Now decayed, it is not open to the public. Overall, the network of ditches in the Prince's Garden is more than 6000m in length, from which the entire garden is naturally watered.

These elements are subsumed in a series of intermeshed landscapes as perceived by the nomination, all combining conceptually to create a cultural landscape:

- The water landscape: rivers, leets, dams, ditches, fountains

In medieval times and earlier the valley was filled with marshy areas, mud slides, water courses, forests, and wetlands. Archaeology shows early attempts to control this natural situation in Roman and Visigothic times. The documented history of Aranjuez began as an attempt to control its rivers by restraining, crossing, and steering them. The riverbanks were filled with dams, jetties, feeders, and bridges, and came to represent a pioneer system of hydraulic engineering. The rivers both demanded and gave the opportunity for the development of a complex system of irrigation which enriched Arabic and medieval traditions with Renaissance engineering. Phillip II built leets in particular as part of an irrigation system for the area's fertile soils as he attempted to create in central Spain a little bit of landscape like those he had seen in Flanders and knew about from Italy. The ubiquitous water is both symbolic and functional. It tells on the one hand of life and happiness and provides the stage for metaphorical shipyards, naval fleets, and iconographic statues and fountains. On the other, it releases the fertility of the soil for edible crops while providing a moving dimension in the static formal geometry of the ornamental gardens.

- The agricultural landscape: vegetable gardens, orchards, nurseries and stock-breeding

The growing of edible crops at Aranjuez depends on the soil's fertility and the success of irrigation not only in providing water but in controlling flooding. Royalty banished "common" vegetables and encouraged the cultivation of "worthy and regal" varieties. Aranjuez gave its name to exquisite fruits: in particular strawberries, asparagus, plums, and water pears. Agricultural experiments were based on models in Flanders, Switzerland, and Valencia. The grounds contain a fowl house, a cattle house, and, in particular, the Royal Stud House, which greatly contributed to the breeding of Spanish horses.

- The gardens, a delectable landscape

The gardens along the Tajo are representative of the Spanish experience in this field: Renaissance gardens with a slight Arab touch; Baroque and French Classicism-style gardens; "Anglo-Chinese" gardens; and 19th century bourgeois gardens. Trees and shrubs from all over the Spanish Empire were brought to be acclimatized and cross-cultivated, often then being returned to their place of origin.

- Landscape and geometry

There is no single geometric axis or grid for the whole site, but the whole of the site is affected by geometric design ranging from the grand alignments of Phillip II and the "Great Historic Garden" to detailed arrangements in nursery gardens. If there is one main axis, it is the *Calle de la Reina* laid out by Phillip II with that intention. If there is one main control point, it is the node in the Garden of the Twelve Roads, for its axial influence extends right across the whole property north of the River Tajo and, indeed, across the river to the lines radiating from the Palace and the geometry of the new town. Particularly outstanding is the way in which the apparently asymmetrical, rectilinear grid of the new town, a late addition to an already geometrically complex landscape, was "mortised" into existing axial lines emanating both from the Royal Palace and from the gardens. Geometry also influenced parts of the hydraulic system, though clearly other factors were at play there; conversely, the hydrology fed the fountains and ponds, which were usually placed at particular points determined by geometry, albeit serving an aesthetic purpose (eg in the Island Garden and the western parts of the Prince's Garden).

- The constructed landscape: roads, architecture, town

The "New City" was built in the 18th century fronting on to the Tajo. It was designed in the form of a new garden, but with buildings where there would have been flowerbeds. A pattern of radial and lattice lines is superimposed on the geometric plan. The *Canal de las Aves* zigzags its way through the town centre; straight, tree-lined streets overlie channels of running water. The architecture and the urban spaces are contrived to seem like decoration for the abundant vegetation in and visible from the streetscape. The whole is linked visually, in plan, hydrologically, and botanically to the surrounding landscape, yet the city is part of that landscape in a unique composition.

Management and Protection

Legal status

Two legal instruments are specific to Aranjuez. The whole area was declared an Historical Complex in 1983 under the Spanish Heritage Law. This sets basic guidelines to ensure the preservation and upkeep of the city's historic area as well as the landmarks, palaces, orchards, avenues and groves. The Urban Development Plan sets objectives for and analyses the city's status and preservation, establishing what sort of activities should be encouraged and discouraged. In addition, the nominated area is covered by a wide range of regulations from other government bodies (eg the Madrid Community and Aranjuez City Council).

Management

National, regional, and local agencies are all involved separately, but it now seems that a series of specialized agencies are likely to exert control over the preservation of the historical complex. They are: the National Heritage, in charge of Crown properties such as palaces and gardens; the Local Heritage Commission, consisting of representatives of regional and local government; the Technological Institute for Agricultural Development, Ministry of the Environment, which manages the orchards and historical avenues; and the Tajo Hydrographic Confederation, which is in charge of the management of the water and its associated structures.

The nomination dossier is descriptive of these and other management matters, but no analysis is provided of effectiveness, nor proposals for prioritization, co-ordination, review, or revision. ICOMOS would stress the need for the ready availability of high-quality management information, based here above all on well researched historical data implemented by management sympathetic to the priority of historicity throughout the work of maintaining and improving the site.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Essentially the well-being of Aranjuez was sustained and promoted under continuous Royal care until the 1868 Revolution. Ownership then became fragmented and the site became both prey to neglect and vulnerable to pressures of industrial, commercial, and demographic growth. Despite a railway and National Highway through it, and despite being surrounded by economic development, it survived this phase remarkably well, however, and was undergoing restorative programmes and enjoying better-informed conservation management by the end of the 20th century. The Ayuntamiento has, for example, embarked on a programme of renewing and repairing the avenues and their associated roads in the former Royal estate where they are such a key element in the historical layout. The ICOMOS mission noted, however, that many components of the site need repairing, renewing, improving, and even, in some cases, recreating in order to improve the historical integrity and the understanding of it for the present-day visitor.

Authenticity and integrity

Both the natural and geometric bases of the site as a whole survive remarkably well, with relatively little loss and effectively (modern communication routes apart) no inappropriate intrusion. Major buildings as well as the city's layout and its gardens and tree-lined avenues have been preserved as the characteristic of an urban community among orchards and groves living on a ground plan mimicking those of ornamental gardens across the river. Though some of the garden areas require restoration, overall the state of preservation is such that the site is able to demonstrate clearly, not its state at any one moment in history but the stages of its development from the mid-16th to the mid-19th century.

The most important general factor which makes Aranjuez and its landscape distinctive and a strong candidate for World Heritage status is the way in which it has been shaped and developed by the interests of the Kings and Queens of Spain and their Courts between the early 16th and mid-19th centuries. Both Charles V and Phillip II were leading figures in Europe and the world in their time, and therefore in the history of Europe and the world. They were extremely well informed, immensely influential, and wealthy. The present site still recognizably represents the Golden Age of Aranjuez, not only as the creation of Spanish Royalty but as a place and a period when ideas and materials from much of the known world came to Aranjuez and ideas and influence emanated from it for long after the 16th century.

A detail, but an important one, is that the Palace was originally approached from the west and not the east, ie from both Toledo and Madrid. This is now impossible because both bridges across the Rio Tajo are missing.

The ICOMOS mission noted the omission from the nomination, without explanation, of several structures and features which appear to be integral parts of the whole: eg the Royal stable near the Rio Tajo east of the Jardín del Principe, the Casa de la Monta, and the late 18th century model farm, the Real Cortijo de San Isidro.

Another question concerns the wider landscape: the views out from the proposed area, and the way in which the proposed area sits within the wider landscape, are significant aspects of the nature of the site and its integrity. In particular, the boundary on the north-west should be across, not along, the Rio Jarama.

A daily loss of integrity is produced by the large amount of traffic, affecting not just the town but also the Palace, the gardens, and their landscape setting. Improvements need to continue to be made and to be kept under review.

The site is in general of high integrity and retains its authenticity to a considerable degree, authenticity of place and in design, architecture, and hydrology, and to a surprising extent, in function too, though it has, of course, lost its role as a royal residence.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited the site in February 2001. It also consulted the ICOMOS-IFLA International Scientific Committee on Historic Gardens and Landscapes.

Qualities

Aranjuez the town, as distinct from the whole landscape, is an integral part of the cultural landscape. In this context, its relationship with the design of both the water management and with the geometric dimension of the planned landscape is outstanding. As a town in its own right, its salient characteristics are covered by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, paragraph 27, where it falls into category (ii), and by paragraph 29 where it meets criteria about "spatial organization, structure, materials, forms and ... functions" which "essentially reflect the civilization which [has] prompted the nomination," and falls into category (iii), "Historic centres that cover exactly the same area as ancient towns and are now enclosed within modern cities." Aranjuez the town is, in other words, a distinctive and distinguished urban ensemble which might well have been considered for World Heritage status in its own right. However, it is properly presented in its landscape context, thereby adding to understanding of its own nature and becoming a key element in the cultural landscape nominated for World Heritage status.

Stages of that landscape's development from the mid-16th to mid-19th century are clear on the ground and in plan. This is particularly important because several of the stages capture significant phases in the development of European thought, scientific enquiry, and landscape design.

The combination of natural situation with running water, managed hydrology, fertile soils, scientific horticulture, great garden design, royal palatial context, and planned urban development makes for an outstanding cultural landscape, well within the Western tradition in thought and physical realization but expressing values of global interest about matters such as man/nature relationships, technology, and

aesthetics, and how rulers can best use their power and resources.

Comparative analysis

The nomination offers no comparative analysis. A guidebook submitted with it contains, however, a map of "European Royal Sites" which presumably provides the context within which Aranjuez would wish to be seen. These include: within Spain, the Escorial (World Heritage Site – WHS) and La Granja clustered with Aranjuez around Madrid; Sintra (WHS) and Queluz near Lisbon; Caserta (WHS) near Naples; Schönbrunn (WHS) outside Vienna; Potsdam (WHS), Berlin; Compiègne, Versailles (WHS) and Fontainebleau (WHS) around Paris; Greenwich (WHS), Hampton Court, and Windsor near London; and Mariefred outside Stockholm

The constant references in the nomination's text to the sources of inspiration underlying the development of Aranjuez also imply comparisons. Phillip II in particular was much influenced in terms of waterscape by his travels in Flanders. A completely different example of external influence is the Petit Trianon at Versailles, which was the immediate reference for the artificial streams and ponds arranged irregularly as the context for classical pavilions and "eye-catchers" of Chinese and Turkish inspiration, obelisks, false ruins, and artificial prospect mounds in the Prince's Garden.

Though design and cultural context are completely different, at global level this nomination seems as a cultural landscape conceptually close to that of Vat Phou, Laos, among current nominations.

ICOMOS comments and recommendations for future action

The nomination documentation was exemplary in many respects but it made ICOMOS's task a little more difficult than need have been the case by containing no comparative analysis and omitting a scale from all maps.

No management plan was submitted with the nomination. All the elements required in a management plan are actually present in, though dispersed throughout, the documentation. The missing elements are a statement of objectives on a short- and long-term basis (five and twenty years?) and a formal mechanism for reviewing implementation of the plan and making consequential revisions.

ICOMOS also recommends that such revision should include reconsideration of the boundaries of the nominated property. Some buildings are inexplicably omitted. More generally, the outer boundaries of the buffer zone across the river on the north-west and west of the site need rethinking.. Although the river itself is clearly a convenient line, ICOMOS is anxious to see some protection in place of views out of the core zone into the surrounding countryside.

Further consideration also needs to be given to an exposition of the policies, both general and more specific, that will apply to the proposed site and buffer zone, in connection with their conservation, care, and use. It would also help if more explanation could be offered in respect of the management structure for the implementation of these policies. Mechanisms for co-ordination, monitoring, and review are needed.

With regard to executive capacity, ICOMOS notes the familiar organizational complexity and overlapping fields of responsibilities and expertises that exist in the management

of the whole site. It therefore recommends that the authorities concerned give serious consideration to the establishment, under democratic control, of a dedicated executive agency solely concerned with promoting, sustaining, and, where necessary, defending the interests of the nominated property. This might well prove to be appropriate in so large and multi-dimensional a cultural landscape which can only be given part of the attention of institutions with many other responsibilities. It would follow such a step in the case of the Loire Valley and run with a similar proposal being implemented in the case of Alto Douro, Portugal (currently being evaluated).

ICOMOS reiterates its appreciation of both this site and the quality of the work on the nomination already achieved. Its unusually detailed response here recognizes those facts, and is motivated by the thought that here is a splendid opportunity to produce an exemplary World Heritage site if all concerned will dedicate time and effort to achieving a correct nomination.

Whether or not Aranjuez be inscribed on the World Heritage List, the fact that eight royal palace/park/garden complexes in Europe are already inscribed might suggest that, in a world perspective, the List is now reasonably representative in this respect (particularly as it also includes other, non-royal, European designed parks/gardens).

Brief description

The Aranjuez cultural landscape is an entity of complex relationships between man and nature, between horticulture and ornamental garden, between fixed structures and flowing water, between sinuous water courses and straight lines of geometric landscape design, between the rural and the urban, between carefully regulated treescapes and as carefully modulated architecture in palatial buildings, garden furniture, and streetscape. Three hundred years of Royal attention to the development and care of this landscape have seen it variously express concepts such as humanism and political centralization and enshrine values such as those in the 18th century of the French-style Baroque garden and, a little later, urban living side by side with the scientific practice of plant acclimatization and stock-breeding in the Age of Enlightenment.

Supplementary documentation, including a management plan, was submitted by the State Party in May 2001, after the meeting of the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel. The detailed management plan has been studied by ICOMOS, which considers that it conforms with the requirements of the Committee. The points raised by ICOMOS relating to conservation policies, management structure, and coordination mechanisms are dealt with in a satisfactory manner and the boundaries of the nominated property have been modified.

Statement of Significance

Aranjuez represents the coming together of diverse cultural influences to create a cultural landscape that had a formative influence on further developments in this field. Its components illustrate seminal advances in landscape design.

ICOMOS Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii and iv*:

Criterion ii Aranjuez represents the coming together of diverse cultural influences to create a cultural landscape that had a formative influence on further developments in this field.

Criterion iv The complex designed cultural landscape of Aranjuez, derived from a variety of sources, mark a seminal stage in the development of landscape design.

Bureau Recommendation

That this nomination be *referred*, to allow ICOMOS an opportunity to review the recently received integrated management plan for the Aranjuez Cultural Landscape.

ICOMOS, September 2001