

ESTONIA

Historic Centre (Old Town) of Tallinn

Brief description

The origins of Tallinn date back to the 13th century, when a castle was built there by the crusading knights of the Teutonic Order. It developed as a major centre of the Hanseatic League, and its wealth is demonstrated by the opulence of the public buildings (the churches in particular) and the domestic architecture of the merchants' houses, which have survived to a remarkable degree despite the ravages of fire and war in the intervening centuries.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1997

Agency responsible for site management

- Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (ii), (iv)

Justification provided by the State Party

Tallinn old town is a monument to the town architecture of the middle ages, which in its earlier stages of development stimulated and influenced the development of urban culture both near and far, and which has retained a degree of authenticity and integrity rarely found in the Baltic Sea region. Having escaped not only the ravages of fire and siege but also extensive redesigns, demolitions and redevelopments, Tallinn old town's authenticity and integrity are now threatened by a building boom precipitated by the new economic conditions. It should therefore fulfil the criteria outlined in 24.a) (ii), (iv) and (v) of the "Operational Guidelines" (page 7.).

24.a) (ii): Tallinn which sprung up on the shores of the Gulf of Finland, was from the 13th to the 16th centuries one of the most far-flung outposts of Western civilisation in northern and north eastern

Europe. Influencing the development of urban culture in the surrounding region, Tallinn mediated and helped spread the building traditions of the orders of mendicant friars, the Teutonic Order and the Hanseatic League. Thanks to the unlimited limestone reserves on which it is built Tallinn became a predominantly stone-built town quite early in its history, (timber construction was totally banned at the end of the 14th century) and hence also an exporter of stone architecture to regions where timber constructions still preponderated.

Of the region's largest towns: Stockholm, Visby, Riga, Tallinn Pskov, Novgorod, stone architecture dominated in the first four, and limestone, in addition to Tallinn, also in Visby. The development of the latter halted in the 14th century and Tallinn took her place, and, although Stockholm and Riga had in many ways more important roles to play at the time, fate has been considerably less kind regarding their historic inheritance. (...)

24.a) (iv), (v): Tallinn was part of the Hanseatic world, and is a town with a documented history reaching back to the 13th century and remarkably well preserved urban structure and buildings. It is a rare example of the contiguous coexistence of the sovereign's residence (Toompea Citadel) and the Hanseatic merchants' quarter. The town has suffered little from fires and warfare, and the long term economic slump of later centuries did not permit the execution of any intensive construction activities.

The majority of the buildings of the old town, of which the oldest date back to the 13th century, originate from the 14th - 16th centuries. Although later centuries have added new architectural features from every style period, and modifications of their own these have hardly ever completely replaced the original.

The basic town structure and street layout, dating from the town's establishment, all the dominant features such as the town hall, all the sacred buildings and guildhalls, a large number of private houses and an essential proportion of the city wall and its bastions, which encompasses the old town and makes it like a world apart, have survived. The superb town silhouette, which can be seen from a distance from almost any angle, is also a noteworthy feature. Due to its limestone base, the strong lime mortar used in supporting walls and the use of coniferous timbers, the old constructions are in relatively good repair. It has been possible to preserve the old town quite effectively thanks to the protected status awarded it in 1966, and by avoiding damaging planning decisions, it has even been possible to carry out limited restoration works to good effect.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

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

Tallinn is an outstanding and exceptionally complete and well preserved example of a medieval northern European trading city that retains the salient features of this unique form of economic and social community to a remarkable degree.

Committee Decision

The Committee decided to inscribe this property on the basis of criteria (ii) and (iv), considering that Tallinn is an outstanding and exceptionally complete and well preserved example of a medieval northern European trading city that retains the salient features of this unique form of economic and social community to a remarkable degree.

- Statement of significance adequately defines the Outstanding Universal Value of the site

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: a buffer zone has been defined

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- The biggest problem is Harju street. It was bombed on 1944 and is still in ruins. There are signs that in the nearest future real estate businessmen are trying to get permission to build new houses. It could be done, because there have been buildings from the 14th century, but it must be done in harmony with existing medieval street, plots and building structures around this street

3. Protection**Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- Heritage Conservation Act, Statute of the Tallinn Old Town Heritage Protection Area, Administrative Agreement between National Heritage Board and City of Tallinn.
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective.

4. Management**Use of site/property**

- Urban centre

Management /Administrative Body

- No steering group

- Management by the State Party; Management under protective legislation; Management under contractual agreement between the State Party and a third party; Management under traditional protective measures or customary law
- Site manager on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national, local
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- No management plan
- A management plan will be completed and adopted: June 2008
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department, City Planning Department, City Enterprise Department. There should definitely be negotiations with National Heritage Board

6. Financial Resources**Financial situation**

- Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department heritage division; National Heritage Board for special renovation works
- Extra funding has not been drawn from World Heritage status
- World Heritage Fund
- Funding available for the adequate management of the site: insufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- 3 staff

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

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

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

- Renovation and heritage training, communication schooling

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 2,690,000 in 2003 - tendency increasing
- Visitor facilities: plenty of museums, medieval churches, parks, nice only pedestrian walking areas, shops and art galleries, lot of restaurants, cafes and pubs, toilets, information centre (booklets, cards, maps, audio guides, books in different foreign languages)
- No tourism/visitor management plan

10. Scientific Studies

- Studies related to the value of the site, archaeological surveys, transportation studies
- These studies have been used for planning the first steps of the renovation and projecting works

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors; local communities; businesses; local authorities
- World Heritage Day
- Estonian National Library and lot of other exhibition galleries. Every year special concerts dedicated to the project Tallinn Church Renaissance – in different churches of Tallinn
- Web site available
- No local participation

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 22nd (1998); 23rd (1999); 30th (2006)

Conservation interventions

- Conservation works on Tallinn City wall and towers (1,7 km), conservation works on bastions. Renovation works in Tallinn Town Hall – for celebration of 600th birthday. Finished façade works: Tallinn Dome Church, Church of Transfiguration of Our Lord, Holy Ghost Church. There have been many renovation works done in different buildings in the Old Town
- Present state of conservation: needs more resources

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure; Visitor/tourism pressure
- Specific issues if mentioned: Real estate business is trying to build new houses on the empty plots in the Old Town. Quite often the new buildings/projects do not fit to the historical area. High buildings in the buffer zone (views to the Old Town)

Actions taken

- Local municipality is working on the building regulations and thematic/special planning (high buildings)

13. Monitoring

- No monitoring programme
- Measures taken/planned: In the nearest future we try to put down the exact rules for supervision

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: social, economic, management
- Strengths: Tallinn Old Town is in a good condition, there has been lot of renovation works done by city of Tallinn and private owners. There are more inhabitants who are living in the Old Town area. There are more business enterprises here. Old town is more prestigious both for living and business. People are more informed about the unique values of the Old Town
- Weaknesses of management: Too much pressure by tourism business, like souvenir shops, streets are overcrowded, local inhabitants do not like to go to the Old Town during the summer period, etc.

Future actions

- To give more information about the values of the Old Town, to introduce the architectural and cultural heritage
- Activity does not require funding from World Heritage Fund