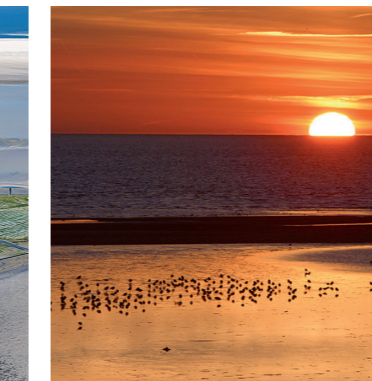




MORE THAN JUST A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

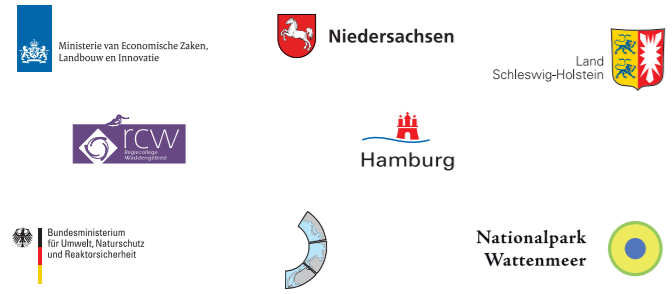
In order to be included in the World Heritage List, an area must be of outstanding universal value. UNESCO uses several different criteria to assess whether an area merits World Heritage Site status. It deemed the Wadden Sea to be globally unique in at least three of those criteria! It is outstanding in its importance for the conservation of biodiversity and ecological and geological processes that proceed in the Wadden Sea mostly natural. A World Heritage Area must also be complete and intact, and the protection and management must be effectively secured. This is ensured thanks to the nature conservation areas and the trans-boundary cooperation in the Wadden Sea.



More information?

Would you like to find out more about the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site? Then visit our website: www.waddensea-worldheritage.org There you will also find useful links to other organizations that are active in the Wadden Sea Area.

www.waddensea-worldheritage.org



Unique in its variety

The Wadden Sea has many different kinds of habitat and therefore offers a home to more than 10,000 species, from single-celled organisms to fishes, birds and mammals. Every year as many as 10 to 12 million migrating birds on their way from their breeding areas in Siberia, Canada or Scandinavia to their wintering grounds in West Europe and Africa stop over in the Wadden Area for short or extended periods. Only here will they find enough food to complete their journey of thousands of kilometres. The Wadden Sea is thus crucial for the conservation of the global biodiversity.

Natural forces and dynamics prevail

The Wadden Sea is unique in the whole world in demonstrating how nature, plants and animals adapt themselves to constantly changing conditions, in an area where freshwater (from land) and salt water (from the ocean) meet. The continuous interplay between wind, sand and tides in the Wadden Sea has created an incredible range of plants and animals specially adapted to cope with these changes. This huge variety is the magnificent result of natural processes that have been at play since the last Ice Age.

Young and unique

The Wadden Sea is geologically a very young area. The landscape, including its mudflats and dunes, was formed and is being formed rapidly. At the same time, the area reveals a lot about our planet's recent geological past, i.e. the era from the last Ice Age (10 to 12 thousand years ago) to the present. The Wadden Sea shows the dynamics of how entirely new landscapes take shape. Today, you can see with your own eyes how the landscape has evolved – and how it continues to do so.



OUR WADDEN SEA WORLD HERITAGE SITE



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This is a publication of the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) in cooperation with the organizations mentioned above.

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Whichever part of the Dutch or German North Sea coast or its islands you visit, you will be surveying an area that holds a natural beauty, unique in the world: the Wadden Sea.

In June 2009 the Wadden Sea was added to the World Heritage List. Why is the Wadden Sea a World Heritage Site?

And what does this mean?

Find out more in this leaflet!



The Wadden Sea – unique in the world!

The Wadden Sea forms an unparalleled, dynamic landscape. Nowhere in the world will you find such a vast, varied area, sculpted by the constant flow of tides. Even now, changes are noticeable on a daily basis. A complex system of channels and streams alternates with exposed mudflats and sand banks. You will find mussel beds, dense patches of sea grass and mud flats full of shellfish. On the foreshores of the coast, the islands and Halligen, extensive flowering salt marshes alternate with white beaches and dunes. This uniquely varied landscape means the Wadden Sea provides habitats for more than 10,000 plant and animal species and is a crucial stopover for millions of migrating birds.

Experience the Wadden Sea – walking across the living seabed!

Low and high tide alternate every six hours in the Wadden Sea, bringing about stunning changes to the landscape almost every minute of the day. You can experience this the whole year round. During low tide, it is possible to walk far out onto the mudflats –

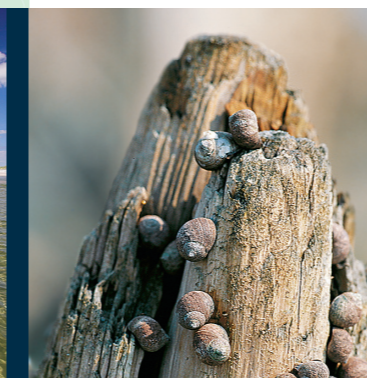
and, in some areas, even from the mainland to one of the islands or Halligen. You're actually walking on the living seabed! The best and safest way to experience the true magic of the place is under the leadership of an experienced guide.

Walking on the mud flats, you will hear only the sound of wind and the calls of the birds. Here you can see for yourself how the constant interaction between wind, water and waves has shaped the landscape since the last Ice Age – and how it continues to do so. A skein of geese cackle in the air. A wader cautiously picks its way on the newly-exposed seabed, looking for worms and shells. The salty air and mud-rich waters fill your senses. Cockles and worms under your feet cause movement in the water and sand. Prawns flash by your ankles and you can see flatfishes close by in the shallow water. Air bubbles, created by algae, burst at the water's surface. Legions of small crabs, cockles, mussels, starfishes and hermit crabs are exposed by the retreating sea. You even have the privilege of watching seals sunbathing on a sand bank – but keep an appropriate distance!



The Wadden Sea World Heritage Site encompasses the Dutch and German parts of the Wadden Sea. It covers an area of almost 10,000 square kilometres along a coastal strip about 400 kilometres long. The Wadden Sea has had a protected status for more than 20 years, in Germany, as national parks and in the Netherlands, as nature reserves. The designation as World Heritage Site has neither influence on the protection status of the area nor does it cause any new regulations.

The fact that the area has now become a World Heritage Site is largely due to the support over many years of local inhabitants, many organisations and government authorities.



World Heritage Site since June 2009

At the end of June 2009, UNESCO, the United Nations organization for nature and culture, placed the Wadden Sea on the World Heritage List. This puts the Wadden Sea on the same footing as other world famous natural wonders on the World Heritage List like the Grand Canyon in the USA and the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

What is a World Heritage Site?

A World Heritage Site is a monument, area or landscape of a natural and/or cultural-historical value which is of outstanding universal value and therefore needs to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole. Under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, adopted in 1972, member states committed themselves to protect the globally outstanding cultural and natural heritage within their boundaries and to safeguard it for future generations. More than 180 countries, including the Netherlands and Germany, have now signed the Convention.

