



2. Description of the World Heritage Site and its Environment as well as their Significance in a World Heritage Context

2.1 Characteristics, Identification

2.1.1 Locational Information

Name: Cultural Landscape of Fertő - Neusiedlersee

Countries: Austria and Hungary

Provinces: Federal Province of Burgenland in the Republic of Austria and Gyor-Moson-Sopron County in the Republic of Hungary

Location and geographical coordinates (Austria – Hungary)

Property: north 47° 36' 05" to 47° 55' 20" and east 16° 37' 40" to 16° 55' 30"

Property and buffer zone: north 47° 33' 30" to 47° 55' 20" and east 16° 37' 40" to 16° 56' 00"

Extent of the area (Austria – Hungary)

Property: 68,369 ha

Buffer zone: 6,347 ha

Inscribed: 16 December 2001



Map 1: Location



2.1.2 The Characteristics and the Boundaries of the World Heritage Site

The cultural landscape lies on the territories of two countries – in the Federal Province of Burgenland in the Republic of Austria and in Győr-Sopron-Moson County in the Republic of Hungary – on the eastern border of Austria and the western edge of Hungary.

The Ferto-Neusiedler See landscape is a natural geographical unit. Its character was formed by the thousand year-long interrelation of nature and civilisation, the immediate environment of which also forms a cultural unit in symbiosis with the lake.

Austria

The cultural landscape of Neusiedlersee (German: Neusiedler See, Hungarian: Ferto-tó) inscribed on the World Heritage List includes the Neusiedler See – Seewinkel Ramsar wetland including the biosphere reserve classified by UNESCO, the whole area of the free town of Rust located on the western shore of the lake, with its historic centre under a preservation order in its entirety; the lakeside villages of Mörbisch, Oggau, Donnerskirchen, Purbach, Breitenbrunn and Winden together with their fields and field systems; parts of the territories of St. Margarethen (Roman quarry), Oslip, Schützen, Jois, Neusiedl/See and Weiden; and east of the lake the territories of the National Park Neusiedler-Seewinkel, the villages of Podersdorf, Illmitz and Apetlon, and parts of the territories of Gols, Frauenkirchen, St. Andrä and Pamhagen.

The buffer zone is identical with the Neusiedler See – Seewinkel nature conservation and landscape protection area and parts of the Neusiedler See – Seewinkel National Park outside the core area.

Hungary

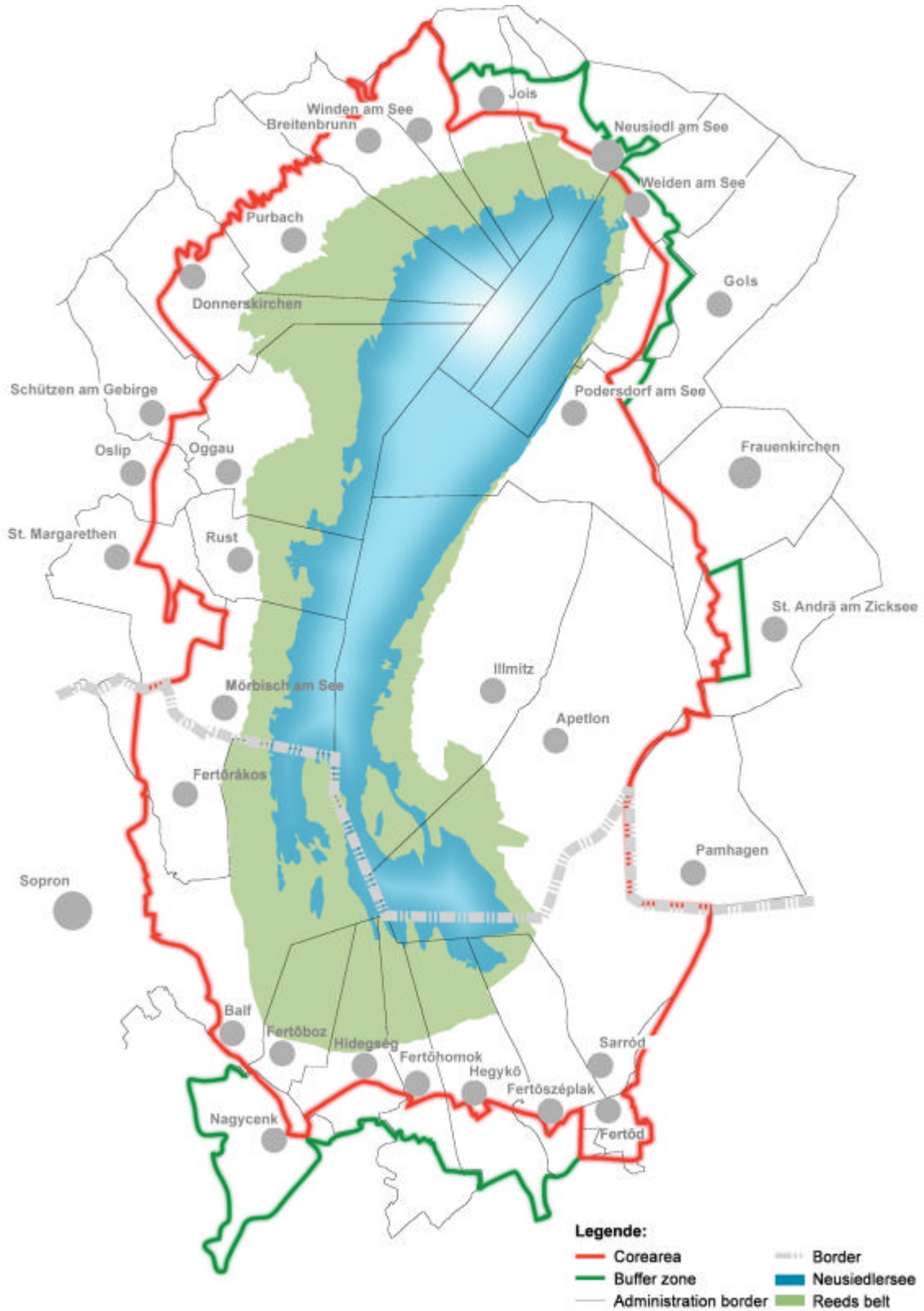
The Hungarian portion of the World Heritage cultural landscape of Ferto / Neusiedlersee includes the whole area of the Hungarian Ferto-Hanság National Park near Ferto / Neusiedler See as well as the settlement of Fertorákos - including its core, which is under historic monument preservation – up to the road leading to the Paneuropean Picnic site; the protected historic environment of the former Széchenyi Palace of Nagycenk – including the row of linden trees leading from the Palace to the lake; the inner area of Fertod and the protected historic environment of the Esterházy Palace; the area of Fertod between the lake and the road leading to Pamhagen, as well as the settlements of Sarród and Fertoboz; the inner areas and further territories between the inner areas and the lake of the settlements of Fertoszéplak, Hegyko, Fertohomok, Hidegség and Balf (Sopron).

The buffer zone is formed by the outer parts of Nagycenk, Hidegség, Fertohomok, Hegyko and Fertoszéplak.

World Heritage property and buffer zone, see map, following page



Map 2: World Heritage property – core and buffer zone





2.1.3 The Property's Regional Context

The property and its buffer zone are located on the border of the Alps and the steppe, on the territory of two states, Austria and Hungary.

The region was a Hungarian territory from the 10th century until World War I. Under the peace treaty of St. Germain (1919) the western areas of the former Sopron and Moson counties were ceded to Austria and a new state boundary was established.

The importance of the Ferto-Neusiedler region is best evidenced by the fact that within a relatively small area there are such significant settlements as Sopron and Eisenstadt, both having a long history dating back to Roman times.

The Austrian part of the cultural landscape of Ferto-Neusiedlersee is located in Burgenland, the easternmost Austrian province ("Land"). Covering 3,965 km², this province borders on Lower Austria and Styria in the west, on Slovakia in the north-east, on Hungary in the east and on Slovenia in the south. The provincial capital is Eisenstadt (Kismarton in Hungarian).

The Hungarian part of the World Heritage area is located in the north-western corner of Hungary, in the area of Győr-Moson-Sopron county which covers 4,012 km². The central town of the county is the city of Győr, which is located on the Danube.

The distance from Neusiedler See (Ferto-tó) to the city of Vienna (Austria) is only about 60 kilometers, to Bratislava (Slovakia) about 40 kilometers and to Sopron (Hungary) about 7 km. The lake and the surrounding cultural landscape form a particularly valuable and sensitive area in the European metropolitan region Vienna – Bratislava – Győr – Sopron.

2.1.4 History and Developments

In terms of the character of today's cultural landscape, the history of the region can be divided into two major periods: the long period from early human history until the establishment of the Hungarian state in the 11th century, and the period from the 11th century until now. The first archaeological traces of settlements in the area of the Hungarian Fertő and Hanság date from the 6th millennium BC. The row of Neolithic settlements follows the southern shore of Fertő-Neusiedler See. The existence of cultural and trading connections with the neighbouring areas is substantiated by the forms and decorations of the painted pottery finds. The sites of the Copper Age Balaton-Lasinja group date from the beginning of the 4th millennium BC, and vestiges of the late Copper Age Baden civilisation have been found near Fertőrákos and Sopronkőhida. The area continued to be inhabited at the end of the Copper Age, around 2000 BC, as can be seen from traces of a metallurgical workshop.

The Bronze Age, the first golden age in Europe, resulted in prosperity in the Fertő area as well. The successive civilisations made contact with the people of far-away lands via the routes crossing in the south-west region of the lake. The Amber Route ran through the Sopron basin, which is next to the hills of the lake shore, and connected the Adriatic to the Baltic. There was also the main road connecting the plain of north-western Hungary to the Vienna basin from the east, one of its tracks following the southern shore of Ferto-Neusiedler See.

In the early Iron Age, mainly from the 7th century BC, the shore of the lake was densely populated. Surface remains of these former settlements have been found in the fields of almost every present-day village.



In the 5th century BC, the Celts lived in small pile and mud huts, partly at ground level and partly dug into the earth of what are now fields near Sopron. The first coins were also minted by the Celts in the area of Ferto / Neusiedler See.

Between 50 and 57 AD, Pliny mentioned that the territory of the people of Noricum reached to lake Peiso and the deserted region of the Boii. However, in the latter, the Colony of Claudius (today's Szombathely) and Scarbantia (today's Sopron) founded by Julius were already inhabited places. Some scientists believe that lacus Peiso is Ferto-Neusiedler See, others think that Pliny was referring to Lake Balaton. The region south of Ferto-Neusiedler See belonged to the territory of Scarbantia in Roman times. In the fields of almost every village, remains of Roman villas have come to light.

The Mithras cult was especially popular in this border region of the Roman Empire. The birth of Mithras (the god of heavenly light), was celebrated on *dies natalis solis*, 25 December, the date later chosen by the Christian church for the Christmas festival. Among the archaeological finds in the region, the altar dedicated to Mithras in Illmitz and the Mithras shrine near Fertorákos are especially worthy of mention.

The Roman administration in the vicinity of Scarbantia was destroyed by the Teutonic Quads, who raided the land from the area of today's Slovakia between 374 and 395 AD. Teutonic Svebs arrived and lived in the vicinity of the Roman remains.

Around 433-434 AD, the Western Roman Empire left East Pannonia to the Huns. The nomadic Huns and their Teutonic allies occupied the province as far as the Alps. The fall of the Hun empire was followed by the hegemony of the East Goths, the Svebs and Heruls, Langobards and Avars. This eastern equestrian people united the region of the Carpathian basin under a single authority for the first time. Around 670 AD, new settlers arrived from the east, who reorganised the Avar empire. They were Onogurs, after whom the Magyars, who came later, were called "Ungars", i.e. Hungarians. Around 800 AD, the Avar empire, which was torn apart by internal fighting, collapsed under the attacks of Charlemagne and the Bulgarian Krum Khan. The region of Ferto-Neusiedler See (inter Savariam et Carnuntum, i.e. between Szombathely and Petronell) remained the territory of the Avar people.

On the shore of the lake, Frankish Bavarian military posts existed for controlling the roads, for example between Balf and Fertőrákos. At the turn of the 10th century, the Hungarians allied with the Bavarians and occupied this territory from the north. Hungarians occupying the Carpathian basin were the overlords of the Ferto / Neusiedler See area in the years around 900 – as a land especially suited for keeping animals. It became part of a multi-level border protection system.

Within the state and public administration system established since the 11th century, the formerly Celtic-Roman Sopron became the seat of the bailiff and the centre of the county named after it, which included the south-western part of the Ferto / Neusiedler See area. The north-eastern area of the lakeside became part of Moson county. Migration of German settlers started in the 13th century and continued throughout the Middle Ages. The Tartar invasion in 1241-42, which devastated almost the whole country, left this area unharmed, i.e. the settlements were not forced to restart from scratch. The region enjoyed uninterrupted development throughout the Middle Ages until the Turkish conquest.

The Turkish siege of Vienna in 1529 devastated this region as well. The fall of Győr in 1594 and four years of Turkish occupation brought renewed devastation. During that period Croats moved in from Slavonia to replenish the reduced population. The conflicts with the Ottoman Empire led to the redesign of the medieval fortifications. Some of them were turned into Italian Renaissance-type fortresses, whereas many villages on the shores of Ferto-Neusiedler See



received stone fortifications, e.g. Rust, Oggau, Donnerskirchen and Purbach. The most important local event in the 17th century was Rust's elevation to the rank of a royal free town in 1681.

The most significant building phase that would continue to dominate the vistas of towns and villages in the area of Fertő-Neusiedler See was that of the 18th century. The economic upswing that followed the Turkish wars, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and the war of Hungarian independence (led by Rákóczi) was not only reflected in the great building activity of the aristocracy but also in the splendid facades of the local burgher farmhouses, as well as in buildings built by the Church to glorify the victory over Protestantism and by the nobility to manifest its regained prosperity. The palaces and mansions of noble families, above all the Esterházy and Széchenyis, were bathed in a splendour hardly conceivable a few decades earlier; it was the unrivalled heyday of culture in Burgenland, an epoch of flourishing arts and crafts. In addition to designers, architects and stucco and fresco artisans, many other artists helped create the special cultural atmosphere of that period. This applies in particular to music, the most notable example being the great Joseph Haydn and his close links with Eisenstadt (Kismarton), Fertő-Eszterháza and the Esterházy dynasty.

The landlords' estates, which had developed since the 16th century, covered such a huge area that they prevented any major economic development for the peasants living on them. On the other hand, this was the time when the palaces and parks of Fertő and Nagycenk were built, while the villages and towns around the lake received their present appearance. Reformation and Counter-Reformation led to the rebuilding of churches or the construction of new ones. Numerous small monuments were built which are still found inside and outside the villages and towns of the present-day cultural landscape of Fertő / Neusiedler See.

While the economic basis of the area continued to be arable farming, animal husbandry and viticulture, the politically restless times of the first half of the 19th century prevented any major changes and thus also any further development of the existing building forms, i.e. the Baroque character of townscapes and villagescapes remained largely intact.

The liberation of the peasants under the laws of 1848 and the political situation after 1867 promoted the area's development. Renewed building activity set in. This was when the frequently Classicist and eclectic street facades with their plastered decorations were added, dozens of which are still to be seen.

The most important events of the second half of the 19th century were the construction of railway lines and the completion of the water management facilities in the area.

The first segment of the railway line between Sopron and Wiener Neustadt was completed in 1847. The next section from Sopron to Győr was completed in 1876, that from Sopron to Ebenfurt in 1879, and that from Fertőszentmiklós to Neusiedler/See in 1897. Hence, by the end of the 19th century, the region was completely integrated into the transportation system of the Monarchy and/or Europe.

After World War I, the national border introduced between Austria and Hungary divided the region into two halves. However, true isolation started with the establishment of the Communists' "Iron Curtain" after World War II. But it was between Fertőrákos and St. Margarethen that the participants in a Pan-European Picnic tore down the barbed wire and reopened the border. "This was the place where the first brick was knocked out of the Berlin Wall".