

## P R E S S   B R I E F I N G

# The European Green Belt: Borders.Wilderness.Future

With

Dr. Josef Pühringer, Governor of the State of Upper Austria  
Martin Heller, Director of Linz 2009 European Capital of Culture  
Dr. Thomas Wrbka, Exhibition Curator  
Mag. Dr. Peter Assmann, Director of State Museums

Also available to answer your questions:

Dr. Gottfried Schindlbauer, Director of the Nature Conservation  
Department of Upper Austria  
Dipl.-Ing. Hannes Kunisch, Upper Austrian Nature Conservation Academy  
Josef Limberger, President of the Upper Austrian League for Nature  
Conservation  
Dr. Gerhard Aubrecht, Director of the Biology Center

Exhibition in the New South Wing  
of the Linz Schlossmuseum

Opening: 4 July 2009, 10 a.m.

Exhibition dates: 4 July 2009 to 10 January 2010

[www.schlossmuseum.at](http://www.schlossmuseum.at)

***Brief Info – Brief Info – Brief Info – Brief Info – Brief Info – Brief Info***

The exhibition, "The European Green Belt: Borders.Wilderness.Future", presents an **international nature conservation project** which aims to protect the diverse landscapes along the former Iron Curtain, sustainably preserving their natural and cultural assets. On a strip 8500 kilometres (5280 miles) in length, areas of wilderness have spread across Europe, acting as important retreats for wild animals such as bears, lynxes and wolves; however, most of them are embedded in **a variety of cultivated landscapes** in which environmentally compatible forms of use could serve as models of sustainable development for rural Europe.

Based on cultural and economic aspects of this "enforced neglect", the **biological and cultural diversity** of this strip stretching from sub-arctic Lapland via the Baltic coast, the Central European uplands and flood plains to the Black Sea coast on the border between Bulgaria and Turkey is presented. The stories covered range from the delicacies of the Far North, such as reindeer meat and cloudberrries, via the amber of the Baltic Sea coast to the floral treasures of the Balkan Mountains, and are illustrated by a wide variety of exhibits. This ultimately raises the question of the direction in which these border regions in the heart of Europe can and should develop in the future.

A project of the Upper Austrian State Museums and the University of Vienna for Linz 2009 European Capital of Culture.

# **"The European Green Belt: Borders.Wilderness.Future"**

The exhibition, "The European Green Belt: Borders.Wilderness.Future", presents an international nature conservation project which aims to protect the diverse landscapes along the former Iron Curtain, sustainably preserving their natural and cultural assets. Thanks to decades of border security, often accompanied by enforced depopulation, areas of wilderness were preserved or in some cases created on a strip more than 8500 kilometres (5280 miles) in length stretching across Europe.

## **Protecting the Natural Heritage**

Following the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, efforts were set in motion by regional authorities, environmental groups and dedicated individuals in many countries to protect the natural heritage of the formerly marginalised border regions and to give them a new and positive cultural significance. These initiatives were brought together within the "European Green Belt" project and continued by NGOs (IUCN, Euronatur, BUND, ÖNB, WWF, etc.) and official nature conservation agencies as a strategic key environmental development project in the heart of Europe.

The natural corridor which is to be preserved extends from the sub-arctic environment of Lapland to the Mediterranean border region between Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey in south-eastern Europe, and thus has an international, European dimension. Long-term historical developments led to the creation of a wide variety of cultivated landscapes consisting, depending on the region, of an extremely diverse mixture of wilderness-like natural remnants (mountain ecosystems, wetlands, coastlines, etc.) with locally typical cultivated ecosystems. Heavily forested wilderness regions within the Green Belt today provide important retreats for wild animals such as bears, lynxes and wolves which were formerly widespread in Europe. The Green Belt with its widely varying environments is often embedded in a diversity of cultivated landscapes in which environmentally compatible forms of use could serve as models of sustainable development for rural Europe.

## **Role of Intermediary between Nature and Culture**

Moreover, the Green Belt also plays an important role as an intermediary between nature and culture. From a historical perspective, it occupies a unique position in the history of the development of European landscapes, the reason being that the militarily secured political and ideological border led for the first time in the continent's history to compulsory depopulation and thus to a decline in human activities on a grand scale. Of

course, this enforced neglect had social and cultural implications which stand in complete contrast to the ecological consequences which can only be assessed positively.

The exhibition, "The European Green Belt: Borders.Wilderness.Future", within "Linz 2009" European Capital of Culture, attempts to cover a variety of aspects of this part of European history in relation to nature and mankind. Based on cultural and economic aspects of enforced neglect, the biological and cultural diversity of this strip stretching from sub-arctic Lapland via the Baltic coast, the Central European uplands and flood plains to the Black Sea coast on the border between Bulgaria and Turkey is presented.

### **Border Regions in the Heart of Europe**

The stories covered range from the delicacies of the Far North, such as reindeer meat and cloudberry, via the amber of the Baltic Sea coast to the floral treasures of the Balkan Mountains, and are illustrated by a wide variety of exhibits. This main narrative telling of Europe's diversity is supplemented by secondary narratives giving insight into important topics such as the human players and the return of wild animals. This ultimately raises the question of the direction in which these border regions in the heart of Europe can and should develop in the future.

A project of the Upper Austrian State Museums and the University of Vienna for Linz 2009 European Capital of Culture. "Talking about Europe is one of the most vital functions of the Capital of Culture", says **Director Martin Heller**. The exhibition, "The Green Belt", offers ideal opportunities for this. Says Heller, "Here, Europe's history, as well as its future, becomes tangible, especially as the Iron Curtain was not only an inhuman reality which deprived people of their liberty but also a powerful symbol. Thus, the story of how it was overcome is a strong beacon of hope in every respect. Here, nature and culture cannot be separated: the story book tells of both in grandiose manner."

## **Publications**

### **Exhibition Catalogue (German/English)**

"The European Green Belt: Borders.Wilderness.Future"

Edited by Dr. Thomas Wrbka, Mag. Katharina Zmelik, Dr. Franz Michael Grünweis

Catalogues of the Upper Austrian State Museums N.S. 88

ISBN 978-3-900000-16-5

Publishers: Verlag Bibliothek der Provinz, Weitra

Printed by Ing. Christian Janetschek, Heidenreichstein

A cooperative project of Linz 2009 European Capital of Culture, the Upper Austrian State Museums and the University of Vienna

ca. 300 pages, price: 29 euros

### **Exhibition Booklet for Young People (German)**

"Das Grüne Band Europas: Grenze.Wildnis.Zukunft"

Authors: Dr. Andrea Benedetter-Herramhof and Mag. Julia Kropfberger

Catalogues of the Upper Austrian State Museums N.S. 89

ISBN 978-3-85474-210-4

Printed by Plöchl Druck GmbH, Freistadt

A cooperative project of Linz 2009 European Capital of Culture, the Upper Austrian State Museums and the University of Vienna

ca. 48 pages, price: 5 euros

## **ORF/BBC Documentary in the "Stadtkino" in the Linz Movimiento**

From August to December 2009, the "Universum" documentary, "The Green Corridor", will be shown in the course of the **"Stadtkino"** project **in the Linz Movimiento**. This ORF/BBC joint production by Paul Reddish shows what has become of the former border areas 20 years after the opening of the frontiers between the Eastern bloc and Western Europe. Natural paradises full of life directly along the death strip, rare animals and plants in the shadow of watchtowers. Along the Iron Curtain, from Finland's polar region to the inter-German frontier, and from the northern and eastern borders of Austria to Macedonia, habitats have been preserved which have long since disappeared elsewhere. Along this strip, some 8500 kilometres in length, environmental organisations are working on the world's largest conservation project: the Green Corridor or the Green Belt is to unite Europe where the Iron Curtain used to divide it.

# **"The European Green Belt. Borders.Wilderness.Future"**

## **Educational Programme**

In connection with the exhibition, **guided tours** and **workshops** for children (5 years and over), young people and adults are on offer.

In the course of the educational programme associated with the exhibition, visitors are invited to investigate the flora and fauna of the former "Iron Curtain" region. What is the significance of this Green Belt running right across Europe? Which plant or animal species are typical for or peculiar to which areas? What are the future perspectives of the "European Green Belt"?

### **Activity Sheet**

Activity sheets (in German) are available in the exhibition for visitors aged 8 years and over. They contain explanations, puzzles and suggestions for an independent tour.

### **Nature Workshop**

The aim of the two-hour workshops is to offer visitors an opportunity to investigate the exhibition thoroughly and to subsequently express what they have experienced in their own active creative work.

### **Holiday Initiative**

In the course of this three-day foray through different European landscapes, the diversity of natural landscapes from the Far North to the sunny South undergoes intensive investigation. Which animals live where? How do plants adapt to the climate and the environment? Are some of the landscapes of the Green Belt also thematised in paintings in the parallel exhibition, "Sehnsucht Natur. Landschaften Europas", ("Nostalgia of Nature, Landscapes of Europe")? There will be ample opportunity for creative artwork or active investigation.

### **Know How Upper Austria**

In September, our monthly meeting for people from different cultural backgrounds will be concerned with flora and fauna throughout Europe. The discussion on how the former "Iron Curtain" is seen today from the different standpoints of the visitors' countries of origin promises to be particularly fascinating.

**Guided tours on Sundays:**

**from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.**

5, 12, 19, 26 July 2009  
2, 9, 16, 23, 30 August 2009  
6, 13, 20, 27 September 2009  
4, 11, 18, 25 October 2009  
8, 15, 22, 29 November 2009  
6, 13, 20, 27 December 2009  
3, 10 January 2010

**English-language guided tours on Saturdays:**

**from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

4, 11, 18, 25 July 2009  
1, 8, 15, 22, 29 August 2009  
5, 12, 19, 26 September 2009  
3, 10, 17, 24, 31 October 2009  
7, 14, 21, 28 November 2009  
5, 12, 19, 26 December 2009  
2, 9 January 2010

**Guided tours on Thursday evenings from 6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.:**

9, 23 July 2009  
6, 20 August 2009  
10 September 2009  
1, 29 October 2009  
12, 26 November 2009  
17 December 2009  
7 January 2010

**Guided tours for senior citizens from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.:**

Thursday, 6 August 2009  
Thursday, 7 January 2010

**Guided tours for families from 2 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.:**

6 August 2009  
3 January 2010

**Know How Upper Austria from 6 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.:**

Thursday, 1 October 2009

**Nature Workshop (5 years and over) from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.:**

Saturday, 18 July 2009  
Saturday, 7 November 2009

**Holiday initiative: "The European Green Belt":**

Tuesday, 28 July – Thursday, 30 July 2009  
For children aged 5-8 years: daily from 9.30 a.m. – 12 noon  
For children aged 9-12 years: daily from 2 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.

**Information events for teachers:**

Tuesday, 7 July 2009 at 4 p.m.  
Tuesday, 22 September 2009 at 2 p.m.

**Guided tours and workshops in German and English:**

By agreement, groups of 8 persons or more

**Registration and information:**

0043-732/ 77 44 19 - 31 or [m.stauber@landesmuseum.at](mailto:m.stauber@landesmuseum.at)

## **Excursions to the Green Belt:**

In connection with the exhibition, the Upper Austrian League for Nature Conservation is offering topical excursions to the Green Belt. The excursion destinations lie in the border region between Upper Austria and the Czech Republic and thus along the former Iron Curtain. The erstwhile death strip along the former frontier to the Eastern bloc has developed into a belt of life, which the Upper Austrian League for Nature Conservation is actively engaged in preserving. The Green Belt stretches for a distance of 122 kilometres (76 miles) in Upper Austria.

### **24 and 25 July:**

2-day tour to the Green Belt in the border region between Upper Austria and the Czech Republic.

Visit to the Green Belt exhibition in the Linz Schlossmuseum. Departure to Leopoldschlag, visit to the Info Center, short hike along the river Maltzsch, drive to Krumau, sightseeing on foot, drive to the Trebon ponds, short hike to the ponds. Overnight stay in Trebon. The next morning drive to the Red Bog. Drive to Gmünd and Weitra. Lunch. Return to Freistadt and Linz via the Waldviertel.

### **8 August:**

Short tour to the Green Belt in the border region between Upper Austria and the Czech Republic. Schwarzenberg Canal, Bohemian Forest.

### **12 September:**

Short tour to the Green Belt in the border region between Upper Austria and the Czech Republic: Moldau Dam and Sumava National Park.

**18 and 19 September:**

2-day tour to the Green Belt in the border region between Upper Austria and the Czech Republic.

Visit to the Green Belt exhibition in the Linz Schlossmuseum. Departure to Leopoldschlag, visit to the Info Center, drive via the Waldviertel to the Thayatal National Park in Lower Austria.

Further information on events and excursions to the Green Belt can be found on the internet at [www.naturschutzbund-ooe.at](http://www.naturschutzbund-ooe.at). Telephone registration Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on 0043-732/77 92 79 or by e-mail: [ooenb@gmx.net](mailto:ooenb@gmx.net).

## At a Glance ...

### **Schlossmuseum (Castle Museum)**

Schlossberg 1, 4010 Linz  
Tel.: 0043-732/77 44 19  
schloss@landesmuseum.at  
[www.schlossmuseum.at](http://www.schlossmuseum.at)

### **Current exhibition**

**"The European Green Belt:  
Borders.Wilderness.Future"**

### **Exhibition dates**

4 July 2009 to 10 January 2010

### **Opening hours**

Tues., Wed., Fri. 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
Thursday 9 a.m. - 9 p.m.  
Sat., Sun. and holidays 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Monday closed

### **Admission charges**

Admission 6.50 € per adult

### **Director of the Upper Austrian State Museums**

Mag. Dr. Peter Assmann  
Tel.: 0043-732/77 44 82 - 42  
E-mail: p.assmann@landesmuseum.at

### **Exhibition curator**

Univ. Doz. Dr. Thomas Wrbka

### **Press and Publicity**

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### **Cultural education Upper Austrian State Museums**

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Linz at July 2009