

BASIC PRESS RELEASE

Industrial nature and Zollverein Park

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Unique industrial nature at the UNESCO World Heritage Site Zollverein

Biodiversity in the middle of the Ruhr area

Essen. When visitors standing on the panoramic roof of the former Zollverein Coal Washery let their eyes wander, they are always amazed to see how green the UNESCO World Heritage Site and the surrounding area are. Until 30 years ago, the 100-hectare site of the Zollverein Coal Mine and Coking Plant was a grey “city within the city”, visibly characterised by mining and closed to the public. Today, Zollverein Park in the open areas of the listed premises invites to linger and provides a popular local recreational destination for visitors from far and wide. Newly laid out pathways and connections along the railway tracks belonging to the monument afford the opportunity to explore the World Heritage Site by foot or by bicycle. A special type of nature has recaptured its place in the huge open spaces, about 700 animal and plant species have already been documented at Zollverein.

Zollverein Park

Since 2006, the special relationship of nature and industrial architecture at the Zollverein World Heritage Site has been maintained and continually developed in the Zollverein Park. The park comprises 70-hectare of undeveloped area at the World Heritage Site. The design basis is the master plan “Zollverein Industrial Landscape”, designed by Agentur Agence Ter 2003 under the direction of landscape architect Henri Bava. Zollverein Park was implemented by an interdisciplinary team, consisting of Planergruppe GmbH Oberhausen (landscape architecture), Licht Kunst Licht (lighting), Observatorium Rotterdam (art), and F1rstdesign.com (orientation).

The maintenance concept for Zollverein Park provides for a noticeable contrast between nature and industrial buildings, putting the famous architecture of Fritz Schupp and Martin Kremmer in the focus of attention. This emphasises the structures of the monument and the existing visual axes. The former railway tracks, for example, now form a network of parallel and transverse footpaths, which are lined by young birch trees. At the same time, the industrial landscape with its elevations and hollows produced by mining shall remain visible. This is why the wooded and green areas at Zollverein are regularly maintained and carefully pruned in selected areas.

Emscher Landscape Park

Zollverein Park is part of the regional Emscher Landscape Park, a cooperation project of 20 cities and two districts, which connects different park spaces in the Emscher region by a network of cycle paths. The concept for this network of regional parks was developed during the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Emscher Park, which provided lasting impulses for the economic change of the Ruhr area with about 120 projects between 1989 and 1999.

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Industrial nature and biodiversity

Industrial landscapes create new habitats for animals and plants. Industrial utilisation changes, amongst other things, land and soils; in some areas, completely new industrial soils consisting of slag and ashes appear. If industrial operations are shut down, animal and plant species quickly settle on the disused land. A characteristic industrial nature with a fascinating variety of colours and species emerges.

On the grounds of the decommissioned Zollverein Coal Mine and Coking Plant, more than 500 fern and flowering plant species, about 100 lichen species, about 40 bird species, and more than 20 butterfly species have already been documented. Frequently, these species are particularly well adapted to the extreme habitat conditions. The soil at the tips, for example, is nutrient-deficient, and only virgin soil specialists such as birch, locust and willow trees can survive there. Numerous plants, which arrived in the Ruhr area with goods transported by ship or railway, grow between the abandoned tracks at Zollverein: goldenrods and evening primroses from North America, the narrow-leaved ragwort from South Africa, the summer lilac from China, and the apple of Peru from Peru, for example, find habitat conditions at Zollverein which resemble those of their indigenous locations.

Leisure and recreation

For visitors, Zollverein Park is an appealing leisure and local recreation area. In 2014, the park was voted the most popular destination in the Emscher Landscape Park. Strollers, joggers and cyclists alike use the 3.5-kilometre ring promenade, which runs across the entire World Heritage Site. Freely accessible seats, picnic areas and viewpoints invite to stay a little longer. Renowned artists have eternalised themselves with artworks and sculptures in the open areas. An ecologically friendly E-Bus connects the most important locations at the premises.

Cooperation “Nature at Zollverein”

Since spring 2015, Zollverein Foundation, RAG Montan Immobilien, Ruhr Museum, and Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union of North Rhine-Westphalia (NABU NRW) have jointly worked on giving visitors to the World Heritage Site an understanding of the varied and unique nature in the Zollverein Park. One result of the cooperation is the free hiking map "Nature at Zollverein", which visitors can use to get to know the special features of the ecosystem at Zollverein at twelve different locations. Steel steles mark the individual stops on the World Heritage Site. Visitors can also access the descriptions with their smartphone via QR code at the steles. More detailed information on the twelve stops of the tour is available in the nature guidebook "Industrienatur auf Zollverein" ("Industrial Nature at Zollverein"), which was published in 2017 in the series "Kleine Schriften des Ruhr Museums" (vol. 5). Numerous pictures give an impression of the biodiversity at Zollverein, which for the first time has also been comprehensively documented scientifically: the publication "Artenvielfalt der Industrienatur. Flora, Fauna und Pilze auf Zollverein in Essen" (Biodiversity of industrial nature. Flora, fauna and mushrooms at Zollverein in Essen), published in 2017 by Peter Keil and Esther Guderley in the treatises from the Westfälisches Museum für Naturkunde (vol. 87), documents in 17 papers the flora and fauna on the grounds of the Zollverein Coal Mine and Coking Plant.

European Green Capital – Essen 2017

In the year of the "European Green Capital – Essen 2017", the Zollverein World Heritage Site offered a varied programme of guided tours, exhibitions and events on the themes of industrial nature, green space development and sustainability. The central exhibition "Green in the City of Essen. More than Parks and Gardens" of the Ruhr Museum quickly became a magnet for visitors. During the duration from 21 May to 27 August 2017, more than 35,000 visitors attended the colourful exhibition in Hall 5. Another highlight was the GEO Day of Nature on 17 and 18 June 2017 – organised by NABU NRW

and the association "GEO-Tag der Natur e.V.". Within 24 hours, researchers documented more than 800 animal and plant species at the World Heritage Site and invited young and old to get involved. The varied available guided tours through the Zollverein Park also enjoyed great popularity. Various events rounded off the "green" year at Zollverein: the "Fairgoods" show in May informed visitors about sustainable consumption, the "Experiment Kleingarten" (allotment garden experiment) regularly invited everyone to do gardening together, and in August, the travelling exhibition "Gemeinschaftlich Gärtnern in Essen" (joint gardening in Essen) presented the city's garden projects.

Further information at: www.zollverein.de