The Wadden Sea: a sensitive balance between land and sea

Darmstadt, February 22th, 2018 *** Waves, wind and tides: A vacation at the Wadden Sea means experiencing nature up close. The beauty of the landscape and the incredible variety of flora and fauna exert a very special fascination. The Wadden Sea is a habitat for approximately 10,000 species of single-cell organisms, fungi, plants and animals, among them countless kinds of mussels or crabs as well as lugworms and
It is also considered one of the most important areas for migratory birds worldwide: sometimes about 6 million birds are present at the same time and between 10 and 12 million migratory birds in total pass through it each year. For good reason, the German, Dutch and Danish parts of the Wadden Sea are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. However, this extraordinary natural landscape is increasingly threatened.

An endangered natural environment

The effects of pollutants from industry and agriculture on the ecological system of the Wadden Sea become more and more evident, as well as those of plastic waste and overfishing. Climate change and the resulting sea-level rise pose a special threat to the mudflats. In the long run, they can cause tidal flats, salt marshes, dunes and beaches or even whole islands with their unique nature to disappear. During the last centuries, the sea-level has already been rising for natural reasons, albeit considerably slower than it will rise in the future. The measures for coastal protection – such as the construction of bigger and bigger dykes, dams or concrete and stone structures – frequently caused serious destructions of nature. Due to the efforts of initiatives and foundations, for example the WWF, some measures, such as the embankment of large mud flat areas, are no longer permitted. Still, there is much to be done to preserve the Wadden Sea in the long run.
Promoting environmental protection

On the islands as well as at the coast, numerous efforts are being made to protect the environment, for example shifting to electric buses or restricting car traffic in some areas. The first German ferry that runs on liquid gas (LNG) operates between Emden and Borkum. On Spiekeroog, a deposit system for coffee cups is supposed to help reduce garbage and Föhr is promoting a more conscious use of plastic. In response to climate change, large amounts of renewable energy are being generated on the North Sea coast. The Wadden Sea countries Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands decided in 2010 that the region should become carbon neutral by 2030. Moreover, the German government is trying to convince all coastal communities of joining the transition area of the UNESCO biosphere reserves. The objectives of the biosphere reserves are a conscious ecological use of land and resources, environmental education and a sustainable economic and social development. The Wadden Sea of Lower Saxony and the Wadden Sea of Schleswig-Holstein are already recognized as biosphere reserves.
Exploring the Wadden Sea

Visitors can make use of the comprehensive excursion and information program and also pay attention to relevant quality standards. In the national park Wadden Sea of Lower Saxony, there is a range of certified trips, for example tourists can take a trip to the seal banks or watch sea mammals and birds. Providers and accompanying personal are specially trained and work closely with the national park administration. Moreover, care is taken to ensure that the fauna and flora is not disturbed. Visitors of the island Juist can participate in the bicycle tour “Juist unplugged”, during which the sustainability expert Thomas Vodde presents the ecological and social aspects of the island. And the best way do explore the Wadden Sea is a mudflat hiking tour or a visit at the experience center Naturgewalten on the island Sylt.
An active contribution

On Sylt, the Hotel Niedersachsen is a recommendable starting point for mudflat hiking tours. By choosing a sustainable hotel, tourists contribute to the protection of the environment. Being a climate neutral hotel, Hotel Niedersachsen covers 50% of its energy demand by a geothermal system using natural heat from the Earth’s interior. A cogeneration unit, the use of 100% green electricity and the purchase of regional products also contribute to the hotel’s low carbon emission. For eco-conscious tourists who want to explore the car free island Juist, Strandhotel Kurhaus Juist is the perfect accommodation. This is not only due to its location on the declared “climate island” that has been certified as a sustainable travel destination by TourCert. At Strandhotel Kurhaus Juist, active waste prevention, efficient water management and a cogeneration unit make sure that guests can spend a relaxing holiday at the North Sea contributing to a sustainable philosophy.
The German Green Pearls GmbH with place of business in Darmstadt, Germany unifies international tourism companies that support environmental protection and demonstrate social commitment. Thereby, Green Pearls is the first holding company worldwide that consolidates sustainable hotels, destinations and restaurants in a global data source.

Among the criteria of admission to Green Pearls® Unique Places, are a sustainability plan on management level, sustainable architecture, comprehensive water, energy saving and waste recovery measures, the use of seasonal and regional ingredients in the kitchen, as well as a large commitment for the social balance in each of the vacation regions.

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