

„... Rügen's true paradise.“



Welcome to the South-East Rügen Biosphere Reserve!

"... on my mind I drew a line from Putbus via Cirkow to Prora. The place which is situated eastwards beyond this line, is Rügen's true paradise".

This is how JOHANN JACOB GRÜMBKE enthused about South-East Rügen in his book "Wanderings across the island of Rügen" in 1805. It seems as if he had foreseen the current boundaries of the biosphere reserve already.

This praised landscape has been recognized by UNESCO as one of now 16 Biosphere Reserves in Germany. World-wide there are currently 669 Biosphere Reserves located in 120 countries (status: June 2017).

South-East Rügen is one of the most characteristic landscapes in Germany. You rarely find such a diverse, harmonious cultural landscape with an unmistakable charm, with close links between land and sea, a variety of natural features and harmonious distribution of nature and culture. Here, a pre-industrial culture has been preserved that cannot be found throughout the northern German coastal area any more.



Field near village Vilmnitz

Biosphere Reserve – what does it stand for?

"Biosphere" literally means "habitat". The biosphere is the framework for the development of life on earth, containing all the forms of life. It surrounds our planet as a protective skin. Very much simplified, it extends as deep as fish can dive and as high as birds can fly.

Biosphere Reserves are small sections of the biosphere. They form model regions and components of a network of large-area reserves of the UNESCO program "Man and the Biosphere" (MaB), being created all over the world.

Within the Biosphere Reserve, human management obtains top priority. But nature conservation is only one part of the duties. Agriculture and fisheries, forestry, transport and tourism, settlements and the organisation of the territory – all those activities have to be arranged in such a way that they offer the residents of this area an enduring basis of existence in harmony with the natural environment and scenic beauty.



Historical farmhouse in Groß Zicker

Think global – act local

The worldwide ecological crisis needs practical examples of a sustainable, environmentally-friendly utilisation of our livelihood. The international UNESCO program "Man and the Biosphere" (MAB), created in 1970, takes up the issue. The "National park program" proposed by the former GDR, which allowed the creation of the South-East Rügen Biosphere Reserve, was followed by the MAB program in 1990. The Seville Strategy, formulated in 1995 by the UNESCO, provides a model for carrying out the objectives of the United Nations conference for environment in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 ("Agenda 21").

The Biosphere Reserve of Rügen was established on October 1st 1990. It is managed by the Administration of the South-East Rügen Biosphere Reserve, which is statutory responsible as Lower Nature Conservation Authority of the country Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. But nature protection is only one of the main tasks of the Biosphere Reserve.

The guidelines of the International Network of Biosphere Reserves describe the main tasks as follows (UNESCO 1996):

- Development: promotion of scientific and human sustainable development, of culture and social environment.
- Logistic support: encouraging education and learning environment, research and environmental observations on a local, regional, national or international level about conservation or sustainable development.
- Conservation: encourage the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems but also the species and genetic diversity.

The zonation concept

Biosphere Reserves are split into three different categories:

The Core Area
(Legal status: nature conservation area)
In this area nature develops without human impact. Conservation of natural or rather nature-orientated ecosystems gets top priority. Any utilization for economic purposes is prohibited.

The Buffer Zone
(Legal status: nature conservation area)
The Buffer Zones surround the core area and aim at maintaining and preserving those ecosystems which were influenced and created due to human utilisation. The objective is to establish extensive use of such landscape parts, which support a wide range of habitats for typical plant and animal species. Land use forms, such as extensive grazing or semi-natural Forestry prevail.

The Transition Area
(Legal status: protected landscape)
The Transition Areas surround the buffer zone. Any economic use must be carried out with respect to nature and environment considering social needs as well. In addition, these areas are used for monitoring and research.

The South-East Rügen Biosphere Reserve covers an area of 22.800 ha half of it being water surface.

Ice, wind and sea

The landscape of Rügen Island was shaped by glaciers of the last ice age, which ended about 10.000 - 12.000 years ago.

After the melting of these glaciers the water level of the Baltic Sea raised. Lower parts of the landscape were covered with water, higher parts remained above the sea level - at this time Rügen became an archipelago of many small islands.

The waves of the Baltic Sea removed the glacial material of the coasts. In many places steep slopes developed, big blocks remained at the coasts; fine materials were transported and deposited elsewhere by the water. Later these fine materials finally connected the former separated islands of Rügen. The island got its present appearance.

Today you can find Rügens best beaches with fine and white sand along the east side of the spits.

Under cover of spits inshore waters that are almost unaffected by the Baltic Sea have been formed. Those waters are called „Bodden“.

Today the coast of the Biosphere Reserve is characterized by a small-scale alternation of rough cliffs and beautiful white sandy beaches. The breakers of the Baltic Sea are still shaping the coastline of the Rügen Island.



Cliff near Neuendorf

Nature

The diverse landscape and history of land use in the Biosphere Reserve has led to the existence of an extraordinary variety of habitats of flora and fauna.

Dry grasslands provide a particular charm to the region. From spring to autumn the dry grasslands near the small village Groß Zicker offer a magnificent floral diversity. Even species that have adapted to very dry grasslands like in the Mediterranean Region and in South-East Europe are able to find their optimal environment here.

Additionally the beech forests spread over an area of more than 1.000 ha in the northern part of the Biosphere Reserve, called Granitz. The forests are directly bordering the Baltic Sea which makes them very unique. Some small swamps with typical plants and animals are to be found here.

Along the coastlines of the inshore waters, nearly separated from the Baltic Sea, large reed belts and salt meadows have developed. These ecosystems are full of endangered plants, whose existence was maintained by agricultural activity of the people that lived here once. This diversity is now threatened due to missing land usage.

A diversity of plants, animals and ecosystems can also be found in the marine environment of the Biosphere Reserve. Especially the seaweed areas in the Greifswald Bodden are of particular importance for several fish species as they are used as spawning grounds. Furthermore these waters are internationally recognized for their staging and breeding areas for migratory birds and species of local water birds.

Human being

Humans have been living in the South-East part of Rügen island since the middle of Stone age.

Today many Neolithic megaliths and tumuli of the Bronze Age still exist. Later, in the Slavonic culture, castles and ritual places were built. Many names of fishing and farming villages have been preserved until today.

At the end of the 12th century Danish troops have invaded the Rügen island. The population was christianized; many typical brick churches were built. Until the early 19th century Rügen frequently had been the scene of bloody wars.

Prince William Malte I. of Putbus left something very special. By building his residence Putbus with the landscape garden inspired by Alexander von Humboldt, he created a highlight of so called „Northern Schinkel Classicism“, a very typical architectural style.

The history of the peninsula Mönchgut, located in the south-east of the island, is also very peculiar. Between the 13th and 16th century, it had been in possession of the Cistercian monastery Eldena near Greifswald. Due to its isolated location unique traditions and culture have been developed here. The border to the „motherland of Rügen“ was a ditch and later called „Mönchgraben“.



Megalithic tomb near Lancken-Granitz

Cultivated area

The appearance of an area has always been a result of its utilization and expression of our culture. Centuries ago large areas of wood were cleared by men in order to gain space for fields and grazing land. So there was nearly no wood on Rügen island 200 years ago. Later some areas were reforested.

Prince Wilhelm Malte I. of Putbus laid out wide areas for aesthetic needs. By then the romantic landscape painting received significant impulses and the harmonic countryside of Rügen island was a big attraction to artists. So the island of Vilm near Putbus temporarily developed to an artists' colony. Famous artists like CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH worked here.

The grand alleys of the island were nearly all realized during the 19th century. Unfortunately, they are now threatened by traffic, agricultural measures and new building standards. Their conservation is one of the main issues of the South-East Rügen Biosphere Reserve.



Orangery in the Residence Park of Putbus

Agriculture

Agriculture has shaped the landscape over a period of several thousand years. It was influenced by traditions and the culture of local inhabitants. Land use has given the south-eastern part of Rügen its unique character and beauty.

However, changes in land use after World War II have caused many damages to the landscape due to drainage, over-fertilization or construction of oversized buildings.

Today, new ways of sustainable development are aspired. That’s why nearly all the pastures of the Biosphere Reserve are enclosed to the governmental promotion programmes which aim to strengthen sustainable land use.

In 1996 the regional association "Rügenprodukte e.V." was founded. It cares for the marketing of sustainable, local produced agricultural products which is another big issues of the Biosphere Reserve South-East Rügen.



Field near Stresow

Fishery

Every year in springtime the so called "Rügen herring" migrates into the Greifswalder Bodden to spawn. For a long time, it has been the main income for local fishermen. Because of its low salinity, the Baltic Sea welcomes both saltwater and freshwater fish, such as the Flounder (European Flounder), the Gadiformes (cod, haddock), the Eel, the Northern Pike, the Zander and perciformes (perches, darters ...). There are other species in this region, but they are less popular regarding the economic interest.

There are many well-known “coastal fish stores” in the Biosphere Reserve. Today, fishing is still done in a traditional, small-scale way with stationary nets, using materials and fishery techniques that do not threaten the fish stock.

Farming and fishing are the main factors having shaped the cultural landscape and the history of south-east Rügen, especially of Mönchgut.



Fisherman boats in the harbour of Thiessow

Tourism

The summer bathing season on Rügen Island is of significant economical importance for more then 100 years now. At that time, the so-called resort architecture has been evolved in the newly developed fashionable Baltic Sea resorts.

During the era of Nazism the starting signal for mass tourism on the island was set. In Prora, north of Binz, a monstrous forerunner of the modern giant hotels was built – nearly 20.000 people were meant to spend their holidays here.

At the time of the existence of the GDR (1949-1989) the mass tourism was further established. In many places, the traditional architecture was abandoned to decay; some landscapes have been disfigured by cheap mass accommodation.

Following the reunification of Germany in 1989, this development has ended and today, these buildings are an undeniable part of German history.

The South East of Rügen has traditionally been one of the most popular Holiday areas in Germany. In some sections on the national road 196 more than 15.000 cars per day have been recorded during peak periods since 1991. The individual traffic with its negative side effects has become a significant problem for nature and People living here.

Tourism is the greatest hope for the region but it also is a threat to itself. All responsible persons have to strengthen their common efforts to preserve the high attraction of this landscape for future generations.

It also is up to you to preserve the beauty of South-East Rügen!

Please read the information boards at the entrance of the protected areas, which explain the rules that must be respected to preserve nature and landscape. Our Rangers will be happy to answer your questions.

You can discover the wonderful countryside of the UNESCO South-East Rügen Biosphere Reserve along the more than 200 km of hiking trails with a lot of scenic views and resting places. In addition a large network of bike paths is available.

Please use public transport and e.g. discover the South-East Rügen Biosphere Reserve by the historic small coal-fired train "Rasender Roland" running from the harbour of Lauterbach to the sea side resort Göhren. You will have an unforgettable journey!

Visit our exhibition in the „Granitzhaus“ close to the famous castle „Jagdschloss Granitz“. This exhibition presents the different areas of nature conservation, the aims of the South-East Rügen Biosphere Reserve and the Granitzhaus itself, whose history is closely connected to the castle „Jagdschloss“. The admission is free.

Please visit our website at www.biosphaerenreservat-suedostruegen.de for more information about the South-East Rügen Biosphere Reserve.

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