The World Heritage Convention is an international treaty that must be ratified individually by the UNESCO member states. Austria delayed ratification of the Convention for twenty years, and the ratification charter signed by the Federal Ministry and ratified by the Federal Chancellor being deposited with the Director of UNESCO on 18 December 1992. Austria officially became a member state only after the announcement to this effect in the Federal Gazette No. 29/1993 on 18 March 1993.

Being a World Cultural Heritage monument does not mean that everything is enveloped in a protective cocoon. On the contrary, the current approach to monument preservation has long recognised the necessity and importance of "authentic design", the tension of a dialectical confrontation between the old and the new with the aim of creating a synthesis in the form of a total work. It is here that the concept of quality in the field of architecture and urban development takes on a central role in the planning process in the areas surrounding World Cultural Heritage Sites.

At present there are eight World Heritage Sites in Austria, one of them, Fertö/Neusiedlersee, a cross-border nomination by Austria and Hungary. The nomination of the Innsbruck-Nordkette-Karwendel Albepark as a cultural landscape is already under consideration by UNESCO.

THE AUSTRIAN EXAMPLES ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

- Historic Centre of the City Salzburg, 1996
- Semmering Railway and the surrounding Cultural Landscape, 1998
- Hallstatt-Dachstein Salzkammergut Cultural Landscape, 1997
- Vienna, Palace and Gardens of Schönbrunn, 1996
- Fertö/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape, 2001
- City of Graz – historic centre, 1999
- Wachau Cultural Landscape, 2000