

# **WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Draft Proposals for Tourism Management at  
World Heritage sites  
Proposed by**

**The World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Initiative**

**European Meeting for Improvement of Tourism  
and Visitor Management Skills**

**Bardejov, Slovak Republic**

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## **Introduction**

These draft Principles for Sustainable Tourism at World Heritage Properties have been formulated through a series of workshops in France, Switzerland, India and China as an important component of the World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Initiative (WHSTI) for the conservation and presentation of World Heritage properties. The WHSTI is an integral sub-component of the World Heritage Tourism Programme, a Programme approved by the World Heritage Committee in 2001.

Through its Tourism Programme, the World Heritage Centre has in parallel, instigated the World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Initiative (WHSTI). It has been developed as a cooperative effort between the World Heritage Centre; the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee, IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM; and a number of key partners. These key partners include the UN World Tourism Organization, the World Bank, The Nature Conservancy, the UN Foundation, and the Nordic World Heritage Foundation.

The World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Initiative aims to develop best practice policy guidance in relation to new and innovative processes and methods for the management of tourism at World Heritage Properties. It received recognition at the 2009 meeting of the World Heritage Committee through paragraphs 17, 18 and 19 of Decision 33COM 5A:

### *The World Heritage Committee*

*17. Takes note of the progress report on the World Heritage Tourism Programme;*

*18. Thanks the Governments of Australia, China, France, India, Switzerland and United Kingdom, who have worked in close collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, the World Tourism Organization and other partners, for contributing to the Initiative of Sustainable Tourism;*

*19. Expresses its gratitude to the Governments of Australia and China for the organization of a workshop on sustainable tourism at the World Heritage site, Mogao Caves, China, in September-October 2009 and requests that the following elements be submitted to the Committee for examination at its 34th session in 2010:*

*a) A report on the workshop,*

*b) The subsequent recommendations of the workshop regarding the adoption of best practices policy guidance, and concerning the changes proposed*

*for the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention,*

*c) A document concerning the progress of the World Heritage Programme on Tourism;*

All of the WHSTI participants recognise the important potential of tourism associated with World Heritage Properties as a tool to conserve and enhance conservation outcomes while contributing to sustainable development of a destination and its local communities. They recognise that much tourism promotion, visitor activity, cultural exchange and economic development that affects World Heritage sites takes place in the surrounding locality, the nearby tourism destination, elsewhere in the country or internationally.

The accompanying draft Principles for Sustainable Tourism at World Heritage Properties, to be eventually supported by Implementation Approaches, will be used by all stakeholders as a basis for best practice management of tourism at and in the vicinity of World Heritage Properties. A further step would be to developing an effective capacity building programme.

These principles are presented in the form of a working document. The final version, with possible modifications in the wording, will be presented firstly to the 34<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee in Brazil next July. The supporting implementation approaches or guidelines will not be included in the document to the Committee and remain at this stage as a working document to the disposal of the site managers.

## A

**Proposed Principles for Sustainable  
Tourism at World Heritage Properties****Principle 1****Contribution to World Heritage Objectives**

Tourism development and visitor activities associated with World Heritage Properties should always contribute to the protection, conservation, presentation and transmission of their heritage values. Tourism should equitably generate sustainable socio-economic development and contribute tangible as well as intangible benefits to the local and regional community in ways that are consistent with the conservation of the properties.

**Principle 2****Cooperative partnership**

World Heritage Sites should be places where clear and effective partnerships with the public and private tourism sectors, communities and other stakeholders maximize conservation and presentation outcomes, whilst minimizing threats and adverse impacts from tourism.

**Principle 3****Public Awareness and Support**

Tourism promotion and the presentation of World Heritage Properties should be effective, honest, comprehensive and engaging. It should mobilize local and international awareness, understanding and support for their protection, conservation and sustainable use.

**Principle 4****Effective Tourism Planning**

Continuous, proactive planning and management should ensure that tourism development and visitor activities associated with World Heritage Properties contribute to their protection, conservation and presentation, while having regard to relevant tourism supply chain and broader tourism destination issues, including congestion management and the quality of life for local people. Tourism planning and management, including cooperative partnerships, should be an integral aspect of the site management system.

**Principle 5****Stakeholder involvement**

Planning for tourism development and visitor activity associated with World Heritage Properties should be undertaken in an inclusive and participatory manner, respecting the needs, rights and interests of the local community including owners, traditional or indigenous custodians, and the local people, including their capacity and willingness to participate in visitor activity.

**Principle 6****Appropriate Tourism Infrastructure**

All tourism related infrastructure and visitor facilities associated with World Heritage Properties should be carefully planned, sited, designed, constructed and periodically upgraded as necessary to maximize the quality of visitor appreciation and experiences while minimizing adverse impacts on the place, consistent with levels of visitor activity and the surrounding environmental and cultural context.

**Principle 7****World Heritage Property Management Capacity**

Management systems for World Heritage Properties should ensure that sufficient skills and resources are available when planning tourism infrastructure and managing visitor activity to ensure the protection and presentation of their identified heritage values and respect for local communities.

**Principle 8****Equitable Application of Tourism Generated Revenue**

A reasonable proportion of the revenue derived from tourism and visitor activity associated with World Heritage Properties should be used effectively and equitably to sustain their long term conservation, presentation and management.

**Principle 9****Contribution to Local Community Development**

Tourism infrastructure development and visitor activity associated with World Heritage properties should contribute to local community empowerment and socio-economic development in an effective and equal manner.

**B****Guidelines for Addressing Tourism and Visitor Management  
at World Heritage Properties****1. Effective Tourism Planning and Management**

1.1 Overarching Principles provide a framework that defines the “rules” by which decisions will be made.

1.2 The tourism planning process carried out with the World Heritage nomination process provide important opportunities to build community and stakeholder understanding and support for World Heritage outstanding universal value.

1.3 The World Heritage Convention and each property’s Statement of Significance combined with national regulations and other related policies are key tools used for defining a broad vision and the goals and objectives of tourism management decision making.

1.4 Desired tourism and visitor conditions serve as the core for planning and management; they are based on a property’s OUV, existing national legislation, and the goals and objectives of management.

1.5 The policies and a property’s stated tourism goals and objectives, guide visual, spatial and functional qualities of property infrastructure and infrastructure design decisions and are adopted and justified by referencing the World Heritage criteria and the property’s significance.

1.6 A property’s tourism goals and objectives guide decision making on programmes such as promoting local educational, interpretation activities and community economic development.

1.7 Trust underlies all relationships; site managers, tourism industry and other stakeholders must work to build and maintain trust. Descriptions of desired conditions are formulated through stakeholder consultation. A stakeholder tourism advisory group made up of the various interest groups, tourism officials, local administrators, residents, property managers, is an important mechanism for the exchanging of ideas and building consensus on goals and objectives.

1.8 The concept of using World Heritage sites as anchor sites for disbursing information and expertise to other protected areas is a key information distribution and training strategy.

1.9 Tourism planning defines a vision for tourism and other public use development and management. Planning is based on the system of Limits of Acceptable Change. It includes zoning systems with the appropriate visitor experiences aligned with the zone, interpretation messages, and business planning. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) tool is used for setting objectives for different visitor experiences within the desired conditions of management.

1.10 Tourism planning outlines a process to monitor change and evaluate threats and opportunities, permitting management to respond to protect OUV and other key values so as to maintaining the property's sense of place.

1.12 Planning is used to generate closer cooperation and collaboration between ministries of tourism and similar agencies, WH management, and ministries of culture, departments of conservation, and ministries of the environment.

1.13 Planning is an adaptive management tool for updating information permitting sound policy and decision making responsive to anticipated changes. Tourism planning is not an event with a particular starting and ending date, rather a process of sensing, evaluating and learning about changing expectations and public values and changing environmental conditions. The planning process provides important opportunities to build community and stakeholder understanding and support.

1.14 Building the capacity of a public use specialist or coordinator within the agency in charge of the World Heritage site is essential. A tourism plan is developed and implemented by staff preferably by a property's public use coordinator. The planning process should be viewed as a means of building technical proficiencies, in heritage protection institutions and agencies.

1.15 Planning has a regional destination orientation. Management looks beyond a site's boundaries offering the potential of using World Heritage for regional economic development and the effective management of growing visitor numbers.

1.16 Consider ties to other regional heritage assets and attractions during planning. This permits opportunities for linking the WH property to satellite sites, but there must be rigorous planning at these satellite sites. Involving local participation to create a regional heritage inventory of tangible and intangible

assets is recommended. The inventory is developed into a map or brochure. Actions help to maximize the complementary roles of various agencies and organizations in management and economic development issues.

1.17 Tourism is viewed as a mechanism to intervene in mitigation of threats to OUV. Identifying site threats during the planning process aids priority setting for recommended enterprise development activities such as guides training and micro-enterprise development that have then been identified as alternatives to unsustainable or inappropriate activities.

## **2. Effective Application of Tourism Generated Revenue (Site Financing and Concessions)**

2.1 Management goal and objectives objective provide the framework for establishing concession policy. The tourism plan provides the overall policy framework for determining the type, amount, location and seasonality of public use to be allocated among various concessions. Understanding and promoting through regulations the types of concessions most appropriate for achieving sustainability and examining the economic impacts of different tourism markets is part of the work.

2.2 A market analysis provides an essential basis for formulating projections of revenue potential. Data about existing and forecasted levels of tourism and public use is collected, analyzed and is part of tourism planning and management decision making.

2.3 Understanding the regional, national and international tourism markets, the different segments, and visitor expectations and preferences is sought to determine if existing markets can strengthen and match the management goals and objectives.

2.4 Business planning is carried out to develop realistic tourism revenue financial targets. Site financing is addressed to cover the unmet conservation costs. Establishing links to tourism ministries and regional tourism associations is needed to help determine visitor data and projections on revenue.

2.5 Because tourism generated revenue relates to supply from the tourism industry, managers understand how the industry is structured (e.g., tour operators, wholesalers, etc.) as well as their views about the viability of different market segments.



2.6 The tourism plan provides the strategy for pricing of concession contracts or fees associated with their implementation. Concessions are granted primarily to facilitate accomplishment of tourism plan goals and objectives.

2.7 Concession operations do not degrade the OUV and other relevant values. Concessionaires (firms, individuals, NGOs holding a contract with management) operate under a formal agreement with management to provide services including among others, lodging, food, transportation, guiding.

2.8 There are a variety of tools and methods to secure adequate site financing, including visitor fees. Management determines administrative costs associated with the instruments in order to procure high quality concessions and sustainable revenue streams.

2.9 Evaluating direct, indirect and induced impacts of tourism and visitor spending on the local economy provides a variety of site stakeholders with useful information.

2.10 A regional destination orientation encourages the use of innovative revenue generating ideas, such as multi-property passes.

### **3. Presentation of Heritage Significance Interpretation**

3.1 Interpretation of site values begins with the visitor's initial decision to visit. Understanding the tourism value network permits different approaches and content of interpretation at different points in the value chain.

3.2 Interpretation messages are developed during the planning and inventory processes and based on managements desired goals and objectives.

3.3 Interpretation and education help managers communicate the Outstanding Universal Value to visitors and help address impact issues.

3.4 Site interpretation messages link different attractions and communities in the landscape. This provides a means to strengthen World Heritage site identity.

3.5 Linking messages to local goods and services and generate opportunities for regional economic development for the local people.

3.6 Telling the story of heritage assets to local people and visitors deepens their sense of place and brings new perspectives to their way of viewing the site.

Depending on the themes and stories chosen, this approach creates links between natural and cultural, tangible and intangible heritage assets.

3.7 Residents living in and around World Heritage sites generally have little knowledge of its global significance and the reasons for its protected status. Carrying out conservation education and pride-building campaigns at sites that are linked to key conservation messages developed in the interpretation activity can help to fill this deficiency. Raising awareness of the value of site resources generates respect and a sense of pride among local populations and promotes a feeling that the site must be protected for more than economic reasons.

#### **4. Working with the Tourism Industry**

4.1 Engagement with the tourism industry is seen as an essential ingredient in successful conservation outcomes. A shared vision provides the foundation for cooperative endeavors, development of partnerships, and engagement of the public in World Heritage site management. Integration of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and the World Heritage Alliance Performance Evaluation Framework is carried out.

4.2 Engaging the tourism industry is important in developing and implementing tourism plans. A supply-chain perspective will enhance understanding of the various roles of different tourism players and provide greater opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.

4.3 The tourism industry plays important roles in building awareness of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage site and expectations for conditions encountered on a site. Raising industry officials' awareness of the importance of safeguarding World Heritage helps coordination with the tourism industry and assists managers in addressing a number of tourism problems.

4.4 Support from tourism industry officials generates international support for conservation efforts, changes the policies of the ground operators they work with, and motivates visitors to make donations to conservation and respect management regulations.

4.5 Important presentation elements are, presenting a realistic image of the site; describing management efforts and challenges; education on visitor impact minimization; and providing information on how to contribute to the site's protection.

4.6 Partnerships with the tourism industry require all participants to clearly indicate and come to agreement on their expectations and roles in order for

partners to appropriately address various issues. Understanding the tourism value chain provides managers and site stakeholders a tool to identify obstacles, construct compromises between conflicting interests, and exploit opportunities for higher quality visitor experiences, cooperative programs and generation of revenue for management.

4.7 The tourism industry plays an important role in local economic development by enhancing labor income of residents and through payment of taxes on goods and services purchased locally. Wherever possible, the tourism industry employs local residents as guides and workers, uses locally produced foods, and encourage development of authentic local arts and crafts.

4.8 Tourism based on heritage is a fast changing an information intensive activity; a knowledge and understanding of tourism industry site concerns and of site management issues and problems is critical to developing effective entry points for cooperation and coordination between the industry and site management and local economic development activities.

4.9 Tourism industry partnerships develop creative mechanisms that deliver financial benefits to site conservation efforts. The World Heritage label attracts tourism operators to support actions that increase site revenue from visitor fees, concessions, or donations generated by the tourism industry.

## **5. Tourism to Benefit the Local Population and Contribute to Local Development**

5.1 In working with communities in or adjacent to World Heritage properties, management emphasizes the advantages of building upon the region's particular character and culture in attracting visitors, raising expenditures and enhancing livelihoods.

5.2 Tourism generates demand for a wide range of services, providing opportunities for community development. These services are linked to the World Heritage property, providing an alternative to high-impact land uses such as logging or mining, tourism helping foster community support for conservation and site management.

5.3 Training is provided to local people to enter the tourism industry, for example, training local guides and other community members in micro enterprise development; and on-going training to raise skill and service standards of existing local enterprises.

5.4 Marketing local community products is necessary to offer local people an alternative economic source to the extraction of protected area resources. Products and services such as local guides, crafts and boat operators, are rarely part of regional, national, or international marketing efforts. Site management, working with the tourism industry, plays a role in providing marketing links and raising demand for these local products.

5.5 Management works with communities to develop indicators that monitor not only improvement in economic condition and access to services but also maintenance of local culture and changes in attitudes of local residents toward the area.

5.6 Site management takes an activist position in assisting communities in organizing a local tourism committee to implement and maintain development programs. Site management assists communities in organizing regional destination management and marketing organizations.

5.7 Economic development is a long term process and involves a variety of stakeholders; management works with these stakeholders to ensure cohesive strategies and institutions for the long term. Site management, working with local development authorities, constructs an input-output matrix to better understand the flow of spending in the region.

5.8 Site managers can encourage community-based inventories of tourism related product and service offerings and opportunities that would be at the basis of regional level management and marketing. Management identifies opportunities for tourism enterprises in which the local community can participate that will generate revenue.

5.9 Travel circuits where visitors follow a more or less defined path or route through the region offer an opportunity not only for a cohesive travel and multi-faceted experience, but are also important for benefit distribution

5.10 Creating a sense of ownership, responsibility or caring is an important approach for reducing threats from the local community. Management works with community and tourism representatives to seek appropriate locations for needed supporting facilities (car parks, bathrooms, etc), vendor locations, transportation sites and building designs that do not infringe the outstanding universal value of the site and resolve conflicts with access to needed resources and values by the community