

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AT WORLD HERITAGE SITES

BACKGROUND

World Heritage sites represent the world's most important cultural and natural places, recognized for their outstanding universal value. World Heritage sites are some of the world's most heavily marketed and visited tourism attractions. The dynamic growth in both international and domestic tourism is generating important challenges to the protection and conservation of their integrity and authenticity. The use of World Heritage properties by the public, and in particular tourism, is a growing management issue. The challenge lies in careful planning, development and managing visitation such that it does not threaten or unacceptably affect the 'Outstanding Universal Value' for which the property was inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Since 2001 the World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Programme has initiated activities and projects, building site staff capacity in public use planning, business development and marketing techniques to create processes for using tourism to promote site conservation. A lesson learned is the need for a broader programmatic-policy strategy and links to key partners to enable generating and disseminating sustainable tourism processes and policies to a wide range of World Heritage sites. The Marrakech Process is seen as important to filling this need.

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS LINKED TO THE MARRAKESH PROCESS

The World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Initiative is a cooperative effort between the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Convention: IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM and key partners within the Marrakech Process, including UN World Tourism Organization, UNEP-DTIE and the Convention on Biodiversity, and the United Nations Foundation. The goal of the Initiative is to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the management of public use and sustainable tourism at World Heritage Sites, so as to mitigate threats from tourism to World Heritage sites. It seeks practical instruments, capacity building activities, and pilot demonstration projects to identify good practices.

Through a series of expert workshops, this partnership aims at developing joint policy guidelines with supporting working methods and approaches for tourism and public use management. It will integrate and promote to site

management and State Parties to the World Heritage Convention related and complementary tourism initiatives, such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, the WH Alliance Performance Evaluation Framework, Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council accreditation scheme, and the Sustainable Investing and Financing for Tourism.

FRAMEWORK

The overall framework that guides World Heritage tourism interventions is:

- Building the capacity of World Heritage site management to deal with tourism including the development of a tourism public use planning process providing a broad vision of how site tourism will be developed and managed
- Training local community members in tourism related activities to participate in the industry and receive tourism's benefits
- Aiding communities around the sites to market their products
- Raising public awareness of World Heritage and building pride with local communities and visitors through conservation education
- Using tourism generated funds to supplement unmet conservation and protection costs at the sites
- Sharing the lessons learned with other sites and protected areas
- Building increased awareness of World Heritage and its activities and policies for tourism industry officials and their clients

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