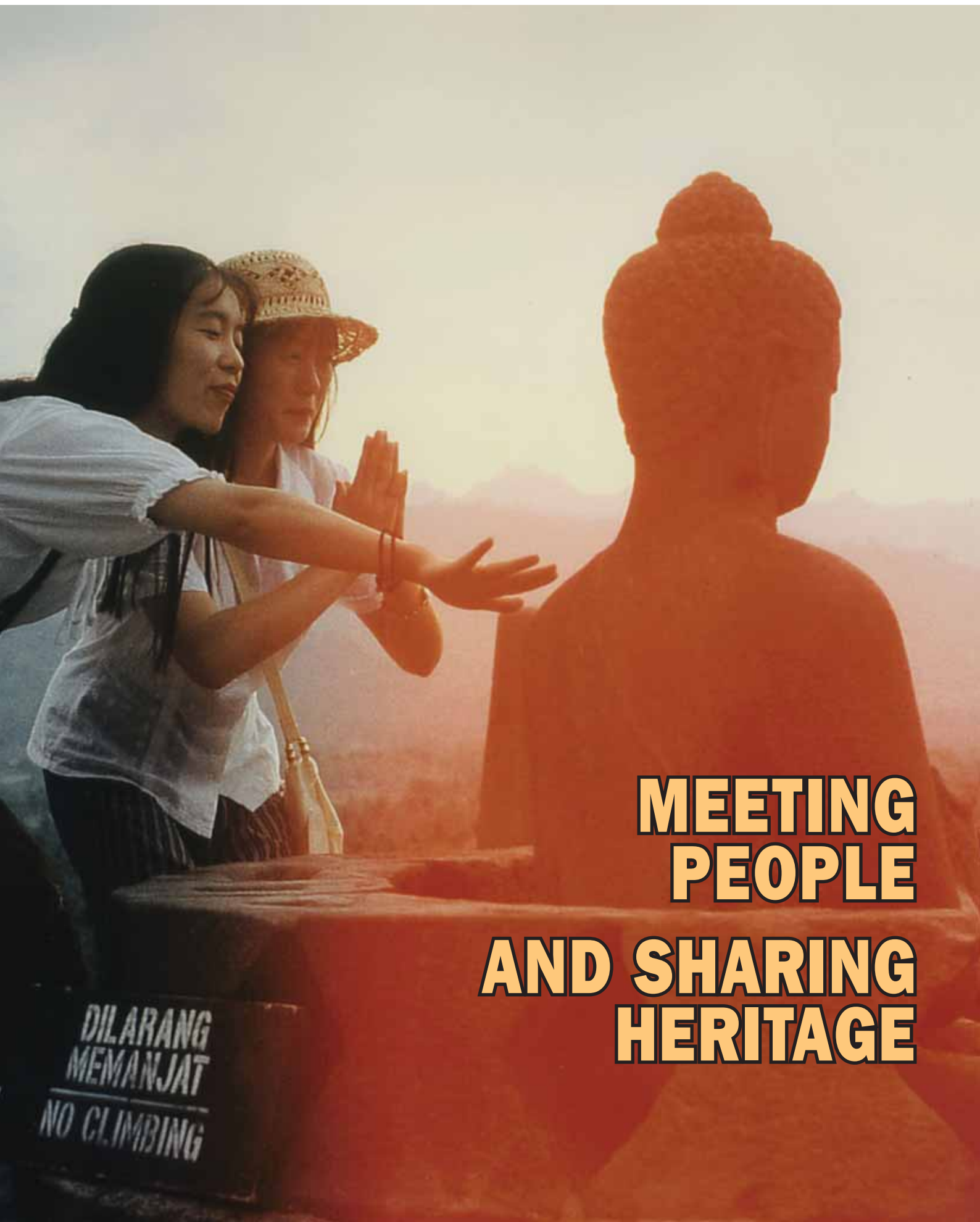




United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

the UNESCO Courier

Special edition October 2009 • ISSN 1993-8616



**MEETING
PEOPLE**

**AND SHARING
HERITAGE**

DILARANG
MEMANJAT
NO CLIMBING

© UNESCO/Silvia Schiemann



Tourists in Borobudur, UNESCO World Heritage Site (Indonesia).

MEETING PEOPLE AND SHARING HERITAGE

When well-managed, tourism need not pose a threat to the cultural or natural environment. On the contrary, it can be a source of sustainable development, helping to combat poverty, safeguard our heritage and preserve cultural diversity.

This special issue, which is published to coincide with the 35th UNESCO General Conference, brings together a number of articles that have already appeared in our magazine, illustrating various issues surrounding this question.



ROHA THE WONDERFUL

Perched at an altitude of 2500 metres in the Amhara region (Ethiopia), the small village of Lalibela has been home to an astonishing gem of religious architecture for the last eight centuries.

Constructed of single blocks of stone, the village's churches were added to the World Heritage List in 1978. **3**



A PERMANENT CHALLENGE

Twenty-seven new sites have been inscribed, in 2008, on UNESCO's World Heritage List. While no changes were made to the List of Heritage in Danger, 'reinforced monitoring' was requested for four sites: Bordeaux, (France), Timbuktu (Mali), Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu (Peru) and Samarkand (Uzbekistan). **7**



LEGENDARY CAMAGÜEY

With its red tiles, neoclassical façades with their louver-boards and pilasters, windows and carved screens, the city of Camagüey, the birthplace of Cuba's national poet Nicolás Guillén, offers its visitors a haughty and legendary beauty. **9**



THE GRAND OLD LADY AND THE PLASTIC CHAIRS

On the border between East and West, the island of Corfu is shaped like a handle, thrusting from the Ionian Sea towards the Adriatic, not far from Italy. The little streets of Corfu exude its Roman, Byzantine and Venetian past. The Greek artist, Katerina Zacharopoulou, takes us on a tour. **11**



VISITING SUBMERGED TREASURES

Underwater museums and parks, replicas and digital reconstructions of wrecks are all ways to encourage the public to discover our underwater cultural heritage without damaging it. Some cost more than others, but they may also be more magical. Take the museum in the Bay of Alexandria, for example. **14**



WHEN WORLD HERITAGE SITES AND BIOSPHERE RESERVES MERGE

Last May, Fraser Island, Australian World Heritage site since 1992, became the core part of the new Great Sandy Biosphere Reserve. Natural world heritage sites conserve ecosystems for which they have been inscribed, while biosphere reserves also do restoration of degraded environments. How will environment and tourist management practices change for the world's largest sand island? **17**



THE PERSONAL EYE OF A FAMILIAR STRANGER

"This is not a photo of a merry-go-round, but of its reflection," explains Shigeru Asano, a Japanese photographer fascinated by the light and shadows of Paris. He has been walking the streets of the city for 30 years. Nearly 10,000 kilometres from his native Osaka, he feels at home in the French capital, where he finds an atmosphere of melancholy more to his taste than "Tokyo's dazzle". **20**

Perched at an altitude of 2500 metres in the Amhara region (Ethiopia), the small village of Lalibela has been home to an astonishing gem of religious architecture for the last eight centuries. Constructed of single blocks of stone, the village's churches were added to the World Heritage List in 1978.

Roha the Wonderful



© UNESCO/Jasmina Šopova

In Lalibela, look out for concealed churches.

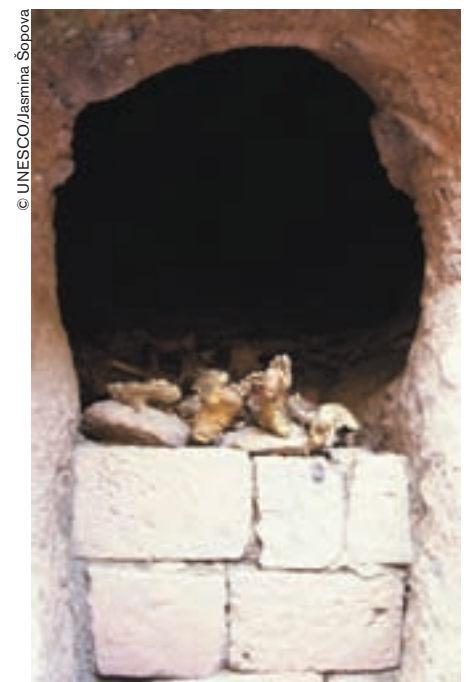
The village was called Roha, 'the Wonderful', back when the very pious king Gebre Mesqel Lalibela had 11 monolithic churches hewn from the rock, linked to each other by a vertiginous maze of tunnels, their walls pierced with cavities, some of them with a foot sticking out of some saint laid to rest there several centuries ago.

The living and the dead are accustomed to rubbing elbows in this place where nothing seems impossible – not even carving an entire church, with portico, naves, vaults, upper stories, windows, out of a single block of stone. Beta Medhane Alem, the largest of the 11 churches inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, rests on 34 pillars forming a rectangle 34 metres by 24. It is

practically the size of Notre Dame of Paris!

As for the double church, Golgotha-Michael, also called Debre Sinai and Golgotha: it offers one of the most spectacular views. The king, after whom the village is now named, is buried there, adjacent to the tomb of Adam – ancestor of all humanity, in the Biblical tradition. Take one step in Lalibela, and you tumble from history into myth.

A short distance from this hillside nest of churches lies St George, the only one with a drainage system and probably the most recent of the churches hewn on the orders of King Lalibela. One can see it from a distance jutting out of the earth inside a huge pit with its roof sculpted with interconnected



© UNESCO/Jasmina Šopova

A cavity in the rocks around the famous church of St. George where the feet of saints, at rest there for centuries, are exposed.



Mt Tabor at Lalibela, named after the site of the transfiguration of Christ in Galilee.

crosses. Standing next to it, you feel dwarfed by the cross-shaped structure, with its 12 façades rising 12 metres. Its three stories are marked on the outside by ledges and windows. “Those at the bottom

have no windows because that’s Noah’s level,” says Muchaw, one of the site’s official guides. “It’s to prevent flood water coming in,” he adds with a smile.

To reach another group of churches, which, from afar, seem to be straddling each other, one must walk by a stream called Jordan, which flows past another hill crowned by a small bell hanging on a dead tree – Mount Tabor – and you cross the cave of Bethlehem: the Holy Land in miniature !

According to one of the many contradictory legends surrounding King Lalibela, he founded Roha when he returned from exile in Jerusalem and intended it to become a new holy city in Africa.

Lalibela at risk

It welcomes some 140,000 pilgrims a year, between Christmas and Tikemet (Epiphany), says Belete, the most popular person around. He heads a staff of 20 at the Tourism and Culture Office in the village of 12,000 inhabitants, which is located some 600 km north of Addis Ababa. For Belete, tourism is the wave of the future: “Between July 2007 and March 2008, more

than 8000 tourists stayed in our 12 hotels,” he reports.

His office, funded by the Amhara Regional Council, receives contributions from the central government and from the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH). Safeguarding projects on the Lalibela site is also supported by the European Union, UNESCO and several NGOs, notably Plan International.

While one of UNESCO’s main concerns is preventing the churches’ deterioration due to infiltration of rainwater, Belete’s first preoccupation is the disadvantaged population that lives on the site and is causing damage. It is imperative to relocate these 270 families as quickly as possible, he thinks.

Right now he lacks a specific plan and an accurate idea of cost, but he is optimistic. For this dynamic young leader, the image of a clean and well-maintained Lalibela is paramount. “I spread the word in the village’s five schools and it’s working,” he says proudly.

He is equally worried about the condition of 24 churches in the



Beta Medhane Alem, the largest church in Lalibela, under a modern shelter.



Traditional shelter for the little church in the village of Kirkos, which is not on the World Heritage list. It is 30 km from Lalibela.

vicinity of Lalibela, 14 of which are not part of any safeguarding plan. "They should all be inscribed on the World Heritage List," he maintains. To convince me, he takes me on a tour.

One stands out because of its amazing natural setting. It was built by Lalibela's predecessor, King Imrahana Kirstos.

The mysteries of Imrahana Kirstos

More than 40 minutes' drive to cover the 12 kilometres separating Lalibela from a very poor hamlet at the foot of a mountain. Then half an hour of climbing, on a slope with no visible sign of human life... except a group of women returning from the market on the other side of the mountain.

Halfway up, we leave the trail and suddenly an immense cliff looms above us like a thick cloud petrified centuries ago. A small church is nestled there, barely visible. It is protected by a newly-constructed high wall.

The inside of the sanctuary is like a theatre: daylight only reaches one side of the church and a small royal palace of brick and earth

© UNESCO/Jasmina Šopova



The church dedicated to Neakutdeab, youngest brother of Lalibela, is built beneath this enormous rock.

nearby. Splendid liturgical drums are heaped on the straw-covered floor. The straw is spread over animal skins, under which are bones. "The church was built on water,"

explains the priest, lifting the small lid inserted in the ground to convince unbelievers.

Behind the church, the body of its architect is laid out on the bare ground, wrapped in multicoloured sheets, close to the sarcophagus of the holy king and the tomb of his holy spouse. She bore him no children. "Their union was only spiritual," says the priest, launching into an astonishing biography of the king, who every day received the visit of the archangels Gabriel and Raphael, bringing food for the 5740 pilgrims come from the four corners of the world to admire his work and his wisdom. The precision of the numbers is also surprising.

Having shown me the cross God himself forged and gave to Imrahana Kirstos, as well as a triptych painted by the king's own hand, the priest lets me go off alone to explore the depths of the cave. As my eyes get used to the dark, I spot a grinning skeleton, stretched out

© UNESCO/Jasmina Šopova



A few tourists venture as far as the church of Imrahana Kirstos.

in a long wooden box. Recovering from the shock, I see a vast ossuary spread out in front of me. It could easily contain the remains of 5740 people.

What happened in this grotto? From what period do these bones really date? Answers remain vague. But it seems, in Lalibela, just one step is enough to take you from imagination to reality.

Jasmina Šopova

(*The UNESCO Courier*, 2008, n° 8)



An immense bone yard is hidden deep inside this rock cave.

When culture and tourism work hand in hand

To mark the reinstallation of the Aksum Obelisk in its original location in northern Ethiopia, *The UNESCO Courier* (2008, n° 8) revisited some of the country's cultural sites. Our travels off the beaten path lead us to another treasure, less obvious, less monumental than the castles of Gondar, less visible than the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, but just as impressive: Ethiopia's intangible heritage.

True, tangible and intangible heritage are inseparable, particularly in Ethiopia. This is one reason why Françoise Rivière, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Culture, decided to launch another 'worksite', specifically in Lalibela, the Ethiopian World Heritage site renowned for its monolithic churches carved into the rock.



Neakutdeab church's bell near Lalibela.

"The idea is to carry out projects integrated in world heritage sites," she explains. "These 'projects' are intended to contribute to economic and human development by focusing, according to need, on cultural tourism, safeguarding intangible heritage, promoting cultural diversity, dialogue, languages or cultural industries. We will identify one site per region to launch these projects. In Africa, it will be Lalibela, where UNESCO has been present for a long time."

The foundations for the new initiative are already there: the Organization has several conventions at its disposal, including those concerning natural and cultural heritage (1972), intangible cultural heritage (2003) and the diversity of cultural expressions (2005). "By operating in symbiosis, these instruments can transform culture into a powerful agent for development," says Françoise Rivière.

Twenty-seven new sites have been inscribed, in 2008,
on UNESCO's World Heritage List.
While no changes were made to the List of Heritage in Danger,
'reinforced monitoring' was requested for four sites: Bordeaux, (France),
Timbuktu (Mali), Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu (Peru) and Samarkand (Uzbekistan).

A permanent challenge



Band-e Miza dam, in Khuzistan province (Iran). The ancient hydraulic system in Shush is inscribed on the World Heritage list.

The 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage is perhaps the most widely recognized and effective conservation instrument in the world. One of its main purposes is to ensure "the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage." Inscription is thus not an end in itself, but only the beginning.

The World Heritage Committee provides leadership in promoting systems to support the sustainability of heritage sites. There are processes to identify threats to World Heritage properties, including periodic reporting, reactive monitoring and, in cases of severe threat, In Danger listing.

Over the past biennium, the World Heritage Committee examined almost 300 State of Conservation reports, the highest number ever examined by the Committee. Nine properties were removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger,

in recognition of the improvement in their state of conservation, while five additional sites were added. By flagging them on this special list, the Committee hopes to draw particular attention to their plight.

Tip of the iceberg

But the In Danger List is only the tip of the iceberg. Most of the World Heritage Sites face conservation problems such as construction of skyscrapers, bridges or oil pipelines, uncontrolled tourism, poaching and climate change.

The first major case discussed by the Committee was the proposed Wien Mitte project in the Historic Centre of Vienna, which, in 2003, sparked an ongoing debate. The most recent example is the proposed Gazprom Tower development in St. Petersburg, by the major Russian natural gas company. During its meeting in Quebec, the Committee asked Russia to invite an expert mission from the World Heritage Centre and the Interna-

tional Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) to evaluate the tower's impact, and to postpone action until results of the analysis are available.

Infrastructure projects like dams, canals, roads and bridges are often highlighted in the state of conservation reports on specific World Heritage Sites. In the case of the Group of Monuments at Hampi, India, a proposed bridge that threatened the site's values was re-routed away from the property, leading to the removal of the site from the In Danger List in 2006. Another situation, yet to be resolved, involves a proposed bridge at the Dresden Elbe Valley. In 2006, the Committee took the position that the bridge would "irreversibly damage the values and integrity of the property." This year [2008], it regretted the construction of the bridge underway and urged the authorities to opt for a tunnel. If the bridge construction is not stopped and damage reversed, the Committee decided, the property will be deleted from the World Heritage List in 2009*.

The threat of uncontrolled tourism is one that occurs frequently at World Heritage Sites. There are travel companies that create tour packages around UNESCO sites, using the label 'UNESCO World Heritage Site' as a tourism marketing brand. At Angkor in Cambodia, there are reportedly 5000 visitors a day. In the Galapagos Islands, tourism has increased from 40,000 visitors in 1991 to 120,000 in 2006. The problems related to tourism include threats to public security and the heritage resources as well

* In June 2009, the Dresden Elbe Valley was withdrawn from the List of World Heritage Sites. The construction of the Waldschlösschen Bridge altered the cultural landscape and integrity of the site as defined by the List.



Hampi (India). General view.

as to the quality of the visitor experience. The World Heritage Committee works on developing principles for responsible tourism that apply to the stewards and custodians, to tour companies, to the people who write guidebooks as well as to tourists.

Over time, the Committee has dealt with cases of mining, logging, gas and oil extraction as well as the poaching of animals for commercial purposes. And the Committee can claim some spectacular successes, such as the re-routing of the mining road around Huascarán National Park (Peru) and the re-alignment of a proposed oil pipeline outside the watershed of Lake Baikal (Russia). A singular achievement for UNESCO is the 2003 undertaking by the International Council on Mining and Metals not to explore or mine in World Heritage Sites, recognizing them as 'no-go' areas.

An important advance: reinforced monitoring mechanism

Among the less manageable threats are natural disasters, including extreme weather events, fires and floods often related to the broader issue of climate change. In collaboration with international institutions and committees, the World Heritage Committee has developed its own policy framework and operational plan for monitoring and addressing the impacts of climate change on World Heritage proper-

ties. (See *Case Studies on Climate Change and World Heritage*, a 2007 UNESCO report)

Another issue that is beyond the control of the Committee is the threat to sites from civil unrest and armed conflict. As an example, particular concern for the deteriorating condition of the properties in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) led the Committee last year to decide on a comprehensive approach for all five In Danger sites.

The Committee has also recently adopted a 'reinforced monitoring mechanism' for properties inscribed on the World Heritage List in Danger, applying it to the five sites in DRC, as well as Dresden and Jerusalem. This mechanism can be activated either by the World Heritage Committee or by the Director-General of UNESCO in specific and exceptional cases. At its 32nd session

in Quebec, decisions were taken to apply it to Timbuktu (Mali), Machu Picchu (Peru), Samarkand (Uzbekistan) and Bordeaux (France), which are not on the In Danger list. The case of the five DRC sites was again closely examined.

For the first time in the history of the Convention, the World Heritage Committee in 2007 decided, with deep regret, to remove a property, the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman, from the World Heritage List. The Committee judged that the property had deteriorated to the extent that it had lost its Outstanding Universal Value. This dramatic moment of the Convention reminds us all that protection of World Heritage is a shared responsibility. It is the obligation of States Parties to protect the world cultural and natural heritage situated on their territory; it is the duty of the international community as a whole to assist and to cooperate with States Parties in this endeavour.

At the 32nd session in Quebec, Canada made a special effort to engage young people in the work of the World Heritage Committee. The long-term conservation of our World Heritage Sites depends on the will of future generations to take over stewardship responsibilities. Engaging today's youth will shape the decision-makers of tomorrow.

Christina Cameron,

University of Montreal, Chairperson of the 32nd World Heritage Committee
(*The UNESCO Courier*, 2008, n°6)



Skulls of plains gorillas, killed by war and the bushmeat trade (DRC).

With its red tiles, neoclassical façades with their louver-boards and pilasters, windows and carved screens, the city of Camagüey, the birthplace of Cuba's national poet Nicolás Guillén, offers its visitors a haughty and legendary beauty.

Legendary Camagüey



One of the emblematic sites of Camagüey (Cuba).

As my friend, the Cuban poet Roberto Méndez, a native of Camagüey, tells it, the indigenous chief Camagüebax welcomed the Spaniards with open arms when they arrived in 1514 in what they would call Villa Santa María del Puerto Príncipe. The chief gave them a ribbon of land stretched between the Tinima and Hatibonico rivers so they could settle. They, in exchange, murdered him and threw him off a mountaintop. Legend has it the land all around immediately turned red.

That said, the capital of Cuba's

most extensive province, also called Camagüey, had to be re-founded several times in diverse circumstances down through history. First the indigenous people rose up against the conquistadores, then pirates attacked and finally in 1616 a dreadful fire reduced all the ecclesiastical archives to ashes. Difficult, then, to piece together the history of the city, which, in the past, was characterized by narrow and sinuous streets like a medieval town, in flagrant contrast to the rectangular shape of its main square today.

Following the 1616 fire, the city's

first parish church, La Parroquial, was rebuilt. It was moved from its original site facing the city council to a side of Arms Square. From then on, urban geography adopted the church as its core and the square as its centre. It was around the latter, renamed Agramante Park, that the most important government buildings were erected.

The city with the earthenware jars

Residential buildings definitely take up the most space within the central historical heritage, which is probably the largest in Cuba. We must remember that in 1800, at the start of the 19th century, the Royal Justice Palace of Santo Domingo Island was transferred to Camagüey, when the former Spanish colony became French under the Treaty of Basel. As a result prominent families came to live in the city, giving impetus to majestic architecture with its own particularities, consisting mainly of what we call today neoclassical houses, which still bear the names of their owners in olden times.

These large palaces, built in the second half of the 19th century, conform to the fashion of the era that favoured neoclassical style and had as antecedents the vast two-storey houses of the previous century. We can therefore affirm that, starting in 1850, architecture took on a new aesthetic. The most eloquent example is the Socarrás building, designed in 1862 by the Spanish architect Dionisio de la Iglesia, whose influence is evident on all subsequent buildings. Everywhere we find the rhetorical alternation of pilasters and bay windows as well as balconies defined by wrought-iron balustrades.

In 1841, Camagüey comprised 125 streets composed of 1033 blocks of houses, and already standing since the 18th century were buildings like the convent and hospital of San Juan de Dios, the churches of La Merced and La Soledad, the Jesuit college and the women's hospital, all imposing constructions typical of the century's architecture.

But if there is one thing that gives personality to this city the Cubans call 'Legendary', it is the enormous earthenware jars, like those in Andalusia, placed on the patios of houses and in gardens and parks which fill with rainwater and are intended to keep epidemics from spreading. They started making them in 1620, at the same time as the bricks and tiles used in the construction of all the city's buildings.

Camagüey is also scattered with an impressive number of churches, which earned it the nickname 'city of temples'. All of them share the same feature, a single tower. The architectonic complex that includes the Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Carmen, the Ursuline convent and the women's hospital is the most typical example.

If the cart had not got stuck in the mud...

But the church that goes farthest back in time is the old Ermita de Nuestra Señora de la Soledad, haunted by a legend. The story



Daily life in Camagüey.

goes that at the beginning of the 17th century, a cart drawn by oxen came to a halt at the future site of the church, stuck in the mud. The load was removed to lighten the cart and a mysterious bundle fell to the ground, containing the image of Our Lady of La Soledad. Brother José de la Cruz Espí, known as Father Valencia, recognized this as a sign and had the church built, along with a number of other Christian houses of worship.

It was in Camagüey, furthermore, that what is considered Cuba's first literary work, *El Espejo de Paciencia*, the Mirror of Patience, materialized, written by the public writer from the Canary Islands Nicolás Guillén, the island's national poet.

In the general cemetery is pre-

served the epitaph that poet and barber Agustín de Moya is believed to have written in memory of his beloved and inaccessible Dolores Rondón. According to Méndez, Dolores, the illegitimate daughter of a Catalan merchant, chose out of self-interest to accept the advances of a Spanish officer instead of those of the love-struck Moya. In 1863, the barber found her in the women's hospital, disfigured and dying of the pox. Above the common grave where she was buried, an epitaph appeared on a piece of wood. Anonymous hands renewed the inscription as the years passed, until finally in the 19th century the mayor, Pedro García Argenot, decided to build a tomb in the central part of the cemetery.

The epitaph on it reads:

Here Dolores Rondón came
to the end of her path.
Come, mortal, and consider,
How great are pride and
self-importance
Opulence and power
Everything withers in the end
Because nothing is immortal
Except the harm we keep
ourselves from doing
And the good we are able to do.

Marilyn Bobes,
Cuban poet



Pilasters and wrought-iron balustrades are part of Camagüey's charm.

(The UNESCO Courier, 2008, nº6)

On the border between East and West, the island of Corfu is shaped like a handle, thrusting from the Ionian Sea towards the Adriatic, not far from Italy. The little streets of Corfu exude its Roman, Byzantine and Venetian past. The Greek artist, Katerina Zacharopoulou, takes us on a tour.



Nightfall in the town of Corfu (Greece).

The grand old lady and the plastic chairs

For a long time Corfu has been a favourite destination for all sorts of visitors. Cosmopolitan society of the 1960s, tourists in groups, poets and academics, Greeks from the farthest reaches of the country – all who wanted to come to visit this island had good reason. It is true that a place such as this – inhabited, ruled or described by such personalities as Dionysos Solomos, Jean Capo of Istria or Lawrence Durrell – has an aura that goes beyond its natural beauty, although that certainly plays a role in its renown

Here, like everywhere, everyone forms, not to say draws, his or her own picture of the place. For me, I've kept the first, practically definitive impression of Corfu I was filled with when I arrived, still a child, with my parents, on this island that my mother was from, and with which my father had fallen so in love he'd partially abandoned his ties to his own birthplace, Constantinople. The contrast between East and West gave me the feeling that I was coming from an indefinable place and arriving in a European city. A

sensation that the island I could perceive from the boat, as it slowly approached the port, was the destination chosen by a fairy who sent me there so that I could discover secrets. I would later understand that this childish fantasy was inspired by two things: the roofs on the houses and the incredible, romantic landscape all around. With its city dwellers and the Italian style of their ways, its villagers who all had the appearance, at the time, of administrators for important landowners, with the atmosphere of the

nightlife of the 1960s dominated by the personality of Aristotle Onassis, “the richest man in the world”, Corfu was indeed opening to me like a book of fairy tales.

Mainly there were the little streets that exuded history. History with European roots, with its lords and aristocrats, men of letters, painters and musicians, with its struggles for independence, its avant-gardes and precursors, its fortresses and palaces, local and foreign customs, its peasant houses and lordly residences portraying the diversity of humankind.

Self-discovery

Corfu is not a holiday island, at least for me. As Lawrence Durrell, who lived there, said: “Other countries may offer you discoveries in manners or lore or landscape; Greece offers you something harder – the

discovery of yourself?” Corfu is certainly Greece, but also a Mediterranean bridge of the Orient towards the Occident. Besides self-discovery, it awakens in people something profoundly human, a sort of melancholy, indefinable nostalgia, something heavy, like a definitive and hopeless love, like a romantic interior landscape.

We each have our own paradise. And the island of mass tourism and a carefree life, turquoise sea and fancy hotels, the island in the travel agency brochures, is not one. Real paradise is the smile of the Corfiot woman wearing a white scarf on her head, sitting in the afternoon on the step of her house in Aghios Markos, and behaving as if she didn't know that two steps from her peaceful village in Ypsos, thousands of motorcycles are roaring, on the road to innumerable taverns, restaurants,

cafes, bars and night clubs concentrated on the sea shore. The real paradise is the city in October when you wander the little streets and you discover the bookshop ‘O Plous’ (The Crossing), before a sudden shower pushes you into the Liston café. The real paradise is to be found in those fragrances whose origins you're unsure of: a blend of air from sea and cypress, moistened earth and jasmine, from an old closed home and wet grass.

A cosmopolitan aristocrat

There are in the world many deeply moving towns teeming with architectural treasures, surrounded by breathtaking vistas, exotic beaches, etc. Corfu is not the only one. But at the same time Corfu is unique. It's enough to go once at Easter time to understand that. Corfu is

© Municipalité de Corfou



Corfu seen from the old fort.



Is tourism a threat to the 'old aristocrat', the town of Corfu?

simply spectacular on those days of mourning transformed into days of celebration. Musical groups multiply in the town, handsome young people, usually blond, play music, fireworks tossed from the Citadel complete the décor.

The Corfiots are very proud of their

island, and let's be honest, they feel superior to Greeks from other regions. So do Cretans, you say, and people from the Cyclades too, but for other reasons. That is a question that concerns History, far from what I'm talking about. What I mean here is that, for me, Corfiots, as heirs to

a great civilization, are both ancient and modern. They are Greek, but also a little Italian. They care about their heritage, and at the same time they destroy it. Like everywhere in Greece, you say, but in Corfu the contrast sometimes takes on excessive proportions. Is it possible to make past, nature and globalization coexist without damage?

Corfu is a cosmopolitan aristocrat who suffers from plastic chairs. Fast-food doesn't suit her any more than motorcycles and vulgar behaviour. She needs to be treated like a Grande Dame in the old days, with respect... But today, as we know, great ladies are having a hard time just about everywhere in the world.,

Katerina Zacharopoulou,
Greek artist

(*The UNESCO Courier*, 2007, n°6)

Corfu: Mediterranean stepping-stone between East and West

In the Ionian Islands, Corfu lies farthest to the north, close to the Albanian coast but also the closest point in Greece to Italy. Because of its strategic position on the border of East and West, the small and scenic island has been caught up in the Mediterranean's battles and conquests throughout history. A Corinthian colony from about 734 BC, it fell successively into the hands of the Romans, Byzantines, Venetians, French and British. For four centuries, however, its fortifications were used to defend the maritime trading interests of the Republic of Venice against the Ottoman Empire.

Corfu has been a part of modern Greece since 1864, yet it still treasures remnants of foreign influence in its chequered past, all the way down from antiquity. The splendid Venetian citadel, today the setting for concerts and other cultural events, testifies to the

tumultuous sieges Corfu endured. Both the Old Citadel and New Fort, outstanding medieval military monuments built by Venice's best architects and engineers and restructured by the British, have been selected for the World Heritage List.

Between the two fortresses midway along the island's eastern coastline, lies Corfu's Old Town. With its labyrinth of quaint little streets crammed within the fortifications, it too is now part of the World Heritage site. Marked by its Italian-style architecture, it also boasts Eastern Orthodox churches (one containing the mummified remains of patron Saint Spiridion), while its vast main esplanade incorporates a very British cricket field. In structure and form, as well as in its lifestyle, arts and letters, Corfu represents a unique entity, having absorbed by osmosis both Eastern and Western characteristics. This ensemble has been preserved alive and substantially intact until today, and World Heritage recognition will help keep up that momentum.



The Old Fort by the Harbour.

Underwater museums and parks, replicas and digital reconstructions of wrecks are all ways to encourage the public to discover our underwater cultural heritage without damaging it. Some cost more than others, but they may also be more magical. Take the museum in the Bay of Alexandria, for example.



© D.Frika/Courtesy of the Ministry of Culture, Croatia

Greek bronze representing a young athlete, Vele Island (Croatia).

Visiting submerged treasures

Stonehenge, Chartres cathedral, the pyramids of Egypt, are all evidence of the power of human creativity. They need to be protected and preserved, but not locked away, so that everyone can marvel at their heritage.

This is not a great problem on land. But how can the public discover the ruins of the Alexandria lighthouse, or Cleopatra's palace, the wrecks of Greek and Roman ships, or the sphinxes and other statues found beneath the waters of the Bay of Alexandria?

This is one of the purposes of underwater archaeology, a discipline that requires good diving skills and

expensive equipment. But it takes a great number of dives and sophisticated technology - and therefore a lot of money - to bring treasures to the surface, or to decide to leave them where they are and preserve them.

After all, if these wooden wrecks have survived for centuries, it is precisely because the darkness and lack of oxygen in deep water have allowed their preservation. Once exposed to the air, the saturated remains have to be treated to stop them deteriorating. "Conservation takes a lot of work, over many years, and is very expensive," says Florian Huber, underwater archaeologist at

the University of Kiel (Germany).

Irena Radi-Rossi, one of his Croatian colleagues, is a specialist in Roman shipwrecks carrying large cargoes of amphorae. "When you raise that number of objects," she explains, "you run into all sorts of problems, like storage, conservation, treatment and exhibition space." And, on some sites, the amphorae have melded with the seabed. "Any attempt to free them could easily end up by destroying some of the finds."

The easiest solution, concludes Huber, is to leave the sunken object where it is. This is what the Convention on the Protection of

the Underwater Cultural Heritage, adopted in 2001 by the UNESCO General Conference, recommends. But how can these submerged treasures then be made accessible to the public?

Underwater museums

The ideal solution would be to build an underwater museum that could be visited without even getting one's feet wet. No need, then, to be able to dive to admire the exhibits in situ. But building such a museum is itself a highly complex and costly technological feat. The question is, how complex and, above all, how expensive?

"Finding answers to these questions was one of the aims of a feasibility study for an underwater museum in the Bay of Alexandria," explains Ulrike Koschtial, of UNESCO's Division of Cultural Objects and Intangible Heritage. Launched by the Egyptian authorities with support from UNESCO, the pilot project is under the direction of French architect, Jacques Rougerie. Not lacking imagination, he envisages a museum complex in two major parts. Not far from the new library of Alexandria visitors will enter the first

part, above ground, with its glass walls. They will then go deep underground via a tunnel until they reach a 40-metre diameter underwater terrace, in the centre of the Bay. There, seven metres down, behind glass windows, they will be able to admire the many finds dating back to ancient Alexandria. The museum would boast a total surface area of 22,000 square metres and receive some three million visitors a year.

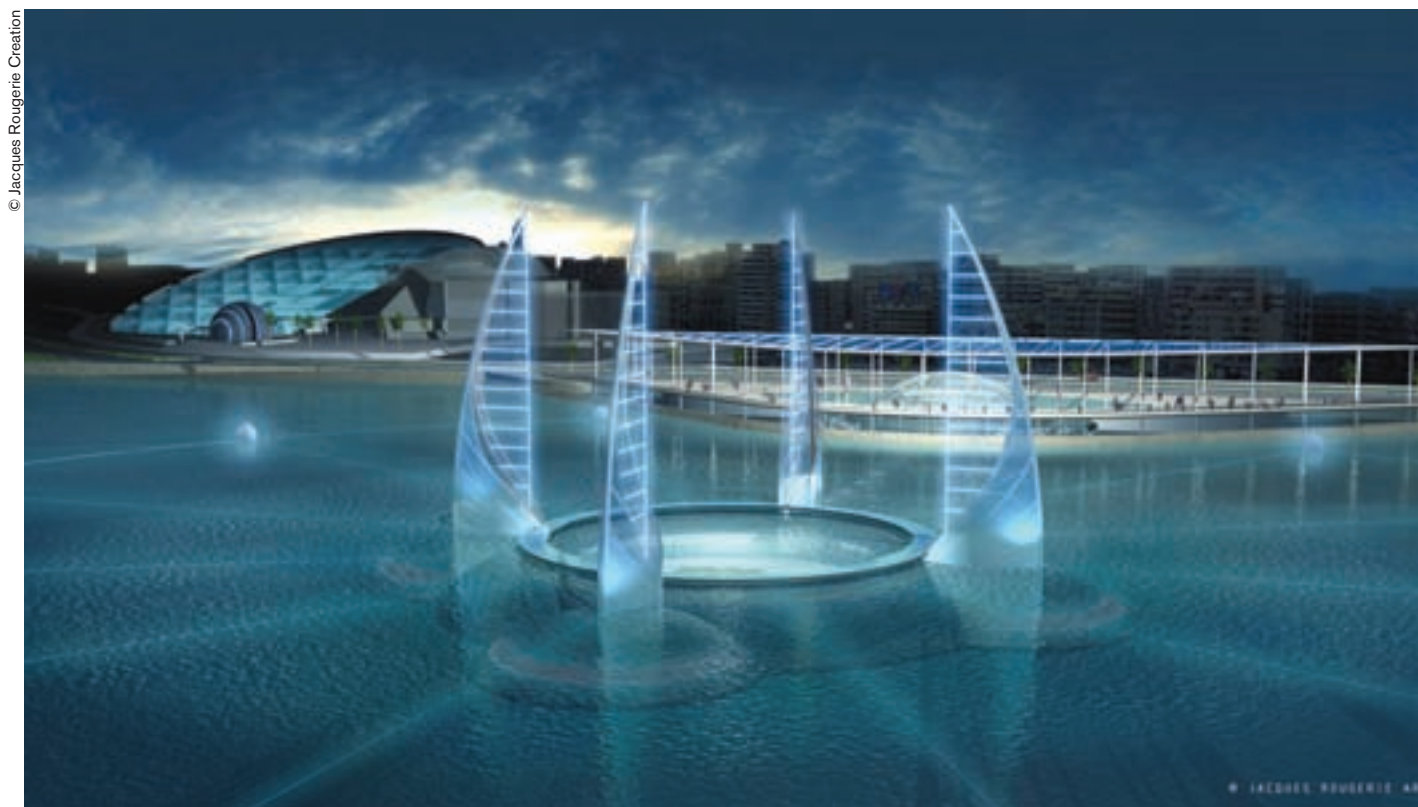
Apart from its probably prohibitive cost, this captivating project would have to overcome other obstacles, like the Bay's pollution. Before visitors can appreciate the treasures in their underwater setting, a way has to be found to purify the seawater and keep it clear, while not hampering the operation of the port. Another challenge is that Egypt is in a seismically active area, with the Red Sea lying on a fault line between the Arabian and African tectonic plates.

Another underwater museum is already being built. At Baiheliang (China), there is a 1600 metre-long ridge, on which changes in the level of the Yangtze River have been recorded for 1200 years. Until now, the 'White Heron Ridge', as it is

called, has only partially been submerged by the river. But, when the Three Gorges dam is completed, it will be completely under water. So, in the 1990s, the Chinese authorities decided to preserve the Baiheliang inscriptions by making them part of an underwater museum. This should have been finished in 2007, but is taking longer than planned.

Other solutions

While waiting for these underwater museums to open, the public can enjoy 'underwater parks'. But for this, the visitor needs to be able to dive. Sarah Arenson, a historian from the University of Haifa, is behind one such project in Caesarea, the ancient port city on the Mediterranean coast of Israel, constructed by King Herod to honour the Emperor, Augustus Caesar, in 10 B.C. Some of the problems that still have to be solved in Alexandria are familiar to her. "In the case of Caesarea, there was no option of recovery," she explains, "as the site is mainly composed of architectural remains." But, she adds, "the prospects of damage to the site are slight. The biggest danger comes from use of the area by fishermen and pleasure



Plans for an underwater museum in the Bay of Alexandria, by French architect Jacques Rougerie.



Design for the interior of the future underwater museum in Egypt.

craft.” The only way to prevent this, she says, is through legislation, by prohibiting fishing and boating in the area. But, as for visibility, “the only answer is prayer,” she smiles. Meanwhile, pollution is minimized by periodical cleaning by volunteers, attracted by special events and competitions.

For Daniel Zwick, of Deguwa, the German society for nautical archaeology, underwater parks are a good way to make underwater heritage accessible, while preserving it. “The routes followed by divers are usually designed to avoid exposed relics, which could be damaged by the movement of scuba fins, for example.”

Humans are still a threat, though. There are always a few black sheep masquerading as divers who come to pillage the sites. And, to enable the public to gain a better appre-

ciation of these sites, Florian Huber has set up a study group for maritime and limnic (freshwater) archaeology (AMLA), which offers regular courses for divers. “It is very difficult to protect shipwrecks,” he says. “The only way is to raise public awareness.” Even so, fragile relics can also be damaged by deep sea fishing nets, storms and even the naval shipworm (*Teredo navalis*), a tiny mollusc that bores into submerged wood.

This is why other approaches are being used. One of the most impressive underwater trails, anywhere, takes visitors to the oldest known shipwreck, the Uluburun, which sank over 3000 years ago, off the south-west coast of Turkey. But, since 2006, divers have been unable to explore the original. The archaeological park they come to is, in fact, next to the original site, and

exhibits an exact replica, named Uluburun III.

“Uluburun III was built on dry land,” says underwater archaeologist Guzden Varinliogu, “with a fake cargo of gold and amphorae. It was then laid on the seabed following the archaeological layout of the original Uluburun wreck.” The original is now in the museum for underwater archaeology in Bodrum.

Even less harmful to underwater treasures are virtual visits, where dives are simulated on a screen. This is the aim of the European Venus project, which digitally reconstructs wrecks in three dimensions. Data from sonar scans of the site are combined with underwater photography to provide a realistic simulation of the sunken object, with the same resolution used in the latest computer games. This is one way to allow everyone to see these underwater relics. “It is perfectly clear that not everybody can reach such sites,” says Irena Radi-Rossi. “But you can always create virtual reality spaces on nearby land and offer some of the emotion, pleasure and adventure of diving to people who can’t dive.”

Jens Lubbaddeh,
journalist for

Der Spiegel Online, Germany,
correspondent for
the UNESCO Courier

An underwater museum in the Bay of Alexandria

“It will be a revolutionary museum because for the first time we’ll be able to visit an underwater museum without getting our feet wet!

A feasibility study on the subject is in preparation and a technical management committee led jointly by UNESCO and Egypt will proceed with its evaluation and recommend procedure. Egypt has assigned the study to Jacques Rougerie from France.”

Françoise Rivière,
UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture

(*The UNESCO Courier*, 2009, n°1)

Last May, Fraser Island, Australian World Heritage site since 1992, became the core part of the new Great Sandy Biosphere Reserve.

Natural world heritage sites conserve ecosystems for which they have been inscribed, while biosphere reserves also do restoration of degraded environments.

How will environment and tourist management practices change for the world's largest sand island?

When World Heritage sites and Biosphere Reserves merge



© Fraser Coast South Burnett Tourism

Fraser Island, Australia, is the largest sand island in the world.

Off the eastern coast of Australia, Fraser is the largest sand island in the world. It supports a complex rainforest ecosystem, unique perched freshwater lakes and rare Australian flora and fauna.

The island, which recently became the core part of the Great Sandy Biosphere Reserve, was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1992 and much of its land is

protected by national park laws. "In some rare cases, core zones can be inhabited. In the case of Fraser Island, the villages are very small and only at the coast line," explains UNESCO's Ecological Sciences and Biodiversity Section chief, Dr Thomas Schaaf.

How will Great Sandy's joining UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves alter the manage-

ment practices already in place on Fraser Island for the environment and tourism?

According to Schaaf, "Natural world heritage sites conserve natural ecosystems for which they have been inscribed, while biosphere reserves also do environmental restoration and rehabilitation activities of degraded environments. In fact, biosphere reserves are mainly con-



To get to Fraser Island you have to take a boat and then hire a 4x4.

cerned with managing change in ecosystems linked to human activity in order to promote sustainable development."

Management of natural World Heritage sites also takes sustainable development into account, particularly for tourism. According to Kishore Rao, World Heritage Centre Deputy Director, "The most important factor and management challenge is to ensure that such use is compatible with and has no negative impact on the 'outstanding universal values' for which the sites were inscribed on the World Heritage List."

This is not the first time a World Heritage site has also become or been incorporated into a Biosphere Reserve. "As is the case with Serengeti National Park in Tanzania – named a World Heritage site and a Biosphere Reserve in 1981 – the two can go together. The magnificent wildlife array is outstanding, but the Serengeti is also a typical savanna ecosystem in Eastern Africa," he said.

Changing lifestyles

Russel Burnett, chairman of the Burnett Mary Regional Group (BMRG) that presented Great Sandy's application to UNESCO, said that one of his organization's main goals in having the area designated a biosphere reserve was to establish its importance to the integrity of a world

heritage site, thus contributing to its conservation. "It is not well known that many of Fraser Island's attractions can actually be seen without the need to drive bumpy four-wheel drive tracks or catch a boat," said Stewart. "There is a great potential to develop eco-tourism on the mainland."



Fraser supports rare Australian flora and fauna.

Although the Great Sandy region already plays host to 950,000 seasonal visitors per year – compared with less than 200,000 permanent residents – the BMRG chairman was less concerned with the impacts of increased tourist numbers to the area than the vast number of people moving to the region to live.

“The ‘seachange’ phenomenon, whereby people are moving to coastal areas of Australia, is causing very rapid growth in population

in the Great Sandy Region, with significant urban development,” he said. “The loss of natural areas of conservation, development of good agricultural land and increased human impacts on popular recreational areas are all potential threats to the region’s environment.” Managing Great Sandy as a biosphere will help to plan this development in a more sustainable way, he believes.

“In fact, we call Biosphere Reserves *learning sites for sustain-*

able development”, said Dr Schaaf. “In addition, Biosphere Reserves are also scientific research sites to study the structure, functioning and dynamics of ecosystems, and the interactions between people and the environment – of interest to both natural and social scientists.”

Letea Cavander,
Australian journalist

(*The UNESCO Courier*, 2009, n°6)

World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves – 85 sites in common



© Fraser Coast South Burnett Tourism

Fraser Island, a World Heritage Site, is the core part of the Great Sandy Biosphere Reserve.

World Heritage sites and biosphere reserves share a number of common challenges – such as climate change and the worldwide loss and degradation of services provided by ecosystems, notably those related to preserving biodiversity. To respond to these common challenges, strategic coordination of activities of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme and the World Heritage Convention is needed for better management of some 85 sites that are both biosphere reserves and World Heritage sites. This process must combine the different mechanisms and approaches offered by the two instruments, and use them as complementary tools for the benefit of both the environment and local populations.

The main differences between biosphere reserves and World Heritage sites (including natural, cultural or mixed sites

and cultural landscapes) are their objectives, legal status and management principles. During the first years of biosphere reserve designations, the traditional conception of national parks weighed heavily. In a majority of cases, therefore, these old designations (from the 1970s and early 1980s) involve sites that do not really fulfil the three functions of biosphere reserves (the conservation, development and logistic functions including research, and monitoring and education) nor have the proper zonation scheme (i.e. core, buffer and transition areas) or cooperative management structures. In these cases, biosphere reserves coincide with the respective natural World Heritage sites (such as Dja in Cameroon, Yellowstone in the United States and Macquarie Island in Australia).

However, in the majority of sites with twin designations, and particularly since 1995, the World Heritage site repre-

sents the core area or a part of the core area of the respective biosphere reserve. An example is the Pantanal Biosphere Reserve in Brazil. Indeed, the Pantanal Conservation Complex, a natural World Heritage site, represents one of the 15 core areas of the biosphere reserve. But biosphere reserves can include not only natural heritage sites, but also cultural heritage sites. Like the Pays de Fontainebleau Biosphere Reserve in France and Tonle Sap in Cambodia. As for El Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve in Mexico, two sites – one natural and one cultural – are part of the same biosphere reserve.

Ana Persić
Division of Ecological
and Earth Sciences (UNESCO)

Excerpts from the article “World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves - Building on complementarities”, *World Heritage Review*, n° 49 – April 2008

“This is not a photo of a merry-go-round, but of its reflection,” explains Shigeru Asano, a Japanese photographer fascinated by the light and shadows of Paris. He has been walking the streets of the city for 30 years.

Nearly 10,000 kilometres from his native Osaka, he feels at home in the French capital, where he finds an atmosphere of melancholy more to his taste than “Tokyo’s dazzle”.

The personal eye of a familiar stranger



Shigeru Asano's photographs, like shimmering skylights, only give a partial glimpse of reality - no more than a tiny puddle of water on a pavement can hold. Shigeru Asano is not the only photographer to be fascinated by reflection, but he is surely one of the very few to have used it as an aesthetic principle. These reflections stay surprisingly sharp, even when the wind whips up a strip of blur, or water forms a frame of shadow. In any case, the reflection is the only perceptible reality in his images.

“People sometimes come up to me and ask if I am feeling all right,” he says. “They are concerned when they see someone crouching in the rain under an umbrella, trying to stay dry. They don’t see that this man is trying to set up his camera on a tripod, aiming his lens a couple of centimetres from the ground. They can’t imagine that he has spent months, even years, visualizing the photo he is about to take; or that he might use up thirty films before he gets the photo he has seen in his mind’s eye.”

This gives an idea of how important time is in Shigeru Asano's approach as an artist. He avoids digital technology because he is not interested in the instantaneous. “With film, you have to wait ... and then the moment of truth comes – success or failure? Sometimes, when the film is developing, no image appears. Everything is black. So, I have to start again. It is like a perpetual struggle with the image. It is very motivating.” In eight years, since he started his “puddles” project, Shigeru Asano has made only



60 photos he is satisfied with.

At the opposite end of the spectrum to his compatriot Nobuyoshi Araki, Shigeru Asano creates a parallel universe, woven with illusions and dreams. He counters violence with lyricism; uproar with silence; the crowd with solitude. His Paris is almost empty of people. "No it isn't," he protests. "Look, there's a man." And, it's true, a few rare silhouettes do cross the black and

white scenes that Shigeru Asano composes on the Pentax 6x7 that accompanies him everywhere. But they are always alone. "For me, these photos are like a mirror", he finally admits.

And the photographer tells of his solitude. He lost his mother at the age of fourteen. He never knew his father. He has no brothers or sisters, and no children of his own. "At least, not for the moment," he adds.

In 1971 he moved to Tokyo to study design. Five years later he came to Paris on a short trip and returned in 1979 to live. In his first ten years, he turned his hand to everything – painter, mechanic, waiter – before discovering a Minolta and throwing himself into photography. He spent the next ten years searching, taking hundreds of photos in flamboyant colour, some for fashion magazines. "Then, one evening, when I was feel-





ing low, because the woman I loved had left me – which happens to everyone doesn't it? – I went out for a walk in the rain. My tears, mixed with the rain, misted my eyes, and I started to see images that were to become the photos you see today. I found my path."

Curious coincidences with the

Stranger we encounter in *Paris Spleen* by the French poet, Charles Baudelaire:

*"Tell me, enigmatical man,
whom do you love best,
your father, your mother,
your sister, or your brother?
I have neither father, nor mother,
nor sister, nor brother [...]"*

*Then what do you love,
extraordinary stranger?
I love the clouds...
the clouds that pass...
up there... up there...
the wonderful clouds!"*

Jasmina Šopova

(The UNESCO Courier, 2009, n°5)



As part of the UNESCO World Cultural Diversity Festival, in May this year, Shigeru Asano exhibited his work at the Town Hall in the first arrondissement of Paris. He has allowed us to reproduce a selection here (© Shigeru Asano).



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

The UNESCO Courier is published by
the United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization.

7, place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP, France
<http://www.unesco.org/courier>

General inquiries, reprint and reproduction rights
f.ryan@unesco.org

Director

Saturnino Muñoz Gómez

Editor in Chief

Jasmina Šopova - j.sopova@unesco.org

Editorial assistance

Katerina Markelova - k.markelova@unesco.org

EDITORS

Arabic

Bassam Mansour - b.mansour@unesco.org
assisted by Zaina Dufour - z.dufour@unesco.org

Chinese

Weiny Cauhape - w.cauhape@unesco.org

English

Cathy Nolan - c.nolan@unesco.org

Portuguese

Ana Lúcia Guimarães et Nelson Souza Aguiar
a.guimaraes@unesco.org

Russian

Victoria Kalinin - v.kalinin@unesco.org

Photo

Fiona Ryan - f.ryan@unesco.org
and Ariane Bailey

PDF Layout

Gilbert Franchi

Web Platform

Stephen Roberts, Fabienne Kouadio, Chakir Piro
s.roberts@unesco.org

Articles and photos credited UNESCO may be reproduced and/or translated providing the credit line reads "Reproduced from the UNESCO Courier" and includes date and hyperlink. Photos without UNESCO credit require specific authorization. Articles express the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of UNESCO. Boundaries on maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by UNESCO or the United Nations of the countries and territories concerned.

