

**A Proposed Framework for the Development of Joint Cooperation
On Nature Conservation and Sustainable Tourism
At World Heritage Natural sites**

Between

The tourism industry and the UNESCO, World Heritage Centre

Introduction:

Tourism is an important cross cutting issue and management concern at most World Heritage sites. Site personnel and other local stakeholders lack the resources, industry experience, and in many cases, training necessary to use tourism as an effective tool for achieving long-term nature conservation and sustainable development. Because of the growing impact of tourism and the needs of site managers, in 2001 the World Heritage Committee instituted a World Heritage Tourism Programme. A key policy in the Programme is to engage in dialog and actions with the tourism industry to determine how the industry may contribute to help safeguard these precious resources.

The purpose of this document is to provide an initial framework upon which to base the development of joint activities between the tourism industry and the UNESCO, World Heritage Centre (WHC).

Proposed Framework:

Since 2001, WHC and partners such as RARE, have implemented tourism management projects at a number of World Heritage natural sites. From these activities WHC has identified a series of needs and actions that constitute a recommended framework for utilising tourism to benefit site protection. This process is composed of seven activities and WHC is proposing that the tourism industry could support either individual components of the framework and/or projects that address all seven activities. It is felt that implementation of the entire suite of actions enhances the ability of World Heritage sites in developing countries to conserve their heritage through the use of sustainable tourism. The activities are:

1. Building the capacity of the site management to deal with tourism;
2. Training local community members in tourism related activities so that they can participate and receive tourism's benefits;
3. Helping to market these products through their promotion at the local, regional, country and international levels;
4. Raising public awareness and building pride in the World Heritage site with local communities and visitors through a conservation education campaign using a symbolic specie upon which to base a social marketing and public awareness campaign (e.g. a Manta Ray in Komodo National Park, a Toucan in Sian Ka'an Reserve);
5. Using tourism generated funds to supplement unmet conservation and protection costs at the sites;
6. Spreading the lesson learned to other sites and other protected areas;
7. Building an increased awareness of World Heritage and its activities and policies in the tourism industry and to the clients of the industry.

The tourism industry & WHC – Exploring Mutual Synergies, Compatible Values:

World Heritage Tourism Programme encourages sustainable tourism actions at World Heritage sites, including implementing policies, aimed at preserving the site for future generations, such as using tourism to contribute to environmental protection, limiting negative socio-economic impacts, and benefiting local people economically and socially. Potential partnerships between the tourism industry and the World Heritage Tourism Programme could place in motion an important series of actions to mobilise resources for increasing technical assistance to World Heritage sites and local communities as well as testing innovative ideas on public-private initiatives for site protection and conservation.

Under the Programme, the Centre is involved with a UNF funded project linking biodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism development, restoration projects funded by the industry, an education programme in local schools in Vietnam, working with the UNEP-WTO-UNESCO Tour Operator's Initiative, a potential partnership with the Mundo Maya Organization, that includes the National Geographic Society, to promote WH within the Mundo Maya network, partnership developments with leaders in the industry through a WHC presence at the International Travel Bourse in Berlin, Germany, a partnership with Ecotourism Australia to support site conservation, and advising ICOMOS on a World Tourism Organization (WTO) study on tourism congestion management.

UNESCO, World Heritage Centre (WHC) located in Paris, France is the international secretariat co-ordinating the implementation of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, generally abbreviated as the World Heritage Convention. WHC is well placed to add value to the partnership. WHC provides key linkages and facilitates interactions between the industry, the country, and the site managers; linkages facilitating essential dialog between site management, local and national authorities and the tourism industry. WHC assists in the design of projects and coordinates with the sites and the industry to match stakeholder needs and promotes public visibility of partnerships and their sponsored activities through the WH and UN information networks and at public forums. WHC endorses promotional information through the use of the UNESCO and WH logo. Because of its legal status, WH facilitates co-operation and practical conservation actions with other international conventions, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Potential outcomes of joint efforts:

1. Building the capacity of the site management to deal with tourism

World Heritage Policy

The tourism public use planning process at each site develops and/or refines a multi-stakeholder vision for tourism development at the site and creates and/or enhances the framework for visitor limits and monitoring, site interpretation and development of appropriate infrastructure. The tourism public use plan should be incorporated into the site's management plan and endorsed by the appropriate governing bodies of each site and the main stakeholders. The tourism public use plan development process increases and enhances collaboration between site managers, local, regional and national governments, NGO's, local enterprises and the tourism industry.

Potential collaboration

Depending on the level of development, the number of visitors and the specific needs identified, the tourism industry could participate in the development of tourism management or tourism public use plans. It could play an important role in helping to organize and

participate in planning workshops at the site. It could offer suggestions on prioritizing site attractions, conservation messages, and offer management advice on planning visitor access and identifying visitor needs.

Tour operators usually conduct diagnostics of local and regional market situations; this research is carried out for established destinations as well as before developing new destinations and it could be an important element in creating a long-term strategy for the development of tourism enterprises in communities in and around each site.

2. Training local community members in tourism related activities so that they can participate and receive tourism's benefits

World Heritage Policy

The active involvement of local communities is an essential component to the World Heritage Tourism Programme. Tourism generates a demand for a wide range of services, providing opportunities for community development. If this is linked to the protected area, tourism can foster community support for conservation – a critical ingredient for site management. By providing an alternative to high-impact land uses, well-planned tourism can benefit natural ecosystems, cultural resources, and the surrounding communities.

Potential collaboration

Areas of possible cooperation include support for the formation of local nature guide training programs. Skills to be developed include local natural history knowledge, conversational English, interpretation, and tour planning. In these courses input from the industry would be invaluable and help in supporting the development of a natural history textbook for each site designed for adults with limited formal education. Other areas of cooperation are training local people in business and marketing skills for existing products that have positive impacts on conservation or helping to create those products that will help to mitigate pressures to sites.

3. Helping to market local products through their promotion at the local, regional, country and international levels

World Heritage Policy

The marketing of local products linked to communities is essential if the local products are in turn linked to the interests of the protected area. Community products, for example, an association of local guides or local boat operators or local crafts, products that may foster the site protection, are rarely part of regional, country, and international marketing efforts. The tourism industry could play a key role in the development of this component.

Potential collaboration

Similar to the awareness raising activities, local products could be promoted in hotel or tour brochures and in-flight magazines

4. Raising public awareness and building pride in the World Heritage site with local communities through a conservation education campaign using symbolic species upon which to base a social marketing and public awareness campaign

World Heritage Policy

The most valuable tool available for the protection of World Heritage sites is education. Residents living in and around World Heritage sites generally have little knowledge of the sites' global significance or the reason for its protected status. Some local people resent the restrictions imposed by site protection laws; others are not even aware they live in a protected area. Raising the awareness of local people generates a sense of pride and respect for the natural and cultural heritage sites in their communities, and a feeling of solidarity with other countries to protect all World Heritage sites.

Raising the awareness of conservation and World Heritage with visitors to the sites is another essential component to World Heritage framework. Describing management efforts and problems can all add to building an honest image of the site and pointing out to visitors those actions that will aid the site's protection.

Potential collaboration

The sponsoring of local community conservation education campaigns is needed. RARE's approach in the field of conservation education campaigns as part of their collaboration with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre has been exemplary and it could serve as a model in developing new projects.

Help in the production of site interpretation materials for visitors are essential. Information on the sites in promotional materials could be useful, if coordinated with the site management.

5. Using tourism generated funds to supplement unmet conservation and protection costs at the sites

World Heritage Policy

Systems to increase revenue from visitor fees, concessions, or donations generated by the tourism industry should be refined or developed to fund operating costs and support monitoring, education, and conservation programs.

Potential collaboration

Arrangements can be developed where tourism enterprises make a contribution to World Heritage based on each tourist visit to a site. These contributions could then be dispersed to finance a specific conservation activity at a chosen site.

Regarding short-term needs on the site, financial support could be provided in the form of donations for specific actions such as the purchase of technical material and the development of appropriate, low-impact tourism infrastructure. Examples could include a terrestrial or aquatic nature trail for visitors, and one that could be used by local nature guides, a visitor's centre and other facilities such as wildlife viewing observation towers.

6. Spreading the lessons learned to other sites and other protected areas.

World Heritage Policy

Developing communication systems for an exchange of experience between site managers on tourism management best practices is a key part of the World Heritage Tourism Programme.

Practical information systems to reach those managers and site people on the ground should be a priority.

Potential collaboration

The World Heritage Centre regularly organises regional workshops with site managers and local and national authorities. Tourism enterprises could support and participate in these events and present, together with the World Heritage staff, the outcomes of joint initiatives and the lessons learned for private sector/public sector partnerships. The workshops would serve as platform to exchange ideas and experiences between all stakeholders involved.

7. Building an increased awareness of World Heritage and its activities within the tourism industry and to the clients of the industry.

World Heritage Policy

Raising public awareness by teaching the importance of safeguarding World Heritage to those visitors participating in tours and staying in hotels nearby to World Heritage sites can help managers mitigate problems caused by tourism and can generate international support for conservation efforts. This can also aid in motivating visitors to eventually make donations to conservation at the site or conservation efforts in general.

Potential collaboration

Tourism enterprises could be provided with information and photographic material of World Heritage sites that could be used to inform their clients via different dissemination channels, catalogues and brochures (as mentioned above), in-flight magazines (features on World Heritage, similar to the World Heritage Review), and hotel brochures. This information, prepared by the World Heritage Centre, could include practical information on the site, describe the outstanding universal site value, and provide information on the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Workshops could be organized to inform hotel employees and tour guides about the World Heritage in order to sensitise and instruct clients when visiting the sites.

Potential outcomes of joint efforts:

- Enhanced skills, management capacities, resources and support for World Heritage site directors and personnel enabling them to better use tourism as a tool for the conservation of cultural and natural sites;
- Active participation of the tourism industry in the conservation of a site by long-term monitoring activities and technical assistance;
- Enhanced local support for conservation by strengthening each site's economic value to the local community;
- Sharing experiences and the creation of networks between, site managers, local, regional and national authorities, and the tourism industry;
- Greater awareness among the international tourism industry and decision-makers in each country about the needs of World Heritage sites and the benefits of sustainable tourism;

- Increased knowledge of the sites and local natural resources and a sense of pride, preparing local residents to participate in site conservation efforts and to better provide services to nature-oriented tourists;
- Greater awareness among customers of the problems that World Heritage natural sites now face and future challenges.

Expected cooperate benefits:

- Increased public visibility by supporting on the ground projects at World Heritage sites. Official partnership with UNESCO, World Heritage and therefore authorized to use the UNESCO label.
- Social responsibility actions and a model for environmental protection and conservation of cultural values between UNESCO and the tourism industry promoted on an international scale throughout the UN system;
- Improved coordination with the site personnel and enhanced visitor services and amenities, enabling a more positive tourist experience;
- Increased dialog with national authorities leading to national tourism policies that positively influence and aid conservation;
- Large-scale dissemination of information through links to the World Heritage Centre website and UN international networks.