

# Tourism and cultural heritage



Tourism and cultural heritage Tourism to sites of cultural and natural significance has existed at least since the time of Greek Antiquity, as reflected by Hellenistic world's invention of the Seven Wonders of the World. In more recent times, 157 countries have ratified the World Heritage Convention of 1972 (protecting the world's cultural and natural heritage), and 582 sites are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. UNESCO's Director General F. Mayor expressed it this way: "The potential benefits of World Heritage extend far beyond the sites which have been listed, since these areas can play a leadership role in setting standards for protected areas as a whole, can bring resources for training which will be of wider application, and can be flagships in terms of raising public awareness of conservation issues." Together with other culture and nature areas, these World Heritage Sites are important tourism attractions and form the backbone of the tourism industry.

Indeed, inscription on the World Heritage List can quickly cause a site to become a major tourist attraction. There is some debate regarding the exact size and growth of tourism, but it clearly is one of the largest industries in the world, if not the absolute largest. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that tourism generated 192 million jobs and \$3.6 billion in GDP in 1999, which is 12% of the world total.

And it continued growth, with annual rates of 3% between 1999 and 2010 for the world as a whole. In short, tourism's economic impact is significant and still growing. Moreover, much of the employment and associated income involves foreign exchange earnings.

In addition, though there is wide variability across destinations and regions, tourism generally provides jobs of various types (from unskilled to skilled, part-time to full-time) and for both genders. Thus, tourism can make an important contribution to economic development. Tourism also generates a variety of other impacts, both positive and negative. For example, it can help keep traditions alive and finance the protection of cultural and natural heritage, as well as increase visitor appreciation of that heritage. Conversely, tourism can damage heritage when not well managed. Thus, there is a tension between tourism and cultural and natural heritage management, indeed between tourism and broader societal values. Tourism is a double-edged sword. As noted by UNESCO: Cultural tourism can encourage the revival of traditions and the restoration of sited and monuments.

But unbridled tourism can have the opposite effect. Here there is a real dilemma. Is there not a risk that the boom in cultural tourism, by the sheer weight of numbers involved, may harbour the seeds of its own destruction by eroding the very cultures and sites that are its stock in trade Or, as stated by Egyptologist Rainer Stadelman, ??? Tourism is already a catastrophe. But we have to admit that without tourism there would be no public interest, and without that there would be no money for our work.??? On the one hand, cultural heritage can serve as a tourism attraction, while tourism can lead to financial and political support for management of this heritage. On the other hand, there is also potential conflict insofar as tourism can damage cultural heritage, and limits on visitation can damage tourism (or hinder its expansion). What is clear is that tourism is growing and will have an increasing impact on cultural heritage. In its forecast Tourism: 2020 Vision,

the World Tourism Organization (WTO) predicts that cultural tourism will be one of the five key tourism market segments in the future, and notes that growth in this area will present an increasing challenge in terms of managing visitor flows to cultural sites.

The focus of this report is how to promote symbiosis rather than conflict, and particularly how development cooperation can facilitate achievement of this objective. The means to achieve symbiosis is to pursue well-managed tourism in cultural and natural heritage settings. Although members of the tourism industry may oppose specific measures or management in specific settings, industry organizations note that ??? the challenge is to manage the future growth of the industry so as to minimize its negative impacts on the environment and host communities whilst maximizing the benefits it brings in terms of jobs, wealth and support for local culture and industry protection of the built and natural environment.??? First the focus is on cultural heritage.

However, cultural and natural heritage often overlap, such that issues, examples, and experiences from nature tourism can also be relevant in the present context (and vice versa). Second, the focus is on tourism, but it is recognized that the involvement of development agencies in cultural heritage clearly goes beyond tourism. Culture, like nature, can be an important component of economic development generally, not just in tourism.

Moreover, cultures provide benefits internationally to those who have not visited, and may never visit, sites. Such ??? existence??? and ??? option???

values helped motivate funding for environmental programs such as the Global Environment Facility (a multi-billion dollar fund for environmental projects), and similar values in the culture context also justify development cooperation. Third, cultural heritage tourism (CHT) is viewed as travel concerned with experiencing cultural environments, including landscapes, the visual and performing arts, and special lifestyles, values, traditions and events.

It is important to stress that CHT involves not only tangible or visible heritage such as sites, colors, materials, and settlement patterns, but also intangible heritage such as societal structures, traditions, values, and religion.