



EUROPEAN
ASSOCIATION
Historic Towns & Regions

Sustainable Cultural Tourism in Historic Towns and Cities



Education and Culture DG

Culture Programme



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Sustainable Cultural Tourism in Historic Towns and Cities

The Council of Europe invited EAHTR to produce Guidelines on sustainable cultural tourism as part of the 'Dubrovnik Declaration' setting out the conclusions of the international symposia, Cultural Heritage – Economic Benefit or Loss of Identity?' held in the city of Dubrovnik in September 2006.

Introduction

Cultural tourism is important to conserving and realising the value of our heritage.

It also enables cultural exchange and encourages cultural diversity to flourish. It is a route to individual personal fulfilment and a major creator of jobs and investment. Tourism, however, is an industry facing in many different directions and one which has both local and global environmental implications – all of which bring challenges and opportunities. Reconciling the potential conflicts between promoting both tourism and sustainability is a major policy challenge for the EU, the Council of Europe and for the leadership of historic towns and cities.



Purpose of the Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to show how cultural tourism can be developed to realise its economic and social potential but in a more sustainable way.

The guidelines aim to achieve an integrated and consistent approach to promoting cultural tourism by:

- Raising awareness of the need to tackle issues of sustainability
- Establishing a shared framework and a common language
- Promoting practical action.

The Guidelines are intended for use principally by policy makers and practitioners within municipalities and those governmental agencies best placed to influence more sustainable approaches to cultural tourism. They are designed to help decision makers openly assess their current approach and to develop a clear plan of action relevant to local circumstances.

Definitions

The following definitions are used for the Guidelines.

- Cultural Tourism: Tourism, the principal purpose of which is to share and enjoy physical and intangible heritage and culture, including landscapes, buildings, collections, the arts, identity, tradition and language.
- Historic towns and cities: Historic places and areas, including villages, small towns, cities and parts of larger urban areas with significant cultural and heritage assets.
- Sustainability: The Guidelines are based on the Bruntland Commission definition of sustainable development, as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Tourism and Historic Towns – Issues

Tourism is not new to historic places and much of their history was built around it and it continues to support them by:

- Generating economic value
- Supporting investment in heritage assets
- Supporting local facilities and services
- Sustaining local traditions, events and products.

Yet the impact of tourism can pose problems for historic places, for example damage to both the sense of place and cultural identity. In practice tourism means different things to different places: for some it is an aspiration, for others it is a challenge to be managed. It is also important to consider the potential of different destinations, which will vary from place to place.

Historic places need to consider seven key issues in developing a more sustainable approach to cultural tourism.

1. Defining the product

The historic place product includes, culture, heritage, attractions and facilities. The elements must both work individually and come together as a coherent whole to maximise the benefit to the place and provide a unique tourist experience.

2. Physical and Social Impacts

Many historic places are comparatively small and large numbers of visitors can result in congestion, wear and tear, disturbance and a sense of displacement for local people. Adapting a historic place to the demands of the 21st century can bring the fear of physical change; however, regeneration working with tourism can often find valuable new uses for historic buildings.



3. Retaining Distinctiveness

Historic towns and cities offer local distinctiveness and a strong sense of place and they need to retain these qualities if they are to be successful in attracting high value tourism. Properly managed tourism can help local people to understand and value what is distinctive about their place.

4. Resources and Climate Change

Cultural tourism cannot afford to ignore its potential impacts on resources, the wider environment and climate change. However, there is an opportunity for business and destinations to develop more environmentally friendly products and practices.

5. Optimise Benefits

Historic places face the challenge of trying to optimise the benefits of tourism, for example, by attracting inward investment. What most historic places will seek is discerning, high spending visitors staying longer throughout the year.

6. Competition

Europe's historic places face global competition; they cannot afford to be complacent and they need to understand how the markets are changing. Delivering a high quality experience to overseas and domestic visitors is central to remaining competitive.

7. Support and Funding

Despite the importance of tourism it often has a low political priority. The consequence is that many historic places receive insufficient resources to ensure product quality and distinctiveness and establish proactive destination management.

Principles for Sustainable Cultural Tourism

The content of the high level frameworks in the Charters listed in Appendix 1 has been assessed. The principles set out below reflect common themes that emerge from this assessment and should guide an integrated approach to sustainable cultural tourism. The principles of sustainable cultural tourism are that:

1. Climate change is a critical global issue and priority should be given to forms of cultural tourism that reduce carbon emissions, conserve rare and precious resources, in particular water and energy, and avoid waste production.
2. Municipalities should attach an intrinsic value to the culture and heritage of historic towns and cities over and above their importance as tourism assets.
3. Authenticity, distinctiveness and the rights and beliefs of local cultures should be respected and underpin approaches to cultural tourism.
4. Tourism is an economically important activity and cultural tourism should contribute to an overall programme of sustainable development.



5. Cultural and heritage assets should be conserved and cultural tourism should contribute to achieving this.
6. The needs of the local community are critical and cultural tourism should be agreed and owned by the host community and the aspirations for it communicated to visitors.
7. Equity is important to long term sustainability and cultural tourism should aim to provide benefits equitably to the local community.
8. Effective management and development requires coordinated action and all local stakeholders, including municipal governments, local communities and businesses, must be involved in the development of cultural tourism.
9. Cultural tourism must respond to the needs of visitors and aim to deliver a high quality visitor experience.
10. The impact of tourism should be reflected in prices to consumers and producers, prices reflecting the real cost to society and the environment.

11. Cultural tourism will be built around more sustainable transport to, within and from the destination.
12. The management and development of cultural tourism should be responsive to change.

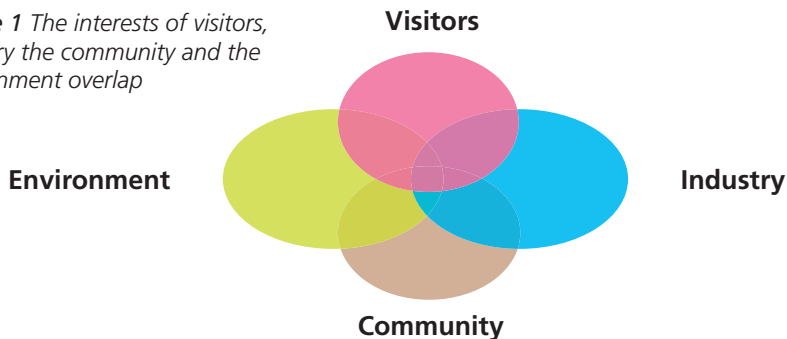
The complexity of cultural tourism and places means that it will rarely be possible to comply with all of the principles. It is a matter of balance and each place must seek the position that is right for it.

Taking the issues underlying these principles, a structured approach to sustainable cultural tourism can be defined by considering:

- Visitors – their needs, aspirations and wellbeing
- Industry – the need for tourism businesses to be profitable
- Community – respecting the values and quality of life of the local people
- Environment – conserving cultural and physical environments,

A critical challenge for historic places is to decide on the relative priority to be given to each of the components. The priority will vary from place to place and over time – the interaction between place and cultural tourism is always dynamic, see Figure 1.

Figure 1 The interests of visitors, industry the community and the environment overlap



Guidelines for Sustainable Cultural Tourism:

A framework for action

Guidelines for action need to flow from the principles set out on pages 4-5. An effective framework requires an integrated approach to: developing a position statement; objectives and policies; processes; delivery and action; and well as a basis for appraisal.

Municipalities are encouraged to use the check list of questions below as a framework for the creation of an Action Plan that meets the needs of their locality.

Answers to the questions posed need to be based on a self critical open assessment of the circumstances prevailing and will benefit from independent evaluation and support.

Position Statement

Sustainable cultural tourism requires careful planning and management. Achieving this demands a clear starting point provided by a rigorous position statement to establish:

- a. The key cultural assets of the place
- b. The current profile of tourism to the place
- c. The social, economic and political factors shaping attitudes towards tourism
- d. Regional, national and international tourism trends.

Objectives and Policies

- a. Is there a consistent local vision, objectives, strategy and policy framework for cultural tourism agreed at the heart of corporate municipal government?
- b. Is the strategy joined up with regional and national policy?

- c. Does the framework include a cultural tourism strategy, destination management plan and inclusion of tourism issues in land use and transport planning policies?
- d. Does the policy framework :
 - i. Take a long-term view?
 - ii. Ensure a holistic and integrated approach across the full range of multidisciplinary activities?
 - iii. Have a foundation on robust, objective evidence and an understanding of culture, heritage, tourism and tourists?
 - iv. Manage risk and adopt the precautionary principle?
 - v. Include provision for review based on monitoring?

Processes

- a. Are all stakeholders, including residents, businesses, politicians and heritage and interest groups responsible for the stewardship of the place, engaged in the development of the objectives and policies and the subsequent delivery of more sustainable tourism?
- b. Are there measures to develop effective decision making through education and training for policy makers and decision takers?
- c. Does the approach to developing local engagement include:
 - i. Establishing formal or informal inter-agency delivery partnerships?
 - ii. Use of a Tourism Forum to facilitate an ongoing dialogue with the host community?
 - iii. Use of local guides and volunteers?



Delivery and Action

a. Do the steps towards establishing a sustainable destination:

- i. Include a clear understanding of what local products and markets are to be developed and what are to be managed?
- ii. Ensure that marketing and media exposure is objective and aimed at potential cultural tourists, who have a real interest in visiting the destination for its inherent qualities?
- iii. Use destination management techniques to balance demand and capacity by managing/restricting access to sensitive sites and spread the visitor load both spatially, temporally and consider lengthening the stay?
- iv. Use interpretation carefully to celebrate the distinctive culture, heritage and diversity of the place?
- v. Establish mechanisms to ensure that a proportion of the economic benefit accruing from tourism is reinvested in the culture and heritage of the place?
- vi. Actively promote the use of sustainable transport, including cycling, walking and public transport, locally and for access, and charging accordingly?
- vii. Meet visitor needs for services, information, comfort, stimulation and safety?
- viii. Provide advance information to visitors to plan their visit effectively and encourage appropriate and sustainable behaviour and transport use?
- ix. Respect diversity and meet the needs of minority groups and mobility impaired people?

b. Do steps to support and develop sustainable businesses,

- i. Favour businesses with good long-term prospects that are rooted in the inherent strengths of the destination?
- ii. Encourage businesses that take conservation and community engagement seriously and show strong corporate social responsibility?

- iii. Encourage community businesses based on marketing locally distinctive products?
 - iv. Encourage businesses that invest in training and skills to provide jobs for local people?
- ### c. In developing sustainable products, is there a focus on:
- i. Attractions that are built on the inherent strengths of the area and which reinforce distinctiveness and identity?
 - ii. Complementing the inherent qualities of the place where there is pressure to diversify the product(s)?
 - iii. Products that are identified and developed by the local community – community based tourism – and provide them with a direct income?
 - iv. Using tourism creatively to find new ways of viably and flexibly reusing historic buildings?
 - v. Sourcing local goods and materials that benefit local people?
 - vi. Services and products with small carbon footprints?

Appraisal

- a. As culture, heritage and tourism are not static, is the approach to sustainable cultural tourism subject to fundamental regular review, dependent on the rate of change, usually at not more than five year intervals?
- b. In order to provide evidence for policy development and investment decisions, are tools and methodologies developed continually to:
 - i. Measure the local quantitative dimensions – volume and value – of tourism?
 - ii. Assess the physical and social impacts and other qualitative aspects of tourism?
- c. Do you regularly review best practice to learn from the experience of other destinations?



Process Overview

These guidelines embody the fact that places and cultural tourism are not static, but exist in relationships that affect each other. Figure 2 summarises the principles and guidelines as a process.

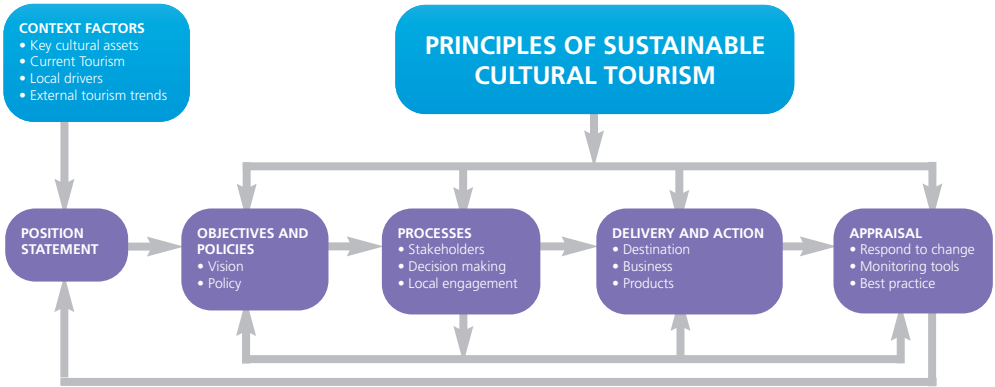


Figure 2 Sustainable cultural tourism – a dynamic process

In applying the Guidelines it is important to consider the relationship with the visitor. Figure 3 sets out a simplified form of a visitor journey that embraces the thinking behind this framework. Each step has a counterpart in the principles and guidelines and is important in ensuring that the objectives are realised on the ground.

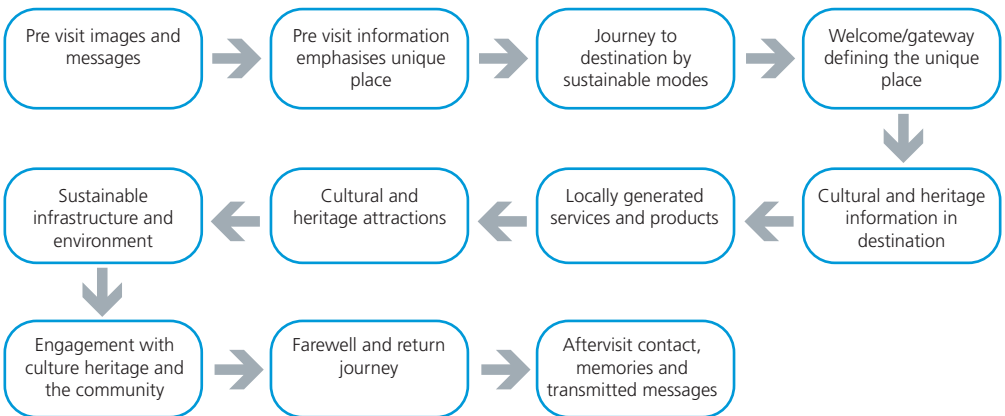


Figure 3 Sustainable cultural tourism and the visitor journey (with acknowledgements to Tourism Site Network)



A Community stakeholder meeting, Regensburg, Germany

Action Plan

All of the preceding stages should be brought together in a Sustainable Cultural Tourism Action Plan.

This has seven main steps:

- 1 Endorse the Principles through adoption as corporate policy
- 2 Establish a stakeholder group of all key interests in the community
- 3 Prepare a collective Position Statement
- 4 Assess the current position against the Guidelines
- 5 Agree actions, resources and timetable
- 6 Implement proposals
- 7 Monitor and review

The production of a Sustainable Cultural Tourism Action Plan will benefit from a degree of independent support working in partnership with the municipality and local stakeholders. EAHTR is able to offer advice and in some circumstances consultancy support. to draw in expertise and examples of good practice elsewhere.



Park and ride contributes towards more sustainable transport for visitors in historic towns and cities

Conclusions

Cultural tourism is an important part of the European economy; and there is a compelling case for safeguarding European cultural heritage. The principles and guidelines set out here aim to provide a consistent framework for decision making by municipalities leading to the delivery of more sustainable cultural tourism at the local level. The Guidelines do not ignore the broader environmental issues, but seek to show how actions towards more sustainable tourism can be taken locally in the context of that bigger picture.



Appendix

Existing Guidelines

These Guidelines do not exist in a vacuum. In addition to the Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European Tourism¹, other charters and guidelines for sustainable tourism include:

- International Cultural Tourism Charter – Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance, 1999²
- World Tourism Organisation Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, 1999³
- The Burra Charter, ICOMOS Australia, 1999⁴
- The Malta Declaration on Cultural Tourism: Its Encouragement and Control, Eupopa Nostra, 2006⁵
- The Dubrovnik Declaration, Council of Europe, 2006⁶

¹ Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European Tourism, Brussels, 19.10.2007 COM(2007) 621 final
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0621:FIN:EN:PDF>

² <http://www.icomos.org/tourism/charter.html>

³ <http://www.unep.org/bpsp/Tourism/WTO%20Code%20of%20Conduct.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au/burracharter.html>

⁵ http://www.europanostra.org/OS/lang_en/index.html

⁶ <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1044795&BackColorInternet=e0cee1&BackColorIntranet=e0cee1&BackColorLogged=FFC679>

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About EAHTR

- The European Association of Historic Towns and Regions (EAHTR) was formed as part of the Council of Europe's initiative 'Europe – A Common Heritage, in October 1999. EAHTR aims to promote the interests of Europe's historic cities through: -
 - o International co-operation between heritage organisations and historic towns
 - o Sharing experience and good practice between historic towns
 - o Promoting vitality, viability and sustainable management of historic towns and cities

Activities

- Since its inception EAHTR has organised, or helped organise, 12 international Symposia in Russia, Finland, Malta, Turkey, Italy (2), UK (2), Sweden, Croatia and Poland.
- EAHTR leads and /or participates in European projects as a key means of exploring issues relevant to historic cities particularly in terms of the social, environmental and economic importance of investing in cultural heritage. We provide funding information to members and help establish project partnerships.
- EAHTR has recently established a programme of guidelines for local and regional authorities. The first of these is "Sustainable Cultural Tourism in Historic Towns and Cities".
- EAHTR is committed to facilitating 'knowledge' transfer both at city and individual levels. For example we fund short 'secondments' for staff between member cities on key issues relevant to our work and organise study visits to member cities to share experience.
- EAHTR has established 'Heritage Zone' - a dedicated social networking site for heritage professionals and other interested individuals. See **www.heritagezone.net**

Membership

- EAHTR has members in 28 European Countries and through its membership arrangements represents over 1000 historic towns and cities. Membership is open to towns, cities, regions, associations, academic institutions and individuals.
- Membership details and further information can be found on EAHTR's web site: **www.historic-towns.org**

Contacts

The Secretary General
European Association of Historic Towns and Regions
The Guildhall, Gaol Hill
Norwich NR2 1JS
United Kingdom
Telephone +44 1603 496400
Mobile +44 7799 885671
Fax +44 1603 496417
Email bsmith@historic-towns.org





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