

Anna Leask and Alan Fyall

managing
world
heritage
sites



Managing World Heritage Sites

For Mum and Dad (Anna Leask)

For Alix and Elliot (Alan Fyall)

Managing World Heritage Sites

**Edited by
Anna Leask
and
Alan Fyall**

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Foreword

The UNESCO *Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage* came into being in 1972, at a time when some of the important economic and political powers in the world were belatedly becoming aware of the growing threats to the cultural and natural heritage of the planet. There had been inconclusive discussions for fifty years aimed at creating some mechanism whereby the more affluent countries might assist their poorer neighbours to protect and conserve the rich heritage on their territories that they were unable to finance themselves. The first faltering steps were taken in the 1920s by the League of Nations, and these continued after World War II when UNESCO took over the relevant portions of the League's remit, but nothing concrete emerged despite many years of debate and drafting.

The situation changed in the 1960s when the US Government began to take an active interest in environmental protection, spurred on by non-governmental bodies such as the Sierra Club and the World Wildlife Fund. A White House Conference in 1965 recommended that 'there be established a Trust for the World Heritage for the identification, establishment, and management of the world's superb natural and scenic areas and historic sites'. This initiative was taken up by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and later by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), set up with UNESCO encouragement in 1965, and the resulting Convention was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 17th Session in Paris on 16 November 1972 – an unusually rapid gestation period for an international convention.

The early years of the Convention (which came into force in 1977, when it had been ratified by twenty countries) were marked by a great deal of enthusiasm but a lack of coherent policy-making. Cultural and natural properties were nominated to be evaluated in a somewhat *ad hoc* fashion by the two Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee, and the World Heritage List gradually grew. In the Convention the sole criterion for inscription on the List is 'outstanding universal value', a noble phrase but one that proved almost impossible to define, as a result of which ten more detailed criteria were painfully evolved.

By 1994 the World Heritage List had grown in an uncontrolled manner to more than 400, and the Committee recognized that a more systematic approach was needed. This resulted in a Global Strategy,

which has been striving to ensure a more equitable and logical representation of the heritage of outstanding universal value, both geographically and thematically – so far, it has to be admitted, with only limited success.

The most significant development in the Convention over the past two decades has, however, been related not to its representative nature but rather to the establishment of standards and criteria for the management, presentation and promotion of World Heritage Sites. No property is now inscribed on the List unless it can show evidence that it has ‘an appropriate management plan or other documented management system which should specify how the outstanding universal value of a property should be preserved, preferably through participatory means’ (*Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, 225, para. 108). The scrutiny of these systems by the two Advisory Bodies is now rigorous, and the inscription of a number of important sites has been deferred to await the preparation and implementation of a suitable plan. Perhaps the most significant example of this rigour was the deferral, in 2000, of the famous archaeological site of Bagan (Myanmar) because there was (and still is) no effective management plan in force.

It is axiomatic that management implies presentation to the public, at all levels from the local to the global. The mere act of listing may increase the visitor numbers at World Heritage Sites many times over: for example, visitor numbers at Sammaladenmäki, a Bronze Age cairn cemetery in Finland, rose tenfold in the first year after listing. The need for close collaboration with tourist bodies cannot therefore be too highly stressed: the approaches to Machupicchu in Peru serve to highlight the dangers of failure to develop a policy of sustainable tourism at ‘honeypot’ sites of this nature.

Serious consideration is now being given to what the visitor to World Heritage Sites will need (in addition to the *sine qua non* of car parking and toilets). The presentation and display techniques pioneered by the US National Park Service and more recently by English Heritage are now finding favour elsewhere around the world, providing worthwhile visitor experiences in intellectual as well as in material terms.

Only comparatively recently have specialized courses in the management of cultural sites begun to appear in universities around the world, accompanied by a slowly growing literature, both for students and for heritage managers. The present volume is an outstanding addition to the invaluable corpus.

Henry Cleere
Honorary Professor, Institute of Archaeology, UCL;
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Preface

Whenever you mention World Heritage Sites, the person you are talking to asks if there are any in that particular country. In attempting to answer them, one finds oneself trying to recall those that are inscribed and justifying both them and the properties that are not listed. On deeper questioning, few people actually know what the UNESCO designation really means and can rarely think where their own countries and properties celebrate the inscription. That said, they are never at a loss to list a lengthy catalogue of sites that they think should be listed and those that should not!

When the editors originally discussed embarking on this project we carefully considered the worth of trying to inform and contribute to the growing body of knowledge on World Heritage Sites – how could we make a valuable contribution to a complex environment where tourism is often seen as a necessary evil and is not often universally welcomed? It is our hope that we have provided both explanation of what the designation means and encouraged analysis of its impact on the successful future of the care of precious resources and sites across the globe. The content of the book will include fantastic sites such as the rainforests in Australia, historic cities in China, Europe and South America, and the role of tourism within their management. The case studies will review cultural and natural sites, those on the List of World Heritage in Danger and those considered to be ‘safe’. There is significant interest in the future of these sites on both a local and global level with growing public interest and awareness in the successful sustainability of these resources. Governments recognize the value of them in the global scene, yet with a view to economic prosperity in some situations, but also their role in conservation, developing local culture and stimulating tourism activity. The text attempts to address these issues in a practical and applied manner, with use of case studies in each chapter and in-depth cases towards the end of the book to demonstrate the very individual needs of the properties on the World Heritage List (WHL). One clear aim of the text is critically to review the role of tourism activity within the issues under discussion and to encourage discussion of the positive ways to balance tourism, economic benefit, and cultural aspects and to minimize physical damage to resources.

The whole area of tourism and World Heritage Site (WHS) management has been the subject of various international academic

gatherings and conference themes in recent years, with special editions in *Tourism Recreation Research* (2001) and the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (2002), and the most recent *Current Issues in Tourism* (2005) special edition and textbook edited by Harrison and Hitchcock (2005). This collection of papers discusses World Trade Law and focuses on the contested nature of WHS and the politics that surround the whole process. Alongside the development of the academic debate has been the publication of more practical approaches, such as *The Illustrated Burra Charter Good Practice for Heritage Places Australia*, 3rd edition (ICOMOS, 2004) that 'encourages the co-existence of cultural values, particularly where they conflict and recognize the importance of interpretation', where 'conservation is an integral part of good management'. In addition, the World Heritage Centre has published *Managing Tourism at WHS: A Practical Manual for WHS Managers* (Pedersen, 2002) as part of their World Heritage Series, offering practical solutions to the variety of issues that they may encounter. The aim of this text is to combine the issues raised via the academic debate and research, with the more practical and applied results from individual properties and those involved in their management. The chapters contain broad coverage of the issues and are then followed by specific and applied case studies, thus providing a useful text for students, academics and practitioners alike.

The editors would like to recognize the considerable effort on behalf of the contributors for their initial interest and willingness to participate in the project and their continued support in submitting work to us. Their views and comments regarding the content of the chapters and text overall have led to a great wealth of content and depth throughout each section. This has contributed to the diverse range of resource and site choices, and the broad geographical spread.

The title of the book was chosen specifically to reflect the broad scope of the overall management of World Heritage Sites and the manner in which tourism activity participates in this context, rather than simply approaching tourism practice at these sites in isolation. It was not the aim of the editors only to consider tourism activity at the WHS, more to view the impacts and issues raised in combining the tourism activities within the broader context of the WHS, to establish how it results in wider socio-cultural and economic impacts and how it can contribute to the benefits gained overall. It is anticipated that this academic debate and contribution will stimulate further publications in the area. The debate over the future sustainability of the World Heritage List will continue and perhaps there is no definitive answer, more a recognition of the need to continually work towards balancing the huge variety of activities that occur at World Heritage Sites.

Anna Leask and Alan Fyall
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Abbreviations

EH	English Heritage
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
WH	World Heritage
WHC	World Heritage Committee
WHConvention	World Heritage Convention
WHL	World Heritage List
WHS	World Heritage Site
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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PART 1

Introduction to World Heritage Sites

Part One of this book explores the broad context within which UNESCO designated World Heritage Sites (WHS) operate. While the book considers the management issues involved in heritage sites in general, it specifically focuses on the UNESCO designated WHS as being indicative of the need successfully to manage these properties. The variety of the sites on the World Heritage List is indicative of the complex issues involved in the effective management of these natural and cultural resources. The aim of this initial section is to consider the role of tourism within the whole World Heritage process, in that it has a significant role to play but that a careful balance of activities is required to maintain the very nature of the resource that visitors seek.

The key themes and issues addressed in this Part include a précis of how a heritage property or resource becomes designated as a World Heritage Site – from the initial suggestion to the final inscription by the World Heritage Committee. In Chapter 1 Anna Leask outlines the process of inscription, before investigating the motivations for pursuing this accolade and the implications for a States Party and site. She then moves on to consider the current representation on the World Heritage List (WHL) and where the main advisory bodies of ICOMOS and IUCN have identified gaps. These bodies have identified some inequalities in the WHL across the categories of designation – natural, cultural and mixed – and geographically, with a heavy lean towards European cultural properties. There follows some discussion concerning the future of the WHL, though this is dealt with in much more detail in Chapter 11. Throughout the chapter, the author recognizes that there are varying viewpoints with regards to tourism activity at WHS. To some it is the key motivation for pursuing the status, while for others it is a marginal activity. For some it is already an established factor in the dynamics of the site, while for others the lack of infrastructure or the political situation precludes effective and appropriate tourism activity. This aspect of politicization is a recurrent theme, of relevance to the motivations for inscription, the decisions around which sites are nominated and how the World Heritage Convention operates and will be revisited throughout the book. Not least there needs to be recognition of the variety of breadth of stakeholders involved in the nomination, inscription and ongoing management of World Heritage Sites, resulting in a challenging operating environment.

In Chapter 2 C. Michael Hall explores the differences in implementation of the World Heritage Convention between States Parties, investigating what the designation means for a country as well as a site. One key theme here is that of the implications of designation – what they are, how they are measured (if at all) and how they can be optimized appropriately to the WHS. Does a site attract more visitors following WHS inscription and what other implications might there be, for example legislation? He concludes with the thought that

there needs to be a change in the whole focus of WHS management, with less emphasis on the process of gaining inscription, rather to the implementation of the WHConvention following inscription. His view being that the story does not end once a site gains the status, rather that it should be the start for the improved management of the site via systematic evaluation, monitoring and reporting on the impacts of WHS listing.

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World Heritage Site designation

Anna Leask

Aims

The aims of this chapter are to:

- Introduce the concept and process of UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) inscription
- Outline the process and role of stakeholders involved in their designation
- Describe the current profile of the World Heritage List (WHL)
- Identify and discuss the issues surrounding WHS designation and management.

Introduction

This chapter acts as an introduction to the process of identification, nomination and inscription for WHS across the globe. This enables the future chapters to concentrate on the specific issues in relation to their implications and applications within various settings, rather than each re-examining the process. The content will cover the aims above in seeking to explain the at times complex process whereby a site deemed to be of significant worth is inscribed onto the WHL. It will consider the vast range of bodies, organizations and stakeholders who become involved in the process and the role that they play. The key management role is that of UNESCO to identify and aid the conservation of those sites deemed to be of outstanding universal value. While the sheer variety of resources protected by the designation creates its own difficulties in the application of UNESCO practices and sustainable management of the sites, a fact noted by Bandarin (2005), UNESCO recognizes this and uses its 'coveted WHS programme as a means of spreading best practice in sustainable management'. The chapter will then raise many of the controversial and political issues surrounding the whole concept of World Heritage in attempting to highlight the disparate views on the success and potential longevity of the designation process. It will then conclude with a summary of the process to act by way of introduction to later chapters that will tackle many of these points more directly.

What is a World Heritage Site?

Approved in 1972, the 'Convention concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage' was adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and came into force in 1976, when it had been ratified by twenty