



World Heritage Alliance Principles

The World Heritage Alliance has adopted the below principles to guide travel industry members in their efforts to foster sustainable tourism in and around World Heritage sites. These principles are modeled on the National Geographic Society's concept of **geotourism**, which is defined as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place - its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents. By implementing these principles, Alliance members recognize their significant role and capacity to enhance the destination while minimizing negative impacts, promoting social responsibility, ensuring tourist satisfaction, and conducting business in such a way that benefits nearby communities.

All World Heritage Alliance members are required to implement the below principles.¹

Destination Impact

Integrity of Place

Businesses should enhance the geographical character of their property or destination by developing and improving property, destination, and community in ways distinctive to the locale and reflective of the region's aesthetic, social, and cultural dimensions; natural and cultural landscapes; and biodiversity characteristics, so as to encourage markets differentiation and cultural pride. Preference should be given to using local materials and working with native communities and should take account of local architectural styles or vernacular traditions.

Businesses should ensure that natural habitats, heritage sites, aesthetic appeal, and local culture – most especially World Heritage sites – are sustained. Keep volumes of tourists within maximum acceptable limits and seek business models that can operate profitably within those limits, so as to ensure the protection of built heritage, ecosystems, biodiversity, and endangered species within World Heritage sites and surrounding landscapes. Present and interpret the authenticity of these places and cultural experiences to enhance the appreciation and understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of the destination.

Tourism activities promoted by businesses should be planned in such a way as to protect the cultural heritage of the destination by allowing traditional cultural products, crafts, and folklore to survive and flourish, rather than causing them to degenerate and become standardized.

Market Selectivity

Encourage growth in tourism market segments most likely to appreciate, respect, and disseminate information about the distinctive assets of the locale and its surrounding World

¹ These guidelines are based on the geotourism principles established and promoted by National Geographic, with pertinent references to the World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the International Council on Monuments and Sites' Principles of the Cultural Tourism Charter.

Heritage sites. This includes partnering with tour operators and hotels that are sensitive to environmental, cultural, and social needs and giving preference to community based enterprises.

Market Diversity

Encourage a full range of appropriate food and other tourism-related products and services of the geotourism market and so maximize economic resiliency over both the short and long term. Businesses should seek to reduce the pressure of tourism activity on the environment and enhance its beneficial impact on the tourism industry and the local economy by offering promotions and specials in the low seasons and taking advantage of the potential diversity of nearby World Heritage sites through broader tourism offerings.

Conservation of Resources

Stakeholders in tourism development should safeguard the natural environment with a view to achieving sound, continuous and sustainable economic growth geared to satisfying equitably the needs and aspirations of present and future generations. Businesses should include in their management plans policies that minimize water pollution, solid waste, energy consumption, water usage, landscaping chemicals, and overly bright nighttime lighting. Businesses can advertise these measures in a way that it educates travelers on conscientious behavior while traveling.

Evaluation

Establish an evaluation process to be conducted on a regular basis by an independent panel representing all stakeholder interests, and publicize evaluation results. Tourism professionals, particularly investors, governed by the regulations laid down by the public authorities, should carry out studies of the impact of their development projects on the environment and natural surroundings. They should also deliver, with the greatest transparency and objectivity, information on their future programs and their foreseeable repercussions and foster dialogue on their contents with the populations concerned.

Social Responsibility

Recognize that the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical, and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism. Stakeholders in tourism development should observe the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those minorities and indigenous peoples and to recognize their worth. Tourism development and practices should be conducted in harmony with the attributes and tradition of the host religions and countries and in respect for their laws, practices, and customs.

Tourist Experience

Tourist satisfaction

Ensure that satisfied, excited geo-tourists bring new vacation stories home and send friends off to experience the same thing, thus providing continuing demand for the destination.

Interactive Interpretation

Engage both visitors and hosts in learning about the place and nearby World Heritage sites. Encourage residents to show off the natural and cultural heritage of their communities, so that tourists gain a richer experience and residents develop pride in their locales.

Community Advantage

Base tourism on community resources to the extent possible by working with local small businesses and civic groups to build partnerships to promote and provide a distinctive, honest visitor experience, market their locales effectively, emphasize economic and social benefits, and address poverty alleviation, with clear communication of the destination stewardship policies required to maintain those benefits.

Local populations should be associated with tourism activities and share equitably in the economic, social, and cultural benefits they generate, and particularly in the creation of direct and indirect jobs resulting from them. Tourism businesses should encourage the training and employment of guides and site interpreters from the host community to enhance the skills of local people in the presentation and interpretation of their cultural values. Businesses should also help local small businesses develop approaches to tourism that build on the area's nature, history, and culture, including food and drink, artisanry, performance arts, etc.

The fundamental rights of salaried and self-employed workers in the tourism industry and related activities should be guaranteed under the supervision of the national and local administrations, both of their states of origin and of the host countries, with particular care given to the specific constraints linked to the seasonality of their activity, the global dimension of their industry, and the flexibility often required of them by the nature of their work.