

Principles of Sustainable Heritage Tourism

While tourism operators, heritage managers and communities have their own views and needs, there is a broad range of common interest and great potential for mutual benefit.



Of common interest to all are providing appropriate public access, presenting and protecting the significance of places, and the need for sustainability – sustainability for businesses, for heritage places, and for the community.

The following principles (developed by the Australian Heritage Commission) have been derived from the international and national context of sustainable practice in both tourism and heritage. They recognise that much of the groundwork has already been developed in international and national guidelines, charters and best-practice documents in both the tourism and heritage fields.

The principles are important for tourism operators, heritage managers and others who are committed to responsible practice and a quality product.

PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE 1

Recognise the importance of heritage places

A great deal of tourism relies on places with natural, Indigenous and historic significance as fundamental assets on which tourism products are based.

Recognising, describing, understanding and communicating significance is an essential part of heritage conservation and responsible tourism at heritage places. Understanding significance makes good business sense for tourism – it is one of the key selling points for products.

Tourism needs to be planned carefully to be appropriate to the significance of a place. Tourism will not be an option for some heritage places where it is incompatible with the significance or management objectives of a place.

In order to respect the cultural significance of places, people involved in tourism need to be sensitive to, and directly involve, cultural groups who have a special interest in them.

PRINCIPLE 2

Look after heritage places

Heritage conservation is a concern of responsible tourism. It ensures the long-term protection of heritage assets.

The aim of heritage conservation is to retain the natural and cultural significance of places. Each heritage place or area has its own particular significance and requirements for conservation.

It is the responsibility of people planning tourism activities at heritage places to take all reasonable steps to avoid impact on the natural and cultural significance of a place.

PRINCIPLE 3

Develop mutually beneficial partnerships

Developing active partnerships, alliances and open lines of communication between tourism operators, site managers, other businesses, local communities and Indigenous people is the best way to build a sustainable tourism operation.

Success depends on building relationships and, where appropriate, forming partnerships of benefit to both tourism and heritage.

Working with local people in the management, presentation and operation of tourism activities will foster ownership and understanding and contribute to positive outcomes for the visitor attraction and local community.

Developing partnerships with Indigenous custodians is crucial in the case of presenting Indigenous heritage.

PRINCIPLE 4

Incorporate heritage issues into business planning

As with all business operations, sound business planning is the essential foundation of a successful heritage tourism operation. A business plan will clearly establish the nature and purpose of the operation and how it will achieve both business and heritage objectives. It is important to measure progress toward your objectives and adjust the plan if necessary.

A business plan which incorporates both business and heritage objectives can be used to build support in both business and heritage sectors.

Ongoing research on the significance of places and visitor markets should be used to improve the targeting, marketing and protection of the product and inform reviews of business plans.

PRINCIPLE 5

Invest in people and place

Tourism involving heritage places should contribute to both the conservation of heritage assets and to the economic and social well-being of local communities.

Strategies which bring mutual benefits can be developed to benefit the place, the people involved and the local and regional community.

These can include increasing use of local goods and services, providing corporate contributions to conservation initiatives, technical assistance, training and education programs, direct involvement in management or upgrade of visitor facilities, improved visitor understanding of the significance of a place, or helping to achieve other goals that the local community supports.

PRINCIPLE 6

Market and promote products responsibly

The significance of heritage places can be the basis for product definition in marketing and promotion.

The marketing and promotion of heritage places needs to recognise and respect their identified significance and the wishes of local communities — and not create unrealistic visitor expectations.

A balance needs to be found between meeting tourism needs for marketing, promotion and product positioning, heritage needs such as planning for the future use of places and appropriate use of images and the needs of visitors for accurate information.

Successful marketing and promotion are best achieved through strategic partnerships across tourism and heritage interests at local, regional, State/Territory, national and international levels.

PRINCIPLE 7

Provide high quality visitor experiences

Providing an enjoyable and enriching experience for visitors is the goal of everyone involved in heritage tourism. A common understanding of visitor needs and motivations by tourism operators and heritage managers is the basis for providing high quality visitor experiences.

High customer satisfaction is achieved through providing enjoyment for visitors, along with understanding of a place. Attention to detail and a commitment to high quality in the planning of activities, staff training, interpretation and provision of facilities and services will generate positive effects for both businesses and heritage places.

PRINCIPLE 8

Respect Indigenous rights and obligations

Indigenous people have cultural obligations to look after their country and special places. They are the primary sources of information about the significance of their places.

When the cultural significance of the place has been established, the objectives and operating guidelines for tourism should be widely discussed and agreed upon with the relevant Indigenous community. Respect for cultural protocols and control of intellectual property is required with regard to access to sites, disclosure of sensitive information, and the use of designs, photographs, performances and objects.

For professional input regarding strategic master planning for heritage tourism please [contact Lorton Consulting](#).

Fuente: <http://tourismplanningprofessionals.com/?p=246> (Accessed on the 5th of April 2013)