

# Report on the Protection and Management of Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape

## Abstract

Hangzhou Municipal People's Government attaches great importance to the protection of world heritage and earnestly implements the resolution of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) in accordance with the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and the *UNESCO Recommendation for Historic Urban Landscape (HUL)*.

First, we completed the height lowering and rooftop restoration of East Building of Shangri-La Hotel, and tree planting nearby. The digital simulation for landscape impact assessment shows that the hotel buildings are now invisible from four viewpoints of West Lake, and hence have no adverse impact on the Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape.

Second, we stepped up tourist management in the Property. We conducted research on the carrying capacity and re-verified the daily and instantaneous carrying capacities. We formulated management plans, increased publicity and guidance efforts and improved transport organization to divert tourists.

Third, we improved the heritage impact assessment mechanism. Following *Regulations on the Protection and Management of Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape* and the *Protection and Management Plan for Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape (2008-2020)*, we evaluated the heritage impact of construction projects in the Property and the buffer zone and saw to it that the outstanding universal value of the Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape was effectively maintained.

Hangzhou Municipal People's Government always attaches great importance to the protection of world heritage. In accordance with the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and the *UNESCO Recommendation for Historic Urban Landscape (HUL)*, we earnestly implement the resolution of the World Heritage Committee (WHC), actively advance environmental improvement after Shangri-La Hotel lowered its East Building height, improve tourist management and the mechanism for assessing the impact of construction projects on the Property, and strengthen the protection and management of the Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape.

### **1. Environmental improvement after Shangri-La Hotel lowered its East Building height**

The Municipal Government makes a special effort to deliver its promise of improving the environment following the height lowering of Shangri-La Hotel's East Building. The relevant work has been completed.

#### **(1) Restoration of East Building's permanent rooftop**

On May 22, 2019, the proposal for restoring the permanent rooftop of East Building was jointly reviewed and approved by Hangzhou West Lake Scenic Area Management Committee, Municipal Development and Reform Commission, Municipal Urban-Rural Development Commission, Municipal Administration of Gardens and Cultural Relics, Municipal Ecology and Environment Bureau, Municipal Bureau of Planning and Natural Resources, Municipal Bureau of Forestry & Water Resources, and Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism. The construction began on August 1, and was completed on December 1, 2019 (see Appendix 1).

#### **(2) Environmental improvement and upgrading**

On December 19, 2019, Shangri-La Hotel's environmental improvement and upgrading proposal passed the expert assessment of impact on Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape (see Appendix 2). Accordingly, tall trees are planted on the eastern plaza and southern slope to effectively hide the hotel buildings and organically blend them into the natural environment, thus completely eliminating their adverse impact on the West Lake Cultural Landscape. The trees have been planted as scheduled.

### **(3) The second digital simulation for landscape impact assessment**

To objectively and accurately evaluate the effects of the hotel's environmental improvement and upgrading project after completion, Hangzhou City Planning and Design Academy was commissioned to carry out the second digital simulation for landscape impact assessment based on the 2019 simulation (see Appendix 3). Based on the analysis of the simulated shading effect of tree planting after two-floor demolition, the canopy needs to be 25-30 meters tall to completely block the view of the building from the Property.

As for the four viewpoints – North of Gushan Hill, Pavilion for Freeing Cranes, Bai Causeway lakeside viewpoint, and the Jindai Bridge – that had a partial view of the east side of the building in 2019 proposed in the *West Lake Landscape Analysis Report: The East Building Project of Shangri-La Hotel, Hangzhou*, we simulated and compared the landscape effects of East Building wall painting and tree planting on its eastern plaza and southern slope, and found that: 1. Tree planting on the eastern plaza and the southern slope can completely hide the East Building which was visible at the four viewpoints in 2019, and blend it fully into the surrounding natural environment; 2. The color of the exterior wall of East Building matches naturally with the surrounding environment and the mountainous terrain, in only gentle, subtle contrast, and causing no disturbance to the surrounding natural environment.

## **2. Tourist management**

The Municipal Government always puts heritage protection before tourism

development. It guides and manages tourist behavior by making full use of technology, education, economic incentives, administrative means and law, strengthens the monitoring and diversion of tourist flow in the Property, and works to improve the tourist experience and realize the sustainable development of Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape while ensuring the safe, orderly and stable operation of the Property.

### **(1) Research on the tourism carrying capacity**

Within the framework of *Conservation Master Plan for Hangzhou West Lake Scenic Area (2002-2020)* and the *Protection and Management Plan for Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape (2008-2020)*, in May 2020, Hangzhou West Lake Scenic Area Management Committee launched research into the carrying capacity of Hangzhou West Lake Scenic Area (Property), covering tourist management, tourist capacity management and space capacity. The research team analyzed the factors that affect the carrying capacity of the Scenic Area, explored technological and managerial means that can be used for traffic flow monitoring and diversion, and re-verified the daily and instantaneous carrying capacities, to provide a scientific basis for the monitoring and diversion of tourist traffic and ensure the safe and orderly operation of the Property (see Appendix 4).

### **(2) Scientific monitoring and scheduling of tourist capacity**

With the help of the access control & ticketing system, real-time spot surveillance system, mobile phone signaling data, and infrared induction technology, we have built a three-tiered network to monitor the tourist flow in each part of the Scenic Area in real time and better predict the tourist flow trend (see Appendix 5).

### **(3) Taking multiple measures to divert the tourist traffic**

The first is to formulate science-based plans for tiered tourist management. Different contingency plans have been formulated for different types of scenic spots in the Scenic Area (see Appendix 6). The information about the tourist flow is made public in real time; and rational queueing methods are introduced to reduce overcrowding at

the entrance. Since March 2020, the Scenic Area has capped the daily number of tourist arrivals, demanded reservation in advance, and set different time slots for reservation, to realize staggered admission of tourists.

The second is to step up publicity efforts and enhance the tourist experience. Through traditional media such as newspapers, TV and radio, as well as the Scenic Area's official website and public WeChat account, we increase public awareness and visibility of internal transport services, less-visited scenic spots and newly-developed ones in the Scenic Area to divert tourists from "overheated spots." We also try to reform the tourism form and structure by guiding tourists to go beyond sightseeing, focus more on the experience, and have themed tours and leisure tours. The carrying capacity and facilities of the village in the Scenic Area are also strengthened to ease the tourism pressure during peak periods.

The third is to optimize transportation organization and ease management pressure. The traffic police department has compiled a dynamic adjustment plan for traffic capacity of the Scenic Area. It imposes traffic control on popular attractions and surrounding roads, limits parking inside the Scenic Area and schedules public bus services to reduce the number of tourist arrivals in peak hours and realize staggered arrivals. Odd-even traffic restrictions are imposed on passenger cars on weekends and statutory holidays throughout the year, new transfer centers are built around the Scenic Area, and we are actively developing the intelligent parking system to provide data support for traffic control. Since May 1, 2018, non-motorized vehicles are banned around the clock on Su Causeway and Bai Causeway to ease the pressure on tourist management.

### **3. Improving the landscape assessment mechanism**

#### **(1) Incorporating landscape assessment requirements into legislation and planning**

According to Article 12 of the *Regulations on the Protection and Management of Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape* formulated and promulgated in 2011, while

reviewing projects that indeed need to be developed in the West Lake Cultural Landscape Property, the Scenic Area Management Committee shall organize heritage impact assessment, and implement the expert consultation and demonstration system. Hangzhou makes the heritage impact assessment of construction projects in the Property as a statutory precondition for approval, to prevent possible adverse effects on the Property. At the same time, in accordance with Article 23 of the *Protection and Management Plan for Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape (2008-2020)*, the needs of protecting various heritage elements and of landscape environmental control, and China's current heritage protection and management laws and regulations, we divide the Property and the buffer zone into several parcels of different levels and types, and have formulated detailed rules for their protection and management. Specifically, according to the protection intensity requirements for heritage elements, we designate six key protected parcels in the Property, and propose detailed requirements for them; the buffer zone is divided into three categories based on the actual topography of the Property site, the current status and development trend of urban development, with specific requirements put forward for parcel management and control (see Appendix 7). These requirements serve as the basis for the management and control of construction projects in the Property and the buffer zone.

## **(2) Optimizing the heritage impact assessment of construction projects in the Property**

In strict accordance with the *Regulations on the Protection and Management of Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape*, we assess the impact of construction projects in the Scenic Area on the heritage through expert consultation and demonstration. Since 2019, we have held 10 expert demonstration meetings on the impact assessment, reviewed seven engineering projects, and no new construction projects have been launched. Among them, four projects were approved at their first review, one at the second review following one round of modification, one at the third review following two rounds of modification, and one rejected. Judging from the evaluation conclusions and implementation effects, the approved projects have no

adverse effects on the outstanding universal value of the Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape (see Appendix 8). On top of previous work, the Municipal Government continues to make the evaluation process more scientific and rigorous by inviting higher-level experts from a wider range of areas, soliciting public opinion, and improving the demonstration methods. Through meetings, training sessions, and media publicity, we make sure project owners and contractors fully understand the importance and necessity of heritage landscape evaluation, which also effectively guarantee the smooth evaluation process.

### **(3) Improving the impact assessment of construction projects in the buffer zone**

The Municipal Government has revised the *Overall Urban Design of Hangzhou* (see Appendix 9), and issued the *Guidelines for Strengthening the Management of Distinct Urban Landscape and Architectural Landscape in Hangzhou* (see Appendix 10), to further strengthen the city-wide management and control of distinct urban landscape and targeted management of architectural landscape. Projects concerning the buffer zone of Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape must go through rigorous heritage impact assessment to prevent any impact on the Cultural Landscape's outstanding universal value.

#### **Appendixes:**

- 1.Minutes of the Meeting for Final Acceptance of the East Building Height Lowering Project at Shangri-La Hotel Hangzhou
- 2.Minutes of the Expert Review Meeting for Landscape Impact Assessment of the Renovation Project at Shangri-La Hotel Hangzhou
- 3.Simulations of Ecologically Restored Landscape for 4 Viewpoints with a Partial View of the Building
- 4.Summary of *The Study on the Carrying Capacity of the West Lake Scenic Area (Within the Property)*

5. Tourist Flow Monitoring for the West Lake Scenic Area (Within the Property)
6. Excerpts from the *Tourist Flow Management Plan for the West Lake Scenic Area (Within the Property): Control Plan*
7. Rules on Conservation Zoning under the *Outline of the Protection and Management Plan for Hangzhou West Lake Cultural Landscape*
8. List of Landscape Impact Assessment Projects within the Boundaries of West Lake Cultural Landscape, 2019-2020
9. Municipal Government's Reply Regarding the *Overall Urban Design of Hangzhou (Revised)*
10. Guidelines for Strengthening the Management of Distinct Urban Landscape and Architectural Landscape in Hangzhou