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UNESCO World Heritage
Sustainable Tourism Online Toolkit

Guide 3
Developing effective governance

Welcome to the UNESCO World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Toolkit

Sustainable planning and management of tourism is one of the most pressing challenges concerning the future of the World Heritage Convention today and is the focus of the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme.

These 'How To' guides for World Heritage Site managers and other key stakeholders will enable a growing number of World Heritage Site communities to make positive changes to the way they pro-actively manage tourism.

How to use this guide

These easily accessible 'How To' guides are focused on best practice approaches to sustainable economic development through tourism. The first of their kind, the 'How To' resources offer direction and guidance to managers of World Heritage tourism destinations and other stakeholders to help identify the most suitable solutions for circumstances in their local environments and aid in developing general know-how for the management of each destination.

The 'How To' guides bring best practice knowledge to the full WH community, so that site managers, tourism professionals, conservation professionals, and communities around the world understand the possibilities of sustainable tourism and what key issues have already been achieved.

These resources are a valuable asset to site managers in particular, who often lack the tools and know-how to effectively manage and maximise tourism benefits, while minimising its negative impacts.

Our series of guides have been structured as a step-by-step process for site managers.

Guides 1-4 establish the basic foundations for sustainable tourism (these are coloured yellow).
Guides 5-10 are tailored to more specific issues, which will have greater relevance at some sites than at others (these are coloured orange). We recommend that site managers explore each guide, however, as sustainable tourism is a holistic process, addressing all issues in a strategic manner.

Strategic Foundations

Guide 1 **Understanding**	Guide 2 **Strategy**	Guide 3 **Governance**	Guide 4 **Engagement**

Core Delivery (Only works if steps 1 to 4 are undertaken)

Guide 5 **Communication**	Guide 6 **Infrastructure**	Guide 7 **Value**	Guide 8 **Behaviour**	Guide 9 **Investment**	Guide 10 **Monitoring**

Our Objective

The goal is to stimulate local solutions in communities through capacity-building in best practice. With the immense scale and variation of World Heritage Properties around the globe, coupled with scarce human and financial resources, this is now more important than ever. Site managers and other stakeholders in the tourism sector must have access to these types of innovative sustainability tools in order to develop and formulate their own successful results.

Ideally, site managers and other users will begin to navigate through this system by learning basic ideas and guidance. The system then enables the user to delve deeper into any given subject that falls in line with their local interests, needs, and aspirations.

Our objective for these guidance resources is to enable the growth and success of an entire community of World Heritage Properties, making positive changes to their local surroundings and pro-actively managing tourism in their areas. In parallel, by establishing this community, we aim to facilitate knowledge exchange of the most progressive ideas, and encourage their implementation and evolution.

The driving ethic for the 'How To' guides is to explain critically important ideas for sustainable tourism in World Heritage sites in a clear and concise manner, conveying the key knowledge and processes in a reading time of under 20 minutes per idea. Our goal is to make implementing the ideas of sustainable tourism easier to understand and put into practice for all parties involved.

Getting started

We understand the complex range of different societies in which World Heritage sites exist, and the many challenges site managers face on a daily basis. While the intention is to encourage each site to undertake most, or at least many, of the tasks included in the guides, considering them together all at once may seem daunting and even impossible.

We have developed this tool as a source of guidance and inspiration. It is a menu of ideas from which you, the user, may choose to put into practice, helping your World Heritage site become more sustainable for its current and future visitors.

Getting to know these 'How To' guides will move your site towards better self-management and sustainability rather than demand a level of sophistication that might simply be unattainable for some World Heritage sites. We would urge all site managers to read through these resources thoroughly and begin to think about what positive steps can be taken to implement these changes. Again, we remind each user that results will differ for each site, and the circumstances of the local environment and community must always be taken into consideration.

Sustainability is a complex system to navigate. Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the information provided in the 'How To' guides, or send us your feedback. We are here to help.

This guide will tell you why good destination management and governance matters, and how you can start to develop it in your World Heritage destination.

Why this matters

Without good management it is virtually impossible to bring about the **transformation of tourism** that **is often necessary** to make it sustainable and economically effective. Tourism can and must be shaped and managed so that it is both commercially effective and sustainable in World Heritage sites and their environments.

This is the reason why some of the world's most effective tourism destinations have **DMPs** (Destination Management Plans) and **DMOs** (Destination Management Organisations), and many of the most successful World Heritage sites have established some form of authority to **manage key processes and issues**.

1. Use an existing DMO (Destination Management Organisation) management structure or engage with stakeholders to create one

Many destinations will have some form of **partnership structure or management process**; where this exists, **become part of it**. Often its purpose will be the commercial development of a destination, so site managers need to help stakeholders understand the obligations of being a World Heritage site, the responsibilities that come with it, as well as explaining the opportunities that accompany the designation.

If such a DMO management structure and process does not exist, then **you may have to create it** (See Guide 2: Developing a strategy for progressive change). Those stakeholders involved in the DMO partnership management structure should be **based on the strategic ambitions and aspirations for the destination** – build the partnership around the strategy.

There is no blueprint for a management structure. Different societies and different cultures have their own ideas of what good management looks like, how it works, and how different people and organisations work together. However, most experts agree that some structure for managing the issues at a destination scale is necessary. In urban areas, it might be an elected mayor or a local authority with an inspired vision. In natural areas, it might be a dynamic National Park management authority with the mandate to protect the site and deliver on wider destination issues. In many larger destinations, it may be the tourism board or DMO that sets the strategy. Your destination may need a custom solution, but it can probably learn a great deal from looking at good management systems in other sites.

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2. Destination management is different than World Heritage site management

Destination management usually **requires partnership** working across the tourism, transport, infrastructure, and conservation sectors. This can be a challenge, as effective partnership requires **consensus of shared goals**, aspirations, and mutual obligations. Professionals from different sectors may be reluctant to engage with each other or dedicate time to gain new skills. Site managers who need to influence tourism may need a broader range of skills, some knowledge of the tourism sector, or the willingness to learn about it quickly to help make this dialogue effective.

Develop a management structure appropriate to the size and scale of the destination, and define its responsibilities for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural issues. Your management organisation might be a department, group, committee, private company, a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), or simply a partnership of different types of organisations linked by a shared strategy. It really does not matter. The important thing is that you can **make it work at the destination scale**.

If your site faces severe external issues, such as war or conflict, simply do what you can. **Some site managers will be dealing with extreme scenarios** in which there may be a lack of law and order, lack of basic healthcare, or severe poverty and malnutrition in the local community. Others will be trying to manage a site in places that have challenging political cultures, tainted by corruption, war, ethnic violence, etc. Suggesting perfect heritage management solutions to people in such scenarios seems futile and patronising, so **do the best that you can** until the situation improves.

3. Good governance relies on a number of key factors

The most progressive World Heritage sites have **management structures and governance that are extremely open and inclusive**. This does not mean that expert advice is not heeded. Instead, a **significant number of people** in the destination and host community **play a vital role** in setting the strategy, delivering actions and activities, and monitoring progress. They are able to provide input approving, supporting, or disagreeing with any given action, and may also process knowledge that experts are unfamiliar with.

There is a tendency in many sites to try and retrofit community and stakeholder support, but this is a mistake. **Good governance requires a sustained process of interaction**. The advantage of starting to develop a governance strategy from a basic level is that you can do things inclusively from the start.

The **authority and capacity to control or prevent** Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) damaging activities – which often includes making tough, perhaps even counterintuitive, decisions and enforcing them – **is crucial**. Many of the most progressive World Heritage sites have offered businesses and communities dynamic and sustainable alternatives to activities that damage the site's values. However, they will also enforce protection when it is necessary.

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Melaka and George Town, **Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca (Malaysia)**

Baseline situation

George Town and Melaka were jointly inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2008 due to their shared rich multi-cultural trading heritage. However, they have also been subject to criticism and a feeling of 'disconnect' between residents and their heritage, which is associated with foreign cultures and colonialism. Tourism in Malaysia was on the rise even prior to the inscription of these sites. From 2000-2010 the number of tourist arrivals increased from 10.2 million to 24.6 million. In 2009, 5.96 million visitors visited Penang (the capital of which is George Town), while Melaka (capital of the state of Malacca) welcomed nearly 3.76 million. As a result, tensions were arising between tourism and infrastructure development, and the requirements of a World Heritage site and safeguarding the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

What did they do?

The tourism strategy in both locations is run by a consortium of stakeholders from a range of heritage associated fields and government workers. This promotes a participatory approach that takes into consideration the view of communities and stakeholders. In order to revitalise the areas, traditional 'shophouses' have been subject to adaptive reuse – such as bars and restaurants – while some are available for homestays.

Strategic priorities

Make the heritage is relevant and meaningful to contemporary inhabitants

Safeguard the traditional features of George Town and Melaka that were responsible for securing World Heritage status and recognised as having OUV (e.g. the 'shophouses' – defined as a 'unique structure that clearly shows the influence of Chinese, Malay, Indian, and European styles, merged and matured in response to the local environment'[1]).

Ensure the economic viability of the shophouses, while maintaining their traditional facades.

Establish a system of governance that facilitates the priorities outlined above.

What worked?

In keeping with the recognition of its OUV, the 'heritage offer' of George Town and Melaka was re-defined as 'cultural tourism', focussing on the heritage city rather than the beach tourism that Malaysia is known for. A not-for-profit organisation, 'George Town World Heritage Incorporated' (GTWHI), was established to manage, monitor and promote the World Heritage features of the city in collaboration with a range of stakeholders, including conservation specialists, state and city authorities, and historians and art practitioners. As part of this, a programme of educational and cultural activities was created. Furthermore, GTWHI provides advice to property owners, architects, and builders; conducts skills development workshops; and engages school children, students, and the public through talks and activities.

In George Town, adaptive reuse of heritage building is encouraged to generate new life to buildings, in keeping with the 'Living Heritage City' concept. Many of the traditional businesses no longer exist (e.g. cobblers), but the shophouses now contain bars, restaurants, and shops where local residents can directly benefit from economical input of foreign visitors. Research has helped to establish the positive examples of adaptive re-use – those that increase the stability and longevity of buildings – as well as those that are detrimental to conservation. This is then fed back into the conservation policy.

Melaka's management plan also recognises the need to form a common vision with a partnership of the cultural heritage management system and cultural tourism. In order to preserve heritage resources and highlight local uniqueness, monuments and buildings such as mosques, temples, and hotels are used as interpretation centres. There are also strict guidelines regarding new buildings, and they cannot be built in a way that might detract from the OUV of the site.

In 2012 Melaka hosted a conference that linked tourism, heritage, and culture. It gave an opportunity for international educators, industry professionals, policy makers, and graduate students to discuss models of best practice for the utilisation of World Heritage sites for tourism purposes.

What was tough?

There was significant distrust in the state governments of Penang and Malacca, who were believed to value the large-scale development over the safeguarding of the traditional townscape of the newly designated WHS (e.g. as soon as World Heritage status was granted to George Town its OUV was immediately threatened by a prospective hotel development).

Additional difficulty stemmed from the fact that the heritage inscribed on the World Heritage List in George Town and Melaka was perceived as 'un-Malaysian', embodying colonial values that were then perpetuated by the influx of modern, 'western', styled bars and restaurants that were taking the place of traditional family businesses run through the historic shophouses.

How did they get buy-in?

The management strategy of both George Town and Melaka included efforts to collaborate with residents and create a common vision that incorporated as many views and concerns as possible. The financial benefits resulting from the reuse of traditional buildings helped to engage the local communities, while the tourist tax has contributed to conserving and revitalising the built environment. All this demonstrates the advantages of the new management strategies that have followed World Heritage inscription.

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For more information about George Town and Melaka, their management plan, and what they do, visit their resource page here.
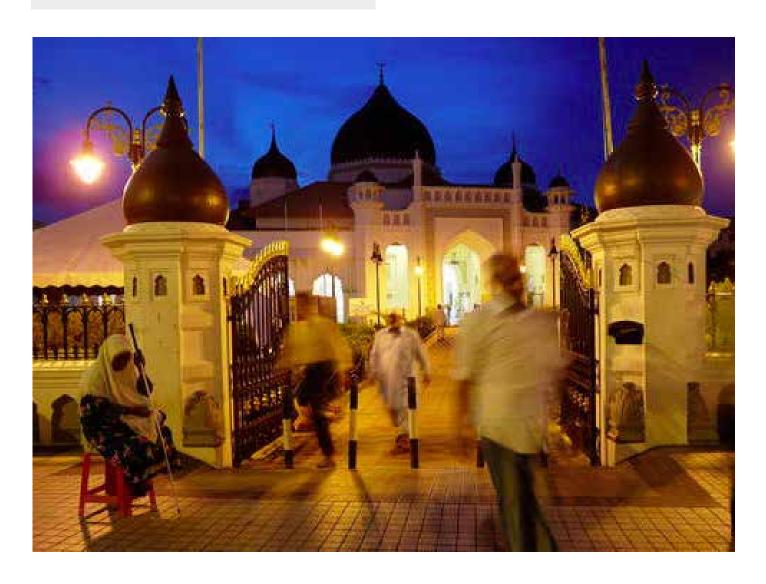
What are the results?

The influx of inhabitants to the revitalised Old Quarters of George Town and Melaka have been encouraged to participate in decision-making processes through residents' committees. Part of the income generated from tourism revenues is allocated to conservation purposes – research has proven that 85% of tourists readily agree to contribute to any form of special tax if the money is used to enhance conservation efforts around the World Heritage site.

The success of the collaborative stakeholder-and-governance schemes can be further measured through tourist satisfaction and perceptions of 'liveability' (the latter being particularly significant, as one of the management plan's key goals is to balance the needs of the local population with the OUV that is displayed to visitors). 'Liveability' is a difficult thing to measure, but attempts have been made to assess these factors through a residents' survey in George Town, finding that liveability had improved thanks primarily to improved social cohesion and economic conditions from the tourist trade. Meanwhile, recent surveys (c.2012-13)in Melaka have shown that the presentation of heritage elements of the town exceed tourist expectations, demonstrating that the current governance system has been successful in conserving the historic structures and features that contribute toward this town's OUV.[2]

What lessons can others take from this?

The key lesson from the examples of George Town and Melaka is to create a diverse body of stakeholders who are given a platform – whether this is through the creation of a specific organisation responsible for the management of the heritage, or the integration of stakeholder consultation as standard into the management plan. This allows people to share their vision of the World Heritage site and identify what opportunities they want to exploit, as well as share their own experiences of how management decisions are affecting people in the longer term.

These sites also demonstrate the importance of OUV as a tourist attraction, and how to use the OUV as a marketing tool to attract a particular type of visitor who will value the characteristics a WH site was inscribed for; rather than just consider it another tourist destination. Visitor and residents' attitudes can, and should, be monitored on an ongoing basis. The responses can then be used to shape policy and ensure that the governance methods are fit for purpose. In George Town and Melaka, surveys have been carried out by external agencies and individuals, and they demonstrate the broader collaborations and resources site managers can use when assessing the impacts of their governance and policy.

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To read the complete toolkit visit
whc.unesco.org/en/tourismtoolkit

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