

Training Course Report

Tourism Planning and Management for World Natural Heritage Sites in Europe

Vilm, October 31st – November 4th, 2007

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Cover Picture: Participants of the workshop (photo: Barbara Engels)

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Introduction

The German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), in cooperation with UNESCO World Heritage Centre and IUCN-The World Conservation Union, organized an intensive training and exchange workshop on tourism planning and management for Natural World Heritage Sites (WHS) in Europe. The seminar took place from October 31 through November 3 at the International Academy for Nature Conservation on the Isle of Vilm (Germany). It was attended by 33 participants from 12 countries representing 13 inscribed WHS and two sites being considered for WHS nomination as well as National Focal Points for WH mostly from Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe.

The course was the last in the BfN's recent series of seminars on "World Natural Heritage and Cultural Landscapes in Europe" including strategic seminars as well as training courses on planning and management issues of WHS. It focussed on tourism, one of the most significant, and often problematic, land use forms at WHS. The objective of the course was two-fold:

- Provide capacity building to site managers, most of whom have a professional background in conservation and natural resource management, but not in tourism;
- Provide a forum to exchange experiences from the respective sites and discuss strategies for the effective conservation of WHS as well as the sustainable development and management of tourism.

With this in mind the seminar programme included inputs by Kerstin Manz of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (Paris, France) and the two facilitators (Prof. Wolfgang Strasdas and Prof. Hartmut Rein, both University of Applied Sciences Eberswalde, Germany) as well as case study presentations by the site managers themselves, group work and plenary discussions. Each day was dedicated to a specific topic. Day 1 laid the foundation by identifying and discussing key issues that WHS face in relation to tourism. Day 2 dealt with tourism planning and visitor management. The focus of Day 3 was on cooperation with the tourism industry, marketing and tourism as a source of revenue. Next to the exchange of experiences between the various sites, the seminar proved also to be very important for the cultural exchange between the countries involved and the creation of a network for future cooperation.

Experience with tourism management at World Heritage Sites (WHS)

Natural WHS in Europe are in different stages of development, both in relation to their management capacities and their roles as tourism destinations. Whereas recently inscribed sites such as the Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians in Ukraine and Slovakia are still in the process of establishing a transnational administration, others have been well-established due to their comparatively long history as a designated WHS (e.g. Bialowiesza National Park in Poland). Some sites, such as the Plitvice Lakes National Park in Croatia or the Curonian Spit (Lithuania/Russia) have traditionally been mass tourism destinations while others (like the Kvarken Archipelago in Finland) are not well known to the general public and thus receive little visitation. Some parks reported an increase in tourism after their designation as a WHS because the WHS status itself appears to have the effect of a tourism brand, especially to tourists from East Asia.

Tourism-related threats to WHS

In several WHS massive tourism represents a burden or a threat to the integrity of the WHS since in most cases the reasons for them being of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) coincide with their attractiveness to tourists. Traffic is an issue at many sites. In other cases the problem lies more in unsustainable forms of tourism, such as the development of ski resorts around Pirin National Park (WHS) and Central Balkan National Park (on the Tentative List, both in Bulgaria) rather than in the sheer numbers of tourists. This is often coupled with the weak regulatory power of the site administrations. Illegal construction and unsympathetic architecture are frequent problems. The Russian part of the Curonian Spit WHS and the town of Sighisoara (Romania) are examples where disorganized tourism represents a serious threat to the integrity of those WHS.

Involving local communities at WHS

Moreover, local communities in the surrounding of WHS sometimes benefit little in spite of high visitor numbers, and connecting WHS to the economic life of the wider community is a challenge (the case of the Abbey of Pannonhalma in Hungary). Some communities, such as Ohrid in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, see the development of sustainable tourism as beneficial and would like to attract more visitors by using the WHS designation as a brand. This, in turn, would also increase the visibility of the specific conservation value of WHS. However, if proactive tourism development is the goal, there is often the need to first improve the infrastructure and build the capacities of local people to provide high-quality tourist services.

Visitor management at WHS

Depending on the respective situation, WHS administrations have employed different strategies to deal with tourism. In some cases a more regulatory approach is used to restrict visitor numbers and control their behaviour (the case of Bialowiesza National Park). Visitor management techniques, environmental education and traffic management are important tools for every WHS administration and thus were an important part of the seminar. The area around Kvarken Archipelago in Finland is already fairly affluent with good employment opportunities in other economic sectors so that there is no need to develop tourism as a significant source of income, but rather to maintain a quiet place to experience nature in small groups.

Marketing at WHS

In other sites a more proactive development of tourism could be observed. Sites such as the Skocjan Caves in Slovenia or the Jurassic Coast in the United Kingdom skilfully promote and market their attractions without neglecting the need for social and environmental sustainability of tourism by actively involving local people. The latter is a focus at many other sites as well. Training local guides, developing traditional local products and renovating historic buildings for accommodation or visitor centres are important tasks for WHS managers, especially in cultural landscapes (such as Lonjsko Polje Nature Park in Croatia) or historic towns (the case of Sighisoara in Romania).

A precondition for this is the development of a new kind of tourism which is more quality- and experience-oriented. Targeted marketing is necessary to attract segments of the tourism market who are interested in authentic culture and unspoiled nature. Almost all WHS managers present at the seminar already cooperate with various tourism organizations and businesses and their respective experiences have been mostly positive. However, conflicts with inexperienced compa-

nies and private investors with little interest in sustainability occur as well, especially in political environments where law enforcement is weak.

Funding WHS (tourism management)

In Europe, funding the management of WHS is perhaps less of an issue than in the developing world. Some level of basic government funding and the availability of a variety of EU funds can provide a solid foundation for management, although available financial resources are not always at the required levels and grant based programmes do not ensure long term financial sustainability. In addition to this, the multitude of tasks that WHS managers face in relation to conservation, environmental education, tourism management, etc. may require supplementary forms of income, such as fees or donations from visitors and tourism companies. Several sites actually do charge use fees, and Plitvice Lakes WHS is almost completely dependent on revenue generated by tourism. Fees turned out to be a controversial issue among seminar participants. It was argued that they can create both dependencies and much needed extra income for the conservation of WHS, as well as for education and awareness raising.

General outcome and proposed follow-up

The presentations and discussions during the workshop revealed that the strategic aims and future directions for tourism management and planning in Natural World Heritage Sites in Europe depend to a high degree on the fragility of the presented ecosystems and should therefore be guided by a clear vision for the management of the sites to preserve their Outstanding Universal Value. For natural sites the preservation of cultural and traditional features plays an important role as well. Therefore, the integration of natural and cultural aspects in tourism management should be considered for all most all natural WHS.

Connectivity was also a very important message to emerge from the seminar. It is crucial to take a broadly based approach to identifying the significance of natural WHS for tourism, which will not be limited only to the features of Outstanding Universal Value. Successful tourism management of WHS in Europe will depend on the ability to connect the sites to the wider surrounding area both for mitigating adverse social, economic and environmental impacts and for developing benefits for local communities. In this way WHS can play a fuller role in tourism development as part of a local and regional tourism economy where visitors will wish to enjoy a series of different cultural and natural attractions. The participation of WH managers in local and regional tourism fora is important to both ensure that WHS benefit from promotion and marketing carried out by the industry and to ensure that such marketing respects the values of the sites and maximises the promotion and education of visitors in sustainable development.

Annex:

List of participants

No.	Name	Institution	Address	Country
1.	Asenova Koeva, Raya	Pirin National Park Directorate	4, Bulgaria str. 2770 Bansko	Bulgaria
2.	Badman, Tim	IUCN Programme on Protected Areas IUCN Headquarters	Rue Mauverney 28 1196 Gland	Switzerland
3.	Baleski, Antonio	Municipality of Ohrid -Macedonia Sector for Tourism and LED-member of a team	Dimitar Vlahov 57 6000 Ohrid	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
4.	Bartusová, Zuzana	The State Nature Conservancy of Slovak Republic Poloniny National Park	Mierova 193 Street 06761 Stakcín	Slovak Republic
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13.	Franjkovic, Dragana	Plitvice Lakes national park Plitvicka Jezera BB	53231 PLITVICKA JEZERA	Croatia

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19.	Gugic, Goran	Lonjsko Polje Nature Park Public Service	Krapje 30 HR-44 Krapje	Germany
20.	Hallantie, Kari	Forest and Park Service. Ostrobothnian Natural Heritage Site P.O.B. 475, 65101 Vaasa	Sandögatan 6 65100 Vaasa	Finland
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23.	Krzysciak-Kosinska, Renata	Bialowieza National Park	Park Palacowy 5 17-230 Bialowieza	Poland
24.	Lauková, Gabriela	The State Nature Conservancy of Slovak Republic Vihorlat Protected Landscape Area	Frana Kráľa 1 Street 071 01 Michalovce	Slovak Republic
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Map of participants' provenance



Programme

Wednesday, October 31, 2007 - Arrival

- 13:20 Meeting of participants (optional) at Berlin Central Station (Hauptbahnhof): track 6 under sign "B"
- 17:50 Departure of the ferry to Vilm Island (alternative: 20:10)
- 18:30 Registration and dinner
- 19:30 Welcome to participants, introduction to Vilm Island (A. BURMESTER, BfN)
The BfN series of seminars on World Natural Heritage Sites (B. ENGELS, BfN)
- 20:00 Getting to know each other, expectations of participants

Thursday, November 1, 2007

07:30 Breakfast

Introduction and Background

09:00 Workshop introduction (H. REIN, BTE/FHE; W. STRASDAS, FHE)

09:15 **Keynote Speaker: A. PEDERSEN / K. MANZ (UNESCO):
World Heritage Sites and Tourism – introduction and experiences**

10.45 Coffee

11:00 **Introduction to tourism** (REIN; STRASDAS)

- Tourism basics – definitions and framework conditions
- International trends
- Types of tourism, esp. nature-based forms: specific supply and demand structures; branding for protected areas and World Heritage Sites
- Tourism-related opportunities and risks for protected areas and the local population (incl. management approaches)

12:30 Lunch

13:30 **Guided tour of Vilm Island** (J. JABS, BfN)

15:00 Coffee

15:15 **Identification of key issues and problems**

Brief presentation by each participant (max. 5 min.) of their area's situation, main issues and challenges in relation to tourism – Identification and discussion of key issues and problems

17:00 **Case Study:** Protection of a UNESCO World Natural Heritage representing typical issues, opportunities and challenges

- The example of the **Curonian Spit National Park World Heritage site, Lithuania** (N. PICIENE, Curonian Spit National Park)
- The example of **Curonian Spit National Park World Heritage Site, Kaliningrad Region/ Russia** (H. REIN, BTE/FH Eberswalde)
- **Discussion of problems and solutions**

18:00 **Summary of key issues** (REIN; STRASDAS)

18:30 Dinner

20:00 Informal get-together; opportunity for participants to show slides of their World Heritage sites

Friday, November 2, 2007

07:30 Breakfast

Tourism Planning and Marketing

09:00 **How to plan tourism in a World Heritage site** (REIN; STRASDAS)

- Taking stock (What needs to be taken into account? What is important for visitors? What are the area's management objectives?)
- Evaluation (Methodologies, SWOT analysis)
- Competitor analysis (Which areas do I compete with nationally or internationally? Any synergies?)
- Market analysis / target groups (What type of guests may I be able to attract? Use of statistics, surveys and other resources of data)
- Strategic marketing (Basics of tourism marketing, esp. for protected areas; positioning/branding of World Heritage sites)

10:00 **Statement of Significance** (ENGELS)

- Importance of the Statement
- Example of Bialowieza National Park World Heritage site (R. KRZYSCIĄK-KOSINSKA, National Heritage Board of Poland)
- Exercise: How to draw a Statement of Significance of your

own World Heritage site

- 10:30 **Tourism Masterplan Lonjsko polje Nature Park (Croatia) - case study** illustrating proactive tourism planning (G. GUGIC, Lonjsko Polje Nature Park Public Service)
- 11:00 **Exercise in small groups: SWOT analysis and identification of USP of areas that participants work with** (*coffee integrated*)
- 12:30 *Lunch*
- 13:30 Presentations of group work in plenary
- 14:30 **A tour operator's point of view:** Expectations of tourism offers in World Heritage sites (presenter to be identified, possibly Lernidee Reisen from Berlin with extensive experience in Eastern Europe)
- 15:30 **Plenary discussion on using World Heritage sites as a brand**
- 16:00 *Coffee*

Visitor Management

- 16:15 **Management approaches to solve conflicts between tourism and conservation goals** (REIN; STRASDAS)
- Zoning, direct & indirect visitor management
 - Visitor information, interpretation, edutainment
 - Visitor centres and other interpretive facilities
 - Sustainable transportation management
- 17:30 **Park Škocjanske Jame (Slovenija) - Case study** illustrating visitor management (V. D. GERJEVIČ, Škocjanske Jame)
- 18:00 **Plenary discussion on visitor management approaches for World Heritage sites**
- 18:30 *Dinner*
- 20:00 Presentations of Statements of Significance

Saturday, November 3, 2007

07:30 *Breakfast*

Participatory Management and Financing

- 09:00 **Participatory management approaches to increase benefits for both the World Heritage site and the local area** (REIN; STRASDAS)
- Participation and cooperation (with the local population, local organisations, the tourism industry)
 - Support to local businesses (small-scale accommodation, ca-

tering, handicrafts; appropriate levels of comfort, quality of services, etc.)

- Tourism products to be offered by the park (guided tours, transportation, accommodation, shops, etc.)

10:30 *Coffee*

10:45 **Jurassic Coast World Heritage site (UK) - case study** illustrating participatory planning (S. HOLDER, Jurassic Coast)

11:15 **Plenary discussion on participatory planning approaches for World Heritage sites**

11:45 **Financing opportunities** (REIN; STRASDAS)

- Public (EU and others) development programmes
- Revenue from visitors and tourism businesses

12:30 *Lunch*

13:30 **Kvarken Archipelago/High Coast (Finland) - Case study** illustrating innovative financing (K. HALLANTIE, Metsähallitus)

14:00 **Exercise in small groups on financing opportunities**

15:30 *Coffee*

16:00 **Presentation of group work**

17:00 **Wrap up, lessons learned, training workshop evaluation and concluding session**

18:30 *Dinner*

Sunday, November 4, 2007 - Departure

07:30 *Breakfast*

07:25 *Departure from Vilm by ferry (arrival in Berlin Central Station at 12:16)*

09:20 *Departure from Vilm by ferry (arrival in Berlin Central Station at 14:16)*