

4

Managing Urban Heritage Areas in the Context of Sustainable Tourism: Tourism

In this chapter, the case examples relate to tourism, which encompasses tourism planning, visitor management, carrying capacity, destination management, marketing, interpretation, visitor experience and product development.

Issues arising from the growth of tourism in Hoi An, Vietnam

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Almost two decades have passed since Hoi An, a historic port town located in the central region of Vietnam, was inscribed on the World Heritage List. During this time, Hoi An has undergone a major transformation from a quiet old town into a bustling tourism centre.

It goes without saying that in order to preserve a heritage site like Hoi An, local efforts are very important. Fortunately, the preservation effort is being guided by the local community, under the leadership of the Hoi An People's Committee. An important guiding tool for the community has been the *Hoi An Protocols for Best Conservation Practice in Asia* (Engelhardt and Rogers, 2009).

While Hoi An's preservation efforts have been successful overall, the town, like other World Heritage sites, has seen its heritage compromised by immense and rapid growth in tourism.

In the early 1990s, Hoi An had only about 4,000 tourists annually. But following Hoi An's inscription as a World Heritage Site in 1999, the number of tourists rose enormously. By 2007 the annual number of tourists had exceeded one million and in 2017 had exceeded three million.

This large number of tourists has brought significant changes to the town. As of 2017, the tourist-related shops (such as souvenir shops and restaurants) accounted for about 70% of the total buildings in the historic quarter of Hoi An. This is at variance with the Hoi An Protocols, which advises as follows: "Do not allow tourist shops and facilities to dominate the historical precinct" (Engelhardt and Rogers, 2009, p. 34).

Another major change brought about by large numbers of tourists is in the make-up of the residents. The growth in the tourism industry has attracted many Vietnamese from outside of Hoi An and outside of the historic quarter. Accordingly, the majority of the shop tenants and shop assistants are not from the historic quarter and they do not reside there. As is often the case in heritage sites, newcomers prioritise the pursuit of commercial opportunities rather than heritage preservation. Therefore, local heritage has been compromised. The Hoi An Protocols warned us of this, noting that "too often the 'packaging and presentation' of heritage is carried out by the tourism industry for the benefit of its members and not by those responsible for the safeguarding of cultural heritage", thus trivializing and compromising both the physical fabric of the heritage and its intangible aspects (Engelhardt and Rogers, 2009, p. 13). We need to take time to reflect on this warning.

References

Engelhardt, R. A. and Rogers, P. R. (2009) *Hoi An Protocols for Best Conservation Practice in Asia*, Bangkok: UNESCO.

Compromised integrity in Malacca, Malaysia

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Malacca is a city of many layers. Kingdoms, international trade and colonial rule endowed this former entrepot with a charm like no other. Its melting-pot architecture, culture and townscape have long drawn tourists and have earned it the honour of UNESCO World Heritage site status.

Sadly, it has proven difficult to reconcile conservation and tourism in Malacca. Key elements of the community's daily life have been replaced with souvenir shops, cafes and other tourist attractions. The Jonker Walk Night Market, conceived as a vehicle for 'revitalisation' of the town, have turned Jonker Street, once a residential area, into a tangle of congestion three nights a week. Residents and traditional trades have been displaced from the core zone. Once an artery of the barter trade, the Malacca River has been closed off from the sea and turned over to the lucrative cruise industry. What has resulted is a hollowing out of the pre-existing community of Malacca and its transformation into little more than a halfway house for tourists passing through.



Figure 4.1: A Hindu religious festival participated by Chinese believers passing in front of a centuries-old mosque.