

Sustainable Tourism in Melaka and George Town, Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca

Introduction

“The Power of Culture: Supporting Community-Based Management and Sustainable Tourism at World Heritage Sites in Malaysia and Southeast Asia” is a regional effort in the implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism (WH+ST) Programme, and is initiated by the UNESCO Office in Jakarta. A series of workshops were conducted under the framework and guided by the UNESCO Sustainable Tourism Toolkit. The introductory workshop was held in May 2015 in George Town, followed by an initiation workshop in November 2015 in Melaka, and the recently concluded specialisation workshop in George Town.

A total of 40 participants from a diverse range of profiles took part in the two-day specialisation workshop. From tourist guides and museum and tourism managers to government officers and hotel operators from George Town and Melaka, all participants contributed their thoughts and ideas towards the development of sustainable tourism strategies for both cities. The outcomes from the series of discussions held are presented below.

Vision Statement

Melaka and George Town, the Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca, are sustainable World Heritage tourism destinations. All stakeholders understand, appreciate, conserve, and protect its unique and authentic heritage values with opportunities created and benefits shared, empowering local communities.

Strategic Objective 1

Ensure that the tourism revenue flows back to the local communities of the World Heritage Site (WHS) by engaging with the entire tourism supply chain and policy makers.

1.1 Proposed Actions

- 1.1.1 Raise awareness among local community members on tourism opportunities and challenges, and ways tourism (and tourism businesses) may benefit the WHS and its communities.
- 1.1.2 Encourage production of good quality local products/services.
- 1.1.3 Establish a levy (reciprocate) system from the supply chain.
- 1.1.4 Prioritise involvement of local communities in tourism related events.
- 1.1.5 Encourage local government to develop regulation of guides within the boundaries of the WHS.

1.2 Expected Outcomes ('impact'/difference made)

- 1.2.1 Better understanding among stakeholders on how to engage in tourism, and ensure that money is kept locally.
- 1.2.2 Standard of local products improved.
- 1.2.3 Levy revenues generated and used for local tourism activities.

- 1.2.4 Involvement of local community members leading to increased appreciation of culture and traditions, improving quality of life.
- 1.2.5 Local guides empowered.

Strategic Objective 2

Ensure broad stakeholders' participation in the management of tourism activities in the site.

2.1 Proposed Actions

- 2.1.1 Develop database of key tourism stakeholders within the community (including private sector), state and council, and ensure consistent reassessment of existing stakeholders.
- 2.1.2 Establish a platform of effective communication between stakeholders, and encourage partnership between the various stakeholders.
- 2.1.3 Develop and provide proper guidelines/policy in relation to stakeholder participation in sustainable tourism.
 - (a) Ensure proper representation of stakeholders within the WHS in the formulation of policies pertaining to tourism.
- 2.1.4 Provide incentives (e.g., award, recognition, financial support) as means of encouraging more positive participation.

2.2 Expected Outcomes ('impact'/difference made)

- 2.2.1 Improved knowledge about the key tourism stakeholders within the broader WHS destination.
- 2.2.2 Effective partnerships and improved trust between stakeholders [community (including the private sector), city council and state].
- 2.2.3 Stakeholders are aware of their limits, 'dos and don'ts' relating to their participation and contribution to sustainable tourism.
 - (a) Improved involvement in development of tourism related policies and increased support in implementation/enforcement.
- 2.2.4 Stakeholders are motivated towards more sustainable and innovative approaches, and thus, provide better quality services (indirectly promoting healthy competition among stakeholders).

Strategic Objective 3

Increase capacity of the stakeholders through training and education to better manage tourism in the WHS.

3.1 Proposed Actions

- 3.1.1 Create specialised training programmes on tangible/intangible heritage, and the link between heritage and tourism.
 - (a) Train government officers on appreciating the Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs) of the WHS.
 - (b) Develop and conduct 'train-the-trainer' programmes.
 - (c) Re-establish tourism clubs/heritage societies in schools.
 - (d) Teach heritage courses at institutions of higher learning.
- 3.1.2 Provide funding for training programmes.

- 3.1.3 Create platforms for communities to share their views and experiences (e.g. organise information sharing sessions with members of all communities to exchange ideas).
- 3.1.4 Upgrade the current workforce certification (continuous training) and encourage hiring of certified work force.
- 3.1.5 Encourage and allow for volunteering.

3.2 Expected Outcomes ('impact'/difference made)

- 3.2.1 Skilled and professional tourism stakeholders/officers.
 - (a) Improved knowledge amongst government officers
 - (b) Increased capacity to train (number of certified trainers to train people)
 - (c) Active participation in tourism clubs amongst school students.
 - (d) Increased awareness about heritage, tourism and sustainability.
- 3.2.2 Improved budget in training and education.
- 3.2.3 More space for active participation in communities, e.g. dialogue, workshops, seminars, etc., and increased participation and awareness amongst the locals.
- 3.2.4 Proper certification of tourism workforce, and increased numbers of certified tour operators.
- 3.2.5 Capacity built through volunteering.

Strategic Objective 4

Communicate the OUVs of the WHS to increase broad understanding and enhance appreciation to ensure conservation and safeguarding of the WHS.

4.1 Proposed Actions

- 4.1.1 Improve understanding and appreciation of the OUVs by interpreting the Statement of OUV terms into simpler language everyone understands.
- 4.1.2 Empower the host community by telling their stories alongside the specific OUV.
- 4.1.3 Develop community journalism to expand public awareness of the heritage issues.
- 4.1.4 Create a platform for dialogue and engagement between stakeholders through various channels.
- 4.1.5 Create a media strategy ensuring access to correct and appropriate information.
- 4.1.6 Make heritage research available to the local community.
- 4.1.7 Develop heritage library (physical and online)[e.g. by collecting dispersed sources, such as local legends, old photographs, reminiscences, and other local forms of folklore] to spread information and stimulate interest especially amongst the young people.

4.2 Expected Outcomes ('impact'/difference made)

- 4.2.1 OUVs are communicated and understood, increasing the appreciation of the WHS.
- 4.2.2 Gap between locally held (heritage) values and those perceived as coming from outside is closed.
- 4.2.3 Public awareness on heritage issues increased.
- 4.2.4 Enable increased transparency, and better advocacy for local issues.
- 4.2.5 Correct and appropriate information is presented in the media.

- 4.2.6 Raised consciousness, pride and preservation efforts among local residents through access to information/research, under the belief that “preservation is the natural product of pride”.
- 4.2.7 Increased curiosity and enthusiasm about the community and their heritage. By keeping record of actual/concrete heritage-affirming activities, heritage issues are kept alive in the news.

Strategic Objective 5

Enhance the visitor experience by creating innovative heritage-based products and services, and improving health and safety (transportation, hygiene, etc).

5.1 Proposed Actions

- 5.1.1 Develop and implement proper guidelines in heritage building application for accommodation (e.g. boutique hotels).
- 5.1.2 Encourage health related activities (e.g. Taichi class held by Cheah Kongsii).
- 5.1.3 Regularly update information (tourism related media, e.g. Lonely Planet).
- 5.1.4 Use more skilful tourist guides (those with more knowledge/passion/experience).
- 5.1.5 Enhance public transportation system (e.g. proper bus parking).
- 5.1.6 Recognise/certify intangible heritage products and services.
- 5.1.7 Improve public amenities (e.g. accessibility and cleanliness of toilet facilities).
- 5.1.8 Improve visitor safety (e.g. increase number of tourist police, tourist clinic, tourist hospital).

5.2 Expected Outcomes ('impact'/difference made)

- 5.2.1 Ensure compliance of all regulations and safety standards (e.g. fire hazards).
- 5.2.2 Promote healthy lifestyle and intangible cultural heritage as community-related projects.
- 5.2.3 Create better awareness amongst travellers pre-arrival.
- 5.2.4 Better story-telling and better understanding of the WHS.
- 5.2.5 Synchronised transportation for the convenience of tourists.
- 5.2.6 Tourist directed to authentic local intangible cultural heritage products and services.
- 5.2.7 A clean image of the WHS is created, and tourists are also better served by the improved public amenities.
- 5.2.8 Safety and security of tourists is improved, with the ultimate aim of creating a crime-free image for the WHS.

George Town World Heritage Incorporated and UNESCO Office in Jakarta would like to invite you to offer your feedback on the outcomes of the specialisation workshop. Feedback obtained will be consolidated and presented at the upcoming concluding workshop which will be held in Melaka.

We thank you ahead for your time and effort, and we hope that your constructive feedback will contribute towards the sustainable tourism development of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Melaka and George Town – Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca.