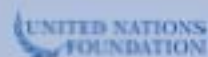
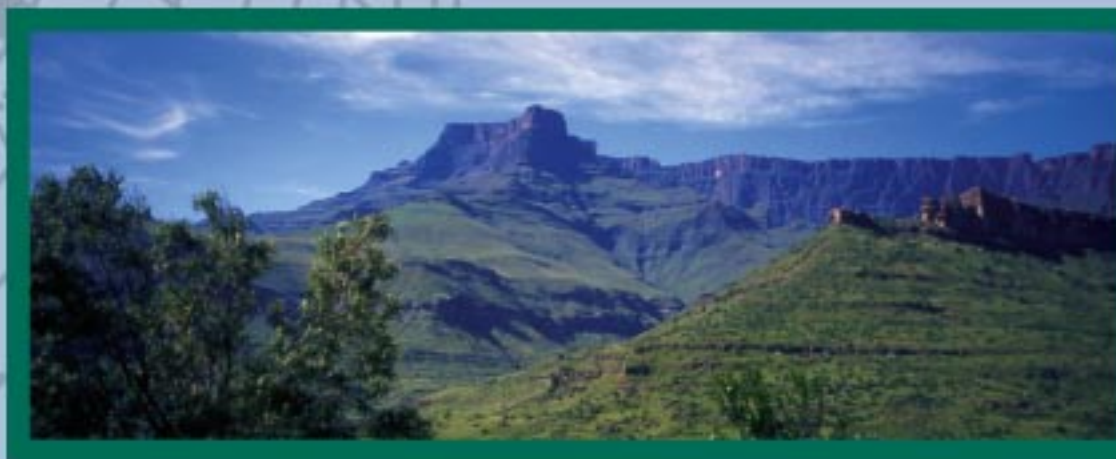




FORGING LINKS BETWEEN PROTECTED AREAS AND THE TOURISM SECTOR

*How tourism can benefit
conservation*

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME



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How tourism can benefit conservation



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This manual has been developed as a contribution to the “Linking Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism at World Heritage Sites” project, which was funded by the United Nations Foundation (UNF) and developed in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and RARE. The four-year project, which began in 2001, was designed to develop the capacity of World Heritage sites to preserve biodiversity through sustainable tourism. Piloted in six World Heritage sites (four in Central America and two in Indonesia), the project sought to provide replicable approaches and tools to help World Heritage sites and national parks managers worldwide develop tourism in a way that benefits both biodiversity conservation and also local communities.

As project implementation proceeded, two related challenges gradually became apparent. First, the goal of preserving biodiversity through sustainable tourism cannot be achieved without increased co-operation between protected areas managers and the tourism industry. Second, protected areas managers often have insufficient knowledge of the priorities and constraints of the tourism sector. It was to address these challenges and facilitate a dialogue between protected areas managers and tourism companies that UNEP suggested the preparation of this manual.

Methodology


Much of the information in this manual is based on primary research on actual interactions and linkages between tourism companies and protected areas, including World Heritage sites. In-depth interviews were conducted with 23 tourism companies, including international tour operators, ground operators and hotel groups. These companies, which include both high-volume tourism companies and specialist and nature-based tour operators, take tourists to a wide range of destinations around the world. In addition, the authors used information posted on the Internet by these 23 companies and a further 25 tourism companies.

Although the companies interviewed and researched are only a small sample of companies involved in tourism worldwide, we believe that the information gained in this survey provides a realistic picture of how the tourism industry operates in relation to protected areas, and of the contributions that companies are willing and able to make to the management and conservation of protected areas. Quotes from the interviews are included at many points in the manual, either integrated within the text, or in quote bubbles.

Other resources for this manual included documents prepared as part of the UNESCO/UNEP/RARE/UNF project, other manuals on management of tourism in protected areas (such as those developed by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, IUCN and UNEP), and additional information collected by Leeds Tourism Group.

Terminology

Throughout this manual, the terms 'linking', 'links' and 'relationships' are used to describe ways in which protected areas, World Heritage sites and tourism companies relate to and cooperate with each other on areas of common concern, to their mutual benefit. These terms are broad and can cover any form of link or relationship, from well-established partnerships with formal commitments between sites and tourism companies, to less formal arrangements on the exchange of information and cooperation on managing tourism. Successful links and relationships provide benefits for both



tourism companies and sites, by recognising their different skills and strengths, and by finding new ways to co-operate in order to achieve conservation goals and provide opportunities for tourism that are compatible with long-term conservation.

Although information about tourism management in World Heritage sites has played an important role in the development of this manual, it is designed to be generally applicable to all protected areas, not just World Heritage sites. For the purposes of clarity in the text, the general term 'protected areas' is used to cover World Heritage sites and all other protected areas. The term 'World Heritage site' is used in the text where it is deemed important to specifically distinguish these sites.

Tourism is a major management issue for many protected areas, particularly those that are World Heritage sites. Travel to protected areas is increasing, both because of the overall expansion of tourism and development of international transport networks, and because of the growing interest amongst tourists in learning more about the natural and cultural heritage of the destinations they visit.

It is estimated that about 10 percent of international tourists wish to purchase tours involving natural and cultural heritage sites, and this segment is the fastest growing within the tourism sector overall. Domestic tourism is also considerable at many of these sites.

Protected areas, and in particular World Heritage sites, offer tourism companies important possibilities to 'add value' to the tourism excursions they offer, and many companies include visits to such sites as part of their programmes. For specialist tour operators, visits to high-quality sites that have global recognition can be an important selling point.

While the global spread of tourism means that there is potential for tourists to visit protected areas in every part of the world, there is still considerable variation in levels of visitation among different natural and cultural heritage sites. For example, the Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve in Honduras receives only 700-1,000 tourists each year; while the Tikal World Heritage site in Guatemala receives 170,000 tourists annually, and is one of the most visited sites in Guatemala.¹

Protected areas can benefit from tourism in several ways:

- Additional funds for conservation can be generated from tourism; this is important, as many protected areas face serious financial constraints.
- By raising awareness amongst visitors² and raising the profile of the protected area at the local and national level, tourism can help promote conservation of the site.
- By providing alternative income opportunities for people living in and around the protected area, tourism may help to reduce unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and promote conservation awareness within local communities.
- By establishing closer links with the tourism sector, protected areas staff can learn the realities of tourist demands and more effectively meet the requirements of tourism companies; these relationships can also encourage a greater understanding of conservation priorities amongst tourism companies.

Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that tourism can also add to the costs of managing protected areas, since sites have to invest in, manage and maintain tourism facilities in order to prevent damage to sensitive areas. In addition, the presence and actions of visitors can present serious problems for biodiversity conservation. Therefore tourism has to be managed with care, and site managers must assess and balance the costs and benefits of tourism in protected areas. It is also important to find ways for local people and communities to benefit from tourism linked to conservation, as this helps to demonstrate the economic value of the natural resources being conserved.

A range of goals and means³ have been developed to maximise the benefits of tourism to species and habitat diversity and economic and social development, while minimizing the negative social and environmental impacts of tourism in protected areas. These goals, which also seek to maximise the benefits of biodiversity to tourism, include generation of sufficient revenues to reduce threats to biodiversity from local communities, encouraging all stakeholders, particularly the private sector, to support the conservation of biodiversity, ensuring the effective participation of communities in tourism development, and channelling a portion of tourism revenues towards

supporting conservation. Other possible goals include diversifying economic activities to reduce dependency on tourism and encouraging the role of protected areas as key locations for good practices in sustainable tourism and biodiversity.

The main challenges for protected areas faced with significant levels of tourism are:

- finding ways to become integrated into the tourism economy, in order to gain a share of tourist expenditure; and
- effectively managing tourism to prevent it from undermining conservation goals.

This manual is designed to provide practical guidance to managers of World Heritage sites and other protected areas on better ways of understanding the tourism industry, and on more effective methods of developing links with tourism, in order to promote conservation and site protection. It also details what can be realistically expected from the tourism industry in terms of support for conservation. The manual does not attempt to provide a guide to tourism management in protected areas, a topic already very well covered in a number of publications. Nor does it address in detail issues such as entrance fees, leases and concessions or implementation of specific measures for management of tourism on which information is available elsewhere. Rather, the aim of this manual is to provide site managers with an overall perspective on what they need to know in order to be able to improve their relationships with the tourism sector. For more information on topics related to tourism and protected areas, a list of references and further sources of information is provided at the end of the document.

The manual is divided into three sections:

1. **Understanding Tourism** gives an overview of the tourism sector and its components, provides a summary of tourism markets, and describes tourism companies' key requirements when preparing tours and excursions.
2. **Identifying Opportunities for Support** details the main types of support that sites may be able to expect from tourism companies.
3. **Steps for Linking with the Tourism Sector** sets out a three-step process for site managers to use in approaching the tourism industry for the types of support described in Section 2.

Sections 1 and 2 provide information that site managers can draw on to build links with the tourism industry using the steps described in Section 3.

Notes

1. *Statistics from Instituto Hondureño Turismo and INGUAT (Instituto Guatemalteco de Turismo).*
2. *Protected Areas are established for a wide variety of reasons. In the IUCN classification of protected areas, the top category is reserved for wilderness areas that are essentially free from any human activities except for the purposes of limited scientific research. The remaining five categories cover conservation areas linked to varying degrees of utilisation for education, awareness-raising, and recreation.*
3. *These goals are highlighted in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, the UNESCO/UNEP manual on Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites, and the IUCN/UNEP/WTO report on Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.*

1 UNDERSTANDING TOURISM

1.1 Overview of the tourism industry


The tourism industry is composed of a wide range of businesses, from small, local operations that service a single local market to very large transport, hotel and tour operator companies that serve markets across entire regions and sell and facilitate millions or tens of millions of tour packages to foreign destinations each year. The industry provides tourists with products and services such as accommodation, transport, food and drink, attractions to visit, and souvenirs to purchase (See Table 1).

Table 1: Products and Services Provided by the Tourism Industry

Product or Service	Providers
Accommodation	Hotels, bed & breakfasts, self-catering, (serviced) apartments, campsites, cruise ships
Transport to and from destinations	Public transport (e.g. trains), airports, scheduled air carriers, air charters, scheduled sea passages, chartered sea passages, coaches, cruises
Catering and food and beverage	Restaurants and bars, grocery stores, farmers, fishermen, local commerce/markets, bakers, butchers, food wholesalers
Ground transport	Car rentals, boat rentals, fuel providers, gas stations, coach rentals
Ground services	Agents, handlers or inbound operators in the destination
Cultural and social events	Excursions and tour providers, sports and recreation facilities, shops and factories
Environmental, cultural and heritage resources of destinations	Excursions and tour providers, public authorities, protected site managers, private concessionaires and owners

The main components of the tourism industry include:

1. **Outbound tour operators.** These operators organise and sell holiday packages that include transport to the destination, and accommodation, transport and excursions at the destination. Their headquarters are in the region where most of their customers come from, and they sell holidays to tourists in their home countries, either directly or through retail outlets known as **travel agents**. Tour operators will often contract accommodation providers directly and set the framework for their overall requirements, while their local agents (see Inbound tour operators/ground handling agents, below) will generally have responsibility for organising other aspects of the tours, including activities and excursions (although this is done in close consultation with the outbound operator). This means that outbound operators rely heavily on their local agents to develop and supply many of the holiday components. Depending on the volume of tourists sent to a country or destination, the tour operator will have regional, country or destination managers. It will also have travel representatives, guides and/or tour leaders who interact with the tourists to make day-to-day arrangements,



such as managing excursions and bookings and resolving any immediate problems. Large tour operator companies may offer tour packages under many different brand names and often rely on large resorts to accommodate their customers. In some cases, tour operators are so large that they own all the other component companies that contribute to a holiday experience (See Box 1).

- 2. Inbound tour operators/ground handling agents.** These are tour operators based in the destination countries that are contracted by outbound tour operators to organise local transport, accommodation and permits. The ground handler may be totally independent of the international tour operator; a joint venture with the tour operator; or a wholly-owned subsidiary of the tour operator. Inbound operators handle tour groups from the moment of arrival off the plane or boat until departure. A reliable ground operator is an essential consideration for outbound tour operators when planning new products. Ground operators may represent several tour companies and employ local guides or other representatives who have knowledge of the visitors' language and culture. In addition to servicing international tourists, ground operators may run excursions and tours aimed at the domestic market. It is therefore more likely for protected areas managers to have contact with inbound tour operators than with overseas-based outbound tour operators.
- 3. Transport providers.** These businesses provide international and local transport for tourists. They include airlines, trains, passenger ships and road transport, which are all used for international transport as well as for travel within destination regions. In addition, at the local

Box 1: Large, vertically-integrated tourism companies

Many large tourism companies also own all the component companies that organise holidays, including the travel agent, tour operator, airline and hotel chain. This company structure is known as vertical integration.

For example, a company that organises holidays all over the world may own travel agencies in Europe that market those holidays. For tours to Mexico, for instance, the company charters independently branded company-owned planes to fly their clients to Mexico, where the tourists then transfer to either cruise ships or all-inclusive resorts owned by the company. A company-owned travel agency in Mexico then handles the inbound management of their tours.

The outbound travel agency, the airline, the cruise line, the hotel and the inbound travel agency are all independently branded profit centres that are owned by the company, but which operate as individual businesses and negotiate prices and contractual arrangements with other company profit centres. The structure of the company as a group of individual businesses means that each business makes its own decisions according to criteria that maximise its profitability. Subject to broad company guidelines, the parent company will not become involved in the decision-making processes of its individually branded businesses.

Within a vertically integrated structure, proposals by protected areas to develop links have to be made to the relevant individual businesses within the company. In this example, proposals related to Mexican tourism would be made to the inbound travel agency and, possibly, the all-inclusive resorts.

level, ground handlers provide transport for tourist transfers from airports to hotels, and for excursions. Public transport, including buses, taxis and ferries, is also widely used by many tourists. Tourists may also rent cars and jeeps from rental agencies, either for the duration of their stay, or to use on shorter excursions. Some tour operators own and operate their own air transport, and may also own or have a share in the transport operated by their ground handlers. Reliable and safe transport is an essential part of any international travel experience. However, the quality, reliability and safety of transport networks, including the condition of roads, can vary considerably between different countries and regions. Where roads and/or public transport are poor and unsafe, local travel by all but the most adventurous tourists will tend to be very limited.

4. **Accommodation providers.** Tourist accommodations include hotels, guesthouses, bed and breakfasts, self-catering or serviced apartments and camp sites. In popular destinations, there will be a wide range of hotels of different grades, ranging from five-star hotels at the highest end down to one-star hotels or establishments that fall below the star system. Many countries have a grading system for accommodations that are not within the star system, to give an indication of quality. Hotels tend to cater to specific types of customers, such as business or leisure travellers, or to visitors from certain countries. In some destinations, higher graded hotels may be run as 'all-inclusives' where guests pay in advance for all the facilities, including extensive activities, and for consumption of as much food and drink as they wish. Larger hotels may be part of a national or international hotel chain. Some large hotels have special links with a local travel agency, which may operate a desk in the hotel.
5. **Catering sector.** These providers include restaurants, bars, cafés, catering businesses, groceries, market gardeners, fisheries, local markets, processed food manufacturers and other food producers, such as bakers and butchers. In smaller countries, or where locally available produce is not to the tourists' taste, a considerable amount of foodstuffs may be imported, leading to considerable economic 'leakages' from tourism revenues.
6. **Attractions.** Visitor attractions include a wide range of facilities and areas that tourists visit to enjoy and where they may participate in various activities as part of their holiday experience. Attractions include entertainment, theme parks, sports facilities and activities, spectator sports, museums, shopping complexes and markets, cultural and heritage sites, and protected areas, amongst many others. In effect, attractions are all those places or activities that draw tourists to visit a destination. Different types of tourists (see Section 1.2) will often be interested in visiting different ranges of attractions. Some attractions are built specially for the tourist market, while others include facilities and sites – such as local markets – that are accessed by the local population and which provide an opportunity for tourists to get a flavour of local life and culture.

1.2 Tourism market segmentation

Understanding the different market segments interested in tourism to protected areas will allow protected areas managers to better develop appropriate strategies for building partnerships with the tourism industry, and thus for different types of tourism. Table 2 presents a typology of international tourists to protected areas.

Although the high-volume market may provide a large number of visitors to protected areas, the market for special interest tourism to cultural and natural attractions is likely to be of even greater

significance for protected areas and World Heritage sites. Also, in the increasingly diversified and sophisticated tourism market, more people travel independently, rather than with tour operators. These tourists, known in the trade as FITs (Free, Independent Travellers), often book their flights, accommodation and local tours through the Internet. The FIT segment is increasing as a proportion of the overall tourism market, owing to the ease with which information can be accessed over the Internet and the increasing proportion of people in affluent countries who have participated in independent backpacking holidays at some stage in their lives. These people are more adventurous, have a greater perception of the possibilities for travel and tourism, and are often interested in visiting places that are not mainstream destinations for high-volume tourism. They are also willing and able to design and book their own holidays. This opens up many opportunities for local accommodation providers and tour organisers in destinations to market themselves directly to international travellers.

The categories in the typology described in Table 2 are not fixed in perpetuity; today's backpacker may be tomorrow's wealthy special interest tourist. However, the typology is useful as a guide to

Table 2 - Typology of International Tourists to Protected Areas

Category	Typical Characteristics
Explorer	Individualistic, solitary, adventurous, requires no special facilities. May be relatively well-off, but prefers not to spend much money. Rejects purpose-built tourism facilities in favour of local ones.
Backpacker	Travels for as long as possible on limited budget, often taking a year off between school/university and starting work. Hardship of local transport, cheap accommodation, etc. may qualify as travel experience, rather than understanding local culture. Enjoys trekking and scenery, but often cannot visit remote areas because of expense. Requires low-cost facilities.
Backpacker Plus	Often experienced travellers, and generally in well-paid profession. More demanding in terms of facilities than Backpackers and with a higher daily spend. Genuinely desire to learn about culture and nature, and require good information.
High Volume	Often inexperienced at travelling, prefer to travel in large groups, may be wealthy. Enjoy superficial aspects of local culture and natural scenery and wildlife if easy to see. Need good facilities, and will only travel far if the journey is comfortable. Includes cruise ship passengers.
General Interest	May travel as Free Independent Travellers (FITs) on tailor-made itineraries with a tour operator, and often prefer security and company of group tour. Usually have limited time available for holiday. May be relatively wealthy, interested in culture, keen on nature/wildlife when not too hard to see. May be active and enjoy 'soft adventure' such as easy trekking and low-grade white-water rafting. Dislike travelling long distances without points of interest. Need good facilities, although may accept basic conditions for short periods.
Special Interest	Dedicated to a particular hobby, fairly adventurous, prepared to pay to indulge hobby and have others take care of logistics. Travel as FITs or groups. May have little interest in culture. Requires special facilities and services, e.g. dive-boats, bird-guides. Accepts discomfort and long travel where necessary to achieve aims. May have active involvement, e.g. environmental research project. Prefers small groups.

Source: Cochrane, J. (2003)

people's purchasing decisions, which vary between market segments. For high-volume tourists, the price of a tour package, the length of travel to a destination and the 'exotic' nature of the destination are major influencing factors. For general interest and special interest tourists, important considerations are the specific cultural, environmental and natural features of a destination, while price is less of a consideration; these customers are also attracted by the quality of the tour and the specific details of the sites to be visited. For backpackers and backpacker plus groups, price is often an important factor. While these groups often follow quite well-defined tourist routes, they are also keen to find activities that are off the beaten track and less heavily visited.

Tours or excursions to protected areas and World Heritage sites can be aimed at any segment of the market. Some activities would be suitable mainly for high-end general interest or special interest tourists (luxury tented accommodation in a protected area, or hunting or photographic safaris), while shorter excursions would be appropriate as add-ons to package tours for high-volume tourists. Because tour operators are often involved in the development of products in association with protected areas, they can help site managers develop tours and excursions that both appeal to tourists and are compatible with the conservation goals of protected areas. Specialist tour operators may be interested in working with protected areas to develop new opportunities for limited amounts of tourism into remoter sites. In heavily visited areas, tour operators may be interested in developing alternative sites to manage congestion and reduce tourism pressures at the most popular sites.

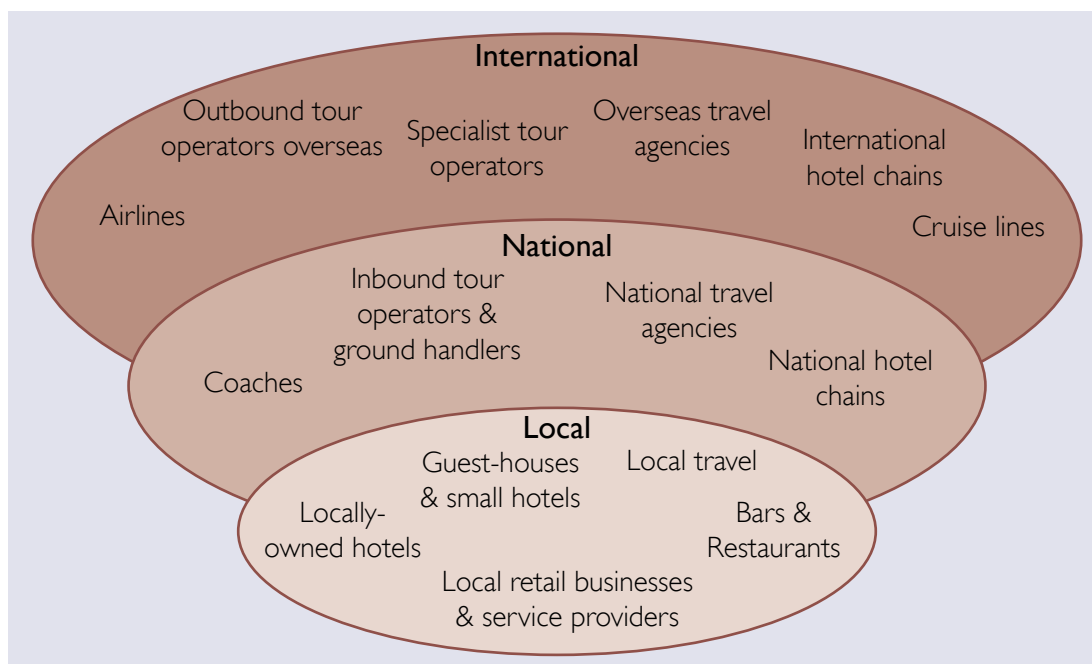
1.3 Potential links between protected areas and tourism

The wide variety of tourism companies and tourists means that protected areas managers will need to consider a range of strategies for linking with the tourism sector – there is not one standard pattern for developing such relationships, and each case needs to be considered in context. Because of the way the tourism industry is organised, outbound tour operators (or international tourism companies such as cruise lines) do not often have direct links with protected areas. While inbound tour operators generally have some links, locally based companies are likely to have the closest links with any nearby protected areas (See Figure 1 for a summary of the different geographic levels of the tourism sector).

Strategies for linking with the tourism sector will also be determined by how visits to a particular protected area are organised and how tourists tend to learn about the site. Travellers may arrive at a protected area in one of several different ways. For example, their visit might be included in a tour package purchased in their home country, or they may have purchased a tour locally from a local tour operator or travel agent, or through their hotel or all-inclusive resort. Some visitors may be FITs who have made arrangements based on word-of-mouth recommendations or suggestions from a local hotel, guide book or tourist information office, or via the Internet. How tourists end up at a destination can be assessed through visitor surveys. The following factors are a starting point for considering which strategies may be most appropriate:

- If most tourists arrive as part of a package purchased overseas, then linking with overseas tour operators – initially by making links with the local inbound operators that overseas companies are using – is likely to be important.
- If tourists purchase their excursions or tours locally, links with local tour operators and travel agents will be more appropriate.
- If tourists are making their own arrangements, then links with local hotels and tourism information offices will be most important.

Figure 1 - Geographic levels of tourism businesses



It is also important for protected areas to consider whether they want to be actively involved in tourism by organising tourism products and services themselves, or more passively involved by hosting activities that are operated by others. The advantages and disadvantages of both approaches will be explored in Section 2.

Each of the different types of companies within the tourism sector offer opportunities for protected areas managers to manage and protect sites through tourism:

- **Outbound tour operators:** Outbound operators may have a particular interest in certain protected areas or World Heritage sites, and it may be possible for protected areas managers (or a group of managers) to approach high-end or specialist operators directly to attract their interest. Outbound tour operators will always want to see a new product in person to verify that the standards and characteristics of the destination meet their criteria, to make links with local tour operators, and to familiarise themselves with the product in order to be able to sell it more effectively. Regional or national tourist boards in the countries concerned will often facilitate these visits, with local service providers and attraction managers providing the accommodation and access for attractions at no cost to the visiting tour operator. These trips are known as 'educational' or 'familiarisation trips'. Alternatively, visits to new products or sites may be incorporated into the travel schedules of company staff.
- **Inbound tour operators:** As most outbound operators make their local arrangements through a ground handling agent, inbound operators can be key players in promoting a protected area. It is therefore generally more appropriate, and also easier, for protected areas managers to have contact with locally based inbound tour operators than with outbound tour operators.
- **Transport operators:** Some airlines, ferry companies and train operators publish magazines for their passengers that can include articles about conservation and protected areas, as well as highlight the possibilities for tourism in these areas. These magazines are a valuable way to promote conservation messages and tourism in protected areas. In addition, some airlines

have donated space in their in-flight magazines to publicise conservation efforts, while others have been involved in supporting UNICEF or other charities by encouraging their passengers to donate their remaining foreign cash after leaving the country. These funds are mostly directed to humanitarian and social welfare projects, but environmental organisations may also be supported.

It should also be noted that there is growing concern about the significant global environmental impacts from emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), as well as more local effects from emissions of other pollutants. Transport companies are beginning to look for ways to address this issue. A few tour operators now offer their customers the option of making payments to specialist organizations to offset the CO₂ emissions generated by their travel. These organizations undertake reforestation schemes to absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere, or invest in renewable energy supplies that will reduce future CO₂ emissions. As protecting existing forest resources can also help to mitigate CO₂ emissions, it may be possible for sites to develop forest conservation projects with support from tour operators or transport providers.

- **Cruise tourism:** Cruise tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry. As excursions organized at ports of call can bring large numbers of tourists to selected attractions, including natural and cultural sites, cruise tourism can generate significant visitation to protected areas, resulting in important revenues. A challenge to protected areas managers is that changes to cruise itineraries can be readily made, and as a result this is a particularly volatile market. Such volatility can make planning and providing facilities and excursions for the cruise market difficult and also risky for individual port destinations.
- **Accommodation and hospitality providers:** Hotels near protected areas and World Heritage sites will obviously be used by many of the tourists to these sites. Sometimes luxury lodges and camps are an attraction in themselves. The type of accommodation near a protected area depends on the site location. If the area is near a major tourism destination, the accommodation choices will cover a wide range, from international hotel chains to more basic accommodation. Accommodation around more remote protected areas will generally be fairly basic and small, and run as family or community enterprises. Protected areas managers should build up a good picture of locally available accommodation through surveys and contacts with the local industry, in order to determine the most appropriate ways to forge links with this sector.
- **Bars and restaurants:** Some restaurants, cafés and bars cater particularly to tourists. These establishments can be important sources of information for tourists wishing to find out more about excursions, and they may be willing to promote tourism in nearby protected areas by displaying brochures and posters.

1.4 Key factors influencing tours and excursions to protected areas

Tourists will often visit a protected area as part of either a tour or an excursion. Tours involve travel through a country or region with stops en route at a series of different places, while excursions are generally short trips of a few hours to a day in duration made from a single location at which tourists stay throughout their holiday. Longer excursions of a few days are also sometimes offered, with overnight stays. Short excursions are associated mainly with the high-volume tourism sector. Longer excursions are often designed to meet the needs of independent travellers. The factors described in this section apply to all types of tours and excursions.

Perhaps the best way in which tourism companies can benefit protected areas is by bringing tourists to visit them in a responsible way. However, tourism companies will only promote tourism products that appeal to tourists in their target market; sites or products that are ideal for visits by one group of tourists might not be suitable for visits by a different segment. To take a simple example, a site that takes two days to reach is very unlikely to be visited by tourists on one- or two-week vacations, but could be incorporated into longer tours of three to four weeks' duration. For day or half-day excursions marketed to high-volume tourists, the sites will generally need to be no more than an hour-and-a-half's travel from their hotels.

Thus, the products offered by tourism companies to their customers depend on the type of infrastructure (particularly roads and accommodation) available. Tour operators also consider a number of other basic requirements when assessing a new tour or excursion, including:

- The attractiveness of the site to potential clients, in terms of the quality of wildlife and habitats that can be viewed. Tour operators can often assess the quality of the wildlife or cultural heritage of a site even before visiting, by reviewing written sources, the media or testimonies of previous travellers. An operator will need to be fairly certain of the quality of a site before going to the expense and time of making a visit.
- The "fit" of a potential tour with existing tourism products offered by the company, as well potential demand from their customers for the new tour or excursion, its marketability and its potential for giving the company competitive advantage. Once the site has been visited, the fit with existing activities and tourism products will be fairly obvious to an established tour operator, as will the marketing possibilities.
- The location of the site, relative to their existing operations. For commercial reasons, it is easier for tour operators to develop new products in areas where they already have good local contacts through existing tours, as they will already have a detailed understanding of the capabilities of their local agents and service providers, and of local infrastructure. These factors reduce the risk and costs involved in planning new products.
- Accessibility of the site, taking into account travel times, overall lengths of tours, and the company's target market.
- The existence of appropriate tourism facilities, support and infrastructure in the region.

The most important elements in choosing a new destination are things to see generally, knowing there's a market that will be interested in going there, flights to get people there and places to stay.

While managers and planners at protected areas and World Heritage sites cannot necessarily influence whether a destination appeals to a certain market or fits in with a tour operator's overall image or existing operations, they can have some influence on the final two factors, accessibility and infrastructure. These issues are discussed in more detail below.

Accessibility

Site accessibility is a key factor for many tours. Most high-volume tourism is to destinations within four-to-five hours' flying time of the major tourist generating countries (although significant numbers of tourists are also willing to visit long-haul destinations). Once they've arrived at their destinations, however, most tourists only want to visit sites within one or two hours' drive from where they are staying. This means that more remote sites are more likely to be visited by tourists who are staying longer in a destination, either on organised tours or as independent travellers. Furthermore, different nationalities take holidays of different lengths, because of the varying amounts of statutory

leave entitlement in their countries; those who take only short holidays will naturally tend to visit destinations that are closer to their homes and take less time to get to. Time is less of a constraint for retired people and for the backpacker plus category of tourists, and these groups generally have a reasonable amount of disposable income to spend on visiting places that are important to them.

There is an important market amongst retired people for special interest and general interest tours to protected areas.

The roads are poor and the travel time to the excursion destination is long. There is little time at the destination, and we're looking for different, more accessible opportunities for excursions, like hikes, boat trips, or forest excursions. We would like to work together with the protected area to plan new products that appeal to tourists as excursions.

Accessibility is affected not only by distances, but also by the quality of transport links. Poor quality roads or rough tracks can greatly increase travel times, presenting problems for excursions. Rough roads and tracks and/or poor quality vehicles can also make sites less likely to be visited by older people who, as noted above, form an important segment of special

interest and general interest tourists for natural and cultural heritage. On the other hand, such features may make a site attractive to explorers and backpackers looking for more unusual and difficult to reach places to visit.

Given these considerations, tour operators will be looking to establish that:

- reliable transport is available, using suitable vehicles for their clients that meet the health and safety standards of their customers' home countries;
- roads and access tracks are adequate and passable during the period of any planned tours; and
- travelling times are appropriate for the tours or excursions planned, and there are suitable wayside opportunities for comfort, refreshment and meal stops (and possibly short visits to sites of interest en route).

Tourism infrastructure

Tour operators will also be looking to see that there is appropriate tourism infrastructure at or near a site, including suitable options for accommodation and food, as well as reliable and experienced ground operators and other local partners.

Accommodation and food: Suitable accommodation is a critical factor for all holidays. Most tourists expect that the accommodation, catering and other facilities of their holidays should match the hygiene and quality standards that they are used to in their home countries. High standards in these areas are therefore a strong requirement of the market. Furthermore, under European and North American regulations, an outbound tour operator is legally responsible for the standards of all the facilities purchased as part of the package that their customers encounter while abroad. Thus, tour operators stress their requirements for clean, safe, comfortable and convenient places to stay.

Depending on their target market, tour operators will require anything from luxury accommodation (in hotels or tented camps) to quite basic accommodation. A growing number of tourists appreciate staying in accommodation built in the traditional materials and styles of the region they are visiting. Catering can also be simple, provided food is properly prepared and includes choices adapted to the tastes of foreign tourists, as well as elements of local cuisine.

The availability of suitable accommodation in any locality determines whether a tour operator will investigate tour development any further, and will influence the type of tourism possible at

specific sites. For example, luxury accommodation is not generally available at most natural sites (with the exception of luxury lodges in or near private reserves and for safaris), but is more often available near cultural sites.

Ground operators and other local business partners: Outbound tour operators require a reliable local partner to take responsibility for all local ground arrangements. Suitable business partners are likely to have a track record in tourism, employ well-trained and experienced managers, provide training to their staff, and have good local networks of business contacts.

... in a developing country, if the ground operators aren't there, this is a barrier to developing products there. What helps us is to find ground operators who deal with the site in a responsible way; the relationship with the ground operator is more important than with the site itself.

Outbound tour operators report that it is difficult to find suitable local business partners in some parts of the world. If tour operators are unable to find a local agent in whom they have confidence, it is unlikely that they will develop and market a new tourism product.

Time frame for development and marketing of new tours

It is vital to be aware that outbound tour operators have lead times for product development and marketing of at least 12-18 months. A large part of this period is taken up with production and distribution of the brochures that detail the products and prices that they offer, and the sales period for their holidays (See also Box 3, Section 2.3).

New possibilities take us at least a year to develop and to begin to test market in our tours. Initially the possibility has to be researched, including developing an understanding of how it could be incorporated into the schedule of a tour (timing, accommodation, meals, etc.). The tour is then tested in the following season using a local promotion to our clients. If that proves successful, the tour will be included in our brochure for the season after that. Then there will be continual fine-tuning of the tour. From initial idea to inclusion in the brochure, therefore, takes a minimum of 18 months.

According to one tour operator, "Setting up a successful excursion requires dialogue and partnership over a minimum of two seasons, with ongoing operational links for successful tours after that."

This means that holidays for the summer season in two years' time would have to be finalised (including details of accommodation, travel and costs) by the spring/summer of next year.

The product manager would go to the site in the current year, giving at least two years between 'awareness raising' and first visits by customers. The lead-time can

be slightly shorter if the product is prepared in a format that suits the tour operators' holidays as closely as possible.

2 IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORT

This section offers site managers an overall perspective on the contributions that tour operators and other tourism companies can make to protected areas, based on an analysis of ways that tourism businesses currently benefit protected areas. Knowing this information can help protected areas managers develop and improve the links between sites and the tourism sector, and build partnerships with tourism companies and businesses. The opportunities discussed in this section are examined as examples of ways to build links with the tourism sector, rather than as a how-to guide for implementing any such schemes or programmes.

Tourism companies can benefit protected areas directly by bringing tourists to visit the sites, through marketing products linked to the sites, and by ensuring that their tours are managed to minimise potential adverse impacts and maximise positive ones. They can also benefit sites indirectly by making their skills and expertise available to provide technical advice to protected areas on developing marketable tourism products and activities, and by advising on the necessary associated infrastructure. Contributions from tourism businesses to protected areas generally fall into the following six categories:

1. Improving and developing tours or excursions linked to protected areas;
2. Raising tourists' awareness of ways to protect the sites;
3. Cooperating in collecting entrance and user fees;
4. Generating donations to the site, by
 - encouraging donations from clients;
 - giving corporate donations and sponsorship to finance projects; or
 - giving in-kind support;
5. Selling merchandise related to the site; and
6. Running tourism-related concessions and leases in the protected areas.

It is important to remember that, while tourism can help protected areas gain revenues that can be used for conservation and generate local and national support for protected area conservation, it can also have significant negative impacts and give rise to various costs, such as the need for additional facilities, extra staff to control tourism activity and clean up or restore any tourism-related damage, and staff training. These costs will need to be carefully considered when drawing up plans for developing tourism at a particular site.

2.1 Developing tours and excursions linked to protected areas

The main scope for linking protected areas and World Heritage sites with tourism is through management of tours and excursions, including alterations to routes, improvements in information provision and guiding, and measures to deal with overcrowding.

Protected areas and World Heritage sites are important elements in the tourism products offered by both high-volume and specialist tourism companies. High-volume tourism companies increasingly offer excursions as add-on options to their holiday packages, including excursions to protected areas and World Heritage sites. For example, one important German tour operator provides excursions from its main destinations to about 120 different World Heritage sites.

Many specialist tour operators that provide nature-based, adventure or cultural tours report that protected areas are important elements of the tours they offer, although the protected status of these areas is often not specifically promoted to clients. While some tour operators said they did not want to overburden their clients with details at the marketing stage, the main reason given for not mentioning site status is that the tour operators are marketing the quality of the overall

product they provide, rather than of the individual sites visited, and that reference to protected area or World Heritage status in marketing would not affect the choices of their clients. For example, a UK-based tour operator offering walking holidays throughout Europe often mentions the scenic and cultural attractions along its routes without identifying those that are World Heritage sites – even though some routes are specifically designed around these.

Most tour operators are keen to expand their range of tours to offer their clients new products, and thus look for excursions and tours that both enhance the experience of their clients and are profitable. In order to keep their costs low, they want to spend as little time as possible on researching new areas; ideally, they like to be offered a ready-made product that fits in with their usual holiday programme. Failing that, they like to find something close to their style, so that they can adapt it with only minor amendments. Protected areas managers thus have an important opportunity to suggest new tours or extensions on existing tours to international tour operators, and especially to the locally based tour operators that act as ground handling agents. Once the interest of an outbound tour operator's regional or product manager has been engaged, he

Example: Benefits for tour operators from supporting conservation

Premier Tours, a US-based tour operator specialising in safari tours to Southern and East Africa, specifically selects accommodation facilities that are committed to supporting conservation and local community involvement, and also uses sustainable practices on a day-to-day basis. This approach ensures a sustainable environment, employment and other benefits for local communities, and a high-quality holiday for clients. Benefits for Premier Tours business have included:

- Gaining new clients as a result of a strong reputation, and maintaining an extremely high repeat and referral business. The company has been selected for two consecutive years by the highly prestigious Condé Nast Traveler Magazine as one of the 'Top 100 Travel Agents' in the United States, and is 'Highly Recommended' by several travel guides and other publications.
- Enabling the company to pursue a new market segment amongst non-profit organizations, such as museums, zoos and universities, that promote group educational tours.
- Motivating staff, leading the company to have an excellent track record in retaining employees, because of a highly stimulating work environment where new challenges are regularly met in the creation of new packages and constant education is offered on existing products, including staff educational trips.

For a company such as Premier Tours with fairly limited resources to contribute directly to sustainable development, it is important to select the right products and suppliers. This is best done by visiting projects and carrying out site inspections to discuss the issues with those who have an interest or stake in the project. By supporting such projects and encouraging others to get involved, product suppliers will be encouraged to re-direct their operating procedures in order to contribute to environmental quality, which is an important factor for the tourism market.

Source: Sustainable Tourism: The Tour Operators' Contribution, Tour Operators' Initiative (2003)

is likely to request further information about the proposal, especially the travel infrastructure (distance from airport/access), accommodation, food and type of activities available, and the cost of the tour. By this stage, it will usually have been necessary to form a partnership with a local tour operator that can act as a ground handling agent and put together the different elements of a tour or excursion, especially as these are likely to include transport, accommodation and other aspects that are outside the domain of the protected area.

It is important to make various preparations before approaching a tour operator (this process is described in more detail in Section 3). For example, the local tourism industry (public and private sector) should be involved at an early stage when considering options for improving the integration of tourism at the site. Forming these partnerships will help ensure that any tours or products are market-orientated; it is all too easy for NGOs or protected areas managers to develop an apparently wonderful product that does not actually attract tourists, because it is in the wrong place, aimed at the wrong target market, or inappropriately priced.

It is therefore valuable for protected areas managers to discuss key tourism issues for their sites with people who are actively working in the tourism industry. Tour company staff will often be happy to discuss these issues on an informal basis, particularly when they are keen to help a site develop its tourism potential. Issues to cover in such discussions include:

- constraints and opportunities for visitor activities at the site;
- tourism trends and market demand that may affect tourism at the site;
- key target markets relevant to tourism at the site;
- pricing structures;
- promotion and marketing of tours or excursions associated with the site (see Box 2);
- the operating requirements of tourism companies that are operating in the site, or which may be considering doing so; and
- appropriate design of facilities, such as visitor centres, toilets, restaurants and bars, to ensure that they are both functional and attractive to tourists, including aspects such as visual impact, accommodation, catering, management of wastes and sewage, etc.

At the same time, protected areas managers should be aware of the risk that some tourism personnel may be overly market-orientated and lose sight of the conservation goals of protected areas; it must be stressed to them that tourism at the site is only permissible when it can be integrated with conservation. Raising the awareness of industry personnel on the principles of protected areas management can help to overcome this risk.

Box 2: Ways to promote and market tours or excursions

- Develop publicity materials (posters, leaflets, etc.) to promote tourism activities.
- Invite local or regional hotels, bars, restaurants and souvenir shops to display the leaflets and posters.
- Invite transport providers – particularly airlines – to include articles about the area in their passenger magazines.
- Arrange a familiarisation trip for local, national or international tour operators.
- Make links with other tourism attractions (including other protected areas and World Heritage sites) in the same region. This can be a way of developing more effective promotional strategies and of strengthening products.

Example: Tourism product development in the Pantanal, Brazil

A partnership approach has helped to ensure that tourism is a tool for sustainable development in the Pantanal, a protected area in Brazil that covers 2.3 million hectares of mainly private land. The Pantanal Park authorities invited selected specialist tour operators for a familiarisation trip that involved stays in several pousadas (ranches) which were starting tourism businesses to complement their traditional sources of income. After the trip, a two-day workshop brought together pousada owners and tour operators for feedback on both activities and accommodations offered, including comments and suggestions for improvement.

The tour operators provided expertise in new product development, designed guide training programmes in nature interpretation and other concepts, and are currently providing a support network for local landowners to adapt their facilities and services to meet the requirements of the specialised Western ecotourism market. The Pantanal Association for Nature Tour Operators is now a unit working together with the park and the Association of Pousadas to connect the local tourism providers with parts of the international market. The partnership is demonstrating the value of tourism for both conservation and local enterprises.

Source: Leeds Tourism Group (2004), 'Tourism Supply Chains', Leeds (UK): Leeds Metropolitan University

2.2 Raising awareness amongst tourists

The more tourists understand about the purposes and importance of a protected area, and about appropriate behaviour, the more likely they are to value the site and behave in ways that minimise damage to it.

Most tour operators provide fairly detailed information to clients about places to be visited both before departure and in-country, through guides and tour leaders. This is done to add value and quality to holidays and to enhance clients' enjoyment of their tours. The information may be provided at any stage of the holiday and in a range of formats, from short leaflets to evening discussions; in a few cases, specialist tour operators even provide short books on a very distinct area, such as Antarctica. When tour groups arrive at their destination, they are generally given an orientation or attend a welcome meeting at which tour company representatives may give a briefing on local excursions. These meetings represent ideal opportunities to communicate information on visiting nearby protected areas and World Heritage sites.

We give information to our clients (sometimes via our tour leaders), and like to get as much as we can to pass on to our clients – the educational aspect is important.

Other venues for raising awareness amongst visitors are published guidebooks, which often contain information about natural and cultural protected areas and give guidance on appropriate behaviour, and the in-flight videos that some airlines and tour operators show clients as a further means of communicating information. Tourists are also increasingly likely to search for information about their intended destinations on the Internet.

Tour leaders and guides play a key role in sharing information with clients about the sites visited. Guides can help clients ensure that they are minimising their impacts on a site, although they are also constrained by the need to ensure that their customers remain happy and fulfilled. Tour operators often build informational aspects into the training courses they run for their tour leaders.

We're always interested in more information about World Heritage sites we go to, as giving information to clients is an important part of our service.

A good example of guides providing information to tourists is the instruction that dive operators give to divers about ways to protect coral reefs. For instance, one hotel chain provides an information leaflet to its guests about protection of coral and marine life: *“We have a partnership with a French NGO specialising in marine issues worldwide. Through this, awareness-raising materials have been developed for our clients staying at some of our hotels on the Red Sea coast, to promote coral protection and appropriate behaviours by tourists. This is now being replicated at a further site on the Red Sea and in Polynesia.”*

Often the best approach to information provision is 'little and often', so that important messages are reinforced by brief repetition to tourists at appropriate points. Examples include short 'refresher' briefings for divers about safety and prevention of damage to coral reefs and marine life, reminders by tour guides to take rubbish back to hotels for disposal, and suggestions about

Example: Using environmental interpreters to raise tourists' awareness

Ventaglio, one of the leading Italian outbound and domestic tour operators, runs an Environmental Interpreter Programme. The programme has three main objectives:

- To raise clients' awareness about environmental issues in their destinations;
- To support the dissemination and integration of sustainability principles and practices to resort staff and management, thus bridging the gap between the headquarters corporate sustainability policy and the resort-based operational staff; and
- To increase understanding and strengthen co-operation between Ventaglio resorts and the surrounding communities.

Training is provided for all Environmental Interpreters. Among the activities undertaken by Interpreters are presentations on marine biology, guided snorkelling tours, evening slide shows on the local environment, ecological beach excursions, children's activities and eco-volunteerism activities, such as beach clean-ups. The Interpreters' tasks also include briefing clients to inform them about how to have a sustainable holiday; organizing meetings about destinations' key environmental features (coral reefs, mangrove forests, etc.); and establishing and maintaining contacts with local authorities and organizations.

The company's headquarters regularly monitors the activities of the Interpreters. Feedback from destination stakeholders has been positive, in particular on the actions that have been carried out. For example, an excursion in the Dominican Republic has been improved by adding responsibility criteria, resulting in benefits to the local community. At one of Ventaglio's resorts in Mexico, clients are contributing to a turtle protection programme.

To date, the Programme has been implemented in ten resorts operated by Ventaglio.

Source: Sustainable Tourism: The Tour Operators' Contribution, Tour Operators' Initiative (2003)

appropriate behaviour at cultural sites. Key messages can also be reinforced by signs; for example, signs might highlight the rarity of certain plants and remind people to avoid damaging them.

Although tour companies do impart a great deal of information to their clients, there are some constraints on their ability to fully inform tourists. For example, time constraints may limit their

Example: Raising awareness about protecting marine ecosystems

The Accor Group, a France-based high-volume outbound tour operator and hotel group, runs an awareness-raising campaign for customers visiting the Red Sea, a destination that is extremely sensitive to impacts from visitors. Launched in 2000, this campaign focused on the distribution of a short leaflet in hotel rooms, and at reception desks and activity desks. A 'Red Sea Corner' has also been created in the hotels used by Accor's clients, offering books, posters and leaflets about marine ecosystems, their main threats and how hotel customers can contribute to their preservation. In 2003, the campaign was expanded to include interactive activities designed to help visitors understand the importance of marine ecosystems and become involved in their protection.

The leaflets and awareness-raising activities have been developed by Accor in collaboration with NAUSICAA, a marine science and technology centre based in France. The hotel-based staff responsible for the programme in Egypt were trained at the NAUSICAA Centre, and regular meetings between Accor and NAUSICAA are planned to monitor project development.

At the entrance to the beach, large posters describe the zoning of the sea for leisure activities (scuba diving, boating, swimming, etc.) and remind guests of the main precautions to be taken. In support of the principles outlined in the leaflet, waste bins have been placed around the hotels, and all staff are trained on the topics covered in the leaflet. Once a week, the hotels organise a 'Sea Day', dedicating all the activities during that day to the marine environment.

Activities for both adults and children are the core of this programme. A 'submarine path' has been created for adults, with visible buoys indicating and explaining notable spots and guided snorkeling circuits.

The benefits of this programme have included:

- increased awareness among tourists and local staff about the importance of protecting the marine ecosystem;
- a decrease in damage to corals and less garbage on the beach;
- new educational and entertainment activities proposed by Accor;
- an improved image for Accor, both in general and in particular with local authorities, because of the company's contribution to a local training course on environmental resources management; and
- increased credibility of Accor's environmental efforts, as a result of the partnership with NAUSICAA and the environmental audits of the company's hotels.

In the future, this programme will be adapted to other Accor hotels near the sea.

Source: Sustainable Tourism: The Tour Operators' Contribution, Tour Operators' Initiative (2003)

ability to gather full information about the sites to be visited, while the cost of publishing and distributing such information may limit its dissemination. Use of the Internet is an obvious way to overcome these constraints, and a few tourism companies are exploring how to integrate information about protected areas and World Heritage sites into their marketing before the customers make their purchasing decisions, rather than afterwards.

One tour operator noted that *“World Heritage status means there’s usually a good amount of information we can provide to our clients.”* However others disagreed: *“Currently, we don’t feel that very much information is available,”* and *“We would welcome information on individual World Heritage sites which we could give people, although the most appropriate way of doing this is through the local guides we use.”* Companies also feel that *“Protected areas and World Heritage site managers need to communicate with our local inbound agents to provide information on what kinds of sites are available, how to use these sites in a sustainable way (appropriate group sizes, leadership/guiding, behaviour of tourists, etc.).”*

As part of our marketing programme, we’re setting up a website that will promote World Heritage sites that are accessible from our hotels.

Clearly, tour companies would appreciate receiving more information from protected areas and World Heritage sites about conservation issues and appropriate behaviour, for example on

Example: Responsible tourism guidelines for tour guides


Dynamic Tours, a Moroccan inbound tour operator and ground handling company, has developed a ‘Mountain and Desert Guide’s Charter’, as a means of building awareness among its guides on their role in liaising between the travellers and the tour operator on:

- environmental problems;
- economic impacts of the groups in a given area;
- financial resources created by tourism and their allocation to the preservation of local species and heritage; and
- social and economic development of the visited areas.

Each guide receives two weeks’ training per year, and for each tour the guide produces a trip report on a standard form, outlining how well guidelines were applied in the different areas visited. The trip reports are assessed by the marketing and operational managers. Throughout each trip, the guides and local team meet with local authorities, NGOs and/or village association representatives to build awareness of the environment, help in existing projects and identify actions or programmes to implement. Since the programme started, Dynamic Tours has trained about 100 guides.

Cooperation between Dynamic Tours, its clients and local people has helped to promote clean-up operations in visited areas, waste collection and treatment, and other environmental programmes. Travellers who see these good practices frequently request information on how they can contribute to responsible development efforts. In addition, Dynamic Tours is assisting with implementation of regional projects to develop tourism in Morocco’s protected areas.

Source: Sustainable Tourism: The Tour Operators’ Contribution, Tour Operators’ Initiative (2003)



keeping to trails and avoiding harm to plants and wildlife. Further local information would also be welcomed so that it can be passed on to clients, used to help companies plan and manage excursions, and incorporated into training course for tour leaders.

Protected areas managers can make up-to-date information about their sites available to local and international tour operators on a regular basis, perhaps through short email bulletins. These can include information about new items of interest, for example the opening of a new trail, new interpretation materials, seasonal changes such as breeding of charismatic species or visits by migratory species, and new local products and services. They can also include information on conservation projects and any changes to management at the site.

At heavily visited sites, managers might invite tourism companies to consider additional support for encouraging appropriate behaviour in the protected area, for example by producing visitor information leaflets with codes of conduct for specific activities (e.g. diving, snorkelling, turtle watching.)

2.3 Entrance and user fees

Entrance and user fees are widely used by protected areas to raise revenue from visitors, and can be an excellent opportunity for tourism to benefit conservation. Rather than providing detail on how to implement entrance and user fee schemes, this section aims to provide a perspective on how entrance fees are viewed by, and affect the tourism sector; and how tourism businesses may be able to assist in fee collection.

Entrance fees are charged to visitors for access to protected areas, while user fees are charged for specific activities or facilities within the protected area (e.g. for parking, camping, fishing, hunting, boating, diving, hiking, sports, photography, etc.). In some cases, geographical factors may make it difficult and/or costly to collect entrance fees at the point of entry, and it may be easier to levy user fees. When tour companies develop tour or excursion packages involving protected areas, entrance and user fees will generally be incorporated into the overall package price, in which case the individual tourist is unlikely to know the exact entry fee. Where individual fees apply, such as in the case of dive fees, these can be efficiently collected by the tour companies and passed on to the protected area.

Tour operators surveyed for this manual suggested that, in most cases, entrance fees to protected areas are set below the market rate, and could likely be increased without causing any drop in demand. They report that they would generally accept increases as long as they are confident that the extra revenue would be used responsibly. One specialist, high-end tour operator felt that “... up to USD 35 per day is the maximum fee that our company could sell” to its market for access to the sites that they visit in southern Africa. This fee would form part of the overall tour cost. A further consideration for tour operators is that, when a protected area increases its entrance fees, the effect is the same for any tour operator that operates visits to the site; thus increased fees would not affect their competitiveness relative to other operators.

An average tour with a specialist tour operator costs a minimum of USD 100 per day (excluding international transport). This money pays for accommodation, meals, excursions, guides, local transport, entrance fees and the tour operator’s overhead. If a tour includes a visit to a protected area with an entrance fee of USD 1 per day, doubling the entrance fee to USD 2 per day will only increase the average cost of a tour by 1 percent.

It is important for protected areas managers to have clear knowledge of the costs of the trips to their sites. It is also important to deflect potential adverse feelings concerning price increases by explaining to the tourism industry (especially local and national tour operators) why prices are being raised, highlighting how the increased revenue will be used, and accounting for such funds properly (e.g. by reporting on how they are used and by publishing accounts). Sites can benefit from advice from tourism companies to help set fees at levels that are acceptable to both sides; by working with tour operators, protected areas managers are more likely to achieve a balance between their need to raise revenue through tourism and the level of fees that the market can accept. It is also essential that tour operators receive notification of fee increases sufficiently in advance, so they can incorporate the necessary price adjustments in their tour prices and brochures (See Box 3).

It may not be possible for the park alone to increase entrance fees under national legislation, or revenues may be returned to the central government with no guarantee of being allocated to the site. In such instances, an alternative is to work with a local NGO to develop value-added elements that can then be used to fund conservation and development projects at the site in partnership with site managers. This arrangement requires an efficient NGO or similar organisation and the agreement of government authorities, but it can be very effective. In some cases, of course, the protected area or World Heritage site may be an important source of foreign exchange for the government, in which case at least part of the income raised is likely to be passed on to the national treasury.

At some sites, it may be practical for protected areas staff to collect fees directly from tourists at entrance points, particularly where there are only a few main entrance and access points. However, for protected areas that have many access points, it may be impractical and too costly to employ staff to collect entrance fees at all of the access points. In these cases, a different approach is necessary. One of the best solutions is to arrange for local businesses to sell permits to visitors and pass the revenue back to the protected area authorities. This approach works particularly well for dive permits, which are sold to scuba divers through dive operators in a number of marine protected areas. As a group, scuba divers tend to have a strong desire to support conservation of the reefs around the sites where they dive.

Box 3: Tour pricing and brochure production

Brochures are produced and updated at least once a year. If a tour cost component is increased after the brochure has been printed, tour operators have to absorb the price increase (which reduces the profitability of the tours), or they may cancel tours (or parts of tours) and offer clients an alternative or a refund. The latter option may be preferable for a tour operator in order to maintain business viability, and may lead to a drop in visitor numbers to the site. This decrease may be acceptable up to a point, particularly if prices have been increased as a way of controlling excessive visitation. However, in extreme cases the price increase may have an opposite effect than intended, in that total revenues from entrance fees may fall rather than rise if visitor numbers drop significantly.

It is therefore important for protected areas managers to provide tour operators with information on significant changes at least 12 months in advance. Better still, managers should consult with tour operators on any significant changes 18–24 months before their introduction. Significant changes include increases in entrance fees and restrictions in access to or opening times for the sites.

For these schemes to succeed, the visitors and the businesses selling permits on behalf of protected areas need to understand the value of conservation of the protected area, and to be sure that the revenue collected is used effectively for conservation management. To build support for such schemes, the revenue generated can be split between the businesses that sell the permits, local communities and the government, while the bulk of the revenue is channelled into conservation.

This approach can also be applied in other situations, including levies on the price of hotel rooms, mooring fees, etc., where the services provided are predominantly purchased by people who use the protected area. As with dive permits, these arrangements require negotiation with private sector operators and will generally require several years of development to gain the support of stakeholders.

Example: Entrance fees at Bunaken Marine National Park, Indonesia

Bunaken Marine National Park, in North Sulawesi, Indonesia, was established in 1991 for its coral reefs, mangroves and outstanding biodiversity. The Indonesian government also established the multi-stakeholder Bunaken National Park Management Advisory Board (BNPMAB). Of the 15 seats on the board, eight are allocated to NGOs and seven to government bodies, including village representatives, the park authority, the tourism and fisheries departments, the local university, and the private tourism sector.

To help finance the park, the BNPMAB adopted a system of entrance fees in March 2001, and the provincial government of North Sulawesi enacted legislation to permit these fees to be introduced. In contrast to the distribution system for visitor fees from national parks in most of Indonesia, where the major portion of the revenues is not used directly for management of the park in which they are generated, 80 percent of the funds collected from the entrance fees at Bunaken are used specifically for conservation programmes in the park, including enforcement, conservation education, waste management, and environmentally friendly village development. The remaining 20 percent is split between local, provincial and national government, and provides an incentive for the government to continue to support the scheme.

Entrance fee levels are based on surveys of visitor willingness to pay, and the fee collection system has been designed in consultation with the local tourism sector, so that it is practical and efficient and does not inconvenience visitors, dive operators, or the park patrol team. Entrance tags and dive permits can be purchased through local marine tour operators based in the nearby town of Manado and in the park. Enforcement of the entrance fee system is conducted via spot checks by park rangers on land and at sea.

An entrance fee of USD 15 allows users to enter and dive in the park for a year, with a lower daily entrance fee. The entrance fees are collected mainly through dive operators located in and around the park, and raise about USD 200,000 per year for the park, which covers about half the operating costs. The BNPMAB is also diversifying revenue streams to reduce direct dependency on user fees, as this design is potentially unstable. Other revenue is generated from national/international grants, merchandising at a visitor centre, an international volunteer system, and establishment of an endowment programme.

Source: Bunaken National Marine Park Co-Management Initiative, available at www.icran.org

2.4 Donations and in-kind support

As global travel increases, tourists are becoming a powerful economic force by virtue of their sheer numbers, and they have considerable potential to support the environment and communities of the destinations they visit. Travel brings together the world's most affluent people with some of its poorest, with the potential for mutual benefit. A recent study of American travellers (undertaken by the Travel Industry Association in collaboration with National Geographic Traveler Magazine) found that a large segment of tourists are highly committed to travel that protects the local environment, engages visitors in the local culture, and returns benefits to the community. These tourists also want the travel companies they use to employ local residents and support the local community. Nevertheless, although these factors indicate a strong potential for benefiting the host destination, the most effective way of realising this potential is not always obvious.

Donations can be an important source of support for protected areas, but tour companies may prefer not to provide funds directly to protected areas, because of concerns about public sector bureaucracy and lack of transparency. Instead, many companies prefer to donate money either to local organisations for specific projects, or to international NGOs which then manage funds and projects agreed with the donor companies.

This section discusses three ways in which protected areas can work with tourism companies to gain support through donations, including:

- inviting tourism companies to encourage donations by their clients to projects associated with the protected areas they visit;
- seeking corporate donations and sponsorship to finance projects; and
- seeking in-kind support from tourism companies.

Donations from clients

Some tour operators have adopted schemes whereby clients are given a choice about whether to make a donation as part of their booking price, either by choosing to donate a fixed amount or an amount specified by the client, or by opting out of a donation that would otherwise be part of the holiday price. However, these schemes are not widespread and present technical problems for tour operators that use complex computerised booking and accounting systems. Instead, many tour operators make corporate donations of a set amount per booking, or donate a proportion of their profits to charities (see below Corporate donations and sponsorship).

Nevertheless, just as tourism as an industry can be a force for change, individual tourists can also make a considerable difference in the places they visit. Thus, protected areas managers may choose to take the opportunity to capitalise on people's interest in protected areas and approach not just tourism companies but also individual visitors for support.

Clients often make personal donations, and this can be stimulated by the tour guide and the way that they run a tour.

Tour operators indicate that the most effective way of encouraging personal donations by tourists is to explain projects and show what they are achieving; visitors who are shown development or conservation projects often want to make direct personal donations in support of those projects.

Some hotels run programmes to collect donations that are then channelled towards humanitarian or environmental programmes. For instance, one hotel chain surveyed reported that “we have a

corporate programme to collect money for the Save the Children Fund, and collecting boxes for this are placed in our hotels worldwide.”

People feel the urge to help when they visit and have problems explained to them.

If protected areas managers decide to encourage such donations, they will need to set up opportunities for tourists to give money, for example by placing donation boxes in visitor centres. They should also make information available to tour groups about conservation and development projects, and, where possible, provide opportunities for tourists to see

Giving clients a hands-on feel for projects and a chance to see them in action often leads on to clients making donations.

these projects for themselves. Tour companies may be able to give advice about how best to encourage donations by their clients, including the types of projects people are most likely to support and ways of communicating information about these projects. Some tour companies may also be willing to collect donations from their clients on behalf of specific projects.

Protected areas will also need to establish systems to record large donations and give the donor a receipt, which demonstrates a professional approach and gives people confidence that their donations will be properly used. It is also important for sites to demonstrate how the money is used by reporting on progress with projects supported by donations, and by publishing accounts.

As with entrance and user fees, legislative and bureaucratic challenges may be overcome if donations are channelled to an NGO or conservation foundation, rather than to the sites themselves. Site managers can help to set up suitable organisations if local legislation allows.

It may also be desirable to set up a trust fund to receive donations, from which monies are disbursed to individuals and organisations. The regulations governing trust funds will vary from country to country. However, all, in effect, depend literally on 'trust', with a number of people appointed as trustees who are responsible for the correct and proper use of funds. Some

Example: A trust fund supported by tourist booking fees

The Wilderness Safaris Wildlife Trust was set up by Wilderness Safaris of Johannesburg, a tourism company based in South Africa. A portion (USD 25) of every tourist's fee is set aside for the trust, which provides quick access to essential funds to solve wildlife dilemmas as they arise. No administration fees are charged for running the trust. Trust Fund projects include support to:

- a turtle project at Rocktail Bay Lodge, which includes paying game scouts' salaries during the egg-laying season and the provision of satellite tracking equipment;
- community conservation groups in the Okavango Delta, Botswana;
- lobbyists from Botswana trying to prevent Namibia from taking too much water from the Okavango River before it reaches the Okavango Delta;
- a large-scale water project for communities on the boundary of the Kruger National Park in South Africa; and
- the formation of a Community Wildlife Conservancy in Damaraland, Namibia, in an area that is home to both the elephant and the black rhino.

Source: Sustainable Tourism: The Tour Operators' Contribution, Tour Operators' Initiative (2003)

Example: An eco-fund established through tourist contributions

The Hotelplan Swiss Group, a Swiss tour operator that offers mainly outbound package tours and guided tours, established an Umweltfranken (Eco-Fund) in January 2001. Funds for the programme are raised through a contribution of five Swiss Francs (about USD 3) per customer booking any of the holiday packages in Hotelplan's 'Ferien am Meer' (Holidays at the Seaside) catalogue, which represents 20-25 percent of the company's sales.

In 2002, the fund raised about USD 750,000. The money is distributed among three categories of projects: internal and external sustainable tourism projects, environmental efforts by partners at Hotelplan destinations, and emergency help in the case of natural disasters or one-off projects.

Interested organisations send proposals for funding to Hotelplan, which are then evaluated and submitted to the Environmental Panel for selection. Local stakeholders are sometimes included in project selection. In general, selected projects receive their funding in instalments. The use of the funds is monitored, and project managers are asked to report back to Hotelplan on progress made before receiving each additional instalment. When possible, representatives of the company's Ecology Department visit the project site.

Hotelplan communicates with its customers about the overall philosophy of the Umweltfranken, individual projects and responsible behaviour while on holiday through special billboards on the projects, informational brochures and customer briefings. For example, in the five Greek beach locations where a turtle project was supported in 2001, Hotelplan produced billboards and printed an information leaflet with recommendations on appropriate behaviour while turtle watching. In Gibraltar, a marine biologist supported in 2001 as part of a research project focusing on whales was also involved in customers' briefings during whale watching excursions.

Hotelplan also provides information on the fund and projects in its corporate Environmental Report and Annual Financial Report, as well as via the Internet and in catalogues and leaflets. Staff are informed about the projects and the progress made by the Fund through the company intranet, meetings and training sessions.

Conservation activities that have been supported by the Umweltfranken include:

- care of the breeding grounds of the Mediterranean green loggerhead turtle along five beach sections in Greece;
- support for a marine biologist and enabling scientific research and unobtrusive observation tours of marine mammals in southern Spain; and
- organisation, execution and financing of a volunteer week for employees to help conserve coral reefs and desert ecosystems in the Red Sea region of Egypt.

Source: Sustainable Tourism: The Tour Operators' Contribution, Tour Operators' Initiative (2003)

tourism companies have developed foundations to raise funds through donations from their clients and channel them to conservation or development uses. For example⁴:

- Turtle Island, an exclusive resort in Fiji, has created a Community Foundation that channels charitable funds to village chiefs to address social needs. The foundation currently has assets in excess of USD200,000 and typically receives USD20,000 to USD30,000 annually in donations from guests, who are primarily American. The trustees of the foundation allocate approximately USD10,000 in annual income to local projects, which have principally been educational in recent years.
- Conservation Cooperation Africa, a South Africa-based safari company, has established the independent Africa Foundation with the aim of harnessing the resources of safari lodges and game reserves to improve the lives of rural Africans living nearby. The Foundation now runs 56 projects in five African locations: South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe. Annual guest gifts total USD 300,000 to USD 600,000. As of 2001, the Africa Foundation had raised USD 1.2 million in donations, 90 to 95 percent of which came from lodge guests. Funds are used mainly for educational and health-related projects.
- The Galapagos Conservation Fund (GCF) was established by Lindblad Expeditions to encourage donations from clients by providing them with a direct solicitation envelope and offering a discount coupon of USD 250 on future excursions in return for charitable contributions of USD 250 or more. Since 1997, guests have contributed close to USD 1 million. Proposals for projects to be funded by the GCF are submitted both to the Galapagos National Park and to the Charles Darwin Research Station. A board of internationally respected and locally knowledgeable conservation leaders makes funding recommendations.

Corporate donations and sponsorship

Some tourism companies set aside a small proportion of their profits (generally less than one percent) or make a donation per booking to support activities by voluntary organisations and NGOs. These companies usually feel that there should be strong links between donations and the places they visit. Many tour operators make donations to humanitarian rather than environmental organisations. However, tour operators that specialise in nature-based tours and some high volume tourism companies support environmental projects and organisations in the destinations visited, often alongside community and social welfare projects. Projects that link both people and conservation are therefore more likely to receive support.

You have to put something back into the destination in order to ensure that you can carry on going there.

Conservation projects supported by tour operators generally focus on activities or sites that appeal to their clients. For example, tour operators surveyed for this report specifically mentioned support for projects on reef protection, bird habitats or specific species (including orang-utans, whales, dolphins, turtles, rhinos, hunting and wild dogs, wolves and polar bears), or for conservation activities in specific locations, including the Galapagos Islands, Belize, Costa Rica, Maasai Mara (Kenya/Tanzania), and Ranthambhore National Park (India).

As long as we can show our customers that our donation goes to benefit the places they visit, they feel very happy about it.

Tourism companies prefer to finance specific items or projects (for example field equipment, staff salaries, restoration projects, interpretation materials

and visitor centres) rather than operational costs (administration or general maintenance). They also prefer their donations to go to NGOs or community-based organisations rather than to protected areas authorities (which may find it difficult to account for such donations in any case).

The companies may also want to channel funds through an organisation based in their home country, in order to maximise tax and financial benefits. In these cases, the money can also be ear-marked for particular projects that such organisations already have the structures and expertise to implement.

It would be difficult for us to work with protected areas directly as we don't have many staff on the ground. What we do is to give an annual donation to various charities focussing on conservation and development. We prefer to do this as it doesn't involve too much time and we believe this is a good way of putting something back into the areas we go to.

Tourism companies often want to publicise their support. They may also channel their donations to improve tourism at sites or to be able to make a link between a project that they support and their tours. A German tour operator, which makes annual donations of between €50,000–60,000, gave two examples of this:

With the projects we support, we expect to use their logo in the brochure to show there's a link: there has to be a benefit for both sides.

“Our company made a grant of €10,000 to develop interpretation and guiding for better management of tourism at the San Lorenzo Penguin Colony in the Valdez Peninsula, Argentina, and has provided €20,000 over two years to support training of Cambodians in restoration techniques for the restoration of Angkor Wat. Our tour groups are given a special guided tour at Angkor Wat by the project staff. Our aim is to sponsor projects and to get a payback from this for the company's tours.”

The following examples give an idea of the level of support that can be generated for conservation activities through donations from tour companies:

- A foundation set up by a tour operator provides about USD 500,000 per year – in 2001 this was allocated between projects in 20 countries worldwide (averaging about USD 25,000 per country).
- Part of the costs of maintaining a British volunteer expert working on ecotourism in a national park in Kazakhstan are met by an annual USD 5,000 contribution from a tour operator.
- The Orang-Utan Foundation in Indonesia receives an annual average contribution of USD 45,000–50,000 from a tour operator, which provides 4-9 per cent of its budget. The contribution is linked to tours to the Foundation's project site; in this case, the tour operator contributes USD 1,000 per visitor.
- A tiger conservation project receives USD 4,500–6,500 each year from an annual 'Save the Tiger' tour; with donations of USD 300 per visitor.

In the last two examples, the levels of contribution are exceptional and are associated with specialist, low-volume and high-quality tours. Such donations are often linked to value-added benefits – for example, expert guided tours, specialist insights into the particular project, and behind-the-scenes access. They generally develop out of the personal interest of senior staff in a tourism company and the reputation of the project being funded, and are only likely to be achieved with sites offering near-unique experiences and particular tour operators with an ability to reach specialist market segments willing to pay high prices and keen to contribute to conservation in action.

Furthermore, not all tour companies will necessarily be interested in donating to a site, and some tour operators don't believe donations are the best way to benefit protected areas. As one company noted: *"We don't collect funds on a percentage of profits or per booking basis, and the company does not have a 'pot of money' to provide to projects. More good is generated by developing something that is long-term and sustainable, rather than by one-off donations. However, if there is a valid reason we'll consider donating. For example, we made a donation to a vaccination programme for dogs in Tanzania which helped to stop the spread of diseases from dogs to wildlife."*

Example: High-value donations by a specialist tour operator

Discovery-Initiatives, a UK-based specialist outbound nature tour operator, offers holidays and tours that are specifically designed to support wildlife and conservation. For example, in Namibia, individual and small-group tours visit community wildlife conservation initiatives run by local people, and each tour contributes USD 350 per client to these programmes. In return, the company's clients gain a privileged insight into wildlife or communities as part of their overall holiday itinerary. A further example is a tour that contributes USD 1,000 per client to the Orang-utan Foundation in Tanjung Putung National Park in Kalimantan, Indonesia. This tour enables individual clients get actively involved as field assistants in the Foundation's work on orang-utan conservation.

The company's tour programmes are designed to use tourism as economic leverage with local communities, to support them in protecting their environment and culture. Each programme is designed to fulfil a number of objectives, including:

- promoting sustainable tourism;
- supporting conservation efforts;
- making financial contributions to wildlife and development agencies and conservation initiatives;
- raising awareness about conservation issues; and
- ensuring that the benefits of the tour programmes stay in the host countries.

The tours are based on partnerships that increase awareness and encourage grassroots environmental action, offering a method of supporting small-scale and local community projects in a sustainable and proactive way. At the same time, tourists get practical opportunities to experience or become actively involved in projects that deliver credible outputs and to see and understand ecological or development issues that are of interest to them.

The company mainly designs its tour programmes by issuing calls for proposals to be submitted by non-governmental organisations, international agencies or local tour operators. Proposals can be submitted for holiday programmes or research projects, and Discovery-Initiatives offers to discuss ideas and questions with potential proponents before they prepare a full proposal. Full proposals have to include a detailed itinerary, fitness requirements, names and areas of expertise of tour leaders, programme costs and minimum persons required, as well as information about research objectives and methodology, project justification, expected programme outputs, etc. Proposals for research projects are discussed with external experts and referees.

Source: Sustainable Tourism: The Tour Operators' Contribution, Tour Operators' Initiative (2003)

In addition, a few companies take the view that: *“The upkeep of protected areas and World Heritage sites should come from the regional, national, and international authorities, although there may be a role for donations from visitors.”* Although they accept that it is reasonable to charge entrance fees, they believe that the balance of funds for the maintenance of these sites should come primarily from government sources.

Our prices are around 5 percent more than those of our competitors, but we provide our clients with privileged insights to conservation projects and VIP treatment – these are things that clients really value.

Whilst many companies will be interested in supporting conservation, it is important not to overestimate the value of corporate donations, as these can be an erratic form of income. In some cases, the donations will depend on the personal interest of a senior member of staff, and if this person leaves or company policy changes, the commitment to the project may disappear. Tourism is a highly competitive business, and the profitability of the company will be the driving factor behind economic decisions. Most tour operators who make charitable donations give 1 percent or less of their pre-tax profits. Profit margins are generally low, particularly in the mass market: around 2 percent or less of the overall tour price is common. It is essential to realise that market forces and the drive for competitive advantage will discourage most tour operators from making larger donations than their competitors, although a few high-end specialist tour operators have set up schemes that generate significant revenues for a small number of conservation projects.

Nevertheless, because of the sheer size of the travel industry, the scope for substantial donations is fairly large, although, in practice, income to protected areas from entrance and user fees is likely to be of far greater economic value than donations from tour companies or individuals.

In-kind support by providing services

Some tourism companies can provide in-kind support to conservation projects by providing access to their facilities at little or no charge during periods when they would not otherwise be used. The cost to the company is relatively low, while the value of these facilities to conservation groups can be high. Other examples of in-kind support from tourism companies include:

- provision of meeting spaces, printing of materials, or support for travel;
- assistance with fundraising;
- provision of technical advice on developing and promoting tourism activities and management of tourists, perhaps through work placements or training given by staff on secondment;
- donation of tours, hotel rooms or other services as lottery prizes or in fundraising auctions;
- donation of equipment such as computers, binoculars, field guides or outdoor clothing for use by rangers and guides in protected areas (although some tour operators feel that organising donation of equipment is more complicated than donating money); and
- encouraging staff to support local charities and providing opportunities for customers to participate.

Some hotel chains encourage their general managers to provide in-kind support for local projects. For instance, one chain requires each of its hotels to run at least one community project per year; these can include environmental projects. Various hotel chains and destinations run local clean-up days, particularly to remove litter from beaches and other open spaces. For instance, one tour company reported: *“Our hotels in Reunion Island organized a “Clean Beach” operation, conducted jointly with the Marine Park.”* Another hotel chain requires each of its hotels to establish a link with a local environmental project, and staff involvement is encouraged.

In Australia, ecotourism operators have set up a scheme through which they donate tourism services (i.e. transport, accommodation and tours) that are combined into a World Heritage tour package. These are resold to corporate clients at market value. The profits will be used to support specific projects at World Heritage sites, most likely in the ASEAN region. Each year, a North American tour operator donates “tours to various environmental organisations so that these can be auctioned or used as prizes in raffles by those organisations to raise funds. We prefer to offer supplies and technical assistance rather than money.”

Employees of two of our hotels in French Polynesia went diving to collect the waste lingering on the bottom of the lagoon. Volunteers from the hotels had each collected four cubic meters of waste, including towels, champagne stoppers, a battery charger and even an umbrella!

Several tour operators acknowledged the potential for staff secondments, as these would be of value to the recipient organisation and of interest to staff, but they noted that it would not be possible to cover their salary costs. This is because tour operators would have to recruit temporary staff to replace those who are on secondment. In addition, their job skills are often not compatible, and time would be needed for training. Many companies commented that “We

Example: Conservation support from an association of hotels

Hotels in the Romana-Bayahibe region of the Dominican Republic believe that investing in sustainable development is the only guarantee for a successful future in the area. In 2000, they formed the Asociacion Hoteles Romana-Bayahibe (AHRB) to put this philosophy into practice.

From a tourism perspective, the AHRB has focused on actions to give the destination a unique character based on local cultural heritage and natural assets and linked with good quality overall. The AHRB has also worked to provide benefits to those who are not directly engaged in tourism.

The AHRB recognises the need to protect key areas from tourism development, and is providing support for maintenance of the Parque Nacional del Este (Eastern National Park), which contains important natural habitats and cultural heritage in the form of Taino culture rock art. A proposal has been submitted to UNESCO to enhance protection of the area by declaring it a World Heritage site. The AHRB is also working to create the Guadalupe Underwater Archaeological Reserve.

With the assistance of the national government and international aid agencies and NGOs, AHRB has supported the relocation of families living inside the National Park to a more suitable location.

The AHRB also runs environmental programmes, including campaigns for protection of dolphins, iguanas and sea turtles, several species of which spawn in the area, and a reforestation scheme with the support of the National Botanical Garden, to protect *Pereskia quisqueyana*, an endangered endemic cactus.

Source: Leeds Tourism Group (2004), 'Sustainable Tourism and Coastal Marine Management in the Wider Caribbean', Leeds (UK): Leeds Metropolitan University.

don't really do work experience and I'm not sure we have the specialist knowledge to train guides,” and “There would be an issue of what benefit it brings the company. We don't feel we have the capacity to spend a lot of time training people.”

Tour companies can also provide voluntary assistance by reporting management problems that may be encountered by tour groups visiting protected areas, or any unusual activities that they may see, such as boats moored inappropriately or maintenance problems with tourism facilities or trails. This can help sites improve management and undertake enforcement activities, particularly where sites have limited numbers of site rangers and are unable to patrol the whole area each day. For example, in Tubbataha Park in the Sulu Sea, Philippines, dive operators help to monitor park management, assisting park rangers who cannot patrol the entire area of the very large park every day. Dive operators report to the park management office about anything unusual in the areas where they are moored, and rangers respond to these reports.

Volunteer help by tourists

Some tour operators tap into enthusiasm amongst target markets for actively contributing to the environment and communities of the destinations they visit by running working conservation holidays. In these cases, volunteer activities are mostly for a few hours on projects such as beach clean-ups or tree planting, while more complex schemes involve research or conservation work, such as species monitoring or construction of nature trails. For example, the non-profit organisation Earthwatch Institute has a global network linking volunteers with scientific research and field conservation projects. Each year, about 3,500 people volunteer with Earthwatch to work with scientists on field research projects in more than 50 countries. Volunteers pay for their own travel and accommodation and contribute funds to support the projects they work on.

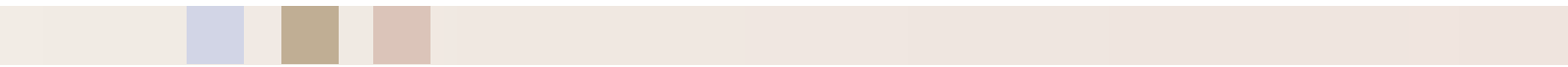
2.5 Merchandise

Protected areas can also generate income from visitors through the sale of souvenirs, clothing (e.g. T-shirts with the park logo and conservation-related motifs), and books about the park and its wildlife. Such sales can bring in significant income when operated on a firm business basis. Protected areas can organise their own sales, but it will often be more cost-effective for local shops to sell site-related materials, either with a proportion of the sale price paid to the site as a royalty, or through a concession agreement. Protected areas managers and local businesses may find it helpful to discuss with tourism companies the products most likely to appeal to tourists and the likely level of demand.

Some merchandise may be printed with the logo of the protected area with which it is associated. Remember that permission will have to be obtained in advance if logos of other organisations are to be used on merchandise.

2.6 Tourism leases and concessions in protected areas

In some countries, protected areas are permitted under national legislation to grant leases and concessions for private businesses to operate within their sites. Although this manual does not aim to provide detailed information on establishing and managing leases and concessions, this section does offer a summary of the main strategic points that need to be considered on this issue.



Leases and concessions can be an important source of income for some protected areas. Sites can control the types of businesses permitted and how they operate, and can impose conditions and revoke leases or concessions if these conditions are not adhered to. At the same time, it is important for sites to be realistic about business factors, and not to impose fee levels or restrictions that would make it impossible to run a viable business.

Leases and concessions can be applied to a wide range of business activities, including guiding, operation of shops or stalls, restaurants and catering, and accommodation provision. In some cases, the site may provide the facilities used by the businesses; in others, the businesses are required to develop appropriate facilities at their own expense and to make them available to the protected area at the end of their lease or concession. The precise approach will depend on the individual site and the levels and types of tourism that it receives.

An alternative to selling leases and concessions is for businesses to be operated by the park. While such an arrangement may generate more money directly for the protected area, the businesses may be less successful than private enterprises if parks personnel do not have tourism expertise or a keen personal interest in ensuring profitability. Businesses run through leases and concessions may be more successful and thus more sustainable in terms of economic viability, and in the long run should ensure greater revenue for the site.

Notes

4. *Examples are taken from the Center on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development (CESD), 2004.*

3 STEPS FOR LINKING WITH THE TOURISM SECTOR

The first two sections of this manual provide essential information about how the tourism sector operates and the types of contributions that tourism can make to protected areas. This section outlines three practical steps that site managers can take to build strong links between protected areas and tourism companies:

1. **Preparing to Approach the Tourism Sector** focuses on preparations that site managers can make to increase their chances of creating successful links with the tourism sector:
2. **Approaching the Tourism Sector** deals with the practicalities of making contact with tourism companies, including identifying the right people to contact.
3. **Consolidating Links with the Tourism Sector** addresses how protected areas can follow up on and consolidate their initial contacts with tourism companies.

It may be possible to get assistance with all of these steps from NGOs and government agencies at both the national and international level. Many development and conservation projects are now implemented within the framework of partnerships between public and private sector organisations, and also with the participation of community, voluntary or non-profit organisations. In some cases, several different organisations will be involved in supporting a tourism project. This strategy is particularly effective when a donor organisation will provide matching funding for monies raised from private sources. NGOs and government agencies can help coordinate the efforts of groups of protected areas, World Heritage sites and other attractions across a region in building links with the tourism sector. They may also provide advice and assistance on marketing and promotion, and on itineraries for familiarisation visits for tourism companies.


In protected areas where tourism is particularly extensive and/or important, in terms of either revenue raising or the need for detailed management of tourism, site managers may wish to consider designating a staff member to be responsible for dealing with the tourism sector, as a way to increase the site's overall capacity to manage tourism and develop effective links with tourism companies. Having a tourism specialist on staff can also help protected areas managers understand tourism from the point of view of industry managers, putting them in a better position to focus discussions on issues of interest to tourism companies and to propose ideas that are more likely to gain support.

Step 1 – Preparing to Approach the Tourism Sector

Before approaching a tourism company, site managers should have a clear understanding of the level of tourism that is appropriate for the site, based on financial goals, conservation objectives and available resources. Preparing management, business and financial plans that systematically identify all the costs and benefits associated with management of tourism can help managers ensure that the presence of tourism results in an overall net benefit for the protected area. In particular, sites will find it valuable to develop plans for:

- keeping tourism in balance with conservation goals;
- setting limits for acceptable change associated with tourism;
- establishing a framework to ensure that these limits are applied fairly and effectively; and
- creating institutional and financial structures to manage tourism revenues.

There are a variety of sources available on developing plans and strategies for management of tourism and conservation in protected areas, including the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and



Tourism Development, the UNESCO/UNEP manual on Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites, the IUCN/UNEP/WTO report on Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, and the WCPA/IUCN publication on Financing Protected Areas (see References and Further Sources of Information on page 48). These manuals provide a framework within which protected areas and World Heritage sites can review and develop tourism and conservation activities, including site policies, conservation goals, impact management, monitoring and improvements. The plans will also include budgeting information on income and expenditure, and should show the financial implications of tourism-related income and costs, with 'best case' and 'worst case' forecasts, depending on the success (or failure) of tourism.

These plans for managing tourism will be formulated within the context of the overall management plan for the site, which describes the management objectives of the protected area, the different groups that use it, its financial needs and resources, and how these resources will be used to achieve the site's conservation objectives.

The principal steps involved in preparing a detailed tourism plan are outlined below. As many protected areas managers with a background in biology, forestry or other natural sciences may not necessarily have the expertise required for carrying out detailed tourism analyses, specialist staff or consultants may need to be engaged in this process.

Review current tourism situation

A baseline of tourism in the protected area can be established by reviewing the current provision of services and facilities in the protected area, as well as any interactions between tourism, conservation and the local community. Past efforts to involve the tourism industry at the site, including through project funding, should be evaluated to identify any approaches that have proven successful. This analysis should also highlight the current benefits and adverse impacts of tourism at the site, including identification of pressure points and 'honey-pots' (places that attract many visitors).

The baseline should also include a profile of visitors to the site, including numbers, nationality, age-group, income bracket, length of stay, mode of travel, activities and behaviour. This profile will allow managers to analyze and segment the visitor market according to the typology of tourists presented in Table 2 (Page 14). A question can be included in any visitor survey about what additional facilities and leisure opportunities tourists would like to see at the site.

Finally, managers should assess how tourism to the protected area relates to tourism elsewhere in the region and/or country. This information can be accessed through the local or national media and through interviews with local and national tourism officials and the tourism industry.

Identify opportunities for improving tourism/conservation links

Once the current baseline of tourism in the area has been established, protected areas managers can determine ways to improve links between tourism and conservation, in order to increase the overall benefit of tourism to the site. This involves identifying tourism products that could be developed or are already existing, paying particular attention to opportunities for tourism and conservation to provide mutual benefits, such as a tourism experience that raises visitor awareness about the conservation value of the site. Keeping in mind conservation goals, managers can assess ways to increase the maximum number of tourists that can be handled on the site, for example by creating new trails to direct tourists away from sensitive or congested places, training park staff and private guides, and improving information facilities. The

analysis will also provide evidence of any conservation threats or social conflicts generated by visitors, which can then be potential issues to target with awareness-raising activities.

During this phase, protected areas managers should also create a list of activities and projects that might attract the financial or in-kind support of the tourism industry. These projects should have the potential to develop and/or better manage tourism in the park and also be of interest to the targeted tourism businesses. If possible, the list should include projects that could be carried out by local NGOs or community groups working with the site.

Identify ways of controlling impacts from tourism

Finally, before formally approaching the tourism industry, protected areas managers should ensure that the type and scale of tourism activities they are proposing is compatible with conservation objectives. This might require seeking out more specialized segments of the tourism market. Safeguards can be built into any proposal for a tourism product, to increase the chances of controlling negative impacts from tourism activities, including:

- requirements that tours are properly guided and/or that tourists keep to tracks and walkways and avoid disturbance or damage to wildlife or cultural features;
- proper and regular waste collection and disposal;
- assistance in providing information to tourism companies' clients about the sites; and
- established structures that will ensure that tours generate economic benefits for the sites and surrounding communities.

Step 2 – Approaching the Tourism Sector

Once the necessary preparations have been made for proposing potential links with the tourism sector, the next step is to identify appropriate tourism companies to approach. Research on which tour operators and other tourism companies are most likely to be interested in a particular site will allow for a much more targeted approach. A key resource for this research is the Internet; the type of tour (in terms of geographical area, activity and target market) that a company offers will be fairly obvious from the company's website. Other sources of information include local contacts in the tourism industry and tourism information offices. Managers should prioritize companies that are most likely to be able to promote tourism that will benefit the protected area. In some cases, these may be inbound tour operators or local ground handlers, for example where most tourists purchase their excursions locally, while in other cases outbound tour operators may be more appropriate, for instance if most tourists arrive as part of a package purchased overseas.

In many cases, the relevant individual staff within the company can be identified by asking local contacts in the tourism industry (tour operators, freelance guides, hotels, business associations and tourism information offices), or the information may be available through the Internet. For local businesses, the owners or managers will be more easily identified, whereas overseas tour operators will usually have a regional manager or product manager with responsibility for the type of tour or specific geographical region.

Most of the larger tour companies have representatives in the countries or destinations to which they send tourists. These people are mostly concerned with interfacing with their clients and with their company's ground operators, but it is also worthwhile to invite them to protected areas, because they are locally based and report back to their head office on customer interests, quality of excursions and suggestions for improvements.

High-volume outbound tour operators report that *“Local inbound agents used by our company are responsible for organising excursions. If an excursion involves a protected area or World Heritage site, it would be for the local agents to make the arrangements, and if necessary to have dialogue and negotiate with protected areas managers,”* and *“We don’t have direct links with World Heritage sites or protected areas. The programme of excursions is made by local companies (i.e. ground agents). We lack the time and the opportunity to set up links with protected areas.”*

The same applies for specialist tour operators, from whom typical comments included: *“Our local partners are responsible for liaising with protected areas in most cases. We might have an initial meeting with a protected areas manager, but otherwise only occasionally,”* and *“We have dialogue with our local operators, and these local operators have dialogue and links with protected areas as appropriate.”*

Although making local contacts is certainly important, in some cases it can also be worthwhile to contact the head offices of outbound tour operators. Head office staff will travel to destination countries periodically, and site managers can check with local representatives for opportunities to invite overseas agents to include visits to sites as part of their schedules. If local agents are not aware of protected areas and their potential for attracting foreign tourists, it is sometimes better to approach the outbound tour operators directly, who will then either notify their local agent (if they have one) or follow up their interest themselves. (See Box 4)

A key factor in building successful links with the private sector is the information provided when the first contact is made. Site managers should prepare an information packet with outline details of the site and its current tourism activities and principal conservation issues. This information

Box 4: Preparing for an effective approach

When approaching tourism companies, it is important to remember that:

- As tour operators have limited time to research any new product, it is essential to select the most appropriate people and companies to meet with and to be well prepared before approaching them.
- Tourism industry personnel will want to be convinced of the business case for involvement in the protected area, and there has to be a balance between this and conservation goals.
- Developing effective links with tourism companies is very time-consuming, and it is likely to be more effective for protected areas managers to form a consortium with other protected areas or other complementary attractions to present a ‘raft’ of places to visit. This will also save time and money on presentation and public relations.
- The personal interests of staff can influence the choices that companies make: staff with a personal interest in a site are more likely to include it in their tours, to make efforts to protect it and to ensure that tourism there is managed responsibly.
- Getting to know the particular interests of individuals working for tourism companies can help site managers find ways of interesting them in conservation issues, for example, by suggesting involvement in activities in a protected area that match their personal interests.
- Sometimes approaching tourism industry associations at local, national or international levels can help to identify which of their members it might be most relevant to approach, as well as possibilities for coordinated support by groups of tourism companies working through their industry associations.

packet should also contain the supporting elements for the proposed linkage (development of new tourism excursions, marketing of existing excursions, financial support for projects or ad hoc activities, or proposed entrance fee revision, etc.).

To enhance the chances that a tourism company will respond favourably to requests from a protected area for additional financial or in-kind support, the protected areas managers should identify projects likely to attract support from tourism companies, e.g. protection of coral reefs and bird habitats, specific species (particularly large mammals and birds), and well-known localities.

When applying for corporate financial support, it is best to address an approach to a specific named individual. The proposal should clearly explain the proposed activity and its conservation importance, and describe accounting and reporting procedures, including information on management structures and the site's record of effective conservation management. Information should also be provided about the legal status of the site and any other organisations (such as local NGOs) associated with the project, as well as potential opportunities for tourism companies to publicise their support, for example by allowing them to use the site logo in their brochures (see Box 5).

At every stage, it is essential to stress the conservation purpose of the protected area, so that the tourism industry personnel will continue to be reminded that the purpose of tourism to the site is not simply to generate revenue for the business, but to support conservation. Measures appropriate at this stage include:

- providing information about the site and tourism activities, particularly those compatible with the goals of conservation;
- asking companies to recommend visits to the site to their clients or incorporate visits in their excursions; and
- making recommendations on adapting tours to improve compatibility with conservation at the site.

Box 5: Applying for corporate support for projects

Applications for corporate support of conservation projects need to be in the form of a written project proposal. This proposal should:

- explain the background and objectives of the project, ensuring that the outcomes are clear;
- explain why the proposed project is important and how it will help the site retain its value for both conservation and tourism;
- provide a business plan for the project;
- outline the structures in place to manage the project, including legal status of the recipient and executing organisations (e.g. public/private sector/NGO), supervisory structures, personnel allocated to implement the activities, executing arrangements to receive donations, and the accounting and reporting systems;
- give details of experience in managing other projects;
- set out clear targets, and time schedules for achieving these targets;
- explain how progress on the activity will be reported back to the donor, preferably through regular project reports;
- emphasise benefits that tourism companies can gain through their support, e.g. use of logos, photographs, public relations opportunities, behind-the-scenes access to projects for tourists and other benefits that will increase the quality and interest of their tours; and
- if appropriate, list other organisations that have agreed (or are being invited) to support the proposed project.

Step 3 – Consolidating Links with the Tourism Sector

Once a tour operator has decided to include a protected area in its tours or excursions, protected areas managers should keep the company up to date with any significant changes to the site, such as new visitor facilities, changes in access times, etc. Even after the tourism company's brochure has been printed, the product manager will want to know of any changes, as these can be incorporated into customers' pre-departure information or into briefings on arrival at the destination. Tour operators should also be given guidance on appropriate behaviour for visitors to the protected area, to ensure that the impacts of tourism are minimised and tourists enjoy their visits.

Once the protected area and tourism company have agreed to proceed with certain projects and activities, it is essential to ensure that they are effectively implemented, that funds are properly managed, that key targets and timetables are met, and that adaptations are made to cope with any changes that affect the progress of the project. Specific projects can be incorporated into the existing daily management plans of the protected area. Project targets and timetables need to be realistic, taking into account the availability of resources at sites, and should avoid drawing resources away from core site management activities. It is often better to focus on small and achievable projects and actions, and to use experience gained in managing these to implement larger projects in the future.

Since tourism companies are usually reluctant to donate money to government bodies, protected areas and World Heritage sites may need to work with or set up an independent organisation, such as a 'Friends of ...' group, to undertake specific projects. This can be a way to involve other key local stakeholders, including local tourism businesses and local communities, in project activities, as well as provide an appropriate governance structure for management of funds.

Where tourism companies have provided financial or in-kind support to a project, either themselves or through their customers, providing regular information on progress made in the project or activities is vital to maintain long-term interest in the project and ensure a lasting and healthy relationship between the company and protected area. Tourism companies may wish to include news on progress in brochures, websites, or newsletters, or to schedule tours to coincide with particular stages of the project. Sites can also use progress reports to build up longer-term relationships with companies, and to highlight how individual projects fit into management and conservation overall. This can include providing information on other possible site projects that tourism companies might find interesting to support, and on further tourism opportunities.

Tourism companies want to know that any funds they provide for projects are being used effectively, which will require transparent financial reporting by the protected area on how funds are used for each specific project. Such reporting may require additional staff training in book-keeping; simple computer software is available to help with this task. Monitoring should be performed regularly (perhaps every three months), and include checks of progress against targets set out in the project plan, as well as reviews of any problems that may have been encountered and efforts made to overcome them.

The survey of tourism companies conducted for this manual clearly shows that linkages between protected areas and tourism companies are often already part of their operations, and simply need to be strengthened to provide maximum benefits to conservation and tourism. Visits to protected areas are important elements in the products offered by both high-volume and specialist tourism companies. Most tour operators provide fairly detailed information to clients about places to be visited, and can play a valuable role both in raising awareness amongst their customers about the purposes and importance of individual protected areas, and in managing their tours to minimise detrimental impacts.

The willingness expressed by many respondents to the survey for a greater involvement in the management of tourism in protected areas at an early stage, in order to help ensure market-focussed initiatives, should not be surprising. Many tour operators and other businesses would welcome further information on protected areas that could give added value to existing products, lead to new tours or excursions, and perhaps provide a focus for charitable giving – especially where it could be tied in with their tourism products and enhance the company's image.

However, although there are many benefits of increased collaboration between protected areas and tourism companies, there are also limits and challenges to this relationship. The primary challenge is financial: tourism companies operate in a highly competitive environment and have little leeway to increase their holiday prices in order to devote more of their profits to fostering environmental or social sustainability. This means that any approach to a tour company from a protected areas manager must be realistic in terms of the type and scale of contribution that can be expected.

Motivational aspects are also a significant factor: it must be remembered that the tourism companies researched for this study were not a completely neutral cross-section of the global tourism industry, but were selected because they already subscribe to some form of conservation or development activity. While many tourism companies are managed by highly motivated individuals who want to ensure that their tours are sustainable, there are still many companies that make no mention of efforts to fulfil any ethical responsibilities towards society or the environment. Of course, this situation may change over time. In a climate of increasing corporate social responsibility, it is possible that some companies need simply to be invited or gently encouraged to express their concern in a tangible form. This might involve, for instance, activities that require a relatively low-level of input, such as raising the awareness of their clients towards the environment and culture of the destinations they are visiting.

Despite these challenges, there are tremendous benefits, both for protected areas and tourism companies, of increased cooperation. If protected areas managers prepare their proposals for approaching tourism companies carefully and with an acknowledgment of the benefits that can accrue to both sides, the links forged between protected areas, World Heritage sites and tourism companies will, ultimately, improve the overall tourist experience in these important areas and enhance conservation of the world's natural and cultural resources.

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Many tourism companies include visits to protected areas, including World Heritage sites, as part of their tourism excursions. These visits could also benefit conservation and site protection, but this requires forging links between parks managers and the tourism industry.

This manual, based on interviews with tourism companies, provides practical guidance on better ways of understanding the tourism industry. It also details what can be expected from the tourism industry in terms of support for conservation.

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