

## MEDITERRANEAN HERITAGE: A PROJECT FOR THE FUTURE

### Tourism development: a cultural heritage perspective



The last two decades have witnessed many discussions, studies, and policies and the application of several models linking tourism and cultural heritage as major contributors to local development. Although many charters and conventions on cultural heritage preservation proliferated, it was not until 1976, when the Charter of Cultural Tourism<sup>1</sup> was published, that the positive and negative effects of cultural tourism on historic monuments and sites were defined and the bases for **integrating cultural assets into social and economic planning while respecting cultural heritage** were laid.

From the perspective of cultural heritage preservation, the economic value of the physical heritage is of primary concern inasmuch as it is linked to its direct use (and abuse), including tourism. It goes beyond the need for increasing the access of paying tourists to heritage places to preserving the lifespan of 'heritage': it is about how tourism revenues are distributed, particularly where it concerns the 'owners' of the heritage; about using part of these revenues for conservation purposes; and finally about raising the awareness about the heritage value of the site and the need for its sustainable use and conservation. This perspective stems from the logic that a well protected and presented heritage brings additional indirect returns to the community and economy that surround it, and a reputed heritage site increases the reputation and hence the market value of the local production that benefits from the reputation of the site.

The Mediterranean basin receives 1/3 of the income of international tourism with the impacts to match, including those on heritage. In the last decade, and according to the report Tourism Trends in Mediterranean Partner Countries (Spörel and Täube, Industry, trade and services, Eurostat Statistics in focus, 95/2008), Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPC) have been witnessing an 8.4% increase in number of nights spent by tourists and the prognosis was that this percentage was very likely to increase in the coming years. To avoid hasty short-sighted decisions that lead to inappropriate practice and development, **mobilising local groups around integrated development programmes centred on cultural heritage assets and stimulating community based tourism** is therefore urgent. Euromed Heritage approaches tourism from this perspective.

1 [http://www.icomos.org/tourism/tourism\\_charter.html](http://www.icomos.org/tourism/tourism_charter.html)



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## Balancing out heritage preservation and tourism imperatives

As a regional programme funded by the European Union since 1998, Euromed Heritage (EH), has contributed substantially to the development of cultural heritage of the Mediterranean Region at many levels, including tourism, and within an approach that promotes socio-economic development among local communities, while contributing to the enhancement of regional identities. Euromed Heritage 4 represents a further milestone in the process of recognizing 'culture' as a catalyst for mutual understanding between the people of the Mediterranean, and aims to facilitate the appropriation by people of their own national and regional cultural legacy through easier access to education and knowledge on cultural heritage and within a developmental perspective.

EH considers cultural heritage as an increasingly important lever for sustainable development when the various custodians of the “common good” – governments, decision makers, local and international NGOs, and the private sector – work together in order to guarantee imperatives of sustainability at the social, economic and environmental levels. The programme seeks to find answers to **how to make tourism an instrument of encounter, of respect, and of an understanding of the other and the other's projection in the future**. It therefore promotes an approach that goes beyond the visual enjoyment of archaeological sites and monuments and heritage cities within the framework of mass tourism, to an experience of exchange between the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

Much of the work accomplished through the previous phases of the programme and being implemented within the present phase constitutes a sound base for promoting sustainable development of tourism activities in the region. The list below is by no means exhaustive: many projects involved in conservation and rehabilitation of traditional/historic buildings and urban spaces have contributed to enhance the heritage 'value' of these sites, thereby transforming them into tourism assets.

As examples, Delta project (Phase 2) on integrated regional planning of heritage conservation and management, produced a vade mecum with guidelines targeting decision-makers, administrators, social and economic actors, but also cultural and tourism actors; Foundations for a Strong Future (Phase 4) has educated children to appreciate their heritage and laid the ground for future professional orientations in tourism services; Montada (Phase 4) promoted the recognition by politicians, governments and the population of the value of traditional architecture as an element of cultural identity and a potential source of social, economic and environmental development at local level, notably through tourism; Mutual Heritage (Phase 4) has promoted the value of recent heritage in the re-thinking of historic cities; Remeé (phase 4) reflects the immense possibilities available to develop alternative forms of tourism that are compatible with the needs of the environmentally and ecologically inclined.

Following is a summary of main Euromed Heritage projects' direct contributions to tourism development. As explained above, this summary does not take into consideration restoration/conservation works on heritage items and the rehabilitation of heritage buildings, monuments and Medinas, with direct benefits for tourism and local development:

### Projects details

#### 1. **Athena** (EH phase 4) [www.athenaproject.eu](http://www.athenaproject.eu)

*Enhancement of ancient theatres for new actualities: the endorsement of proper management plans for ancient theatres and their proper adaptive reuse as a part of a wider archaeological site or urban context, their integration within community life, and their enhancement as tourism destinations.*

In addition to surveys, inventories, training and capacity building, the project has developed tools for a better management of ancient theatres for contemporary uses, including management of tourism flows:

- i. a management plan for ancient theatres taking into consideration the socio-economic reality of its location
- ii. a manual of guidelines for the proper use of ancient theatres, including tourism
- iii. a handbook on standards and procedures in the management of ancient theatres



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2. **Mare Nostrum** (EH phase 4) [www.eh4-marenostrum.net](http://www.eh4-marenostrum.net)

*A heritage trail along the Phoenician maritime routes and historic port-cities of the Mediterranean Sea:*

*MARE NOSTRUM aims at providing a sustainable mechanism for the protection and management of Mediterranean port-cities and their correspondent archaeological sites within the Mediterranean Phoenician routes.*

In addition to surveys and related data collection, the project has:

- i. Developed itineraries in five port cities of the Phoenician maritime routes –Tyre, Tartous, Rhodes, Carthage and Marsaxlokk.
- ii. Revived local markets and local handicrafts in these port cities
- iii. Trained tourism guides in these new itineraries
- iv. Publish a handbook of guidelines for the promotion of a participative approach to tourism development
- v. Published a handbook of a selection of sites related to the Mediterranean communities along the Phoenician routes
- vi. Published promotion brochures on traditional handicrafts
- vii. Promoted itineraries with travel agents and tour operators

3. **Remée** (EH phase 4) [www.remee.eu/](http://www.remee.eu/)

*Rediscovering together the water heritage in the Mediterranean region: the preservation of vernacular heritage linked to water management in the Euro-Mediterranean region is a priority issue.*

The project reflects the immense possibilities available to develop alternative forms of tourism that are compatible with the needs of the environmentally and ecologically inclined.

- i. A series of guidebooks on water heritage, including one for the Cjrchel-Tipasa area
- ii. An eco-museum on water heritage in Tamesloht, Morocco
- iii. An eco-museum of citrus groves in Hammamet, Tunis

4. **Siwa-Tangier: Cultural heritage for a better Life** (EH phase 4) <http://www.siwatanger.com>

*Pilot actions to protect and promote the historical heritage of the Oasis of Siwa and the Port city of Tangier*

The project has implemented three major actions for both locations that have recently become two new destinations in the panorama of organised tours which put them on top of the list of strategic development of tourism in Egypt and Morocco.

- I. Establishment of six tourism circuits for the Medina of Tangier and five eco-paths in the Oasis of Siwa with training of tourism guides and enhancement of the sites along the circuits among local authorities, decision makers, civil society organisations, and the local population.
- II. Training sessions for young men and women to provide them with the required technical skills to start and manage micro-enterprises related to sustainable tourism
- III. Development of literature, maps and signage related to the circuits and eco-paths

5. **Defense Systems on the Mediterranean Coast** (EH phase 2) [www.medanet.info](http://www.medanet.info)

*Activities of restoration and museum creation on fortresses along the Mediterranean coasts*

The project produced a data base of tourist itineraries with the fortresses as part of historical defence systems on the Mediterranean coast, in Algeria, Egypt, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Syria.

It produced a CD with a map of the defence systems, historical backgrounds of the partner cities where the fortresses are located, and virtual reconstructions.

6. **Islamic Art in the Mediterranean** (EH phase 1) and **Discover Islamic Art** (EH phase 3) [www.museumwnf.org](http://www.museumwnf.org)



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### *Creation of “heritage trails” and guidebooks with itineraries for exploring Islamic art and architecture in eleven Mediterranean countries*

The two projects are considered among the most successful actions in terms of sustainability and local as well as international visibility. The project has developed:

- i. A series of catalogue/guidebooks about aspects of Islamic art in partner countries
- ii. MWNF (Museums With No Frontiers) Exhibition Trails with **72 itineraries** of virtual visits
- iii. A series of itineraries packaged under the MWNF Tour label [www.mwnftravels.net/our\\_tour.php](http://www.mwnftravels.net/our_tour.php)

Since then, the Islamic Art in the Mediterranean thematic guides related to the MWNF Exhibition Trails in Egypt, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey are available as eBooks [www.mwnfbooks.net](http://www.mwnfbooks.net); all Islamic Art in the Mediterranean Exhibition Trails are now available also online including full descriptions of all monuments and sites. The number of thematic Itineraries has increased to 90 making it possible to explore 727 museums, monuments and archaeological sites in ten countries!

#### **7. Mediterranean Voices** (EH phase 3) [www.med-voices.org](http://www.med-voices.org)

*Oral history and cultural practice in Mediterranean cities:*

Oral histories including family histories; memories of places and important events; local folklore, rituals and customs; festivals and holidays; as well as a number of daily practices which are part and parcel of everyday life, working and socialising in these cities and certain neighbourhoods within them; are presented in an online database-archive. It also offers a means of promoting greater awareness of the cosmopolitan intangible cultural heritage of Mediterranean urban landscapes amongst as wide an audience as possible. Some of the collected material was used to develop:

- i. virtual archive of oral history
- ii. teaching courses for guides
- iii. a series of tourism brochures promoting itineraries related to the cosmopolitan past of Alexandria

#### **8. Montada** (EH phase 4, 2009-2012) [www.montada-forum.net/fr/montada/montada.htm](http://www.montada-forum.net/fr/montada/montada.htm)

*Forum for the promotion of traditional architecture in the Maghreb*

Montada’s action is built on results of three EH projects: Corpus, Corpus Levant and Rehabimed; it sets out to address a comprehensive preservation of this heritage. To this end, it proposes recognition by politicians, governments and the population of the value of traditional architecture as an element of cultural identity and a potential source of social, economic and environmental development at local level, notably through tourism. Implemented by a partnership specialized in the field of rehabilitation and conservation in different cities of the Mediterranean, Montada actions target civil society by emphasising the value of traditional architecture, and the need for a better management of historic city cores so that the inhabitants can enjoy living and working within them. Among its main objectives, all related to the rehabilitation and promotion of traditional built heritage, it aims at capitalising on the heritage resources of the city, notably by learning about it and putting it to good use. The project has developed:

- i. A series of tools/handbooks and guidebooks about the traditional architecture and techniques, notably for Dellys and Ghardaia, in Algeria, or Salé in Morocco.
- ii. Two international colloquiums on Heritage, tourism & development in Sousse, then on associated legal planning documents for management in Tunis, with specific recommendations for Tunisia
- iii. A series of itineraries for Sale, with associated ceramic maps, and the leaflets associated with the new itineraries proposed.
- iv. Training of tourist guides in the six partner cities in the Maghreb

#### **9. Mutual Heritage** (EH phase 4, 2009-2012) [www.mutualheritage.net](http://www.mutualheritage.net)



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### *From historical integration to contemporary active participation*

Mutual Heritage has developed tools and capacities that would contribute to the integration of recent heritage within a territorial development approach that is attentive to local populations and to the global sustainability of historical inheritance. It underlined the value of recognising recent heritage - from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries- as a main feature of the multi-faceted Mediterranean identity and the need to preserve it and showcase it within tourism itineraries. The project has:

- i. Published a Handbook on “Tourism & recent heritage”, with management guidelines.
- ii. Published a series of tourism guides and maps on 19th and 20th centuries’ architecture for the cities of Casablanca and Teitwan (Morocco), Bir Zeit (Palestine), and Tunis and Kairawan (Tunisia), with new itineraries.
- iii. Organised the training of tourist guides on 19th and 20th centuries’ architecture in Casablanca

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#### **More themes tackled within Euromed Heritage:**

*Archaeological sites and ancient theatres; audiovisual archives; education and the production of tool kits; manuscripts; oral history; museums; traditional hammams; vernacular and monumental architecture; water heritage; women and youth; handicrafts and traditional skills.*