

# Practical, profitable, protected

A starter guide to developing sustainable tourism in protected areas



Containing ideas, case studies, guidelines and tips to help conservation, businesses, host communities and visitors all become winners



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This manual is an initiative of ECEAT International, the European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism in partnership with the EUROPARC Federation.

The manual was produced by EUROPARC Consulting GmbH, ECEAT – Projects and Lauku Ceļotājs, the Latvian Country Tourism Association.

**Financial contribution was received from the European Union as part of the LIFE+ programme, project POLPROP-NATURA (LIFE07ENV/LV/000981), and from the Latvian LVAF fund.**

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Design: Kaleidoscope

Print: Microdot Ltd., Latvia

2012



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## A starter guide to developing sustainable tourism in protected areas

This book is a practical manual on how to develop and manage tourism in protected areas. It is for all those responsible for the management of protected areas as tourism destinations.

These include not only protected-area managers but also local authorities, tourism promotion agencies and tourism business associations.

It focuses on protected areas that are in an early stage of their tourism development and wish to do this in a well-planned and sustainable manner. Examples of such areas are the more than 26,000 Natura 2000 sites which have recently been recognised by 27 European countries. This manual brings together state-of-the-art knowledge and experiences from different parts of Europe and can serve as a basic reference document.

This manual was developed and published with financial support of the LIFE+ programme, a European Union programme supporting environmental and nature conservation throughout the EU. Produced by a team of Europe's leading experts, this manual combines expertise from EUROPARC Consulting, bringing in more than 30 years of experience in developing tourism in Europe's leading protected areas; the European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism (ECEAT), adding the perspective of the tourism sector and entrepreneurs; and the Latvian Country Tourism Association (Lauku Ceļotājs) contributing the specific lessons learned in the frame of the LIFE+ POLPROP -NATURA (LIFE07ENV/LV/000981) project which aimed at the creation of a model for sustainable tourism development in the Latvian Slītere National Park. Many of the best practices and case studies in this manual are based on this Sustainable Tourism Model.

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## The case studies

	Case study	Destination	Summary	Page
	<b>Be strategic</b> Balance protection and tourism			
1	<b>Developing a tourism strategy</b>	Slītere National Park, Latvia	A participative approach to tourism strategy development based on resources, infrastructure, products and effects; goals, vision and activities for development.	19
2	<b>Zoning for wilderness experience</b>	Retezat National Park, Romania	“Experience zoning” of the national park region, resulting in guidelines for development in each zone.	23
3	<b>Zoning beyond the protected area’s borders</b>	Tara Dornelor, Calimani National Park, Romania	In the wider Tara Dornelor region, tourist zones were distinguished based on different target groups and possible outdoor activities.	25
4	<b>Visitor Monitoring Study</b>	Slītere National Park, Latvia	Guidelines for a visitor monitoring methodology to detect the environmental, social and economic impact of tourism.	27
5	<b>Ongoing partnership visitor survey</b>	Parco delle Alpi Marittime, Italy	Every four years this park carries out a survey on a sample of about 1,000 visitors, generating a range of useful information.	29
	<b>Work together</b> Partnership with communities, businesses and organisations			
6	<b>Bringing a forum together</b>	Ķemeri National Park, Latvia	The highly-visited and quite populated park developed a permanent stakeholder forum that informed decision-making and will continue to meet every six months.	33
7	<b>Training in giving and collecting information</b>	Parc Natural de la Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa, Girona, Catalonia, Spain	Tourism businesses can be accredited as official “Park Information Points”, provided they follow training about the area’s resources, visitor information and collecting market data.	35
8	<b>Partnering with local businesses</b>	Harz National Park, Saxony-Anhalt and Lower Saxony, Germany	Businesses who sign up to be “National Park Partners” can use the Park logo as a mark of quality in marketing, based on a certification process.	38
9	<b>Development of “Traditional Coastal Architecture Guidelines”</b>	Latvia	Guidelines were prepared for construction and other physical development in order to ensure conservation of the cultural heritage of traditional coastal architecture.	39
10	<b>The ECEAT quality label</b>	17 European countries	Based on a number of criteria, small rural accommodation can obtain the ECEAT quality label.	40
11	<b>Managing Community Conflict</b>	Harz National Park, Saxony-Anhalt and Lower Saxony, Germany	Stakeholder conflicts are settled in the Park’s Advisory Board that consists of 40 representatives from villages, counties, conservation groups, tourist institutions, etc.	41
	<b>Provide experiences</b> From signposts to canoes			
12	<b>A healing castle</b>	Castle Grad, Krajinski Nature Park, Slovenia	The restoration of an 11 <sup>th</sup> century Knights Templar castle formed a cultural-events centre with alleged healing powers. The Centre helps to provide a more diverse offer to tourists.	46
13	<b>Bog walking with special footwear</b>	Store Mosse National Park, Sweden	“Snowshoe walks” in the summer across bogs.	46
14	<b>Developing the Dovbush interpretation trail</b>	Carpathian National Nature Park, Ukraine	A walking trail was turned into an interpretation trail with “Dovbush”, a historical character, as its main theme.	51
15	<b>Visitor centres - from the simple to the sophisticated</b>	Harz National Park, Saxony-Anhalt and Lower Saxony, Germany	The Harz National Park has 15 visitor centres which range from small to very large. Their management is based on different organisational arrangements.	53

16	<b>SNP Nature Travel, individual walking tours</b>	Four Central European Countries	Dutch tour operator SNP Nature Travel, together with ECEAT, developed individual walking tours from farm to farm with accommodation.	55
17	<b>Country Escape, rural tourism association</b>	Byelorussia	Rural tourism is developed through longer routes using a system of "Green Ways", uniting small businesses under a common umbrella idea of sustainable travel and tourism.	56
18	<b>Developing new tourism products</b>	Slītere National Park, Latvia	New active tourism routes were developed in this park so that visitors stay longer in the area in order to increase long-term demand and the use of local services and products.	57
19	<b>Travel Day to Slītere</b>	Slītere National Park, Latvia	Yearly event to promote the Slītere park and region to national and international visitors.	58
20	<b>Combining sport and environmental education</b>	Darß Peninsula, West Pomerian Bodden Landscape, Germany	A sustainably organised annual sports event (running) is combined with environmental education for children, young people and adults.	59
<b>Communicate</b> Sharing the value				
21	<b>Developing a communications action plan</b>	Carpathian Ecoregion, Ukraine	A route map for strategic communications was developed in three staff workshops.	63
22	<b>Developing a Communications Toolkit for Businesses</b>	Forest of Bowland AONB, Lancashire, England, UK	Based on research among local people, a manual and CD-ROM were developed offering a range of useful information, tools, tips and quality images to local businesses.	64
23	<b>Producing the Slītere Travellers Guide</b>	Slītere National Park, Latvia	The national countryside tourism association, local businesses and park administration developed a comprehensive visitor guide.	66
24	<b>Installing outdoor interpretation</b>	Slītere National Park, Latvia	Interpretation panels were installed based on basic principles of quality and practicality, resulting in a step-by-step approach.	69
25	<b>Involving the local community in interpretation</b>	Defileul Jiului National Park, Romania	In order to attract more local people to the area, an interpretation trail was developed with the help of young people from local schools.	70
26	<b>Developing electronic interpretation</b>	The Broads National Park, Norfolk, England, UK	Augmented reality applications and interactive maps were developed in order to provide digital interpretation for this national park.	71
<b>Create income</b> Generating revenue from tourism				
27	<b>Entrance fees in National Parks</b>	Costa Rica	Costa Rican National Parks successfully raised entrance fees based on "willingness to pay" research.	75
28	<b>User fees in a marine reserve</b>	Miramare Marine Reserve, Italy	The reserve charges fees for activities such as snorkelling and educational programmes, funding 25% of its total budget.	76
29	<b>Concessions in SANParks</b>	South Africa	The National Park Authority granted a concession for the operation of accommodation, shops and restaurant, financing 75% of its total budget and increasing employment opportunities.	77
30	<b>Direct operation of accommodation by protected areas</b>	The Netherlands	The Dutch National Forest Service operates holiday homes and campsites in the state-owned protected areas generating significant revenues.	78
31	<b>Selling national park "shares"</b>	Müritz National Park, Germany	Attractively designed "shares" in the Müritz National Park are issued for €25 each, allowing individuals and businesses to showcase their support for the Park and generating additional income.	79
32	<b>"Voluntourism" in protected areas</b>	Chile, Peru, USA	A non-profit organisation offers "working holidays" in protected areas. Participants repair trails, restore archaeological sites or replant vegetation.	80

## How should I use this book?

The manual demonstrates how visitors, conservation and host communities can all be winners. The practical ideas, case studies, guidelines and tools featured here aim to give confidence and support to start a sustainable tourism "journey". You will find ideas and examples of working proactively, effectively and inexpensively with visitors as well as tourism entrepreneurs.

Chapter one focuses on the *background and concepts*. The following chapters are made up of practical solutions and all feature key principles, ideas and tools which protected-area managers and staff can use to ensure that tourism works for their

area and their local communities - for example by developing a *tourism strategy* (chapter 2), *working in partnership* with others (chapter 3), offering the right *attractions for visitors* (chapter 4), *communicating* clearly (chapter 5) and making the most of *income-generating opportunities* (chapter 6).

Not every detail will be found in this manual. It aims to provide a practical and workable framework for the relevant topics. Each chapter ends with an overview of background documents that will provide you with more detail about the discussed topics. The library of background documents can be found at [www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual](http://www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual)



# 1 The concept

## Why tourism?

**Overview** Developing tourism has not always been a natural objective for protected areas but well-managed tourism can bring many advantages. Tourism is part of our way of life with people wanting healthy, outdoor recreational activities. **Protected areas** offer space and beautiful scenery for these activities. Working with **businesses and local communities** it is possible to achieve a balanced and **sustainable approach**. This chapter discusses some background issues and the links between tourism and sustainable development, as well initiatives to support sustainable tourism.

**The main objective of protected areas is conserving nature and landscapes. In addition, many protected areas have a further task of tourism development and management: providing access for visitors and helping people experience, learn and enjoy what the protected area has to offer. Also by working in partnership with the local host community this kind of work helps create conditions for trust and prosperity.**

Balancing these three roles - conserving natural and cultural heritage, providing opportunities for recreation, access and information to visitors and working positively with the local host community - is a management challenge. If that balance is achieved, we talk about sustainable tourism.

This chapter discusses some background issues such as: what will tourism bring to protected areas and what are the conditions for venturing into tourism development? It also discusses the links between tourism and sustainable development, as well as past and current achievements and initiatives to support sustainable tourism in (European) protected areas.

### 1.1 The benefits and conditions for tourism in protected areas

#### What will tourism bring to protected areas?

Developing tourism has not always been a natural objective for protected areas. Especially in Central Europe and the former Soviet Union protected areas were predominantly seen as “scientific reserves” (*zapovedniks*) where any human interference should be avoided. As those reserves were centrally managed by academic bodies, hardly any integration with the local communities took place. Other parks such as the Slītere protected area in Latvia were part of military (border) zones and for that reason virtually inaccessible.

The rather low level of visitor access and facility development has kept many of these parks relatively unspoilt. However, today many of them are confronted with a lack of public support and consequently state funding. Tourism development



**Make a natural link: tourism and conservation flourish when brought together in the right way - an electric boat-based guided nature trail in the Broads National Park, UK**

can be a solution to regain public and government support. These areas are now in a perfect position to learn from best-practice examples of more developed European protected areas.



**Grow support: provide ways to experience nature so future generations will value it**

### The benefits

Well-managed tourism can bring many advantages to protected areas, visitors, local communities and wider society. It can help provide:

- **Political and financial support:** Well-informed and enthusiastic visitors are more likely to express public support for protected areas. This will, through democratic processes, increase the area's profile leading to better funding opportunities, stronger protection and strengthening of a countries protected-area system.
- **Income for protecting nature:** After having experienced nature tourism activities, such as hiking, cycling and kayaking, the visitors are often very willing to make a donation for the protection of the environment they have enjoyed. This so-called "visitor payback" can be a valuable long-term source of income.
- **Local economic opportunities:** Tourism directly contributes to local economic development through tourist services such as accommodation, local food and drink, and their supply chain such as local producers of food and beverages.
- **Better infrastructure:** Through increased economic activities from tourism, public services

can be improved, such as the development and maintenance of roads, internet services, public transport, health care and other traditionally poorly-developed services in rural areas.

- **Employment opportunities:** Through improved income and living standards, younger generations are encouraged to make a living in rural communities, avoiding depopulation of these areas.
- **Local identity:** Through the interest and appreciation by visitors of the local culture, it is easier to sustain traditions and social values.
- **Better relationships and trust among local partners and stakeholders:** Working together on tourism development creates better understanding between involved organisations, businesses and individuals. This, in turn, can help to empower communities to strengthen civil society as well as to feel a greater sense of ownership and pride in their local areas.

### Without visitors, no tourism

Although tourism can provide many benefits, its success will, in the end, depend on whether your park and destination is able to attract sufficient amounts of visitors to the area. Therefore, before starting to invest in tourism development, it would be good to look at the following questions:

- **Can I be visited?** Is my area accessible for visitors (with relatively low investment)?
- **Where are my potential visitors?** Are my potential visitor source markets within easy reach. Is the travel time and cost worth the effort?
- **Who are my potential visitors?** What are they looking for and is my park able to offer this?
- **Am I the best?** Do I have a competitive advantage ("Unique Selling Points") compared to other areas in my country or region?
- **Can I deliver?** Are my staff and the local population ready to deliver quality services and experiences?

In order to assess these "conditions" for successful tourism development, an assessment of resources, current and potential markets and competitors is essential. It is strongly advised to involve tourism market experts before starting any planning or investments. Many initiatives have failed because visitor numbers never reached the desired levels. Too often public resources have been spent unwisely in the desire to create local support for nature protection by tourism development.



**Mass tourism is not new: crowds flocking to the summit of Mount Brocken - now part of Harz National Park, Germany - in 1875 (artist: Hermann Lüders)**

## 1.2 Sustainability principles

### How are tourism and sustainable development linked?

Since the 1992 Global UN Rio de Janeiro Conference on sustainable development, sustainability has been widely accepted as the basis for planning and managing the way we live now and in the future. This was not always the case and in this section we examine how tourism and its management have developed into the 21st Century and how from negative experiences a more balanced way of developing tourism has emerged.

#### Booming tourism

It was about 200 years ago that individuals who travelled for pleasure or curiosity were first defined as “tourists” but the origins of tourism go back much further. People have always had the desire to explore, to travel and to experience other cultures. In early times, ancient Greeks and Romans undertook travel for health and pleasure and today the intent and experience are similar.

Today, tourism is very much part of the European way of life, with people increasingly seeking healthy,

outdoor recreational activities. This has become possible because of more holidays and a rise in the average income levels. Protected areas offer space and beautiful scenery to carry out these activities, resulting in more and more people drawn to them.

Tourism is booming business. It produces almost 5% of the world’s economic turnover, employs around 200 million people globally and is the fastest growing industry. Tourism is also one of the main economic drivers of Europe’s rural economies; directly and indirectly it accounts for around 10% of European GDP and 20 million jobs<sup>1</sup>. Between 2000 and 2010 European countries recorded over 440 million annual international visitor arrivals. On top of this, an even greater amount of tourism activity can be added in the form of own-country (domestic) tourists and people on day trips.

#### Pressure on resources

For many (rural) regions, tourism provides an important source of income and contributes to social and economic development. Tourism also supports intercultural understanding and can foster wider economic investment and development by improving the general image and recognition of a country or destination.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Report on Europe, the world’s No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe (Fidanza 2010)



**...but they are also visitor "hotspots" that must be carefully managed**

Tourism, however, can also have a negative impact. It can put socio-cultural and environmental pressure on tourist destinations. Profits may be realised in the short term but how durable are the destinations in the long run? If nature or landscapes are damaged the tourist attraction can lose out.

Poorly planned growth of tourism has in the past often brought problems rather than benefits to protected areas. Too many visitors in the wrong place at the wrong time can cause erosion, disturb wildlife, create excessive noise and increased air and water pollution. They can affect the ways of life for local communities through traffic congestion, limitation of access, construction of new infrastructure or increased prices and speculation for land and real estate. This may cause anger and conflicts.

### **Sustainable Tourism: the UN-WTO definition**

In reaction to the negative impacts of tourism, the concept of "sustainable tourism" was developed. Sustainable Tourism was defined by the UN World Tourism Organisation (UN-WTO) in 1988 as follows:

*"Sustainable tourism meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining*

**Protected landscapes are places where people and nature meet...**

*cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life-support systems."*

This definition means that it is acceptable to develop tourism and to benefit from it financially. Nevertheless, we should make sure that this will still be the case for future generations. If the natural environment and local culture in tourist destinations are damaged they will lose the elements of their original attraction.

### **The 3 Ps: People, Planet and Profit**

When we talk about "sustainable" activities, it usually means that we can do the activity in the same or similar way for the indefinite future (i.e. sustainable in time) in three main aspects:

- **"People"** stands for the socio-cultural sustainability of the local population. For example, the development does not harm and tries to revitalise the social situation and culture of the local communities.
- **"Planet"** concerns the sustainability of the environment: flora, fauna, water, soil and climate. For example, to inflict minimal damage or even bring about improvement to the destination through proper protection and conservation.
- **"Profit"** is about the economic sustainability. For example, to do business in a responsible manner which also contributes, over the longer term, to the economic well-being of the local community now and in the future.

The so-called **"triple bottom line"** means that we take into account in our activities these three aspects. It means running a business, an organisation or a government in such a way that it does not destroy the resources – natural, cultural or economic – on which it depends. In fact, a business that is run in this way can enhance all three aspects and continue to operate profitably, while benefiting its surrounding natural areas and communities.



**Authenticity means profit: sustainable tourism traders in Scarpe Escaut Regional Nature Park, France**

### Sustainable tourism versus Ecotourism

It is important to understand that sustainable tourism is not a “type” of tourism or a “niche” market, as is often believed, but rather a way of organising any type of tourism development. It is a (moral) obligation undertaken by all tourism stakeholders towards each other, their local community and to future generations.

“Ecotourism”, on the other hand, is a “type” of sustainable tourism for which the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UN-WTO) set up a clear definition within their 2002 Ecotourism Year. Ecotourism is sustainable tourism in (protected) nature areas. It should include visitor interpretation and should involve or benefit local communities. Frequently “ecotourism” is confused with “sustainable tourism” and also often mixed up with “nature tourism” which involves visiting natural areas but which is not necessarily sustainable.

### Twelve aims for sustainable tourism

To detail further the sustainability concept for the tourism sector the UN-WTO and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) identified in 2005 twelve aims for sustainable tourism (see box). Based on these aims UNEP and the UN-WTO, in partnership with leading NGOs and travel industry associations, have defined 37 detailed measurable criteria for sustainable tourism development ([www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org](http://www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org)).

### Twelve aims for sustainable tourism

1. **Economic viability:** to ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism enterprises so that they are able to continue to prosper and deliver benefits in the long term.
2. **Local prosperity:** to maximise the contribution of tourism to the prosperity of the host destination, including the proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally.
3. **Employment quality:** to strengthen the number and quality of local jobs created and supported by tourism, including the level of pay, conditions of service and availability to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways.
4. **Social equity:** to seek a widespread distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income and services available to the poor.
5. **Visitor fulfilment:** to provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways.
6. **Local control:** to engage and empower local communities in planning and decision-taking about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders.
7. **Community well-being:** to maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities, including social structures and access to resources, amenities and life-support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation.
8. **Cultural richness:** to respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of host communities.
9. **Physical integrity:** to maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment.
10. **Biological diversity:** to support the conservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife, and minimise damage to them.
11. **Resource efficiency:** to minimise the use of scarce and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services.
12. **Environmental purity:** to minimise the pollution of air, water and land and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors.

*Source: Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers (UNEP/UNWTO, 2005)*



**Information and interpretation such as trails are part of one of five "key instruments" to build sustainable tourism, seen here in Breña y Marismas del Barbate Nature Park, Spain**

### Sustainable Tourism Instruments

To help stakeholders reach the twelve aims and 37 criteria, the UNEP/UN-WTO defines five complementary policy instruments in order to make tourism more sustainable (see box). They are all relevant for protected-area management and are discussed in detail within this manual.

Focusing on one policy aim or criterion alone, or using one instrument, is often not sufficient. In order to be successful an integrated strategy is needed, supported by protected areas, governments, tourism enterprises and NGOs, creating synergies between the different tools and instruments (see chapters 2 and 3).

## Five instruments to make tourism more sustainable

### 1. Measurement instruments

These can be used in measuring tourism impact and keeping track of existing or potential changes:

- Sustainability indicators and monitoring (e.g. visitor monitoring – see chapter 2)
- Identification of tourism limits (e.g. carrying capacity – see chapter 4)

### 2. Command and control instruments

These are instruments through which government is able to maintain strict control on development and operation, backed by legislation:

- Legislation, regulation and licensing (e.g. commercial operations – see chapter 6)
- Land-use planning and development control (e.g. zoning – see chapter 2)

### 3. Economic instruments

These are about influencing behaviour and impact through financial means and sending signals to the market:

- Economic instruments (e.g. installing fees – see chapter 6)

### 4. Voluntary instruments

These instruments provide frameworks or processes that encourage stakeholders voluntarily to abide by sustainable approaches and practices:

- Guidelines and codes of conduct (e.g. for visitors – see chapter 2)
- Management systems (e.g. reporting and auditing, European Charter areas – see chapter 3)
- Voluntary certification (e.g. eco-labels for business – see chapter 3)

### 5. Supporting instruments

These are instruments through which governments can directly or indirectly influence and support enterprises in making their operations more sustainable:

- Infrastructure provision and management (providing visitor infrastructure such as trails, bicycle hire and good public transport - see chapter 4)
- Capacity building (see chapter 3)
- Marketing and information services (see chapter 5)



**Keep it real: sustainable tourism should involve and be built on authentic lifestyles, working with local communities**

### 1.3 The story so far

#### What has been done to develop sustainable tourism in Europe's protected areas?

Although sustainability is almost inherent to protected areas, tourism has not always been managed in a sustainable manner within Europe's protected areas. To provide guidance the EUROPARC Federation, which represents around 400 protected areas and organisations across Europe in 36 countries, launched in 2001 a key publication called *Loving them to Death? - Sustainable tourism in Europe's nature and national parks*. *Loving them to Death?* set out basic steps to develop sustainable tourism. The guidance contained a variety of case studies and tourism initiatives from all across Europe including many drawn from the experiences from transition and developing countries.



#### The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

To support and stimulate protected areas in developing tourism in a sustainable way EUROPARC established an award in 2001: the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. The core principle is to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to develop a common sustainable tourism strategy and an action plan (see chapter 2).

The Charter provides sustainability principles and criteria for the development planning and implementation of tourism in protected areas.

The ten key principles are:

1. To involve all those implicated by tourism in and around the protected area in its development and management.
2. To prepare and implement a sustainable tourism strategy and action plan for the protected area.
3. To protect and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage, for and through tourism, and to protect it from excessive tourism development.
4. To provide all visitors with a high quality experience in all aspects of their visit.
5. To communicate effectively to visitors about the special qualities of the area.
6. To promote specific tourism products which enable discovery and understanding of the area.
7. To increase knowledge of the protected area and sustainability issues amongst all those involved in tourism.
8. To ensure that tourism supports and does not reduce the quality of life of local residents.
9. To increase benefits from tourism to the local economy.
10. To monitor and influence visitor flows to reduce negative impacts.

By 2012, more than 100 protected areas from 10 European countries will have received the award. The full Charter text with the complete Charter principles can be found at [www.european-charter.org](http://www.european-charter.org). There are also two Charter manuals, "How to join the journey - a guide for protected areas" and "The journey continues", which are available to registered Charter candidates as guidance for their way towards more sustainable tourism.



**Get help: the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism is run by and for protected areas wishing to develop tourism**

### PAN Parks

Another Europe-wide initiative to help achieve sustainable tourism in protected areas are PAN Parks. Originally established with support from the World Wildlife Fund, PAN Parks focus on the protection of larger wilderness areas. The five PAN Parks principles set high management standards for wilderness conservation (e.g. no human intervention, minimum 10,000 hectares), providing access for tourists as well as creating a stable source of income for the protected areas and the local communities.

Similar to EUROPARC's European Charter process, the PAN Parks certification is carried out by independent experts and the verification procedure includes three elements: the protected area, its sustainable tourism strategy and the local business partners. [www.panparks.org](http://www.panparks.org).



### European Union initiatives

To help project Europe's unique ecosystems, the EU established in 1992 the **Natura 2000** initiative. The EU has designated over 26,000 Natura 2000 protected areas throughout all member states covering more than 750,000 km<sup>2</sup> (18% of the EU's land area) with protection under EU regulations. Development of tourism in Nature 2000 areas is only possible within strict sustainability criteria. Any negative consequences of development must be mitigated within or outside of the protected area.

In 2004, the EU **Tourism Sustainability Group** was set up and has provided guidance, focus and direction. Members are drawn from protected areas, NGOs, destinations and industry stakeholders. In 2007 it launched its sustainable tourism strategy document "Action for More Sustainable European Tourism".



### Further reading: Chapter 1

Find the following additional resources in the library of background documents at

[www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual](http://www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual)

- *Loving them to Death? - Sustainable tourism in Europe's nature and national parks* - EUROPARC Federation (2001)
- *Tourism in protected areas, Guidelines for Planning and Management* - UNEP/WTO/IUCN, (2002)
- *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas – The Charter*- EUROPARC Federation
- *How to join the journey: a guide for protected areas* - EUROPARC Federation, 2010 – manual for Charter applicants
- *Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers* - UNEP/UNWTO (2005)
- *Managing Tourism & Biodiversity: User's Manual on the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development* - UNEP (2007)
- *The Ecotourism Training Manual for Protected Area Managers* - DSE (2002)



## 2 Be strategic

### Balance protection and tourism

**Overview** Protected areas are part of a complex environment. The best way to develop and manage tourism in them is to step back and prepare a **sustainable tourism strategy**. The strategy will lead to **visitor management** focused on objectives. To work strategically the effects of tourism should be monitored and **market research** should be undertaken to find out about current and future visitors. Time invested on the basis of planning and thinking together will avoid unco-ordinated development. Based on the strategy results can be monitored and plans adjusted if required. This chapter describes the process and principles to help your strategy become a blueprint for balancing conservation and successful tourism.

**If you have concluded, based on a feasibility assessment, that tourism is indeed a viable option for your area, it is essential to start preparing a strategic plan.**

As a protected-area manager it is easy, and of course necessary, to become very focused on the place but because tourism development involves many different stakeholders, often spread out over a much wider region outside the protected area, it is critical to look at the bigger picture and adopt a strategic approach. Part of the job of a protected-area manager is to provide an objective and long-term perspective and to keep in touch with key developments in society at large. This will help create successful tourism development in the long term.



**Plan your path: protected areas need to know where they are going, using a strategic plan (Peneda-Gerês National Park, Portugal)**

#### DEFINITIONS

- ▶The management plan is the single most important plan for each protected area. It should cover everything the area does, set vision, objectives and policies and be reviewed every five years or so.
- ▶A vision is a broad statement of long-term intent providing a constant point of reference throughout all subsequent actions. A vision is shared if people involved worked together towards, and agree on, what they are trying to achieve.
- ▶A stakeholder is a person, group or organisation that can affect or be affected by the actions of an organisation (for example local communities, businesses or visitors).
- ▶A sustainable tourism strategy is a plan to develop tourism in sustainable manner. It includes an assessment of the area and visitors, also strategic objectives, an action plan and a methodology for monitoring results.

Many protected areas already have a management plan with actions for their conservation objectives. The sustainable tourism strategy should sit next to this and be compliant with objectives set out in the conservation management plan. A tourism strategy needs to be more outward-facing and should bring together the perspectives of many other stakeholders. It should include an assessment of a shared vision and implementation plan.

To balance nature conservation and tourism is not easy. However, across Europe and the world much experience has been gained in, for example, visitor management and techniques as well as processes that minimise the impact of tourism.

## 2.1 Tourism strategy development

The foundation for developing tourism in an organised way is to prepare an agreed strategy. Most importantly, strategy development is a partnership-building process – a journey, not simply a destination. How you get there is as important as where you arrive.

The strategy must be based on careful consultation and assessment of resources; it should be approved and understood by all the people involved and affected, inside and outside your protected area. Therefore, **before starting the strategy development process**, you need to **find out first who must be involved, by identifying all stakeholders** including:

- **Public sector** – municipal, regional and national authorities, other government agencies, bodies responsible for tourism, natural resources, etc.
- **Private sector** – all (associations of) businesses active in and around the area, such as farmers, tourism service providers (activity operators and guides, accommodation providers, restaurants, personal transport, attractions), commerce, logging industry, private land owners, other individuals, etc.
- **NGOs** – special interest groups active in and around the area such as environmental and cultural conservation groups.
- **Community** representatives and organisations representing tourists in the region.
- **Educational institutions and research bodies** – nearby universities can provide vital insights and research capacities.

More information on how to implement participative planning can be found in chapter 5. It is important to **think together** and to carry out active consultation:

- **Go out and talk** – call meetings, interview individual stakeholders.
- **Share the answers** – make a clear structure, take notes and share.
- **Check that everyone has been included** – keep an open list and allow others to join.

Once the participative planning structure is set up, the strategy development process can start. The first thing to do is **baseline research** to find out the current situation:

- Define the area (could be bigger than your area).
- Describe and assess the natural, cultural, socio-economic resources.
- Describe and assess existing tourism supply (accommodation, attractions, activities and other facilities).

- Describe current and potential demand (visitors and expenditure: key information if you need to decide whether or not to invest in tourism).
- Describe the social and economic context and political framework of your protected area (implications of social, political and economic situation and developments for tourism).
- Finish with an analysis of tourism-related strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis).
- Possibly bring in researchers and/or university students to collect the information.

The following steps are useful in developing the tourism strategy:

**i. Definition and description of the area** to be influenced by the strategy. This may extend outside the protected area. It should at least include a geographical description of the boundaries and general description of the area's physical characteristics. The selected area should have a natural coherence and identity, and should be recognisable to visitors as well as local people, possibly through an historic linkage or natural physical boundary.

### ii. Assessment of the area

Here you list, describe and assess all the resources that might be of interest for visitors, including:

- **natural resources:** geological resources (landscapes, canyons, mountains, lakes, beaches, glaciers, waterfalls, caves, rock formations, fossils), flora and fauna species;
- **cultural resources:** cultural heritage, archaeological sites, rock carvings and paintings, folklore, artisans, cultural events and festivals, traditional farming;
- **social and economic resources:** human resources, community organisational structures, and available infrastructure such as roads and signs, bridges, parking areas, communications and supply of water, gas and electricity.

Be as extensive as possible in the description of your resources. For example, a simple waterfall that may seem of little interest to you can be a prime attraction for (foreign) visitors. Realise that visitors from the cities and abroad are unfamiliar with the ways of (traditional) farming and might be very much interested in a "countryside experience" and enjoy seeing how cows are milked or crops are harvested.

### iii. Assessment of available tourism facilities

Here you provide an overview of the currently present tourism facilities and services, such as:

## Case study 1

### Developing a tourism strategy

Slitere National Park, Latvia

**Slitere National Park, in close co-operation with the Latvian Countryside Tourism Association "Lauku Ceļotājs", developed a tourism development strategy.** The process started with an analysis of tourism resources, facilities and products. All natural, historical and cultural points of interest for tourists were described and the offer was listed. All existing tourism activities and products were described: routes for hiking, cycling, driving, boating or canoeing, as well as other activities, guides; farms and events. Both obvious points of interest (information centres and light houses) and less obvious attractions (a boat cemetery and an antler museum) were described, with pictures and co-ordinates for each of them.



The strategy developers consulted local businesses and residents in order to obtain valuable input. For example, a guest-house owner informed that cycling tourists frequently get lost in the area and it was noted that there were no food providers in the area. As a result, the development strategy included signposting for cyclists and a travelling café for major events.

In addition, a lot of time was spent on researching problems and solutions. The park administration and local community were involved in the process continuously commenting on the work and results – both in the meetings and electronically.

In order to examine the effect of visitors on the protected area, visitor numbers were analysed by area and time; visitor-induced damage, such as eroded paths, was also noted. Guidelines were formulated on how to avoid and reduce these negative effects.

Finally, the goal, vision and activities for tourism development were outlined including both short-term and long-term visions regarding specific areas of development. This was then developed into a plan of 45 actions. The plan showed for each action which organisers, partners, terms and priorities were involved.

All stakeholder levels participated in the process of research, strategy development and drafting of recommendations. These included Slitere National Park administration, local and national government, foreign experts, academic experts, tourism businesses and residents of the area. The process was led in such a way that it allowed the local-level participants to get to the solutions and bring in their own ideas and interests. In this way they really felt it was their plan, which proved to be a key success factor.

See *Recommendations for the sustainable development of tourism at the Slitere National Park* in our library of background documents:

[www.polprop.celotajs.lv](http://www.polprop.celotajs.lv)

- **providers of accommodation, food and drink** - hotels, restaurants, lodges, bed and breakfast providers, campsites;
- **tourism operators and service providers** - naturalist guides, museums and other attractions, activity providers for trekking, mountain biking, kayaking, boating, etc.;
- **information points and other facilities** such as toilets, campsites.

It is recommended to record details such as number of beds, type and level of accommodation as well as type and quality of food providers in order to generate an impression of the area's capacity to accommodate tourists.

It might be that the number of official tourism service providers is limited, but unofficial hospitality providers and guides are active in the area. It is

important to include them as they form the basic tourism infrastructure and have knowledge about the current tourists.

#### iv. Assessment of tourism demand

Key information that should be gathered is about the current and potential demand, such as:

- Current and potential visitor numbers
- Experiences and satisfaction of current visitors
- Location and distance/accessibility of source markets to your area
- Type of tourists, their needs and expenditures

Be careful not to overestimate potential visitor numbers and expenditure as your entire strategy and investments in infrastructure will depend on this information. Get information from reliable sources such as:

- primary research in the area: questionnaires, interviews, recording current visitor numbers, primary research in potential source areas – nearby cities or capital cities, or other (nearby) protected areas;
- secondary research: reports of visitor research that has been conducted in the past.

See also sections 2.3 and 2.4 about visitor monitoring and market research.

**Table 1 SMART guidelines for successful protected-area planning objectives**

Characteristic	Guidelines	Examples
<b>Output-oriented</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectives deal with the results or accomplishments of an activity. They describe what is to be accomplished, but not how.</li> <li>• The "how" is part of the local protected area manager's creativity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Provide 3,000 visitors annually with a world-class wildlife viewing opportunity"</li> <li>• "Maintain an average annual population of 150 beavers"</li> <li>• "Increase the average ecological knowledge of visitors by 50% within five years"</li> </ul>
<b>Time-bound</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goals and objectives should maintain or move toward a desirable future condition.</li> <li>• A time-frame for an objective should be specified.</li> <li>• Time-bound objectives provide the direction needed to develop the appropriate management actions, and require accountability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Within five years, provide 3,000 visitors annually with a world-class wildlife viewing opportunity"</li> <li>• "Over the next 3 years, labour income from park tourism should increase 4% per year"</li> </ul>
<b>Specific</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectives should provide all parties with a clear vision of what is to be accomplished.</li> <li>• Once stakeholders agree to the objective, they all are clear as to its meaning, and all become accountable for their role in achieving the objective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Over the next 3 years, labour income from park tourism should increase 4% per year" (The time-frame is fixed, the increase is explicit and the term "labour income" has a shared meaning.)</li> </ul>
<b>Measurable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measurable objectives provide a clear basis for evaluating progress.</li> <li>• Measurable objectives allow managers to determine where efforts need to be placed in the future.</li> <li>• They indicate what elements in the protected area need to be monitored, where, and with what frequency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Over the next three years, labour income from park tourism should increase 4% per year." (This indicates that local labour income needs to be measured at least once per year over the first three years of the protected area plan.)</li> </ul>
<b>Attainable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectives must be realistic over the timeframe of the park plan.</li> <li>• Objectives must be achievable with the available funding and staffing resources.</li> <li>• Objectives represent a compromise between an idealistic vision (e.g. without impairment of park resources) and the reality of the impacts of tourism.</li> <li>• Attainable objectives provide a motivation for action.</li> <li>• By focusing on desired, rather than existing, conditions, objectives point towards an improvement in conditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Increase the average ecological knowledge of visitors by 50% within five years"</li> </ul>

Source: *Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (UNEP/WTO/IUCN, 2002)*

#### v. Assessment of context and framework for tourism development

Protected areas are not isolated but influenced by social, political and economic forces and conditions over which protected-area managers have no or little control. Describing these “frameworks” helps to place your tourism development in a broader picture of opportunities and threats “from outside”; it contributes to making better informed decisions.

The main focus here will be on the positive and negative impacts of regional, national and EU policies, plans and funding opportunities regarding tourism, rural (economic) development, environmental and cultural conservation, etc. Also very informative are an insight in the structure and trends within the tourism sector and tourism markets at national, regional and international level. This may require additional market research as necessary.

#### vi. SWOT analysis and strategic objectives

The assessment of resources, tourism facilities and demand are used as input for an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). This will tell you where you are. Together with the stakeholders you will have to agree where you want to be in the future, regarding the quality and quantity of tourism development, visitor management, community involvement, heritage conservation and marketing, for example. This “vision” should then be translated into objectives: explicit statements of what should be accomplished - for example, increasing visitors’ length of stay and expenditure, improving the quality of existing tourism facilities or reducing visitor pressure on sensitive environments and increasing environmental understanding.

#### vii. Action plan

An action plan should be developed with your stakeholders and include programmes and actions that support the realisation or achievement of each objective. They should state in detail what should be done when, by whom and for what cost.

These objectives must be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely or timed). They should be formulated to define when an objective has been achieved. The SMART guidelines for successful protected-area planning objectives are listed in Table 1.

#### viii. Proposals for monitoring

It is important to monitor what is happening on the ground. Choose what is working best. First decide what you need to monitor and choose the different methods available. Once you have carried out the monitoring it is important to share the results. Include the conclusions in your long-term planning.



**A dynamic process: tourism development is ongoing and linked to external conditions and events (Yorkshire Dales National Park, UK)**

As we saw in part one, the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas has set out some useful guidelines and a process for monitoring. More information is also outlined in section 2.3 “Monitoring the effects”.

Based on previous experience, the following box shows some success factors when agreeing and developing a tourism development strategy.

#### **Success factors for agreeing and drafting a tourism development strategy**

- Integrate the tourism strategy with other sectors: A tourism strategy should of course be developed in parallel with the management plan of the area. However, it should also take into consideration other development strategies and environmental policies such as those stemming from Local Agenda 21.
- Undertake extensive consultation: Although often a longer process than anticipated, undertaking a series of consultation sessions is a factor for ultimate success.
- Be visionary, clear and stimulating: The strategy should set a clear vision for what the destination is expected to be like. The style of expression should also be confident, direct and speak for all participants that the strategy represents.
- Include measurable targets: such as set out in Table 1.
- Develop linked action plans: To enable flexibility and to avoid the strategy itself becoming swamped by detail, develop the action plans in a separate process.
- See the strategy as a dynamic process: A strategy document should not be seen as the end of the process. The strategy should be treated as a living entity that is regularly updated.

*Source: Towards Quality Rural Tourism (European Commission 1999)*

## Tourism strategy development: Action points

- ▶ **Make** a list of all the stakeholders, both people and organisations, who are involved – or could be involved in the future – in your area. Look beyond tourism. Think about residents, businesses, past and future visitors.
- ▶ **Invite** them to a “getting to know you” meeting, where you introduce the concept of sustainable tourism and show some of the benefits that can come from it. Make sure there is time in the meeting to listen to their ideas; note them down to feed into the future strategy.
- ▶ **Follow** the steps described in this chapter, keeping a close look at the criteria for sustainable tourism as described in chapter 1.

## 2.2 Visitor management

As we noted, the development of the strategy is, at first, on paper but that is not where it ends. The purpose of the strategy is to bring about action; managing flows of visitors is an essential part of those actions.

Visitor management is about the type of visitors to be attracted, where they go, how many there are, what they do and how long they stay. It is an ongoing responsibility which needs a well thought-through strategy. It also needs permanent monitoring and adaptation. Visitor management helps maximise the environmental, economic and social benefits of tourism in protected areas, within the limits of sustainable use. These boundaries of sustainable use are usually referred to as “maximum carrying capacity”.

The carrying capacity can also be defined in terms of socially sustainable use, i.e. the maximum amount of visitors that can be handled without compromising the well-being of the local community or the satisfactory experience level and safety of the visitors themselves.

Positive visitor management supports the following objectives:

- Satisfying different target groups (e.g. children, the elderly, adventure seekers, walkers, horse riders, etc.).
- Increasing accessibility and avoiding traffic congestion.
- Preventing disturbance in sensitive areas.
- Supporting local social and economic development.

## Strategies to manage visitors

Protected-area managers have a number of visitor management tools or methods to manage, influence and mitigate the effect of visitors. Some of these are listed below.

**i. Zoning** - has proved to be a successful strategy for visitor management across Europe. For example, some years ago, the Valley of Marvells, in France’s Mercantour National Park, found its ancient Bronze Age rock carvings were being degraded by an increase in tourism. The park took action, banning access by cars, and carefully managing pedestrians, who must keep to signed trails or stay with authorised guides.

Zoning looks at conservation objectives of sub-areas within the park and aims to allow activities up to the defined carrying capacity. Some areas could be permanently closed to the public whereas other areas could be closed, for example, during the breeding seasons, or from dusk till dawn to avoid negative impacts from visitors. It is also possible to zone for potentially conflicting recreational activities, for example mountain biking vs. hiking; car driving vs. horse riding; swimming vs. kayaking; etc.

Zones can be based on various criteria but the main ones are:

- High/low/medium risk areas in terms of nature
- Travel methods
- Seasonal demands
- Economic needs
- Visitor needs

Once you have defined your different zones, they should be communicated to the public (see chapter 5) and you can use them to plan your tourism infrastructure (4.2). Case study 2 describes how Retezat National Park in Romania defined zones from quiet wilderness areas to high-volume areas and built infrastructure accordingly.

**ii. Honeypots** are attractions or facilities which are especially developed to encourage tourists to visit. They are deliberately planned in the visitor zones leaving other wild and more vulnerable areas free of pressure. They can be, for example, car parks, cafés or restaurants, children’s playing areas or visitor centres.

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### DEFINITION

▶ **Carrying capacity** is the physical and social capacity of the environment, meaning the ability of nature and the cultural environment to react to intervention without losing value, properties and qualities.

## Case study 2

### Zoning for wilderness experience

Retezat National Park, Romania

To join the PAN Park network, the Retezat National Park Administration and the Association of Ecotourism in Romania prepared the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy (STDS) for the wider Retezat National Park region. The strategy was based on defining four different visitor zones:

The **Hateg Area and West Jiu Valley**, both located outside the park, are planned to reach a high volume of tourists, stimulating the small-scale local tourism businesses and linking them to the Retezat National Park.

The **Central Park area** aims to accommodate a medium volume of tourists, to offer a quality hiking and interpretation trail experience and to ensure that all visitors develop an appreciation for the natural resources and park values.

**Rausor** is a mountain resort zone with high numbers of visitors. It aims to develop a

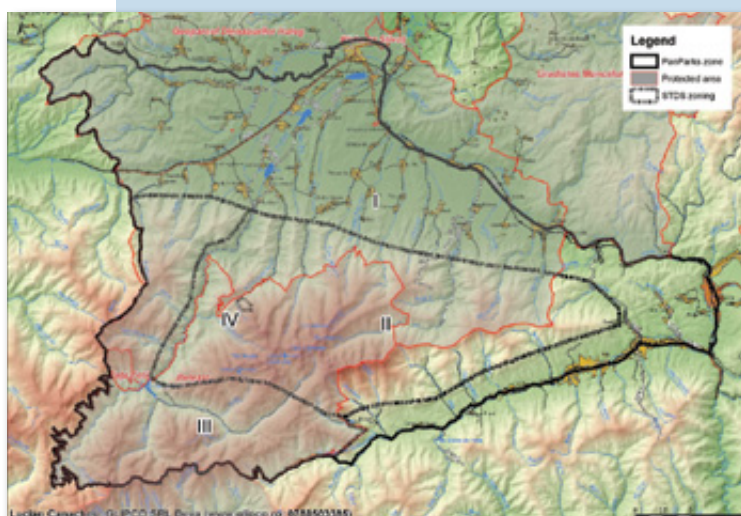
high-quality, four-season mountain experience with opportunities for alpine and cross-country skiing, mountain biking and hut-to-hut trekking.

**Godeanu** and part of the **Retezatul Mic Mountain Area** aim to accommodate a low volume of tourists, offering a remote and authentic Retezat Mountain experience, to be achieved by minimal promotion and zero expansion policy.

The visitor infrastructure development in each zone respects and enforces the character defined by the type of zone: non-intrusive infrastructure for quiet and wilderness zones, while for high-volume zones safety infrastructure is anticipated and more "accepted" by that type of visitor.

The definition of zones was decided through a facilitated participatory process, initially with the park staff and later verified with the businesses and local administration. The results of the zoning exercise were integrated by various actors in their plans. For example, the mountain rescue team reconsidered the location of a planned mountain shelter between Saua Paltinu to Buta, due to the fact that a minimum infrastructure requirement was defining the first area.

[www.retezat.ro](http://www.retezat.ro)



**iii. Roads and paths** - most visitors appreciate good paths, trails or a road network to move through an area. Roads and trails should be planned in such a manner that they only lead the visitor to the desired and designated visitor areas. Through infrastructure planning, different types of visitors (cars, cyclists, horse riders and hikers) can be guided in different directions to avoid disturbance of nature or each other.

**iv. Tourist routes** can be long or short, to be used by cars, bikes, horses or on foot. These routes aim

to guide visitors to the most important attractions, services and facilities and to ensure a high-quality experience of the area. Visitors often know very little about an area, so are glad to have some basic suggestions and ideas of how to plan their travel and what to see. Routes allow protected-area managers to steer visitor flows in desired (less sensitive) directions, put across key messages on how to behave in the area, and stimulate the local economy by leading the visitors to local businesses (4.3).

**v. Levies** are fees charged to access protected areas. Fees create a source of income for the park but are also an instrument to limit the number of visitors.

There are several different types:

- Visitors may pay an entrance fee (ticket).
- Commercial users (businesses) may pay to access the park.
- "Hidden" levies are fees where users pay an extra sum for local services (e.g. car parking); the fees are then passed on to the park (visitor tax).

**vi. Restrictions** can be set, for example, on visitor numbers, group sizes, length of stay and certain activities. For instance, there may be certain "pinch points" in the year where areas become especially popular due to a seasonal phenomenon. In some cases prohibition (banning) of certain activities may be necessary, including for example:

- walking dogs on beaches where there are ground-nesting birds;
- lighting fires (outside designated areas);
- mountain biking when paths are wet and more liable to be eroded;
- too many cars on narrow country lanes to view certain natural phenomena such as snowdrops or daffodils in spring.

Limits can also be set all year round in areas that are especially fragile. They are easier to enforce in areas which are not geographically, or through poor infrastructure, accessible.

**vii. Interpretation** is dealt with in detail in chapter 5 on communications. In brief, however, interpretation is about telling people what is special about an area and encouraging them to behave in certain ways by giving them certain information. This can include:

- Leaflets
- Maps
- Signposts and interpretation panels
- Walking trails

Interpretation is a useful method for "soft" visitor management as, unlike setting limits or restrictions, it does not require enforcement.

**viii. Permits** are special operating licences which can be given to companies working in the protected area, for example:

- Tour guides
- Accommodation (concessions)
- Bicycle and canoe hire
- Forest product gathering (wood, mushrooms, berries)
- Hunting

Permits can be issued in return for following certain guidelines as well as purchased for money. The amount of permits to be issued or sold per month, season or year can be limited. This can be a useful way of monitoring key stakeholders and getting to know them, but it can also provide a source of grievance amongst stakeholders, especially if they are used to have free access without any limitation. On the other hand, if permits are limited compared to the demand of the service, their price may rise or stronger quality and sustainability conditions could be introduced.

**ix. Codes of conduct** are voluntary sets of guidelines that aim to influence behaviour of tourists and/or activity providers. They can be communicated to the target groups on interpretation panels, leaflets at visitor centres, and by activity providers (tour guides) to their customers. Topics that may be included in codes of conduct are:

- environmentally responsible behaviour (e.g. stay on trails, don't drop litter, set up camp responsibly, use biodegradable detergents, minimise use of firewood, etc.);
- socio-culturally sensitive behaviour (photographing local residents, visiting places of worship, etc.);
- responsible company management and ethics (qualification of guides, employment conditions, etc.).

### Visitor management: Action points

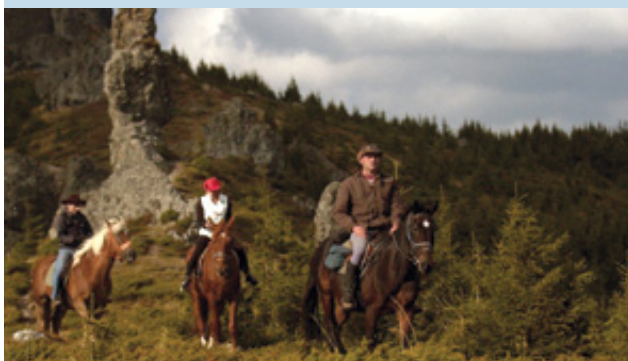
- **Work** with your key stakeholder group to define the different activities and experiences that the different places in your protected area can provide to visitors.
- **Indicate** on a big map all the different places people can reach. Make a list and include how people will arrive, where they will stay, and what they will do.
- **Make** a separate map indicating both environmentally robust and vulnerable places of your area.
- **Look** at where visitor use and vulnerable areas overlap, evaluate strategic visitor management priorities using mentioned examples.
- **Work out** for each area the cost of solutions and likely benefits.
- **Prioritise** list according to cost and benefits, working with operational staff and any key partners.
- **Put** plans into action.
- **Monitor** results and report them to stakeholders.



### Case study 3

## Zoning beyond the protected area's borders

Tara Dornelor, Calimani National Park, Romania



**When developing a tourism concept for the Calimani National Park an expert team advised not only to take the park itself into account but also to consider the wider Tara Dornelor region in which the park was located using the park as a marketing brand of the region.**

In the Tara Dornelor region, tourist zones were distinguished based on different target groups and possible outdoor activities. For example, hiking, mountain biking and ski mountaineering are directed into different zones outside the park area. This limits the pressure on nature in the park area; it distributes and increases the tourist spending in the local communities. The park administration influences tourism flows into the park by playing a leading role in distributing tourists to local (partner) businesses at a regional level.

The approach outlined above shows that by zoning on a regional level a national park can play an important role in attracting visitors to the region without necessarily attracting all visitors into the park area. This way, Calimani National Park has a good chance of preserving its current status as one of the least impacted parks in Romania while contributing to regional development.

In addition to regional zoning, the expert team continued to assist building up a partnership for tourism development in the whole region. The Association of Ecotourism Tara Dornelor (AETD) was formed with board members from the park, businesses, rescue team and municipalities, and connected to a national system of ecotourism certification.

[www.taradornelor.ro](http://www.taradornelor.ro) and [www.calimani.ro](http://www.calimani.ro)

## 2.3 Monitoring the effects

In order to manage the effects of visitors strategically, we need to observe, understand and predict visitor patterns. If we do not, major losses may affect the area or tourists' dissatisfaction may remain unnoticed. Yet often, monitoring of visitor levels and types is not undertaken in an organised way.

The purpose of monitoring is the identification and observation of the effects of visitors over the longer term on the natural and cultural values of an area, evaluate the results, and ensure activities are aimed at the sustainable use of the territory.

The following are some key indicators or activities that can be monitored:

### i. Visitor numbers and types

- Where visitors come from (address)
- Age (for example in age groups such as 0 - 18; 18 - 25, etc.)
- Gender (male, female)
- Motivation (why they are there)
- Social group (background such as professionals, students, etc.)
- Time spent (how long they are in the area)
- Money spent (on accommodation, food, travel)

### ii. Visitor activities

- Main activities undertaken (what and for how long)
- Nature of activity (what they are doing)
- Money spent (entrance fees, other costs, e.g. travel)
- Marketing (how they heard about the activity)
- Potential activities (other things they might like to do)

### iii. Visitor satisfaction

- Quality (if they are satisfied)
- Improvements (what could be made better)
- Weaknesses (what have been the problems)

### iv. Impacts of management and infrastructure

- Changes made (in management)
- Effects of changes (before-and-after evidence)

### v. Environmental impact of tourism

- Effects on biodiversity and endangered species (both positive and negative)

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#### DEFINITION

►Monitoring is the systematic and regular observation of a place, in qualitative (non numerical) and quantitative (numerical) terms.

- Effects on non-living components of the environment (degradation and erosion of rock surfaces, etc.)
- Effects on water supply (any changes in the watershed), waste and waste water, energy supply, carbon emissions

#### vi. Socio-economic impacts

- Impact on the local economy (obtain visitor-spend information)
- Views and experiences of the local population (hold public meetings or carry out community surveys)

#### vii. Trail conditions

- Deterioration of surface, infrastructure and signs
- Littering and waste management
- Environmental impacts

Regarding the process, it is desirable that the monitoring structures should be:

- **regular** - so that it builds up a picture of change over time;
- **repeatable** - and flexible enough to cope with changing conditions and management priorities;
- **reported** - the results should be shared.

Visitor monitoring does not have to be complicated. Using a combination of techniques provides the best results. The following table shows a list of potential methods, with their benefits and drawbacks. Do not hesitate to find your own local method of monitoring – the most effective techniques are often those developed on the spot.

In Slītere National Park, Latvia, a study looked at the best ways of monitoring tourism and its economic, social and environmental effects. The resulting *Guidelines for a Tourist Monitoring Methodology* provided clear guidelines which are summarised in Table 2.

Slītere National Park identified five factors essential for monitoring success:

- a) The interest, understanding and co-operation of all parties involved
- b) Financing for specific types of monitoring
- c) Data security and long-term public access
- d) Monitoring methods that are at the right level – effective to implement and interpret
- e) Concrete actions – steps taken to solve problems, thanks to the data

Case study 4 shows that monitoring should be undertaken strategically and be carried out under

the responsibility of the protected area so that its accuracy can be guaranteed. However, it may be worth considering engaging a trusted professional organisation to ensure that the results are fair and accurate.

### Monitoring the effects: Action points

- ▶ **Make** a list of the types of monitoring that you could use.
- ▶ **Write** down for each one, what it would involve, also the frequency, the results and the potential organisers.
- ▶ **Draw up** a monitoring plan for the area, to include:
  - a large-scale general monitoring survey to be repeated every five years;
  - key indicators – topics from wider plans and strategies that will be assessed;
  - a technical process of gathering data – how the monitoring will be carried out and by whom; budget;
  - data analysis – extract relevance and present in understandable ways, for example with bar and pie charts, and compare with other similar areas/situations;
  - a scrutiny process – who will check that the data and analysis is correct;
  - a reporting process – how the data will be shared, including which parts of the data will remain confidential.

## 2.4 Market research and assessment

When developing tourism it is essential to understand the expectations and needs of your current and potential visitors. Market research is similar to monitoring but considered from the perspective of the visitor or “customer” and their use and perception of the area.

Whereas monitoring focuses on current visitors, for market research you also need to think about who your visitors might be in the future. To do this you could look at other similar protected areas to yours, potentially in other countries. What kind of experiences do they offer? What is their market share? Are their visitors satisfied?

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#### DEFINITION

▶ **Market research** is gathering information about existing and potential visitors for strategic purposes (infrastructure planning, promotion strategies and product development).

**Table 2** Key monitoring methods and their benefits and drawbacks (Slitere National Park)

Type	Example	Benefits	Drawbacks
Self-registration	Guest book entries - a simple guest book where visitors write down their own thoughts.	Cost-effective Participative	Could be inaccurate.
Visitor registration form	Accommodation providers note key details	Cost-effective Accurate	Only covers overnight stays.
Visitor surveys	Face-to-face survey	Accurate	Costly in time and labour.
Remote sensing and traffic counting	Through automated counting devices using infrared devices, etc.	Accurate	Technical (could break down); costly.
Visitor survey – self-completion	Survey forms left in weatherproof boxes at key points	Cost-effective	Vulnerable to damage by weather and people
Interviews	One-to-one interviews	Accurate and give possibility to ask follow-up questions.	Costly in time and labour.
Internet survey	Online survey tools	Can be free and accessible to many.	Could potentially be falsified.
Focus group discussions	A small sample group is brought together to discuss issue	Accurate and open – good depth of information revealed	Too small sample could make results unrepresentative.

#### Case study 4 Monitoring environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism

*Slitere National Park, Latvia*

**To be able to support the development of sustainable tourism the Slitere National Park in Latvia created a comprehensive framework for monitoring tourism dynamics and its economic, social and environmental impacts.** It shows many different types of monitoring with their advantages, shortcomings, recommended frequencies and results, as well as the specific objectives and subject areas that each method may monitor.

Six crucial steps in the process are to:

1. review and select the most appropriate visitor monitoring methods (e.g. surveys, interviews, electronic and physical visitor counting, photo monitoring, sample plots in "attraction" sites to observe trampling, erosion, etc.);
2. set the monitoring period and points of reference;
3. carry out monitoring activities;
4. analyse monitoring data;
5. present monitoring results (e.g. at evaluation events);

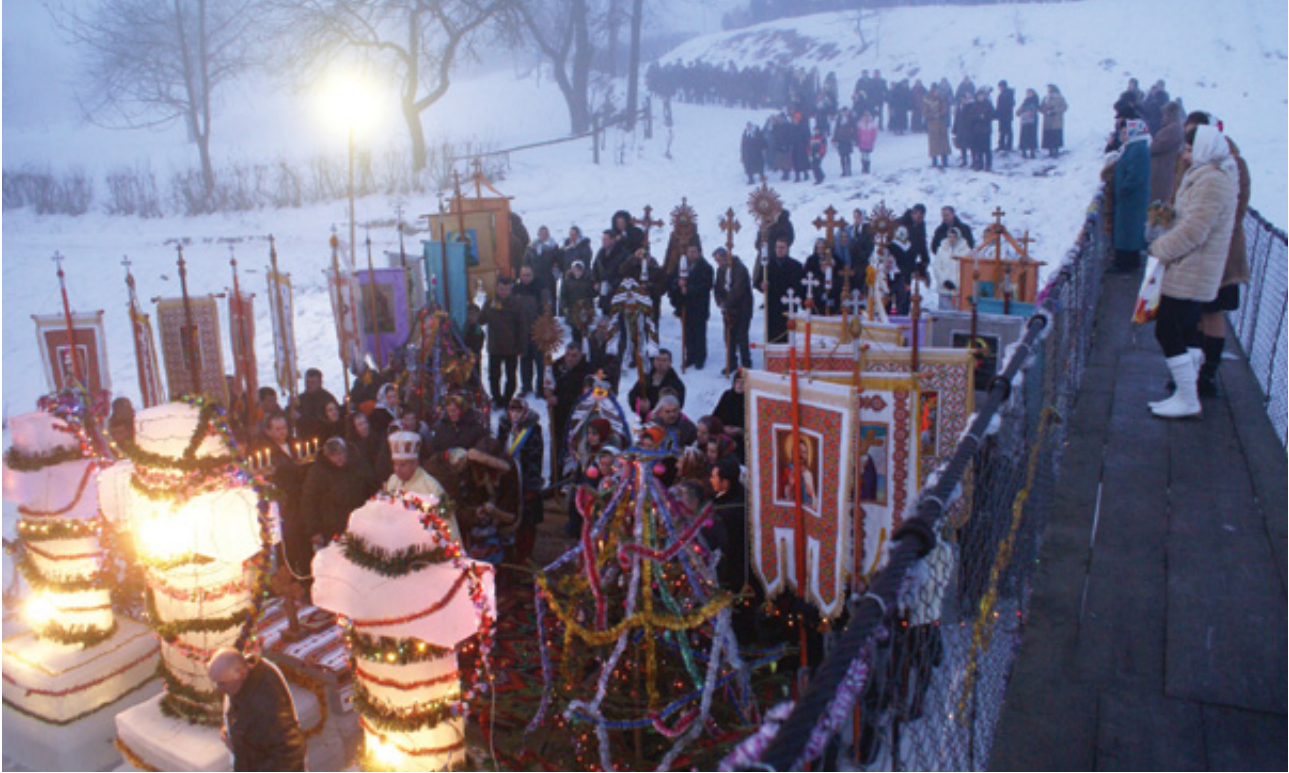
6. use monitoring data for planning of further activities regarding the required improvements, tourism products and services, visitor flow management, infrastructure development, co-operation between all relevant parties.

In this way and by combining a number of methods (regular visits and visual observation; digital photo monitoring; observing sample plots; recording the negative impacts along trails; electronic and physical visitor counts, visitor surveys and interviews with tourism businesses), visitor monitoring in Slitere National Park generated vital input for decisions on future development in the area.

For example, the data proved that increasing visitor numbers would not harm environmental values if visitor flows are carefully managed and if relevant infrastructure is provided. It appeared that tourism stimulated the local economy without compromising environmental conservation goals.

More information can be found in the *Monitoring methodology for monitoring the dynamics of tourism environmental, social and economic impact in the Slitere National Park*, available in the library of background documents at

[www.polprop.celotajs.lv](http://www.polprop.celotajs.lv)



**Back to the source: tourists seek to experience authentic cultures, such as this celebration of the Baptism of Christ**

In case study 5 we see how protected-area visitors have been assessed through questionnaires in co-operation with local businesses. This provided useful information to help the park authority communicate with the visitors, manage their needs and expectations and to promote the park to them.

You can also use methods other than questionnaire surveys to obtain market information. For example, “focus groups” where you ask a sample of (potential) visitors to discuss a topic together, or in-depth interviews with a sample of visitors, or interviews with experts and tourism professionals such your local service providers.

Most tour operators have their own detailed feedback forms for clients and are very sensitive to the results when it comes to their future choice of destinations, programmes or individual facilities. Therefore it is vital to be aware of this and seek to work closely with the tour operators or their local representatives.

Techniques you use for market research are to a large extent similar to those used for gathering monitoring data (see table 2) and can be easily combined. Surveys often include questions for both monitoring and marketing purposes. Whereas the outcomes of monitoring are used to evaluate and adapt protected-area management policies, market research aims to provide vital information for product development and communication and marketing activities. In order to promote a high-quality, satisfying experience to visitors it is essential to share market research results with local businesses and, as with monitoring, repeat the research at regular intervals.

**The consumer perspective**

The market for (nature) tourism has, in recent years, been changing, with tourists planning more but shorter holidays, showing greater interest in health and activity holidays and more concern for the environment. People have increasingly come to value sustainable destinations and tourism businesses. This is partly driven by many initiatives from international organisations (such as IUCN, UN-WTO and the EU) as well as different national and regional bodies promoting sustainability initiatives such as Local Agenda 21, integrated quality management, quality labels and certification for food, destinations and accommodation.

But there are other trends that foster more awareness among consumers. European countries have, in general, moved into a post-industrial phase and, with the pressures and stresses of modern-day life, many people have come to value more sustainable or “authentic” ways of life. Experiencing the “simple life” is becoming a strong marketing tool. Protected areas, especially in the unspoilt central and eastern areas of Europe, are in a good position to provide these experiences and benefit from this trend.

Common motivating factors for those searching for natural and cultural heritage often include one or more of the following:

- physical well-being and health;
- discovery, intellectual stimulation and education;
- enjoyment of unspoilt nature and beautiful scenery;
- contact with people from different backgrounds and cultures;
- or simply just adventure and excitement.

Furthermore, tourists in search of nature or culture are rarely attracted to large luxury hotels. Typically they select smaller accommodation with a certain level of comfort and quality, which provide a personal service. Hotels that have a local touch and feature local crafts and traditional architecture are becoming increasingly popular.

Although it is hard to give a definite profile of the nature tourist, an EU study (EC, 2002) has attempted to describe the typical nature and cultural tourist as:

- in the 39 to 59 age group, more educated, greater travel experience, sensitive to environment and social concerns;
- taking holidays outside peak seasons - 7 days or less;
- booking and travelling independently, rather than through tour operators;
- no clear preference of destination - often regional.

### Market research and assessment: Action points

- **Work out** what you need to know. Write down what you think you know already – how many visitors in total, who they are, etc. Then make a list of things you do not know - questions you would like to answer about (potential) visitors to your area.
- **Collect** already available tourism market information from other parks, universities, tourism promotion agencies or government bodies. Often you may not be aware of what is already known.
- **Prepare** a market research plan by:
  - writing down the key questions and designing a survey which will get answers to them;
  - noting which business partners will be interested in this information, and approaching them to work with you if appropriate;
  - designing a survey with the appropriate technique from table 2;
  - analysing the results and presenting them in an easy-to-read format (for instance with pie or bar charts);
  - sharing the results with appropriate stakeholders;
  - changing your practices (products, communication) in line with what the research tells you (for example, if people want more guided access, put together a programme of guided walks);
  - monitoring the success of the changes through more market research.

### Case study 5

#### Ongoing partnership visitor survey

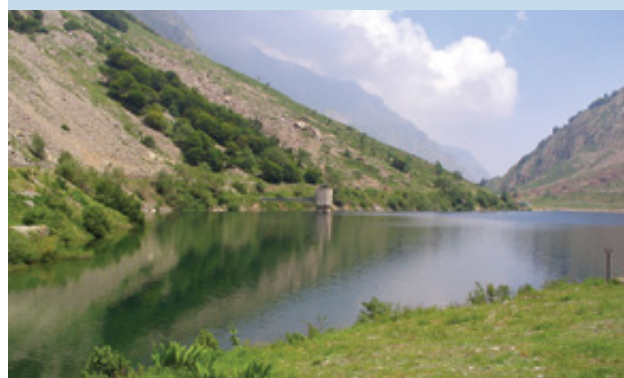
*Alpi Marittime Nature Park, Italy*

**Every four years Alpi Marittime Nature Park carries out a survey on a sample of about 1,000 visitors. A standardised questionnaire is used by interviewers in strategic places in the park (trails, parking, information centres) or by the local tourism businesses for their clients. The aim is to know the visitors' profile, their needs and interests, their level of satisfaction regarding the services and the offer provided.**

It is repeated regularly in order to monitor the evolution in time and test the effectiveness of the policies and strategies in place.

So far, about 4,200 people have been contacted in four surveys. A range of useful information has been discovered - for example that 90% of the visitors are looking for nature and 78% are coming because it is a protected area. Most of them are day visitors coming from nearby. 78% of visitors are interested in seeing wildlife, and 88% think that the area should be conserved as it is. A very remarkable result is that 40% would be willing to make a financial contribution.

[www.parcoalpimarittime.it](http://www.parcoalpimarittime.it)



## Further reading: Chapter 2

Find the following additional resources in the library of background documents at

[www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual](http://www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual)

### Strategy

- *Managing Tourism and Biodiversity (extended checklist for baseline research on page 90-100)* - CBD/UNEP (2007)
- *Tourism strategy and management plan of the Aggtelek Karst and its surrounding areas* - Aggtelek National Park Directorate (2008)
- *Regional tourism management and development plan in the Babia Gora Region (2008-2018)* - Stowarzyszenie Przyjaciół Babiej Góry (Friends of Babia Góra)
- *Recommendations for the sustainable development of tourism at the Slītere National Park* - Latvian Countryside Tourism Association (Lauku Ceļotājs)
- *Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development* - CBD (2004)
- *Linking Communities, Tourism & Conservation, A Tourism Assessment Process* - Conservation International (2008)

### Visitor management

- *Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy for the Retezat National Park - chapter 6 Retezat Regional Tourism Development Concept*
- *Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas - chapter 7 Tools for visitor management* - IUCN, UNEP, WTO (2002)
- *Tourism and Mountains, A practical guide to managing the environmental and social impacts of mountain tours* - UNEP (2007)

### Monitoring

- *Visitor monitoring in nature areas – a manual based on experiences from the Nordic and Baltic countries* - Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (2007)
- *Guidelines for a Tourist Monitoring Methodology at the Slītere National Park* - ECEAT & Latvian Country Tourism Association (2009)
- *Current Practices in Monitoring and Reporting on Sustainability of Visitor Use of Protected Areas* – K. Higginbottom et al. (2010)
- *The Trail Planning Guide – chapter 7 Monitoring and maintenance* - ETE/UNESCO-MaB (2007)
- *Towards Quality Rural Tourism - chapter 5: Strengthening quality management and monitoring processes* - European Commission (1999)

# 3 Work together

## Partnership with communities, businesses and organisations

**Overview** Protected areas are typically shared areas and tourism operates across organisational and geographical boundaries. Building partnerships with communities, businesses and other organisations is essential. The best way to build effective partnerships is to create a **partnership forum**, **offer training**, develop **shared standards** for services such as accommodation and build trust to **resolve conflict**.

This chapter describes how building partnership takes time and effort yet is worthwhile as it leads to greater understanding, acceptance and long-term achievements.

**Tourism development is most successful if local governments, tourism promotion agencies, local businesses and the protected-area management work together in a coherent manner. Together they should define and develop products, target markets and attract visitors at the right moment and to the right location.**

This can be done most effectively on a permanent co-operation platform and based on a common vision and strategy. This will avoid conflicts, create mutual understanding and respect and will make sure a balance is created between economic development, needs of visitors and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.



**Work together: local communities have strong identities - and it is important to understand and link with them**

### DEFINITION

▶ Collaborative working - or partnership working, is where different organisations work together, usually for the same purpose.

Although working in a partnership is not always easy, and certainly takes time, there is no doubt that sharing problems and defining common solutions provides a source of energy and a constant "reality check".

Stakeholder involvement in tourism development can take different forms. Table 3 describes the various levels ranging from limited to intensive involvement of stakeholders.

High stakeholder involvement takes more time and resources but eventually leads to better results particularly in stakeholder satisfaction and the long-term success of tourism development in your area.

In this section we look at how you can use a partnership forum, quality standard schemes, conflict resolution and training to build partnerships with the people and organisations that have an interest in your protected area.

To develop collaborative ways of working that include communities and businesses, protected-area managers need to be open-minded. This means actively seeking feedback, listening to it, and then acting on it. Having an "open" agenda and process will help shift thinking from "reactive" to "proactive".

Trust must be established, and this can take time and effort. Many people are naturally suspicious of other organisations and you are asking them to work in a new way. The positive side is that, once trust is established across organisations, a lot of projects and ideas start to flow as there is a richer source to work from. As people work across their boundaries they become more daring and active, and see more opportunities.

**Table 3** Levels of stakeholder involvement

Approach	Description	Selected techniques	Message to the public
Public information/ education	Knowledge about a decision	Advertising Newspaper inserts Posters	<i>You want them to know and understand about it.</i>
Information feedback	Being heard before the decision	Briefings Focus groups	<i>You want them to understand and support your programme.</i>
Consultation	Being heard and involved in discussions	Community meetings or gatherings Conferences Workshops/problem-solving meetings	<i>You want to understand them and value their views and input.</i>
Extended involvement	Having an influence on the decision	Advisory groups Task forces	<i>You seriously expect to implement most of their advice.</i>
Joint planning	Agreeing to the decision	Consultation Mediation Negotiation	<i>You are fully committed to using the results in all but the most exceptional circumstances.</i>

Source: *Practical management tools for resource protection and assessment* (Wight, 2004)

<b>How to work together – the basic checklist</b>	
<p><b>1. Prepare to work in partnership by making sure you have the capacity to do so:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Find out about your (potential) partners – aim to understand who they are and what they want.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Train your staff to work with others – make sure that they understand it is a priority, and that they have the necessary skills.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use language and terminology that your (potential) partners can understand.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. Offer help to your partners – make it useful for them to work with you by offering:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Training for their staff – especially in areas they work in like tourism, nature, etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Professional advice and technical assistance (provide ideas, contacts and advice about development using local styles, etc.)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Financial assistance – target funding packages (grants/low-interest loans) for quality/sustainability improvements.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop and offer marketing tools that they may find useful, like information leaflets and information about partners on the protected area website.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Create a partnership forum - an organised collaboration, which:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> meets regularly in a shared space;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> has a set agenda, minutes, and records of decisions;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> has a set membership but welcomes new members;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> is effectively chaired and run.</li> </ul>	<p><b>4. Share responsibility by setting up joint projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create a vision – dream together.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make an action plan covering what you want to achieve together.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Look at setting up joint funding bids.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create and run shared standards schemes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate successful projects and praise your partners.</li> </ul>



## Case study 6

### Bringing a forum together

*Ķemeri National Park, Latvia*

**Ķemeri is an easily accessible and therefore popular national park near Riga, receiving high numbers of visitors but also being home to about 3,000 inhabitants. This made appropriate stakeholder involvement and partnership development especially important.**

The park authority organised a first meeting with an open invitation and the plan to see who would come. The event was fairly successful but nevertheless it was felt that something else was needed to build trust, something more personal.

An external tourism expert developed a questionnaire and house-to-house, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the less familiar stakeholders. The idea was that personal contact would be the best at the beginning of this project to provide a basis for sustainability, and this has proved to be true. At the second plenary meeting, the participants already knew the host and were ready to get to know each other – and to think about the possibilities in the future. Vision work and a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) was carried out.

It was decided to show an immediate reaction to problems indicated by forum participants to let them know they were being listened to. As marketing and a lack of (quality) information about Ķemeri National Park were among the first issues to be pointed out, an excursion around the park and also seminars on these issues followed shortly. Furthermore, the National Park Authority ordered essential research from abroad. This was all just the beginning of what is seen as a constant process and long-term relationship between the park and stakeholders.

The forum consists of representatives of municipalities, NGOs, tourism businesses (guest houses, service providers), guides, and the park administration. Involvement of local producers, craft experts and catering services is anticipated.

The forum has no legal status at the moment but there are plans to develop into an NGO. During the process of strategy development the forum met seven times in 2010 but plans to meet twice a year in the future: once in early spring (discussing the news for the summer season, excursions in nature) and once in autumn (discussing results of the summer season and preparing for the winter season).

[www.daba.gov.lv/kemeri](http://www.daba.gov.lv/kemeri)

## 3.1 Stakeholder forum

To work effectively with a range of partners you need to establish a process which is fair and inclusive. One way of doing this is to have a standing “forum”. This is a wide group of interested parties (stakeholders), from small businesses to government organisations.

The idea is to build stable and trustful relationships through regular meetings, and to develop and promote a shared purpose by looking for common benefits, such as joint product development and funding.

To run the forum effectively and successfully, one member should provide leadership in planning and development. Often leadership is taken by the park agencies but it may be better to give this role to a local authority, a group of municipalities, an (eco) tourism association, a development agency or a body especially created to manage tourism.

### DEFINITION

▶A partnership forum is a group of organisations and/or individuals meeting regularly and working together.

Another arrangement is to have twin bodies providing leadership, one responsible for development and funding and the other for marketing and private sector co ordination. In addition, (external) facilitators can be used to run meetings, or an independent chairperson may be brought in to establish trust.

In order to run a stakeholder forum effectively it is often useful to set up working groups. Such groups can be formed around sectors (such as agri-tourism, activity tourism), themes (such as promotion, monitoring) and locations (separate groups for individual communities or local areas). They can be quite small and focused, or larger and more inclusive, depending on the task in hand.

Stakeholder forums can create change and effectively solve problems. For example, Norway’s Dovrefjell–Sunndalsfjella National Park faced a problem that most of the small businesses had a less than 50% occupancy rate in the main season – an emergency situation in business terms. Action was needed, so the park worked with the businesses to attract the target group – hikers – by using a key

natural asset of the area, the reindeer. In partnership with local businesses a wild reindeer visitor centre was established. This led to a stronger branding of the areas and increased number of (overnight) visitors.

As case study 6 from Ķemeri National Park, Latvia, shows, long-term success is built on careful organisation and positive relationship-building. It is possible to start from zero and build up an energetic and useful group.

### Success factors of a stakeholder forum

- Dedicated leadership.
- Full participation by the local authority or several local authorities, including links to all the relevant departments such as environmental management, planning and transport.
- Secure funding over a reasonable time period.
- Links with regional and national tourist boards to gain support and expertise and avoid duplicating action.
- Strong representation of the local tourism industry.
- Recognition within the wider community.
- Internal communication through regular newsletters, a shared website.
- A small working team, committed to quality. The driving force of one key individual is often the key to success.

*Source: Towards Quality Rural Tourism (European Commission 1999)*

### Stakeholder forum: Action points

- **Meet personally with all the people/organisations that are relevant “players” in your area.** Introduce yourself and your protected area, and the idea of working together in a forum. Find out what their priorities are, and note them.
- **Start to build up the organisational framework of the forum with the following steps:**
  - **Plan the first meeting:** Carefully plan a meeting with a presentation which will address the priorities raised in the individual meetings and include time to discuss and ask questions. Staff should be briefed to be welcoming and encouraging, and to introduce forum members to each other.

- **Plan regular meetings:** Set a regular timetable of meetings and make sure all the potential stakeholders know about them. Choose times that will be suitable for most parties to attend. Possibly rotate meeting times so that it is not always the same person who cannot make it.
- **Create a constructive atmosphere:** Make sure the meetings are well run, starting on time and proceeding in an organised manner. Consider offering refreshments to create a welcoming atmosphere.
- **Guarantee a reliable meeting structure:** Make sure there is a clear agenda to which everyone can contribute, and that this is circulated before the meeting along with any relevant information. Have a chairperson to run the meeting, and someone to take notes. Make sure everyone gets a chance to have their say. After the meeting, circulate the notes and keep good records.
- **Establish working groups and internal communication.**
- **Review progress on a regular basis;** address problems and reward successes.

### 3.2 Training

An effective way of inspiring people to work with you, and giving them something in return, is to offer training. For protected areas this is an especially useful tool as they can use the capital they have (the natural richness of their area) as an educational resource. Training is also a sustainable investment. It can be shared across organisations, is relatively cheap and does not rely on expensive infrastructures.

There are many areas in which one can offer training (see box opposite – Possible training topics) and which will appeal to various audiences. For example, in Scotland, UK, the Cairngorms National Park developed a training course for front-line staff in local tourism businesses. This included information on the natural and cultural heritage of the area, details of local attractions, an explanation of the work of the park authority and suggestions for closer working between businesses. The project offered local people the chance to take part in free courses to promote, teach and train in areas that were central to the park’s aims, such as wildflower identification and pond creation.

As case study 7 from La Garrotxa Natural Park, Spain, also shows: training provides a source of support towards communities and businesses which can be repeated year after year.

## Case study 7

### Training in giving and collecting information

*Parc Natural de la Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa, Catalonia, Spain*

**Tourism businesses in the European Charter area of La Garrotxa can be accredited to become an official "Park Information Point" by signing an agreement and following intensive training about:**

- **the protected area's outstanding natural and cultural heritage,**
- **how to give good information to visitors and customers and**
- **how to collect useful information about their customers for protected area statistics and visitor management.**

For those purposes the participating businesses receive a full dossier about the area, an identifying "Park Information Point" sign, a suggestions box and a set of leaflets and information materials. The programme is run in partnership with "Turisme Garrotxa", the local tourism association.

Since 2001, over 64 tourism businesses have received their accreditation, including hotels, bed and breakfast providers, campsites, youth hostels and restaurants. Through this they have established a good relationship with the protected-area authorities. Additionally, 22 of them are partners in Part II of the European Charter which accredits partner organisation for a Charter area.

[www.parcscatalunya.net/garrotxa.htm](http://www.parcscatalunya.net/garrotxa.htm)



## Possible training topics

- Nature guiding – how to visit the area
- Wildlife identification – birds, flora and fauna
- Hosting – how to welcome visitors
- Understanding landscape – geography, geology
- Local history – buildings and events
- Local culture – songs, stories and legends
- Conservation management – forestry, hedge making, etc.
- Traditional skills – thatching, reed bed management, etc.

A common feature of protected-area destinations is the large number of very small enterprises that make up the product. It is often hard to encourage them to participate in training. Some important lessons have been learnt about how to encourage participation:

- Get people to identify their own subjects and arrangements. Enterprises should feel that programmes have been planned for and by them, based on their own needs. Places and times for training should be chosen to be convenient to potential participants.
- Have short courses that can be added together. People are much more likely to attend a series of one-day courses spread over a period than to take time off for a longer programme.
- Link training to specific subjects and initiatives. General-topic courses are less popular than more specific practical courses, especially when linked to marketing programmes or other initiatives.
- Link training to meeting required standards. Training can be linked to regulations or quality labels.
- Link training to further advice and assistance. Attending training courses can be made a requirement of receiving financial aid for quality improvements and access to ongoing advisory services.
- Include study visits. As well as being popular, these are a good way of putting across ideas.
- Keep the price down. Free or heavily-discounted training can act as an incentive, with the possibility of introducing charges once the value has been proven.

## Training: Action points

- ▶ **Investigate training needs:** Use the stakeholder inventory from your baseline research and look at what your stakeholders might like to be trained in. If you are not sure, undertake a survey of training needs - it is pointless to offer training on subjects people are not interested in (3.2).
- ▶ **Identify training supply:** What training can be offered by your staff, other stakeholders or third parties? What are the areas of expertise they have?
- ▶ **Strategic planning of training:** Look at which areas of management priority training are relevant for the park. For example, if you are aware that local guest house keepers need to improve hospitality standards, then that becomes a priority in your training plan. Also check if there are "difficult-to-reach" groups in or around your protected area that you need to link with. For example, some fishermen could be angry about limitations related to tourism or nature management. Training them on how they could (economically) benefit from the protected area and visitors, for example by taking visitors on their boats, may be a way to engage their support.
- ▶ **Make a prioritised training action plan with timescales and budgets.**
- ▶ **Seek funders/supporters:** You may be able to get project funding or support from partners for your training programme. Consider working with local schools or universities, and engaging other partners in the community in delivering the course.
- ▶ **Develop materials, training manuals, timescales, trainers, and accreditation.**
- ▶ **Promote your training:** Publicise courses in relevant, strategic places (local newspapers, shops, town halls, squares), book training venue and (personally) invite audiences to attend.
- ▶ **Evaluate the outcomes of the training.**

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## DEFINITIONS

- ▶ **Quality standards** are agreed rules about how something is managed. They are a way of controlling quality across different businesses or organisations.
- ▶ **A trademark** is a sign or indicator to show that products or services come from a unique source or have a common controlled identity.

## 3.3 Branding and standards

Protected areas can help local businesses to market and develop their products through setting up quality standards and branding initiatives. These can be key methods of engaging the support of local partners, and of improving the quality of the destination. There are many different models:

### International schemes

- International co-branding initiatives for the park as a sustainable destination such as the PAN Park label and EUROPARC's European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.
- International branding and marketing networks for local "green" accommodation like ECEAT active in 17 countries or Gîte Panda, active in Belgium, Italy and France; or the European Ecolabel for accommodation and campsites.

### National and local schemes

- National green labels such as the Latvian Green certificate.
- Co-branding of local companies with the national park is a growing trend. It provides reputational and market benefits for local companies but also reputational risks for the protected area. However, an additional benefit for the park will be that local companies identify more strongly with the park and its objectives. The region as whole is marketed more strongly as all actors use the same messages and branding. Usually the use of the park logo is limited to those companies complying with certain minimum quality, sustainability and consumer information standards. For example, in two case studies local products and services are based on certain product and quality standards linked to the protected-area brands.

Standards can be based around different tourism products such accommodation, food, souvenirs or activities. It is wise to look first for existing standards schemes before developing a new one. Table 4 shows potential standards, along with who might use and operate them, and how they would be assessed.



**Networking: international branding and marketing networks include the ECEAT quality label (see page 40) and WWF's Gîte Panda**

**Table 4** Potential standards and how they could be used, assessed and operated

Standard	Users	Assessment criteria	Operator
<b>Accommodation</b>	Hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfast, holiday farms and holiday apartments	Facilities Cleanliness Information about area Value for money Hospitality Guest information criteria	Local tourism authority Provider associations
<b>Catering businesses</b>	Restaurants, bars, cafés	Local food used Standard of food Facilities Cleanliness Welcome Information about area Value for money	Local tourism authority Provider associations
<b>Local produce</b>	Shops, farms, individual producers	Local labour used Local production Sustainably produced Quality Authenticity	Protected area Local tourism authority Local business network
<b>Green label</b>	Accommodation, restaurants, local product providers, etc.	Energy saving Green energy Carbon neutral Organic produce Waste management Information and education	Protected area NGO National business network
<b>National park/protected-area label</b>	Accommodation, restaurants, local product providers, etc.	Local products used Quality Authenticity Information on protected area Sustainability criteria	Protected area

It is not possible here to give a definitive list of quality standards as they are being developed all the time and vary across Europe. Local research should be undertaken to find out which ones are the most relevant to your area. In case a green label or local product label does not as yet exist in your area it is advisable to develop a combined "green/local product/protected area" label. If, for example, a green label does exist it is advisable to make compliance with the green label a condition for receiving the protected-area label. One may expect from businesses carrying an official recognition from the protected area that they themselves operate in a sustainable manner.

Key issues to consider when developing a standards scheme are:

- Standards – one standard, or a bronze, silver and gold level, for example.
- Assessment - how will compliance be judged? Self-evaluation (first party), the park (second party) or independent assessors (third party)?
- Timescale – how often will assessments take place?
- Sanctions – if quality falls, how will members be informed?
- Cost to participants – will they pay the cost of assessment and marketing?
- Trademarking – should the scheme develop its own brand or "marque"?
- Publicity – how will the scheme be publicised to provide market benefits to participants?
- Long-term plans – how will the scheme deliver management aims?



Varying standards: many exist - choose carefully one which matches your management aims

### Branding and standards: Action points

- **Research** what other schemes already operate or might be relevant to your area.
- Looking at your management objectives, **decide** which schemes may help to deliver them. If you need to develop one:
  - Establish if local businesses are prepared to pay to be part of it.
  - Establish if funds could be available to create and launch and maintain a scheme.
  - Make a project plan for the scheme.
  - Establish answers to key issues as listed above (accreditation – long-term plans).
  - Define standards in close liaison with the target groups.
  - Develop communication and branding.



### Case study 8

#### Partnering with local businesses

Harz National Park, Saxony-Anhalt and Lower Saxony, Germany

**The Nationalpark Harz area attracts many tourists: on average 27 million day visitors and 10 million bed nights per year. The national park has found a way to work with the businesses in the area by making them “partners”, provided they reach certain standards of service and environmental management.**

Businesses who sign up to be “National Park Partners” are “hosts who are supported and communicate the National Park’s philosophy”. They identify with the goals of the park and use the park logo as a mark of quality in marketing. They receive the quality logo based on certification regarding environmental management and support the national park with service and information.

An evaluation committee consisting of the German Hotel and Catering Association (DEHOGA), the Harz Transport Association and the Harz National Park, evaluates the partner applications submitted. A first review takes place anonymously; in a second review candidates are examined on site and park themes are discussed.

More than 37 businesses are part of scheme. The partner businesses help the park a lot in communication with visitors as it is impossible for the park agency to come into contact with all visitors (even with 40 park rangers in this protected area). Additional sets of criteria are being developed for other partner categories like tour guides and restaurants.

[www.nationalpark-harz-partner.de](http://www.nationalpark-harz-partner.de)



*Pictured above left* Regional trademark: the trademark of the Biosphere Reserve Schaalsee, Germany (shown at top of page, third from right), represents the diversity of landscape and its inhabitants through a range of goods and services, from apple juice to speciality foods.

*Pictured left* To support the regional trademark, once a month (from April to November) the supporting association of the reserve organise a regional market; from three partners in 1999, the scheme has now grown to encompass 77 firms.

## Case study 9

### Development of "Traditional Coastal Architecture Guidelines"

Latvia

**The ecological and historical values of the Latvian coastal territories suffer from influence of new building trends. New (rich) landowners in the area have little knowledge and understanding of the historical architectural traditions and how to integrate these values in modern buildings and the landscape. As public consultations on municipal territorial planning are usually "formalities", residents remain uninformed about planned development and impacts and the coastal territories may irrevocably lose their values in the eyes of local residents and visitors.**

In response to this threat, the Latvian Country Tourism Association "Lauku ceļotājs" developed, together with relevant stakeholders, the *Traditional Coastal Architecture Guidelines*. This reference document aims not only at conserving the traditional cultural environment of the coastal territories but also at renewing, recording and further developing a united "emotional" image of the coastline.

In the development process all relevant professionals and organisations were involved:

- Architects and experts of the State Inspection for Heritage Protection provided ideas and recommendations for the first draft.
- The draft version of the Guidelines was discussed with the State Inspection for Heritage Protection, the Latvian Association of Architects, the Coastal Municipalities' Association, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and other relevant institutions and specialists.
- The final Guidelines were presented to several coastal communities in the presence of journalists.

The resulting guideline document provides very practical advice on how to respect heritage in physical development and create a high-quality architectural environment. It explains, for example, how to design buildings and courtyards taking into account building height, the shapes and proportions of buildings, construction and finishing materials, roof types and colour schemes. Special chapters are dedicated to

fences, the principles of building renovation and reconstruction, recreation areas and infrastructure.

Based on these "general" Traditional Coastal Architecture Guidelines, coastal municipalities, national parks, destinations, etc., can develop their specific guidelines focusing on the unique local values, heritage and situation. This process was piloted in the Slītere National Park region resulting in the *Traditional Coastal Architecture in the Slītere National Park - Description, Analysis, Recommendations*. The guidelines were developed through the following process:

1. Exploration of the territory involving experts in architecture and/or cultural heritage.
2. Developing an overview of the traditional architecture, principles of courtyard planning, types and design of buildings, factors influencing architecture style, construction elements, building and finishing materials.
3. Sharing and discussing the work with the local community and institutions to build acceptance and make the document "viable". Comments from the local community and local-level institutions were incorporated in a second version of the document.
4. Consultation with the relevant national institutions responsible for conservation of cultural heritage and incorporation of their recommendations.

The final version of the document was presented to the public at large and distributed to all interested bodies.

[www.polprop.celotajs.lv](http://www.polprop.celotajs.lv)



## Case study 10 The ECEAT quality label

18 European countries

The European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism, founded in 1993, supports a network of over 2,000 small-scale rural accommodations in 18 European countries. Recognised by both tourist service providers and travellers, the ECEAT quality label is proof of the accommodation's quality of service, its contribution to local communities and to protection of the environment. In order to obtain the ECEAT quality label, an accommodation should:

- provide sustainability information to its guests;
- support environmentally-friendly agriculture;
- use water and energy in an efficient and conscientious/responsible way;
- follow the green building policy;
- reduce production of waste;
- support soft mobility;
- contribute to nature protection;
- contribute to sustain cultural heritage;
- contribute to support the local economy;
- support local community initiatives.

Interested accommodation providers can carry out an online self-check which will indicate the company's eligibility for the label. When the



result is positive, the applicant is redirected to the local ECEAT partner who will carry out a final audit against set criteria. Compliance will lead to the award of the ECEAT quality label which provides access to the marketing and promotion tools of ECEAT within the different participating countries. Qualified accommodations appear in online directories such as greenholiday.info (Netherlands), bio.de (Germany) and in the Groene Vakantiegidsen (Green Holiday Guides) which are published together with the Dutch car and tourism association ANWB. Direct links to all ECEAT countries:

[www.eceat.org](http://www.eceat.org)

Also see short video about the early days (1995) of ECEAT: <http://youtu.be/e2MCQ34jzCA>

### 3.4 Conflict resolution

Keeping a balance between managing an area to conserve its natural beauty and allowing people to visit and enjoy it will often involve managing conflicts of interest. Stakeholders, residents and visitors will all care highly for the area but often for different reasons. It is the job of the protected area to find a way through the conflict so that there is maximum benefit for all while maintaining the conservation objectives. Then the area is the winner.

Building trust in your park's motives may seem like a difficult job but is possible long-term through continuity and reliability. A key tool, as shown in case study 11, is to engage impartial outside advisers whom everyone can trust. This can bring an outside view to a situation and help insiders with new perspectives, allowing them to let go of their previously held opinions and find common ground for agreement. Table 5 gives some ideas of which kind of outside influences can help in different situations.

### Conflict resolution: Action points

- **Establish** a committee/steering group of professional outside advisers whom your stakeholders will respect, to advise on difficult issues. Make sure the committee meets regularly for briefings, not just when there is an emergency.
- **Prepare a strategy** for dealing with conflicts. The strategy should cover:
  - **Key personnel** – which is the team in charge in a conflict? How will it be selected?
  - **Key spokespeople** – who will speak for the protected area, and how will they be briefed?
  - **Looking ahead** - what are the likely sources of conflict in the future?
  - **Planning ahead** - what plans can be made now to manage these conflicts if they happen?





**The objective expert: bringing outsiders in can bring new perspectives and help to solve problems**

**Table 5** Types of external advisers and how to engage them to resolve conflicts

Advisers	From	Process	Possible uses
Scientific experts	Universities and other education institutions	Academic research or membership of expert working group	Conflicts involving disputed scientific information/nature management techniques
Commercial experts	Large and medium-size companies	Business development expert secondment to working group	Conflicts involving commercial practices and liaison with wider markets
Community leaders	Church, village leaders, etc.	Chair special group to bring different sides together in a balanced way	Conflicts between community and organisation
Public relations expert	Media or consultancy	Advice on resolving and adopting effective approach. Communication of messages and policies.	Specific problems which might be escalated in media

### Case study 11

#### Managing Community Conflict

*Harz National Park, Saxony-Anhalt and Lower Saxony, Germany*

**The Harz National Park has dealt with several issues of conflict. For example, villagers were opposing the park’s policy regarding bark beetle infestation. This policy allows the currently mainly coniferous forest to die back naturally after beetle attacks, so it will regenerate from existing seeds as a mixed forest. No chemicals are used but some areas are cut with some dead trees left standing. Originally, local people found this very strange and thought it was wrong.**

These types of “conflicts” are settled in the park’s advisory board which consists of 40 representatives from villages, counties, conservation

groups, tourist institutions, trade associations and chambers of commerce. The park administration reports to this board twice a year and has an “ongoing discussion”. According to the board’s own definition, it is “an advisory board for positive thinking rather than for giving orders”.

Villages can also become involved in the park as “partner villages” providing information and signs. Written contracts are agreed to manage land with certain villages. Currently, 16 villages and three counties are involved. This involvement of local communities further reduces potential conflicts between stakeholder interests. Continuity and reliability are key factors in these arrangements.

[www.nationalpark-harz.de](http://www.nationalpark-harz.de)



**Give and take: managing protected areas for tourism is a two way process - a girl presents a loaf of bread while greeting a local government official**

### Further reading: Chapter 3

Find the following additional resources in the library of background documents at

[www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual](http://www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual)

- *Sustainable tourism in protected areas, chapter 4 Planning for protected area tourism* (section 4.5 Involving stakeholders)
- *Handbook to Ecotourism Labelling Criteria and Good Practices in Europe* - Eco Route partnership (2009)
- *A simple user's guide to certification for sustainable tourism and ecotourism* - Centre for Ecotourism and Sustainable Development
- *Towards Quality Rural Tourism: Integrated Quality Management of Rural Tourism Destinations* - European Commission (1999)
- *Linking Communities, Tourism & Conservation, A Tourism Assessment Process* (p. 64 - 88) - Conservation International (2008)

# 4 Provide experiences

## From signposts to canoes

**Overview** Protected areas are places that people want to experience with all their senses. It is important to manage how this happens, and help visitors to access the area in the best way. **Attractions and activities** create experiences; **visitor centres** are a good starting point to provide information and interpretation, and appropriately **designed and planned trails** are essential for a high-quality experience. **Package tours** and guided **routes** provide (controlled) accessibility, and finally, we look at some types of **events** you can organise.

This chapter examines how visitors can have enjoyable and informative experiences through the creation of tourist attractions and activities and how this is supported by careful development of the visitor infrastructure.

When people are travelling, they are open to see new things and are willing to try new experiences. A protected area can help facilitate that visitors have easy access to quality experiences and are able to spend their time and money in ways which benefit the area. By creating tourist attractions and activities, protected areas bring authentic, living spaces alive and influence how visitors experience the place.

The development of tourism attractions and activities should be based on careful assessment of your resources and markets and this is best done in partnership with local businesses and the local community (2.1). There are two possible approaches:

- Decide what kind of tourism is best suited to your resources and then seek markets that will respond to them or
- start with identifying existing and potential markets and then develop resources, attractions and activities to meet their needs.

In most cases a combined approach is required, matching both resources and realistic potential markets together in so-called product/market combinations. The development process should identify:

- who the visitors are and may be, and their needs;
- the current tourism resources and how they may be improved;
- the social and environmental constraints of the area and



**Win hearts and minds: interpretation allows visitors to enjoy themselves and discover new perspectives - as here in the Harz National Park, Germany**

- the economic needs of the area that can be addressed through tourism.

In order to get this information it is important to obtain careful feedback from visitors, businesses and local people. This should form an important basis for the product development strategy.

A helpful approach is to break down existing and potential markets into segments, based on origin, age, interest, etc., and to consider their particular requirements and how to communicate with them. The following table provides a simple indication of different types of tourists you can expect to visit your area:

**Table 6** Types of nature tourists and main characteristics

Type	Main interest	Importance of intact nature	Demands on guides	Standards of comfort	Quantitative demand potential
The “committed nature tourist”	Experiencing nature, special interests	Very important	Special knowledge of ecology	Low	Low
The “interested nature tourist”	Experiencing nature, ecological inter-relationships	Important	Good knowledge of ecology	Low to high	Moderate
The “casual nature tourist”	Easily accessible/ “obvious” nature attractions	Less important	Unspecific knowledge of ecology	Moderate to high	High
The sports adventure tourist	Focus on activities	Nature as a backdrop	Area and technical knowledge	Low	Moderate to high
The hunting/ fishing tourist	Focus on activities	Nature as a backdrop	Area and technical knowledge	Low	Low
The nature tourist with cultural interests	Natural and cultural experience	Important	Good ecological and very good cultural knowledge	Low	Moderate

Source: Strasdas (2002)

How to provide experiences – the basic checklist	
<p><b>The key principles which should underpin the provision of visitor experiences are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Create product/market combinations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Analyse available key resources and potential markets.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Define types of nature tourists that visit the area or could be attracted. Consider their needs and aspirations.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop in a creative process the product/market combinations. Think outside of the box and let yourself be inspired by examples in other regions or countries. Make use of the unique natural, human and historic qualities of your area.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Develop attractions, activities and visitor infrastructure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make attractions accessible by means of roads, trails, signs, viewpoints, moorings, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use local materials and workers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create wide involvement of stakeholders.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop and offer things for visitors to see and do.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Adequately inform visitors what experiences and products are available to them.</li> <li>• <b>Offer authentic, appropriate experiences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure that the experiences are true to the place.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Integrate key messages of your area in the experiences.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Offer quality experiences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Organise activities to the highest standard in all stages of the tourist experience.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure health and safety at all times.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

When planning for the development of visitor experiences, protected areas should carefully bear in mind what kind of visitors they can and want to attract. This will affect the kind of services and infrastructure that will need to be in place.

## 4.1 Attractions and activities

Developing attractions and activities starts with identifying the so-called Unique Selling Points (USPs) of your area.

Attractions are usually fixed points which people visit as part of their leisure time or holiday, such as a museum, a historic place or a waterfall. Activities are based on doing something such as walking, horse riding or guided tours. They can be linked to attractions, for example a bicycle circuit to a special landscape feature, or a walking route to a castle.

Attractions and activities should be closely related to the character of the area; they should practically allow the place to speak for itself. For example in both case studies below (12 and 13) they are using the unique qualities of the place to teach. People learn more if they are having a good time and understand more from a full or “hands-on” experience like feeling how the ground on a swampy wet bog moves rather than viewing from a path.

Some of the types of activities and attractions that can be developed in protected areas are listed in table 7.

**Table 7** Types of activities that can be developed in protected areas

Feature	Possible activities
Traditional communities	Cooking and tasting; singing; embroidery; music performances
Traditional farming	Animal viewing; traditional farming practices; horse and donkey rides; feeding animals
Rock faces	Rock climbing, abseiling (also called: rappelling)
Caves	Viewing; caving, speleology
Hills and mountains	Hiking, mountain biking
Rivers	Kayaking, white-water rafting, tubing
Streams and waterfalls	Canyoning (waterfall rappelling)
Forests	Mushroom and berry gathering; canopy tours (moving through the canopy on zip lines)
Swamps	Bog walking, kayaking

### DEFINITION

► **Unique Selling Point** – features, experiences, attractions and local traditions that distinguish your destination in a positive sense from other competing areas.



**Identify your unique experiences:** such as foraging for and cooking traditional foods like these mushrooms (mainly porcini – *Boletus edulis*) gathered in the Carpathians, Ukraine

### Attractions and activities: Action points

- **Identify** your Unique Selling Points, in co-operation with your stakeholders. Is there a way you can develop or adapt these USPs to make it possible for visitors to experience them?
- **Identify** existing and potential market segments of your area, including their priorities, interests, motivations, etc.
- **Combine** USPs and markets into product/market combinations.
- **Involve** (local and non-local) tourism professionals to develop a prioritised plan of what could be developed in your area.
- **Develop** in partnership with relevant stakeholders (tourism promotion agencies, tour operators, local stakeholders) prioritised attractions and activities (create access, infrastructure, signposting, information).
- **Arrange** operation of the attractions and activities (operate them yourself, through leases to private companies, or public-private partnership - see 6.3).

## Case study 12

### A healing castle

*Krajinski Nature Park, Slovenia*



To help promote tourism the Krajinski Nature Park, located in the Austrian/Hungarian border region, has invested in the protection of cultural heritage. The 11th century Knights Templar castle, abandoned in 1945, was restored as part of the

development of tourism in the area where hiking, biking and spas are becoming more and more popular; tourist accommodation capacity has risen to over 400 beds in the region.

The restored Castle Grad forms a cultural events centre that offers, for example, a film festival "Made in Nature" and summer schools for singing, open to students. It also provides accommodation for ten guests.

The garden has been renovated as well. With a long history of geomancy (the Knights Templars' equivalent of Feng Shui, the Chinese art of aesthetics), the castle is reputed to have healing energy in its yard, and special waters.

[www.park-goricko.org](http://www.park-goricko.org)



## Case study 13

### Bog walking with special footwear

*Store Mosse National Park, Sweden*

In the Store Mosse National Park walking through the bogs with special snow-shoe type footwear has been developed to make visiting the area more fun and to experience the substance of the bog. Staff from the park take groups of visitors away from the regular trails and go deep into the bog, using the extra surface of snow shoes to allow walking on the swampy peat layer. Visitors are provided with binoculars and magnifiers to look at bogs. A special point of interest along the walk is a 4m deep pool in a bog where people can have a swim.

A spokesperson for the park said: "Not many people have ever had a swim in a bog." Tradition has it that the guide jumps into the clean, fish-free water first. After the refreshing experience sandwiches, coffee and tea are served. The cost is around €40, and the trips are very popular.

[www.storemosse.se](http://www.storemosse.se)





**Access with respect: infrastructure should be chosen to be in harmony with surroundings**

## 4.2 Visitor infrastructure

Protected areas act essentially as hosts to visitors. Like any good host, they need to facilitate guests to explore an area which is likely to be unknown to them. A proper visitor infrastructure is an essential element in that. Establishing infrastructure so that visitors can access the area is also a critical part of visitor management (2.2). Table 8 shows the different types of visitor infrastructure.

**Table 8** Types of visitor infrastructure

Visitor infrastructure	Examples
Access points and reception areas	Ticket booths Entrance gates
Transportation and movement infrastructure	Paved or dirt roads for motorised transport (including parking areas) Trails (for walking, cycling, horse riding) Waterways: piers and jetties along suitable streams and on lake shores
Transportation and movement infrastructure	Viewpoints (platforms, towers) Hides to observe wildlife Canopy walkways in the forest
Infrastructure that meets the physical needs of visitors	Rest areas, picnic areas, shelters Toilets, water fountains
Supply and waste disposal facilities	Water and waste management Power supply
Accommodation infrastructure	Campsites, hotels, hostels, huts, lodges
Information-related infrastructure	Directional signs (inside and outside the protected area) Signs informing visitors about regulations
Interpretative infrastructure	Indoor or outdoor displays Signs, etc., at viewpoints and along interpretative trails

A few general guidelines should be considered when planning and developing visitor infrastructure:

- Choose materials, colours and design of infrastructure that is in harmony with the surroundings, reinforcing the unique selling points rather than distracting attention from these qualities.
- Respect the natural environment and minimise impacts on wildlife, natural ecosystems and other natural features.
- Use as much local materials, involve local craft experts and use local (historic) designs.
- Take visitor safety into account. Public infrastructure is often used without direct guidance or supervision by park staff. It must comply with all legal safety conditions, e.g. consider playing children, etc.
- Try to develop infrastructure that promotes a variety of attractive options to experience nature and the landscape. For example, do not only create remote backcountry experiences but, if you receive larger numbers of visitors, also develop sites that are easily accessible and can handle larger numbers of visitors who do not want to walk far.

### Planning and design of trails

Trails should provide access to the most important features of a protected area while avoiding very sensitive ecosystems or wildlife habitats.

Available budgets will influence length of the trails and the quality of materials used. The type of user (interest, fitness) will determine, for example, the gradient of the trail. It is advisable to create a network of trails with different lengths and degrees of difficulty in order to provide high-quality experiences to different types of visitors.

Trails can be developed according to specific interpretation themes. They can emphasise different aspects of the environment such as (conservation of) wildlife and plant life, human impact on nature, soil and geology, water and wetlands or historical use of the land. It is important to incorporate key features of your area such as waterfalls, caves, specific tree species, (suspension) bridges, viewpoints, etc.

### DEFINITIONS

►A nature trail is a short, often loop-type trail (starting and finishing at the same point) which has been made specifically to interpret the nature of an area.

►Interpretation is the explanation of visible features and facts about the nature, historical, natural or cultural resources, objects, sites and phenomena using a range of methods. It focuses on origin, purpose and mutual relations.

Environmental impacts can be mitigated by the trail design, using for example boardwalks and (wooden) fences to avoid trampling of vulnerable vegetation, or the use of screens and viewing hides to hide visitors from the animals or birds.

### Checklist for nature trail interpretation topics

#### Interpretation trails should:

- Focus on certain aspects
- Interest a wide range of people
- Address both adults and children
- Be easy to understand without background knowledge
- Incorporate key features of the area
- Have a meaningful trail name
- Emphasise unusual aspects (USPs) of the area

*Source: The Trail Planning Guide (UNESCO/BRESCE, 2008)*

Trails have different types of possible layouts. Most trails are linear (from A to B) or of a loop type (from A returning to A). Loop trails are generally more attractive because users do not have to retrace their steps.

There are various environments that are particularly attractive for the development of trails:

- Special historical, ecological and natural features
- Scenic views
- Natural clearings
- Natural contours such as those along terraces or ridges
- Seasonal differences and experiences
- Access to and a view of water bodies or streams
- Light brush or other vegetation conducive to easy travel
- Well-drained soils
- Natural drainage such as side slopes and gently rolling terrain
- Safe road, railroad and power line crossings
- Good access from car parks or by public transport
- Minimal conflict with existing land-use or management activities

The attractiveness and success of a trail is strongly influenced by natural and scenic elements in the trail. Where possible, a trail should provide panoramic

views from higher areas such as hilltops and ridges. They should enable easy observation of elements such as:

- **Water:** streams, rivers, lakes, rapids, waterfalls (large and small), pools, etc.
- **Vegetation:** outstanding specimen (size, form, rarity), interesting bark textures, leaf colours, etc.
- **Land:** landforms, geological features, cliffs, crevices, caves, rock outcrops, etc.

Problems with trail construction can be avoided by planning them outside areas that are prone to erosion or flooding. The trail should not run along the banks of streams, lakes, wetlands or areas which are wet and flat with poor drainage. This avoids the disturbance of rare or sensitive vegetation and the erosion of banks.

Similarly, the trail should not be built at vertical angles to contour lines and steep slopes should be avoided. Steps should only be used if steep slopes are unavoidable. Serpentine or "zigzag" trails decrease the incline ascent but make the trail longer. The curves of serpentine should be placed at stable and flatter places (with suitable topsoil and vegetation) along the trail. Wooden steps can be built into serpentine to reduce the incline and also the risk of erosion. To avoid erosion or "scouring" it is essential to ensure water run-off to the side. Useful guidelines for trail grades are:

- **Desirable range of grades:** 0% to 5%
- **Maximum sustained grade:** 12 %
- **Maximum grade for short pitches:** 20% up to a maximum distance of 30m

Barriers (rocks, stones, logs, girders, wooden fences, etc.) can be useful to prevent the creation of shortcuts in serpentine sections of the trail. The trail will probably need additional infrastructure to make it accessible and to provide a certain degree of comfort such as bridges, ladders, chains and stairways. Benches, sanitary facilities and drinking fountains can be installed as extra service to the visitors.

Safety structures (barriers, railings, secure surfacing, etc.) should be placed at hazardous areas such as cliffs, fast-running rivers and avalanche zones. Trail crossings with public and other roads must be clearly marked by traffic signs on both the roads crossed and the trails. However, do not overdo it: if there are railings, fences and safety signs everywhere the "nature experience" can be significantly downgraded.

All these structures should be built as much as possible from natural and local materials and in a way that minimises maintenance cost and environmental impact.



Vegetation along and above the trail should be cleared to enable visitors to pass safely but this work must be kept to a minimum. The clearing width should be at least 0.5 m on either side of the trail. The height of clearing for trails which are mainly used for walking should be at least 2 m and 2.5 to 3.5 m for bicycle/horse trails. The predicted snow level should also be taken into account.

Trail signs should be used to communicate with users. The signs can be divided into different groups:

- **Identity and direction signs:** display information such as trail name, the type of trail (interpretative, hiking, bicycle, etc.), distance to destinations, intersections with other trails, points of interest along the trail route and the level of expertise required. Signposting should be placed at intersections and forks and possibly shortly after them (as a check that the user is on the right route).
- **Use signs:** indicate which types of trail use are appropriate, and what is permitted or prohibited on the trail, such as motor-biking, smoking, the use of matches or lighters, littering and any other forbidden activities. The “use signs” are best placed at the access points.

- **Safety signs:** display warnings concerning underpasses, street intersections, blind corners and vertical clearances which are coming up, water availability along the trail, dangerous wildlife, etc.
- **Interpretative and protective signs:** indicate natural resources, historical points of interest and sensitive areas (see 5.4 for more information about how to develop interpretation panels).

Signs and other information boards should be, as far as possible, constructed from materials which fit well into the surroundings. Wooden boards have proved popular as they are relatively inexpensive, easy to replace and have a life of about 15 years. Table 9 contains details of the advantages and disadvantages of different sign board materials.

When working on trails try to use local materials, local workers or local companies. This reduces the amount of transportation, pollution, disturbance, importation of alien species and has positive effect on the local economy. For building or maintaining the trail use, if possible, hand tools (axes, saws, shovels, spades, etc.) instead of big machinery.

**Year-round way in: marked trails are the one of the best ways to appeal to a wide audience and share special places**



**Table 9** Advantages and disadvantages of sign board materials

Material	Advantages	Disadvantages
Wood	Environmentally-friendly material Long-lasting and not easily damaged Amendable	Relatively expensive Easily scratched (by people carving the wood) Susceptible to weather damage
Safety glass, silk-screen printing	Long-lasting Good combination with wooden supports Recyclable	Reflective surface
Acrylic sheets (Perspex/Plexiglas) – on board, heat sealed on both sides	Convenient Quick and easy reduction	Prone to damage and the effects of severe weather Only moderately resistant to fading
Original covered in laminate	Very convenient Easily changed Can easily combine text, photos and drawings	Relatively short life Unattractive overall appearance
Plastic (printed, silk-screen printed)	Silk-screen printing lasts a long time without fading Many suppliers available	Susceptible to damage Not environmentally-friendly
Steel or aluminium sheet metal board (printed, engraved or etched)	Convenient Long life	Easily scratched Not environmentally-friendly
Scotch-print method (photo-adhesive film on any flat surface)	Highly cost-effective Resists fading and is easily reproduced	Easily scratched Few suppliers available
Enamel	Very attractive and appealing Lasts a long time, not easily weather-damaged	Relatively expensive Susceptible to damage and theft
Cera-print method (glass ceramic)	Very attractive and appealing Extremely long-lasting and durable	Very expensive Risk of theft

### Visitor infrastructure: Action points

- **Think** about what infrastructure visitors will need to get to your area and to turn their visit in a quality experience.
- **Make an overview** of existing access roads and (public) transport services to the starting points of planned trails. Can your visitors easily access what you plan to offer? If not, what investments are needed to create (easy) visitor access?
- If access to your area is sufficient, **start planning** and designing trails to bring visitors and nature together using the following examples of best practice.
  - A thorough survey of the area should be carried out first, including a list of natural and historic features and sketch map of the area.
  - The trail should respect wildlife habitats and wildlife movements.
  - It should not be straight, but curved wherever possible, and preferably constructed as loop beginning and ending at almost the same place.
  - Use design to avoid erosion - the maximum sustained gradient should not exceed 12%.
  - Any existing trails should be used but if they are unsuitable they should be closed.
  - The fragility of features and the impact of visitors on the area should be assessed.
  - Facilities to be provided should be listed. Items to consider include shelters, benches, litter bins, signposts, steps, culverts, bridges, picnic sites, toilets, interpretive panels, safety barriers and rails.
  - Interpretation should include a welcoming and clearly-marked starting point, a theme, and several features for interpretation. Interpretation can be on site or in a leaflet that visitors carry.

## Case study 14

### Developing the Dovbush interpretation trail

Carpathian National Nature Park, Ukraine

The Carpathian National Nature Park administration and WWF Ukraine turned a regular walking trail into the “Dovbush” interpretation trail, called after a local historical character. Initially the trail only featured Dovbush with the help of displays showing drawings and short rhymes. During the development of the interpretation plan it was proposed to turn Dovbush from the main character to be talked about, into a “park guide” that talks about the park. The change was accepted by the park staff. Special interpretation “stations” were developed along the trail presenting the geology, the Prut river, the international character, the forest ecosystems and the human impact through soil erosion. Dovbush and his history were interpreted at the highest point or “station” on the trail.



The interpretation plan contains a year-round programme which includes face-to-face interpretation along the trail from park staff or local guides. Each programmed visit has a special theme so local people and visitors can join several programmes during one year to find out about different information about the park and local culture.

Using Dovbush as the “park guide” connects and positions the protected area into the imagery and history of the place. Bringing the history and legend to life and linking it with the current status of the region as a protected area promotes the local people’s feeling of “ownership” in relation to the protected area as they strongly respect Dovbush.

[www.cnp.yaremcha.com.ua/index2.html](http://www.cnp.yaremcha.com.ua/index2.html)

## Visitor centres

Visitor centres have been used across European protected areas as an effective method of providing access to information, interpretation and literature. For many people they are, in fact, the public face of the protected area where visitors can have a dialogue with its representatives. They can also contribute to raising income for the protected area.

There are many types of visitor centres: from the most simple hut staffed by one ranger or volunteer to multi-media cinemas with restaurant and shop. One must never forget, though, that the cost of visitor centres goes well beyond construction and design, and that maintaining them, and keeping them staffed and updated, can be expensive.

So before you start to think about establishing one, it makes sense to question whether it is feasible to build and finance a visitor centre, what it is needed

for, and if it could be run with partners or local businesses (e.g. café, restaurant). Visitor centres fail if they are expensive to enter or too expensive to run.

As the case study 15 shows, there can be a whole range of approaches and partners in a single national park. Make sure you tailor your own approach to suit what is special about your area. Make your visitor centre unique and authentic, and part of the experience of visiting your area.

The following checklist provides key points to consider when planning a visitor centre.

### DEFINITION

►A visitor centre is a building which is open to the public providing, apart from information, also interpretation about the (protected) area, usually located within or close to that area.

## Checklist for planning a visitor centre

- Area:** Does the area have sufficient attractions, tourism products and facilities to attract a substantial amount of visitors? Are there any new tourism products/initiatives being developed which will either attract more visitors to the area or generate an increased spend from those already there?
- Other visitor centres:** Can any of the existing visitor centres or points of attractions in the area adequately service visitors to your area?
- Audience:** For whom should the centre cater? Make sure it caters for appropriate users. For example: hikers if in a mountain environment or, if near a road, for families and disabled users.
- Site:** What are the location/site options? Refer to your zoning plan. Often visitor centres are most suitably placed in peripheral areas enabling them to function as link between the exterior and interior of your area.
  - Site the centre where people have to stop or wait (end of the road, park entrance gate, etc.).
  - Take note of accessibility, (public) transport links and parking space.
  - Interfere as little as possible with surrounding nature.
- Premises:** What kind of building is needed? An existing building, shared premises or purpose-built? If existing premises are available in the right location:
  - Will there be sufficient floor area to operate the centre efficiently?
  - Will the internal layout impose any constraints on operation?
  - Will the premises meet the standards for (quality and/or sustainability) accreditation?
- Sustainable construction and operation:** Are they appropriate? Use sustainable techniques and management systems as far as possible for waste treatment, building and signposting materials, water and energy conservation.
- Budgeting:** Have budgets for construction and operation been prepared? Estimate cost for construction, annual running and regular refurbishment.
- Funding:** How will funding be obtained for establishment and sustained operation? Prepare a business plan.
  - Can partner organisations, local businesses, local communities and government bodies be involved?
  - Can the centre operate a commissionable booking service?
  - What other revenue-generating activities can be developed: sales of souvenirs, rent of equipment, etc. (chapter 6).
- Staff:** How will the centre be staffed? Paid staff, volunteers or a combination of paid staff and volunteers?
  - How many staff/volunteers will be needed?
  - What are the human resources available in the community?
  - What (volunteer) recruitment and management procedures will be required?
  - What staff training would be needed, how can training be provided and what are the costs?
- Outside message:** Does the building tell the right story? Traditional buildings can be conserved and used; local style can be used, local craft experts employed to make the building sit harmoniously in its surroundings. Modern architecture can also be appropriate.
- Inside message:** Does the content tell the right story?
  - Products for sale should reinforce the protected area's identity, and be local and authentic.
  - Interpretation should engage people's hearts and minds, and be well thought-through and relevant to the visitor, with maps, information in simple language, and translations (maybe just a simple hard copy) where possible.
  - Staff should be well informed, trained and enthusiastic.

*Source: in part from Tonge (2003) How to establish and operate a visitor information centre*

### Visitor centres: Action points

- **Write down** all the special qualities of your area, and some of the most special stories, scenery and species.
- **Describe** what your current visitor interpretation consists of. Does it communicate the special qualities of your area?
- **Define** what interpretation and information for your (potential) visitors are missing and how those gaps can be filled.
- **Draw up** a development and management plan for a visitor centre using the steps previously described.

### 4.3 Tourism product development

In a tourism product the different components of a protected area's resources (accommodation, attractions, transport, activities, guides) are combined and promoted and/or sold together.

The advantage of combining different tourist components with each other is improved accessibility to the separate components. Thus it becomes easier for the visitor to get to places of interest along with relevant services and facilities. It is also a great tool to increase visits to "secondary attractions", get tourists to lengthen their stay and thereby increase the economic impact on the destination. For example, a primary attraction like an impressive waterfall may be promoted or packaged together with secondary attractions such as local artisans, an interpretation trail or another attraction that, on their own, would not draw so many visitors.

Within this chapter we discuss two types of tourism products: package tours (which are sold and can include day and overnight stays) and routes (which are described and can be done independently).

To help understand the process and practice of tourism product development a few commonly-used definitions and concepts are clarified over the page.



**Small is beautiful: a ranger (centre) greets visitors in Scharfenstein visitor hut, Harz, Germany (see case study, right)**



### Case study 15

#### Visitor centres

#### - from simple to sophisticated

*Harz National Park, Saxony-Anhalt and Lower Saxony, Germany.*

**The Harz National Park has 15 visitor centres, run either by the park agency or by a combination of the state, community and local banks. Some are tiny, others are very large, with every size in between.**

The **Scharfenstein ranger station** is the smallest visitor centre and once the location of the East German border patrol barracks. The centre is only accessible on foot and has a simple, welcoming café. There are not many displays as they would be in the way. Instead the café is decorated with old postcards and maps and artefacts of the area.

The **Torfhaus visitor centre** is run in partnership with the *BUND für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland*, a German NGO for nature protection and the environment. It is a joint venture with the local community and opened in 2009. In its first year it had approximately 160,000 visitors. Nearby is a short forest interpretation trail – the *Wald Wandel Weg* (Changing Forest Walk). Last year the Torfhaus centre was visited by more than 600 groups.

The **Brockenhaus visitor centre** on top of the Brocken mountain (1,141 m), the highest elevation in the area. The centre is run by a company jointly owned by the federal state ministry of the environment, local government and a local bank. It is open 365 days a year and has six employees. Between 70,000 and 80,000 visitors come here every year generating around €450,000 turnover (€220,000 from entrance tickets, €100,000 from souvenirs, €130,000 from the cafeteria). Although 64% of the company is owned by the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt, it is self-funding through the income generated.

[www.nationalpark-harz.de/de/besucherzentren](http://www.nationalpark-harz.de/de/besucherzentren)

## Commonly-used definitions and concepts for tourism product development

**Destination:** Country, region or location visited by tourists for a holiday or other purposes (i.e. business, research).

**Domestic tourists:** Domestic tourists are inhabitants of the destination country but not of the destination area.

**Local tourists:** Local tourists are inhabitants of the destination area.

**Tourism product:** A natural, cultural or human feature or quality made accessible for tourists with the help of certain services such as facilities (transport, accommodation) and information.

**Package tour:** A tourist product such as an excursion or a complete arrangement published in a travel brochure, on a website or by a local operator of activities. Usually it is a combination of transport, accommodation, food and activities/excursions.

**Tourist route:** An itinerary, short or long, that leads tourists to places of interest, scenic areas, tourist facilities and is promoted as a coherent "tourist product".

**Tour operator:** An organisation specialised in preparing product packages sold either directly (a "direct seller") or through travel agents to the customer.

**Travel agent:** An organisation selling mainly package tours from tour operators and transportation tickets to the customer.

### Package tours

One way of creating tourism products is by developing tours for one or several days where the costs for a guide, accommodation, food, use of equipment, transport and any entrance fees are included in the price - a package tour. It could, for example, be a three-day tour into a protected area where you will enter the area by canoe on the first day, spend the night in a camp, hike the next day to a traditional farm where you will spend the second night, and horse ride on the third day back to your starting point.

The most important advantage of packaging services and attractions is that they make it much easier, safer and interesting for visitors and (foreign) tour operators to visit your area. They do not have to arrange for themselves (in a foreign language)

accommodation, food, transport, activities, etc., thus providing a sense of security and "being taken care of".

Typically, these packages are developed, sold and operated by private tour operator companies.

Package tours can be sold via:

- direct internet/email/telephone to a specific target audience,
- specific or joint internet websites,
- brochures and leaflets,
- local travel agency outlets and visitor centres,
- through national or international tour operators.

However, depending on the legislation and legal status of the protected-area management organisation, you can operate these activities yourself (6.3). Alternatively, local NGOs or partnerships of small local businesses can run these operations for you. As a protected-area manager you may want to promote the latter option for reasons of stakeholder involvement and local economic development. You could organise initial meetings, support product development, create a management structure and provide promotional support.

It is important that information about the product is extensive and readily available to (potential) customers and tour operators/travel agencies so they know exactly what they can expect. Key information includes:

- What is included in the package? For example, food, guides, transport, accommodation.
- What is not included in the package? For example, drinks, entrance fees, tipping, etc.
- What should participants bring? Perhaps water, clothing, mosquito repellent, snacks, etc.
- What level of fitness is expected from the participants?
- On which days do tours leave?
- During which seasons or months is the tour operated?
- How much time should be observed between booking and starting the tour? For example, a tour that can be booked an hour in advance is attractive for drive-by visitors.
- What guides are used? Think of certification, languages spoken, etc.
- What is the maximum size of a group?
- What type of accommodation is used and what is the food like?

A traditional target market for tour packages is that of groups. They include educational and special interest groups; walking clubs; corporate and incentive business; and general groups seeking to have a special experience of a protected area. Individual tailor-made packages such as walking tours are becoming increasingly popular.

A few tips to work successfully with (group) tour operators:

- Maintain good contact with tour operators and group organisers.
- Provide a reliable quality of ground-handling service.
- React immediately to requests for information or clarification.
- Be open and willing to tailor existing packages to match the requirements of the client (groups).

Another way of promoting and informing about tourist packages is by creating information and reservation platforms: an office, website and/or telephone number that provides information and booking services for the tourists. Sometimes local (public) tourist information offices can take on this role and may charge a booking fee (commission) to the booked tourist service providers. A difficulty with central reservation systems for small enterprises is getting accommodation providers to provide regularly updated information on availability.

### Tourist routes

Another way of grouping different tourist services, attractions and facilities together is by creating "tourist routes". On a tourist route services are not so much packaged and sold together but all interests collaborate together. The tourist service providers and attractions jointly inform, promote and market the area or its unique selling points. One way of defining a route is by using a theme, for example:

### Case study 16

#### SNP Nature Travel, individual walking tours

*Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania*

**One way of marketing small-scale rural accommodation in and around protected areas is by integrating them into tour packages sold through international tour operators. SNP Nature Travel, the largest nature-oriented Dutch tour operator, developed, for example, walking tours to natural and rural regions of Central and Eastern Europe making use of small-scale accommodation.**

Directly after the changes in Central Europe in the early 1990s, a strong demand emerged in the Netherlands to discover the "new countries" in the East. As professional accommodation services or facilities were not, at that time, available in rural and protected areas, SNP developed in partnership with the European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism (ECEAT) a new concept: individual walking tours between organic farms.

In four Central European countries, SNP experts selected ECEAT organic farms within a maximum distance of 25 km from each other. By linking the farms with attractive walking routes, eight-day walking tours were created in each country. Clients stay two nights at each farm and luggage is transported by the farmers so visitors do not have to carry heavy packs. In case clients found the distances too daunting, they can hitch a ride along with their luggage to the next farm.



Since the establishment of the programme in 1996, the farms attract every year more than 180 clients, providing over 20 farmers with a stable source of income. As clients can also book on an individual basis (maximum four people), small holiday farms also have an opportunity to participate in the programme.

[www.snp.nl](http://www.snp.nl) <http://youtu.be/e2MCQ34jzCA>

- bird watching, photography, archaeology, ecology;
- cookery, eating or drinking;
- local produce such as wine, cheese, tea, coffee, whisky, apples;
- safari, hiking, cycling, walking;
- “meet the people”;
- cultural heritage highlights such as churches, castles, markets, artisans.

Collaboratively creating information about the routes and signposting them are the main activities to promote the route and create coherence. Information should be created about characteristics, geographical location and contact details of attractions, activities, restaurants, accommodation, viewpoints, tourist offices, etc. In addition, there may be a baggage transfer service involved in the case of hiking and cycling routes over several days.

This information can be provided through brochures, websites, smartphone apps or outdoor panels. In addition, routes can be incorporated in tourist guidebooks ( 5.3). Signposts or road signs along the route that inform about services and facilities should be of uniform appearance and coherent with all the other forms of information, thus creating an easily recognisable “brand” (5.2).

The experience gained by developing tourist routes in Latvia’s Slītere National Park provided the ten basic steps (see right):

### Tourist routes: Action points

- **Define** product/market opportunities.
- **Decide** what kind of tourism products your (potential) visitors might be interested in.
- **Assess** the options how to commercialise (sales and marketing) and operate the products (the area itself, local tour operating companies, existing NGOs, new co-operative arrangements).
- **Organise** meetings with involved stakeholders (tourism service providers, tour operators) to brainstorm about possible tourism products.
- **Agree** which stakeholder will be commercialising the products.
- **Arrange** permits and concessions (chapter 6) with corresponding terms for any other organisation that operates the products in your area.

### Ten steps to developing tourist routes

1. **The concept of a route** – a brilliant idea and vision to link points of interest into a route.
2. **Investigation of maps and references** – check available information.
3. **Provisional mapping of the route** – connect the objects to visualise the route.
4. **Testing of the route in different seasons of a year.**
5. **Alterations** – process input from the tests.
6. **Testing with the eventual tourists.**
7. **Preparing the route description sheet.**
8. **Involving other service providers and interested actors** – such as information offices, tour operators, municipalities.
9. **Marking the route.**
10. **Route maintenance and updating of the information.**

### Case study 17 Country Escape, rural tourism association

Byelorussia

**In Byelorussia, rural tourism is being developed through longer routes using a system of “Green Ways”. This is a mixed product which can be adapted to the area and needs of the tourists. It includes designated and branded hiking, cycling and driving routes in combination with rural accommodation. It is set up by local groups through an informal partnership declaration and unites small businesses under one umbrella: the idea of sustainable travel and tourism.**

The routes have proved popular with businesses and visitors. Calendars of events, eco-museums and bicycle hire facilities have all been developed and integrated. The open system is not hierarchical and allows participants – small guest houses - to stay close to nature and their traditions, which is what tourists want to see. It allows an authentic view of the area’s warm hospitality, nature and folklore.

[www.greenways.by](http://www.greenways.by)



## Case study 18

### Developing new tourism products

Slītere National Park, Latvia

**The park was established in 2000 after having been a restricted military territory, accessible only with special entrance permits, for more than 70 years. Despite of this, people still thought of Slītere National Park as a closed area. Field visits had revealed that the capacity of the area was underused. The existing supply of tourist services was limited, located in separate areas and focusing on stand-alone attraction objects.**

In 2009 the Latvian Countryside Tourism Association (LCTA - Lauku Ceļotājs) established an initiative aimed at developing new active tourism routes in the park in order to keep visitors for a longer time in the area, and to increase long-term demand and use of local services and products. Tourist products were developed for hiking, cycling, boating, car driving and watching nature in nine defined itineraries and tours.

The first draft of the routes was developed by LCTA after inspection and testing on site. Then the routes were improved and updated with participation of local entrepreneurs, national park specialists and community members. Finally, the route descriptions were designed and made available through online PDF files, making sure that:

- all route descriptions are prepared in the same format;
- route descriptions do not include information which is liable to change frequently, such as the prices for services, opening hours, etc.);

- route descriptions include the contact information of service providers;
- routes are approved by the administration of the Slītere National Park.

The printed route descriptions were developed aiming at simple and low-cost updating possibilities, yet with colourful, attractive design. Instead of contracting professional designers, the product leaflets were made using *Scribus* and *FontForge* open source (free) software for layout, graphics and fonts. As a result, tourism service providers managed to produce professionally-looking materials to promote their products without high costs.

The project taught its participants that the development process was equally important as the routes themselves. Incorporating all stakeholder interests turned out to be highly important for further development of the tourism products and their long-term sustainability. For example, co-operation of national park specialists ensured that the new products were environmentally-friendly and do not cross sensitive nature areas. As part of the package park tourist information officers are involved ensuring the highest quality for information to tourists.

*Development of new tourism products in the Slītere National Park* can be found in the library of background documents at [www.polprop.celotajs.lv](http://www.polprop.celotajs.lv)

## 4.4 Special events

Events provide exciting experiences to visitors of your area and have the potential to generate additional economic impact to host communities as well as promotional coverage about your area. Many types of events can be organised, such as cultural events (like traditional celebrations, folklore music and dance festivals, etc.); sports events (like competitions for cross-country skiing or orienteering challenges, rock climbing, etc.) or educational events (like hosting national or international Scout groups or natural scientists, organising an ecotourism conference, etc.).

Cultural events such as annual craft markets, fairs, folk festivals and ceremonies respond to a demand from tourists for authentic experiences. This may

encourage the local community to maintain or re-establish important cultural festivals, ceremonies and other events. Such activities will enrich the tourism experience within or near protected areas, thereby inducing tourists to stay longer and spend more.

Exposure to cultural diversity can help modify tourist behaviour, change use patterns and create advocates for conservation among the tourist community. Moreover, local communities may benefit when local traditions and values are maintained and when they are encouraged to take greater pride in their communities or regions.

Probably there are already several smaller and larger events taking place in and around your area, such as village carnivals, local fairs and festivals. The

challenge is to create a balanced programme or “calendar” of events by co-ordinating existing events and organising new events in order to fill any “gaps” in your calendar. Reinstating historic festivals or revitalising dormant events and traditions is often a possibility.

It is important to avoid uniformity of events with other regions. After all, people travel to enjoy new experiences. Another challenge is to optimise the impacts of events: avoiding adverse impacts on the environment and disturbance to local communities while ensuring local involvement and maximising the economic benefits of holding and marketing of events.

All events start with an idea but thoroughly evaluating and elaborating this idea is an essential first step in the organisation of any event. The following checklist provides some guidelines for this stage.



**Use your traditions: a musician wearing traditional Hutsul clothes plays a floyara in the village of Chernyk, Ukrainian Carpathians**

## Case study 19

### Travel Day to Slītere

*Slītere National Park, Latvia*

**On 12th June 2010, the Latvian Countryside Tourism Association (Lauku Ceļotājs), together with local government and the park agency, organised the first “Travel Day to Slītere”. This public event offered the more than 500 participants the opportunity to experience a variety of Slītere’s natural and cultural attractions, such as:**

- various trips in the Slītere National Park;
- *Made in Slītere*: a market of local crafts and other products;
- tasting of the best fish soup in Kurzeme;
- a performance by the Kolka Mixed Choir and the Latvian zither ensemble;
- a concluding folk music concert.

At the same time it stimulated a public debate about (sustainable) tourism development in the Slītere National Park.

The idea for the Travel Day to Slītere came from local residents. Developing the idea involved thorough research into how each of the groups working and living in the Slītere area could be involved in, and benefit from, the event. For example, for the fishermen the fish soup tasting increased their sales. For their part, the fishermen

enriched the event by organising fishing tours and describing the process of smoking fish.

A campsite was selected as the site for the event because of its proximity to the sea, easy access for private and public transport, and the capacity to accommodate a large number of participants. The date was chosen well in advance which allowed for publicity in printed materials and at major promotional events such as BALTTOUR international trade fair in February 2010.

Of vital importance was the co-operation with the local government of Dundaga District which, as one of the co-organisers, dealt with all the issues related to security, order and emergency medical assistance successfully. In this way the local government could comply with the relevant regulations simpler and less bureaucratically.

Find the *Handbook for organisation of public events – Practical example: Travel day to Slītere on 12th June, 2010* in our online library of background documents at

[www.polprop.celotajs.lv](http://www.polprop.celotajs.lv)



## Case study 20

### Combining sport and environmental education

*Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft, Germany*

**The Darß Peninsula is a famous beach holiday resort within the National Park Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft (West Pommerian Bodden Landscape) on the German Baltic Sea coast. The park management has created an annual sports event that raises awareness for nature protection and attracts tourists at the same time.**

The idea for an “educational marathon” arose after staff members of the local interpretation centre saw great potential to combine a regular run with their daily activities of providing environmental education for school children, tourists, families and local people.

The criteria of how to organise the sports event in a sustainable way, how to combine it with

environmental education, and how to market it were developed in 2005. The first Darß Marathon was held in May 2006. Initially a maximum of 1,000 participants was planned. At the end 1,305 runners had crossed the finishing lines of the marathon and half-marathon distance. 110 children took part in the children’s event.

The event was organised in an environmentally-friendly way. Many regional products were on offer. For the catering re-usable materials were chosen (such as paper cups instead of plastic cups). Local artists had created the medals for the winners.

The participants came from all over Germany. However, most of them were from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. About 25% stayed for two days, about 28% for three to four days, and about 12% a week or even longer. This shows the event generated additional value for the whole area.

[www.darss-marathon.de](http://www.darss-marathon.de)



**From signposts to canoes: protected areas can provide a wealth of experiences when managers work with communities to provide ways to access them**

## Checklist for organising special events

- Define the aim of the event:** What are your aims in organising the event? Is the idea of the event the most appropriate to achieve your goal? What benefit will you gain from the event?
- Define the target group(s) of the event:** Which target group do you want to address? Is the idea of the event appropriate for the chosen target group?
- Be aware of the relevance of the event:** Is the event topical in the present situation? How can the event benefit the target group?
- Verify the selected place and date:** Can the selected place accommodate the planned number of participants? Is the selected place easily and comfortably accessible to your target group? Is any another similar event being organised nearby on/near the selected date?
- Assess the time, financial and human resources needed to organise the event:** How much time will be needed for an appropriate preparation of the event? How much will the organisation of the event cost? What human resources (skills, talents and contacts) are needed for the organisation process? What resources do you have, and what should you still involve? Is it possible to attract the necessary resources?
- Identify which rules and regulations apply to the organisation** of public events in protected areas (for example, laws and procedures regarding events, security and medical assistance, insurance, copyright, and of course the regulations that exist about the use of the protected area).
- Take a decision about the organisation of the event.**

## Special events: Action points

- **Take a look** at your assessment of cultural resources (4.1) and review what events are currently taking place. Are they attractive to tourists? Is it possible to increase the tourist potential of the event without compromising its authenticity?
- **Draft** a calendar of current events. Do they coincide with tourist season?
- **Compose** an attractive new events calendar for the tourist season. Which existing events, outside tourist season, may be worth re-scheduling into the tourist season? What new events can be added to the calendar?
- **Make** an impact assessment of your planned events calendar. Events should not negatively affect the natural environment or host communities. What are the expected socio-economic benefits?
- **Involve** communities and other stakeholders. There should be an organisational structure in place to manage successfully the organisation, the fundraising and other operational activities.
- **Promote** your events calendar in brochures, advertisements, your website, (electronic) newsletters, newspapers, etc.

## Further reading, Chapter 4

Find the following additional resources in the library of background documents at [www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual](http://www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual)

### General "Tourism experience development"

- *Towards Quality Rural Tourism (chapter 4: Delivering a quality rural tourism experience)* European Commission 1999)

### Visitor infrastructure development

- *Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (chapter 5: Sensitive development of infrastructure and services)* - IUCN, UNEP, WTO (2002)
- *The Trail Planning Guide Ecological Tourism in Europe* - Ecological Tourism in Europe (2007)
- *How to establish and operate a visitor information centre* - Rob Tonge (2005)

### Tourism product development

- *New Tourism Product Development Process in Ķemeri National Park* - Latvian Country Tourism Association
- *Development of New Tourism Products in Slītere National Park* - Latvian Country Tourism Association

### Special events

- *Handbook for organisation of public events Practical example – Travel day to Slītere on 12th June 2010* - Latvian Country Tourism Association

# 5 Communicate

## Sharing the value

**Overview** Protected areas speak for themselves but they also need us to speak for them sometimes so that people will understand, value and protect them. To do this, we need to have a clear **communication strategy**. Careful **area branding** will help to convey everything that is special, as will accurate, well-produced **publications, outdoor interpretation** and **electronic media**. Sharing what we have, and listening as well as speaking, we will build up greater support for our special places. This chapter examines the main principles of visitor communication, looks at effective methods from action planning and branding, through to printed publications, outdoor interpretation and electronic and external media.

**Communication is vital to a healthy future for protected areas. The simple fact of the area being designated a protected area is the first step in a long process of telling others about its value. Once visitors know of this value, it is proven that they will take more care in how they visit – and not destroy the area.**

Good understanding also leads to economic benefits. For example, recent research across German national parks showed that areas designated as national parks not only attract extra visitors but also higher-spending visitors. Also it became clear that the more visitors understood that they were in a national park, the more money they spent<sup>1</sup>. This very much supports the economic benefits of using the national park label in combination with regional and product branding in order to raise the “visitor affinity” (positive preference or relationship) with the park.

In this chapter we further examine the main principles of visitor communication, and then focus on key components and methods which you will need in order to communicate effectively. Communications is a wide subject and we look at action planning and branding, through to printed publications like newspapers and guides, to outdoor interpretation including interpretive panels. Then we look at electronic media and finally external media - press and advertising.

<sup>1</sup> Based on face-to-face visitor surveys, the study measured the structure, size and economic impact of tourist expenditure in six German national parks. It found day-trippers spend between €7 and €13 per day, whereas overnight visitors spend between €37 and €57.

There are many different protected areas, with all kinds of landscapes, nature and qualities. So there is not “one way” to communicate about them. Instead, the method should match the area. However, there are some top-level principles for protected areas that will help you to make true, fresh, effective communication. They are the “DNA” of your communications work. Everything builds from them.

### How to communicate – the basic principles

1. **Be strategic:** Communications should be strategic. This means they should be planned based on clear objectives of what you want to achieve. You need to make a communications action plan which identifies exactly why you want to communicate – what you want to achieve – and evaluates the results.
2. **Have quality as your goal:** Protected areas are some of the world’s finest places. Everything you produce should reflect the high quality of the area and what is special about it – the core of its “brand”.
3. **Be authentic** and allow the area to speak. The material – your “product” in marketing terms – is of high value. It’s your job to convey that value.
4. **Listen as well as talk:** Successful communications are always, at some level, two-way. All communication should be evaluated.

## 5.1 Communications action plan

The first step is not just to plan what to communicate, but why, how and to whom. A fundamental mistake in communications can be to be led by the medium rather than the objective in terms of effectively bringing a message to a specific target group.

For example, organisations often produce leaflets without knowing exactly how they will distribute them, or even if the target audience really wants a leaflet. Many resources can be wasted if communications are not targeted.

Another essential part of communication is to transfer your message to the needs, interests and level of understanding of the target group. As a protected area you want to communicate perhaps how special the nature in your area is. The average visitor, however, might be primarily interested in having a relaxing day after a week of hard work. The art of communication is to attract the attention of the (potential) visitors at the level of their needs and expectations - then also to attract their interests for what you want them to do or know.

If your communications action plan is strategically designed, and based on your communication objectives, you will find that your outputs are much more effective – and sustainable.

Your communications action plan can be drawn up using the template and guiding questions in table 10.

**Table 10** Communications strategy headings and guiding questions

Step	Heading	Questions to ask yourselves
1	<b>Issue</b>	What do you need to communicate?
2	<b>Objective</b>	What do you want to achieve or what needs to change?
3	<b>Target audience</b>	Who can help you to achieve this? To whom do you need to talk? Who do you need to inform/persuade?
4	<b>Audience characteristics</b>	What is the audience like? How can you best communicate with them?
5	<b>Key messages</b>	What is your message? What are the facts and figures that back it up?
6	<b>Communication tools</b>	What will deliver your message to your audience?
7	<b>Evaluation</b>	How can you check that what you are doing works?

## Communications action plan: Action points

- Decide who needs to be involved in making a communications action plan. This can be your communications staff, as well as key representatives from other departments. You could also use the manual mentioned in case study 21.
- Organise a meeting of your team to work through the process described above.
  - Bring along lots of pens and paper and take a whole day to make a big table of everything you want to do.
  - Brainstorm all the issues first.
  - Then go through looking at objectives, audiences, messages. Make sure you get everyone's ideas written down.
  - At the end think about tools – how you are going to communicate. After the meeting, create an action plan.

## 5.2 Area image and branding

Travellers' **images of destinations** play an important role in destination choice. Image differentiates tourist destinations from each other and is an integral and influential part of the traveller's decision-process. One of the reasons is that, unlike most other products one buys, destinations cannot be tested out before the purchase.

An image can be organic: formed by individuals themselves through such things as past experiences with destinations, and through general sources of information (such as news reports, movies, newspaper articles, etc.). Images however can also be induced: created through information received from subjective sources, including destination advertising and promotion. The art of creating a positive image about a destination is called branding.

**Branding** of companies and products is well known. Everyone knows that companies have brands. But did you know that geographical areas have them too? A place can have a brand in order to attract investment and to create a common identity. These brands emerged in the middle ages and are in fact older than company brands.

More recent are destination brands which aim at attracting tourist to the areas. They should reflect the area's USP and be focused on the key target markets. This usually includes graphic elements and a short slogan or motto, summarising the USP of the destination. Use positive language and include an emotion, feeling or experience. Examples of recent successful destination brands are "Incredible India" or "100% Pure New Zealand".

## Case study 21

### Developing a communications action plan

*Uzhansky and Carpathian National Nature Parks, and Gorgany National Nature Reserve, Carpathian Ecoregion, Ukraine*

Within the context of the project “Protection and sustainable use of natural resources in Ukrainian Carpathians” workshops were organised that provided participants with skills in planning communications. Elements included identifying and prioritising issues, making messages, deciding audiences, choosing tools and analysing results.



In order to prepare participants for the learning sessions, a short pre-workshop questionnaire was sent out to get participants thinking about issues to communicate, key messages and facts and effective communication techniques.

In addition to the workshops, participants were asked to plan, implement and write a report on a small communications project of their own. Post-workshop support for the development of these projects was available from a project consultant, EUROPARC Consulting.

The workshops positively “tested” the methodology to develop a strategic communications plan. The



results were presented in a short manual which outlines how to map out a communications action plan. Building up stage by stage, it sets out a clear path to successful, well-planned communication which makes best use of resources. The main steps of this process are:

#### 1. Where are we?

*Define an issue.*

#### 2. Where do we want to be?

*Define things that need to happen to solve the issue (objectives).*

#### 3. Who can help us to get there?

*Define your audiences/stakeholders.*

#### 4. What will motivate them?

*Identify audience characteristics.*

#### 5. Don't forget the message!

*Identify key messages – what do I want the people to know?*

#### 6. Now, how?

*Identify an effective communication method for your audience.*

The techniques are illustrated with examples devised by staff members of the three protected areas using these planning techniques.

Find *Finding our way: a route map for strategic communications* (English and Ukrainian) in the library of background documents at [www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual](http://www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual)

## DEFINITIONS

- ▶ **Target audience** A specific group of people within the target market at which the marketing message is aimed.
- ▶ **Key messages** are phrases that explain the main things you want to say to your audience. They are flexible and change according to the audience.
- ▶ **Destination image** Sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination.
- ▶ **Branding** Development and effective transfer of a set of images and beliefs about a destination.

▶ **A brand** is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller and to differentiate them from those of competitors.

▶ **A destination brand** is a way to communicate a destination's unique identity to visitors and differentiating it from its competitors. It provides a uniform “look and feel” that all destination partners can consistently use.

## Case study 22

### Developing a Communications Toolkit for Businesses

Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, England, UK

Based on research involving more than 200 local people, this area developed a manual with a CD offering a range of useful information, tools and tips to local businesses. The CD features extra images designed to help local businesses understand the special qualities of the area, and use them in promoting their own products as well as contributing to sustainable tourism. The kit is aimed essentially at businesses to become true ambassadors of the Forest of Bowland area and brand.

The publication provides factual information, lists of popular local places collected from the community, and finally includes actions that businesses can undertake to help develop sustainable use of the area. The text is organised in five themes:

- Protection and uniqueness (“A place to enjoy and keep special”)
- Food and beverage (“Delicious local food and drink”)
- History (“A landscape rich in heritage”)
- Farming (“A living landscape”)
- Wild land (“Wild open spaces”)

Each section provides detailed information for local businesses. For example, the section on protection and uniqueness lists over 50 recommended paddling and picnic places, walks in wild country, fishing places, woodlands to explore and gardens, parks and viewpoints.

Every section includes case studies and “People we spoke to said...” areas with extended quotes from



locals. Sections end with “action points” for businesses to follow - from discovering the area themselves, to providing drying space for wet-weather gear; from providing maps and guide books for loan to making it clear to visitors that the area is protected.

Whereas in the past most local businesses marketed themselves by saying they were close to a national park, after distributing this toolkit now 97% proudly identify themselves as being in the Forest of Bowland.

To read *Forest of Bowland sense of place toolkit* in full, go to our library of background documents at [www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual](http://www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual)

It's important to remember that a brand must be based on **what is true**. A simple example: it's no good trying to sell beach holidays in a cold place. Also try to provide objective information, so rather than speak about yourself as the “most beautiful place in the country”, emphasise the specific qualities or refer to a trusted third party (such as UNESCO or a famous poet).

Expectations should not be raised too high, and your aim should be to deliver more than people think they will get. If perceptions are negative there are ways to work with this in your branding. Wales, in the UK, is

notoriously rainy, but a recent advertising campaign by its tourism authority turned this into a positive, branding it as both a refreshing outdoors and “cosy” indoors place.

Protected areas like the Cairngorms National Park in Scotland and the Forest of Bowland in England (see case study 22) have had success building up “**shared**” brands with businesses.

Once you have developed your brand make sure it is widely used – not just by your protected area but also by local authorities and local businesses. A good



brand usually deals with more than just the logo. It also includes guidelines for the use of colours, layout and images. For a brand to work it should be widely applied and used over a longer period (5 to 10 years or more).

### Area imaging and branding: Action points

- ▶ Think about what the shared brand of your area could be.
- ▶ Make a “mood board” – a large piece of paper, with pictures, words and colours which represent what your area has to offer.
- ▶ Investigate what visitors say about the area: Why do they come? What are their prime emotions?
- ▶ Research how local businesses are using the area to sell their holidays. Are these compatible with protecting the area? If not, how can they be adapted to make them compatible?
- ▶ Develop different brand proposals and slogans. Test them among local entrepreneurs and visitors. Remember that a good brand should not need much explanation. There is a direct recognition at the emotional level.

## 5.3 Publications

Information can be provided in many ways, from a simple map or inexpensive colour-marked routes, to ranger-led guided expeditions. This section discusses some examples of published information.

Newspapers, guides, leaflets and books are all especially useful means of giving out information. Even in the digital age, printed materials are still popular, especially for tourists, who may not have access to the internet. They may also like to have a publication as a real “souvenir” that they can take home.

But remember when producing printed publications it is essential to be accurate: information must be correct when it is going to be printed in ink as it cannot be changed, like electronic versions. Focus on providing useful, real and truthful information to your visitors and test what you are going to print by giving it to people to use beforehand.

Working in partnership can be critical while producing a successful publication. Use your communities and stakeholder organisations: the project will bring you closer together, and you will have something to show for it at the end. Finally, keep an eye on practical issues. For example, check where copies of the publication are going to be stored, and how they will be distributed.

### Key elements for a successful publication

1. Work in partnership – use others’ expertise.
2. Be accurate – have a careful checking and editing process.
3. Provide useful information – spend time on research. Include: description of the destination, main attractions, availability of accommodation and restaurants, festivals and events.
4. Use prominently the destination brand and slogan. Clearly indicate on the cover the name of the destination and if for international promotion also the country.
5. Produce high-quality content – use text that is positive and images that reflect the area.
6. Always provide truthful information.
7. Include photos (definitely on the cover page) which include visitors in action (walking, cycling or experiencing local traditions).
8. Show pictures of hospitable, friendly-looking local people.
9. Include a map of the area and a map indicating the area in your country.
10. Refer to sources of further information.
11. Test your product – trial a “dummy” in advance of production.
12. Use environmentally-friendly high-quality paper.
13. Plan distribution and storage in advance.

### Publications: Action points

- ▶ **Collect** together all the different publications that are produced about your protected area – books, newspapers, magazines, leaflets, children’s storybooks, activity books, etc.
- ▶ **Describe** for each: title; author; date; publisher; target audience; print run (how many copies); approx. cost to produce; cover price; amount of pages; format. Now think about where the gaps are. What are the publications you would like to see produced?
- ▶ **Fill in** the same details for them as you have for existing publications. Can you find some partners to work with, by comparing with your first list?

## Case study 23

### Producing the Slītere Travellers Guide

Slītere National Park, Latvia

**The Slītere Travellers Guide was created by the Latvian Country Tourism Association in co-operation with the Slītere National Park administration and local businesses, based on the following key principles:**

The publication provides factual information, lists of popular local places collected from the community, and finally includes actions that businesses can undertake to help develop sustainable use of the area. The text is organised around the following themes:

- The information must be accurate and was checked on site.
- Active touring routes were set up and tested as part of the process.
- Stakeholders from residents to tourist information centres were involved. There is a strong focus on promotion of local services and local produce, with an emphasis on practical information.
- Information is aimed at average users rather than specialists.
- Description of the objects, sites and territories is mainly based on the stories and memories of local people.
- Only nature sites were included where visiting would not have a negative impact on environmental quality.

#### How it was done

During preparation of the Guide regular inspections, at least once a month, including in winter, took place to visit the sites, services and collect information from local people. Staff members of the Latvian Country Tourism Association took part in the development of the Guide's structure. The Slītere National Park was involved in several development stages, approving its concept and contents including active tourism routes and layout.

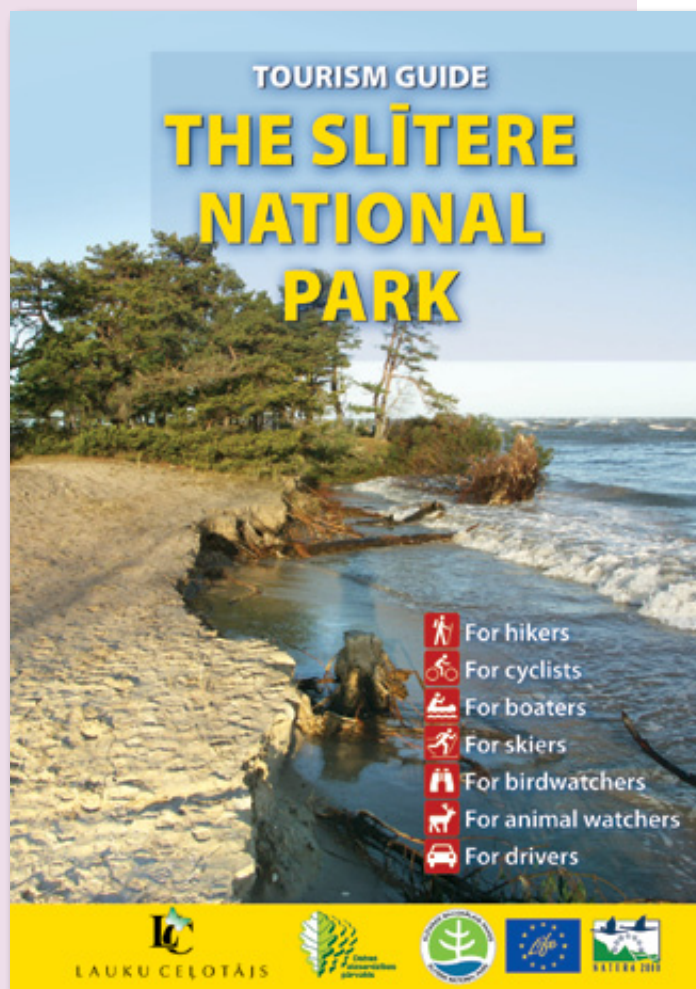
Local entrepreneurs, tourist information offices, specialists of regional studies and other local "actors" were involved through interviews, surveys, testing and proofing. Altogether, around 30 people were involved in the development of the Guide.

#### Guide content includes

- *The most significant events and facts of the history of nature and people*
- *Worth seeing and knowing* – descriptions of 100+ natural and cultural heritage sites
- *Touring itineraries* – routes for walking, cycling, boating, bird and animal watching and driving
- *Annual events* – a calendar of regular events in the Slītere National Park
- *"Green" and practical advice for every mode of touring the Slītere National Park*
- *Services and facilities* – accommodation, food, equipment rentals, banks and other practical information
- A map of the Slītere National Park

To read the report on *Producing the Slītere Travellers Guide* in full go to our library of background documents at

[www.polprop.celotajs.lv](http://www.polprop.celotajs.lv)



## 5.4 Outdoor interpretation

Outdoor signs which let people know where they are, how they should behave, and why a place is important, are key communications tools for protected areas. They can be costly but they are visible to many people and they often remain in place for many years. So it is important to spend time on getting them right. The Latvian Country Tourism Association has produced guidelines for developing

outdoor interpretation panels based on its practical experience<sup>2</sup>. These cover key interpretive planning issues, how to develop content, where to site panels, standards for signs, and good practice examples. An overview is provided (see table 11) on what can be written and displayed on an outdoor interpretation panel. The guidelines also provide a clear summary of the process you need to go through to generate content.

**Table 11** Contents of outdoor interpretation panels

<p><b>General information (header of the stand)</b></p>	<p>The title of the interpretation.</p> <p>The name of the territory.</p> <p>The logo of the specially protected nature area or cultural/historical heritage site (oak leave or other) and an explanatory text about the logo, if relevant.</p> <p>The logo of Natura 2000 or the logo of a bird site, if relevant.</p> <p>Other important information about the unique assets of the territory (e.g. ethnic communities).</p>
<p><b>General information about the territory</b></p>	<p>About the territory (nature park, etc.) – when the protected territory was established and why, the unique and main resources of the territory.</p>
<p><b>Cartographic information</b></p>	<p>Roads, villages, waters, homesteads, tourist attractions and other objects are marked on the map depending on its scale.</p> <p>Text in the original language.</p> <p>The location of the stand is marked with a "You Are Here" sign.</p> <p>Map legend or explanation of symbols.</p> <p>Scale</p> <p>Service providers cited in the text of the stand (accommodation, etc.). Car parks.</p> <p>Other objects of interest nearby.</p> <p>Marked routes.</p>
<p><b>Activities – hiking, bike trails, bird-watching</b></p>	<p>A map of trails and routes: A more detailed map of the trail: Is it linear or a loop? Does it connect with other trails? Where there are places to relax or have a picnic, lavatories, swimming locations? The map marks the beginning of the trail, noting points of interest by number. The stand contains brief information about each object. Information about trails and routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The name of the trail</li> <li>• Length of trail km/m</li> <li>• Amount of time needed</li> <li>• Level of difficulty (pictograms)</li> <li>• What is the marking on the ground for orientation – specific pictogram (e.g., a cyclist) or colour-markings on trees?</li> </ul> <p>Infrastructure: road surface on the trail, obstacles (steps), accessibility for people with special needs, people with baby carriages or bicycles.</p>
<p><b>Points of interest – cultural, architectural monuments and the like</b></p>	<p>Location on the map</p> <p>Photographs</p> <p>A brief description about the object – history, use over time, perhaps interesting stories or legends</p> <p>Historical photographs</p>

*continued over page*

<sup>2</sup> ECEAT & Latvian Country Tourism Association (2010) *How to design an outdoor panel, Guidelines for Interpretation based on practical experience in the Slītere National Park*

<p><b>Nature attraction object or site</b></p>	<p>A map, also showing the location of the stand</p> <p>A brief description of the object and why it is unique</p> <p>Plants, animals and birds in the area – those that are not protected and can be seen</p> <p>Historical maps, photos for comparison to see how the territory has changed over the course of time</p> <p>For bird-watchers – the most commonly found birds and photos of them</p>
<p><b>Services</b></p>	<p>Accommodation – shown on map, in text – name, contact numbers</p> <p>Dining facilities - shown on map, name</p> <p>Shops – shown on map</p> <p>Guide services with telephone numbers</p> <p>Bicycle rental, services, boat, trekking stick or other inventory rent – shown on map, in text – name, contact numbers</p> <p>Tourist information offices or travel agencies providing visitor information – marked on the map, contact details provided</p> <p>Emergency telephone number (112 or 999 depending on country)</p>
<p><b>Green advice (limitations)</b></p>	<p>Things not allowed can be noted with pictograms which take up less room, understandable in any language</p> <p>Focus on positive things – activities allowed</p> <p>Alternatives to restrictions. If no camping is allowed on a particular site, provide information of the nearest campsite.</p>
<p><b>An information band at the bottom</b></p>	<p>Information about the administration of the protected nature territory, the author of the interpretation, co-operation partners, funding sources and their logos, contact details.</p>

There is a lot to think about when producing a sign. As the case studies 24 and 25 show, there is also a lot to be gained from getting it right. As with other forms of communication, identifying the objective and target groups is the most important first step when developing interpretation plans and infrastructure.

**Outdoor interpretation: Action points**

- **Bring together** a team of relevant people including site manager and tourism officers.
- **Ask yourselves** the following key questions and share your answers.
  - Why do you want to provide information or interpretation?
  - Who should be involved in the information/interpretive process?
  - What are you interpreting?
  - Who is your target group?
  - What stories do you want to tell?
  - How will your interpretation be implemented?
  - How will it be monitored and evaluated?
  - How will it be maintained?



**Fitting in: interpretive signs should not detract from the beauty of the scenes they seek to explain**

## Case study 24

### Installing outdoor interpretation

Slītere National Park, Latvia

#### The following criteria were used to guide the installation of outdoor panels in the Slītere National Park:

- Good quality cartographic information.
- Text in Latvian for domestic visitors and English for foreign visitors.
- Good quality photos of the objects described.
- Information on the national park, its nature values, services available, regulations and funding sources.
- Information on what is allowed in the park as most of the existing stands only inform about restrictions and prohibitions.
- Include unique information and combination of facts without repeating what is in other interpretations.

The locations of the new stands were carefully considered taking into account where outdoor panels already existed and finding out where new outdoor panels were most necessary. Installation was approved with the land owners, the national park management, the local municipality and with local residents during public discussions. This involvement of all stakeholders resulted in high-level local acceptance of the new outdoor panels.

The interpretation was produced by specialists of the Latvian Country Tourism Association involving professionals from the administration of the Slītere National Park to write specific information on birds and plants. The interpretation was co-ordinated and approved also with the local residents, bringing in their corrections.

The development of interpretation was carried out in the following stages:

1. Conceptual agreement on location of the outdoor panels and the interpretation contents.
2. Setting the purpose of each outdoor panel and careful development of the interpretation. Writing texts, preparation of maps, selection of photos.
3. Listing the available services (accommodation, shops, food services, tourist information offices, rentals, etc.) and marking them on the map.

4. Editing and translation.
5. Layout design and editing.
6. Approval of the layout by the Slītere National Park administration.

Latvian Country Tourism Association (2010) *How to design an outdoor panel, Guidelines for interpretation based on practical experience in the Slītere National Park:*

[www.polprop.celotajs.lv](http://www.polprop.celotajs.lv)



## Case study 25

### Involving the local community in interpretation

*Defileul Jiului National Park, Romania*

**Defileul Jiului National Park has a special visiting pattern due to the fact that it is located on one of the main routes passing through the Carpathians, along the national road DN 66. It is mostly visited by day visitors attracted by possibilities for relaxing picnics, visiting Lainici monastery or rafting on Jiu River. The objective of the interpretation trail was to invite local people to visit the park and enhance their experience.**

The location of the interpretation trail was selected based on accessibility by public transport. A train station was chosen as starting point for the trail as that could allow visitors from Targu Jiu, the main nearby city, to arrive by train to the trail head. After choosing the location, one of the challenges was how to bring attention to the trail, especially to young people, in an area currently not very well known at all.

A team composed of park staff led by biologists and with additional assistance from interpretation specialists developed the main themes and considered the main interpretation stations along the trail. At this stage, the information about the trails and the themes were communicated to several schools in the community and the pupils were asked to bring input, featuring each theme with drawings.

As a result of a competition, selected drawings were designed to be part of the interpretation boards, being integrated into the graphics by a professional designer, next to specific information tailored to the knowledge levels of pupils. Considering the target group, the whole trail is designed to be a story told by a squirrel, therefore the trail was named the "Squirrel's tale".

Two park objectives were achieved thanks to this approach: the pupils involved felt ownership of the trail and the wider park; and there is an increased likelihood that the trail will attract more local people, as friends and families will want to see the drawings.

[www.defileuljiului.ro](http://www.defileuljiului.ro)

<http://www.defileuljiului.ro/en/visiting/paths.html>





**Appropriate and useful: signs should fit within their area, and offer key information to visitors**

## 5.5 Electronic media

The world of communications is changing fast, and many additional tools are available. Internet-based communications such as email, Facebook and Twitter provide capacity for quick and targeted communications. They also make it much easier to get feedback and monitor and assess use. You can see how many people are accessing a website, where they are coming from and how long they stay on each page, for example, in a way that you cannot do with a visitor newspaper.

Key issues when developing electronic information are to look at how resilient the technology is. How long it is likely to be used? There are many developments which seem exciting at the time but are soon overtaken by other new methods - or old methods are found to be better.

Content remains critical. You need to keep a focus on what it is you are trying to say, and why. It is the challenge of the protected-area manager to analyse carefully whether the tool fits the purpose. It may be, as in the case study below from the Broads National Park, UK, that new methods will reach new audiences. It may also be possible to link up with commercial developers to trial new technologies. This can be a good "fit" with the budgets and purposes of protected areas, as it can help them avoid purchasing too much expensive equipment.

### DEFINITION

► **Augmented reality:** is a "live" view of the real world environment whose elements are added to by computer-generated input, such as sound or graphics.

### Case study 26

#### Developing electronic interpretation

*The Broads National Park, Norfolk, England, UK*

**In 2010, How Hill National Nature Reserve was chosen by the Broads Authority as pilot site for a European-funded research project called STEP which looks at new ways to provide visitors with information in a sensitive wetland landscape.**

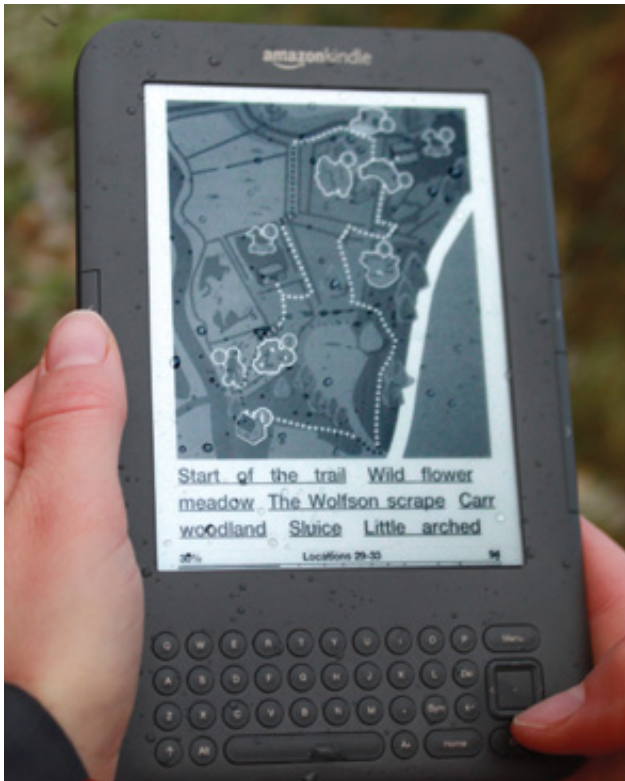
The research focused on identifying and writing information for specific points of interest in the reserve, which was then published in three ways: on an interactive map ([www.how-hill.info/mobiles.html](http://www.how-hill.info/mobiles.html)); as an augmented reality (AR) application on smart phones; and as an eBook downloadable for eBook readers from the website.

Augmented reality (AR) uses the camera and GPS capabilities of smart phones to show additional information on screen, on top of the real view fed in from the phone's camera. This means you can point your phone at a point on the landscape and immediately find out more about it through text and pictures. The visitor information for 25 places is available at the site using this new technology.

There are key advantages of this method of communication. Information can be disseminated without the use of intrusive signs in a wilderness area, young people will be attracted by the latest digital technology and the Broads will come alive for them in an exciting and stimulating way. In addition, this method does not require any printed material and is very flexible to update, edit and expand.

**[www.how-hill.info](http://www.how-hill.info)**





**The future? Electronic books can be easily updated**

### Electronic media: Action points

- **Brief** yourself on new communications techniques.
- **Look** at what young people are using. Ask them to show you how they like to get their information.
- **Make** a list of what is possible, and also what is coming up in the future. Identify if there are any partners you could work with to develop techniques for your protected area.

### Further reading, Chapter 5

Find the following additional resources in the library of background documents at

[www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual](http://www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual)

- *How to design an outdoor panel, Guidelines for interpretation based on practical experience in the Slītere National Park* - ECEAT & Latvian Country Tourism Association (2010)
- *Producing the Slītere Travellers Guide* - ECEAT & Latvian Country Tourism Association (2010)
- *Finding our way: a route map for strategic communications* - EUROPARC Consulting (2009)
- *How to publish profitable tourist guidebooks* - Rob Tonge (2010)



# 6 Create income

## Generating revenues from tourism

**Overview** Protected-area managers have different tools at their disposal to generate additional income from tourism. **Entrance fee systems** are the most straightforward but can be difficult to implement for practical or socio-cultural reasons. More accepted are **user fees** that visitors pay for tourist services or attractions in the area. **Concessions and leases** can generate significant income if the operators manage to create successful tourism businesses. In some cases, it may be better to operate these commercial activities **directly**. Finally, **voluntourism** may be an interesting way to reduce cost, for example of staff, by letting visitors do the work – for free. This chapter discusses the options how protected-area managers can generate income from tourism related activities.

**Developing tourism in protected areas benefits the local economies and society as a whole by making beautiful places accessible. It also creates additional opportunities for protected-area managers to benefit more from the economic value of their areas by generating income from entrance fees, permits, merchandise sales and other resources.**

Drawing on several informative publications<sup>4</sup>, this chapter discusses the options how protected-area managers can generate income from tourism related activities.

### 6.1 Entrance fees

Levying visitor entrance fees is a widely used way to capture some of the economic value or “willingness to pay” for tourism in protected areas. Globally, entrance fees for protected areas range on an average between €5 and €50 per person per day. In reality, however, few areas currently generate substantial revenue from their entrance fees and

charges usually do not cover the true value of the product and service offered in return.

The reason for charging limited or no entrance fees is that protected areas are considered as public goods or national heritage for which access should not be limited through an entrance fee. In fact, often the majority of the operational or maintenance costs are paid by the taxpayers as visiting the parks is considered important for educational purposes and creating wider support for nature protection.

Also, significant costs are involved in collecting and processing the fees. Direct costs include salaries and the installation and maintenance of toll booths and fences, with additional administrative costs of accounting and control, data processing and reports. Indirect costs may include personnel training, security and public relations. Because of such costs, in protected areas with few visitors it may not be worth collecting entry fees. Research<sup>5</sup> indicated that collection costs for the US National Park Service and Forest Service are about 20% of fee revenue.

There are also practical challenges to the successful implementation of an entrance fee system. There may be too many entrance points to collect entrance fees efficiently, and there may be corruption and bribery at entrance gates. Moreover, you may not wish to devote your limited human resources on fee collection instead of area protection.

It has become clear that visitors are more inclined to pay for visiting the area if they know their money is spent on conserving a beautiful area and enhancing

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#### DEFINITION

► **Entrance fees** Fees charged to visitors for entrance and access to protected areas.

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<sup>4</sup> WWF (2004) Pay per nature view: Understanding tourism revenues for effective management plans; Lindberg (2001) Protected Area Visitor Fees - Overview

<sup>5</sup> Source: US Department of Interior and Department of Agriculture (2001) Recreation Fee Demonstration Program: Progress Report to Congress Fiscal Year 2000.

their experience. It has also been found that visitors tend to respect their surroundings more if they had to pay an entrance fee.

### Pricing

Pricing policies for protected areas are often set at national levels, and in some countries all revenues from entrance fees are centrally gathered and redistributed. The US National Park Service, for example, redistributes 20% of the income from the most popular parks to an investment fund for less-visited protected areas.

While fees can be set according to market conditions, often the price for entrance tickets will only partly reflect costs of the service delivery and users' willingness to pay. Policy aims such as providing low-cost recreational facilities for citizens or a high-quality product aimed at maximising revenue from overseas visitors may also play a role in the setting fee levels. Prices are often differentiated for national or international visitors (although not every country's legislation allows for this), students, children and senior citizens, high season and low season, etc. Table 12 shows different types of protected-area pricing strategies.

**Table 12** Types of protected-area pricing strategies

<b>Peak load pricing</b>	Different prices for different times, depending on demand.
<b>Comparable pricing</b>	Prices based on average of user fees charged by other parks for equivalent attractions or services (difficulties may arise when the park is unique and there are no other comparable parks on which to base a price).
<b>Marginal cost pricing</b>	Prices set where the added costs equal the added benefits derived from the park; prices set at the intersection of the marginal cost and marginal benefit curve.
<b>Multi-tiered pricing</b>	Different prices based on residency, age, location, etc. (these have been found to yield more revenue than a high or low fee alone, but have limits).

Source: Brown (2001). "Visitor Use Fees in Protected Areas".

The entrance fee may include a tangible good such as an information booklet or map of the area. You may also consider attaching a service to the entrance fee such as a short guided tour or explanation about the area. This will support the willingness and acceptance of paying the fee.

### Entrance fees: Action points

- **Consider** the legislation, culture, advantages, disadvantages and challenges regarding the installation of an entrance fee system.
- **Decide** whether or not to collect entrance fees.
- **Decide** what the objectives are, for example:
  - Cost recovery – generation of sufficient revenue to cover part or all of tourism's direct or indirect costs.
  - Generation of profit – using excess of revenue over costs to finance traditional conservation activities.
  - Visitor management – by charging high entrance fees reduce visitor numbers, congestion and/or ecological damage.
- **Carry out additional research** (or use past visitor surveys of your or nearby areas) into visitors' willingness to pay in order to be able to set the price for entrance fees.
- **Develop** infrastructure, collecting and accounting systems.
- **Train** and hire staff to collect fees efficiently.

## 6.2 User fees

Because it is difficult in many places to charge visitor fees for entering protected areas, fees can be targeted at specific services and facilities within the area.

Examples are:

- Parking fees
- Fees for camping and mountain huts
- Entrance fees for attractions such as visitor centres, canopy walkways, board walks
- Individual permits for fishing and hunting
- Individual permits for activities such as diving, snorkelling, mountain biking, hiking, kayaking, etc.
- Rent of equipment for camping, boating, mountaineering, kayaking, etc.

National Parks in the United States, for example, have been able to co-finance their budget with revenues from commercial activities. After national subsidies were cut in the 1990s the National Parks were

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#### DEFINITION

► **User fees** Charged to visitors for receiving specific services or to be allowed to conduct specified activities or visit special areas.



**Hidden fees: one way of charging for an area's use is to hire out specialist equipment**

allowed to implement or increase user and entrance fees on condition that 80% of revenues had to be spent in the same area.

The programme generated US\$1.1 billion of tourism revenues in the period from 1996 to 2003 and was used for maintenance and recreational facilities. No significant decline in visitor numbers was recorded<sup>6</sup>.

It is important to show how the user fees are used to support conservation and management in protected areas. Research has shown that visitors will accept user fees much more if the income is returned directly to the area, instead of going to the national treasury.<sup>7</sup>

**Guidelines for reducing public resistance to fees**

- Use fee revenues for quality improvements to trails, toilets, maps and other facilities.
- Make small fee increases rather than making them in large jumps.
- Use moneys for operational costs rather than as a control mechanism for visitor entry.
- Retain and use money for specific, known park purposes rather than for general revenues.
- Use extra money for conservation of the area visited.
- Provide abundant information to the public about the income earned and the actions funded through it.

Source: *Sustainable tourism in protected areas (UNEP/WTO/IUCN, 2002)*

**Case study 27**

**Entrance fees in National Park**

*Costa Rica*

Costa Rica has an extensively developed system of protected areas covering over 25% of the country's area. Park entrance fees in the 1980s were US\$ 1 for both nationals and foreigners (generating up to US\$1 million annually). However, in the 1990s, the national park entrance fees were raised to US\$15. Although visitation decreased, revenues in the first nine months of 1995 were four times the amount earned in 1994.

However, due to widespread opposition to the increase, the entrance fees were lowered again. In 1996 a two-tiered fee system was introduced. Foreigners now paid six times more than nationals for national park entrance.

Yet, a study found that the fee of US\$6 for foreigners and US\$1 for residents was still not the optimal fee for revenue generation. Foreigners were willing to pay more than double their current fee. Costa Rica residents expressed willingness to pay for future visits to national parks almost nine times more than the current fee for residents.

This case shows that there are potential opportunities to set visitor fees in protected areas which would both generate more revenues for current visitor levels and would contribute better to operations and protection.

*Brown (2001) Visitor Use Fees in Protected Areas*



<sup>6</sup> Source: Summers (2005) *Funding the National Park System: Improving services and accountability with user fees.*

<sup>7</sup> Source: ANZECC (2000). *Benchmarking and Best Practice Program: User-Pays Revenue.*

## Case study 28

### User fees in marine reserve

Miramare Marine Reserve, Italy

**Miramare receives most of its budget from the Italian Ministry of Environment but is managed by WWF Italy. There are two financing mechanisms: funding from the ministry (75%) and self-financing from activities such as educational activities, scuba diving tours and snorkelling tours. Access to the Miramare Marine Reserve costs \$2.20 per day, with additional user fees for specific activities. Education programmes cost up to \$8 per person, scuba diving \$22 per person and a snorkelling tour \$11 per person. Fee revenues fund guides and cover part of the area's expenses. The fees have not reduced the number of visitors; rather there are managerial limits on numbers.**

There was no opposition to the fees as all activities inside the marine reserve are organised and run by the park staff (biologist and scuba diving guides). Private tour operators can book an activity for a group but this activity is promoted and run by the reserve staff.

All Italian federal marine reserves feature some restrictions on diving but each reserve is free to set its own regulations with regard to diving permits. Some authorities require diving centres to pay a fee and restrict market entry to those diving centres that existed at the time of the reserve's designation.

Source: *Protected Area Visitor Fees - Country review* (Lindberg, 2001)



#### DEFINITION

**Concessions and leases** Contracts between protected areas and businesses or individuals under which those businesses or individuals are permitted to operate within a protected area and to use certain land or facilities owned by a protected area for a specified period in exchange for making payments to the protected area and subject to compliance with protected area regulations. Source: *WWF (2004) Pay per nature view - Understanding tourism revenues for effective management plans*



**Quality service: whether public or private, guides must be adequately trained and monitored**

### 6.3 Operation of commercial activities

For the operation of tourism services such as accommodation, restaurants, shops and activities, there are two general options: do it yourself or issue concessions and leases to other parties to operate these commercial activities for you. Both options are discussed in this section.

#### Concessions and leases

The most important reason for using concessions and leases is that private operators bring expertise and human resources regarding tourism which protected areas traditionally lack. The private sector is generally better able to adapt to changing markets and product innovations than the public sector. As long as the licensee is successful it is likely that the protected area will receive an ongoing source of revenue.

Such system brings mutual benefits. The concessionaire or leaseholder "buys" the right to run a business in an attractive environment, and the protected area gains extra revenue. Additionally, concessions and leases function as tool for visitor management as their location will direct visitors.

Activities that are given a concession may include accommodation, restaurants, souvenir shops, tour guiding, trekking or diving operations, sport fishing or hunting trips, horse trekking or reindeer/dog-sled safaris, hire of kayaks or mountain bikes and the hire or sale of other sports and recreational equipment.

Protected-area managers should consider a number of things before issuing concessions:

- The capacity and legal powers of the protected-area agency to manage concessions.
- The strengths of the private sector to provide quality service and products as required in the concession terms.
- The lost income (profit made by the concessionaire may be potential income lost by the park agency).
- The suitability of the operation for a concession (it may be hard to find private companies willing to operate essential activities that are not profitable all the year round).
- The suitability of non-private sector concessionaires (you may consider issuing concessions to NGOs and community organisations in order to improve community involvement but this will often require additional training and education).

When drafting concession contracts various important issues need to be taken into account:

- Staff members should be suitably trained for such operations.
- Company and staff qualifications can be one selection criterion.
- Operational details, such as hours of operation, range of services, and level of service, must be outlined in the contract.
- Pricing policy: sometimes the park concession has a monopoly and, therefore, regulation of prices is required. In other cases competition is encouraged through the development of multiple concession operators in different places.
- Standard levels of service, safety and (environmental) sustainability should be included in the contract and arrangements for monitoring should be specified, along with the consequences if the concessionaire fails to meet agreed standards.

Other possible items in the contract include agreements on:

- Minimum or compulsory operating hours
- Public access to facilities

#### DEFINITION

► **Direct operation of commercial activities** Provision of commercial goods and services by the protected area (other than provision of access or activities covered by user fees).

### Case study 29

#### Concessions in SANParks

South Africa

**In 1999 it appeared that SANParks, the South African national park authority, was unable to offer tourism products and services efficiently. Customer service was mediocre, products were poorly differentiated and prices were not influenced by the market.**

It was decided that the commercial activities were to be outsourced and a concession was granted for the management and operation of 12 lodges, 19 shops and 17 restaurants. The concession was tied to social and environmental conditions, and the price for the concession was determined as share of revenues generated.

In 2004, the concessions raised US\$13.5 million and another US\$42.5 million private investments were made. These revenues make up 75% of the current budget, create employment for local communities and helped expand the total amount of land protected by SANParks by 5%.

Source: Saporiti (2006) *Managing National Parks: How Public-Private Partnerships can Aid Conservation*.



- Infrastructure maintenance responsibilities
- Responsibilities for signposting to/from the facilities
- Advertising inside and outside the area
- Staff and operations accreditation standards
- Design of facilities (use of local materials, sustainable building practises)

The selection procedure for concessions to companies is another issue as the choice can become highly political. Selection procedures should therefore be open, transparent and neutral.

Fees from concessionaires to be paid to the area authorities can be arranged in many forms, such as flat annual or monthly fees, or a percentage of the concessionaire's gross revenues or profits.

### Direct operations of commercial activities

Rather than having commercial activities in your area arranged through concessions with private companies and individuals, you can also operate tourism services yourself. If you have human resources available to offer adequate services for different types of tourists, this may maximise the tourism-generated revenues for the area. For example, guided tours can quite easily be operated by park rangers if they had some additional training. Also many merchandise and information shops are run by park agency staff.

In some cases offering direct paid services to visitors can be profitable:

- If your specific knowledge is needed such as in nature guiding.
- If the provision of services can be combined with the regular activities of your park, for example renting out accommodation which is also used for park personnel.

#### Case study 30

#### Direct operation of accommodation by protected areas

*The Netherlands*

**The Dutch National Forest Service (SBB) manages all Dutch state-owned protected areas. SBB offers several forms of accommodation in its protected areas, currently 72 campsites and 56 holiday homes. The natural campsites usually generate little economic spin-off but the rent of former renovated ranger houses and old farms in the protected areas is rather profitable. Weekly rates range from €300 per week in low season to €1,275 per week in high season.**

This operation is very successful with most of the homes fully booked during the entire season. As the homes are self-containing, the overhead costs are limited. Besides generating revenues for the protected area, the holiday homes finance and guarantee the conservation of the cultural heritage in which the holiday homes are often situated.

[www.buitenlevenvakantiewoningen.nl](http://www.buitenlevenvakantiewoningen.nl)

However, it is strongly advised to avoid any "state-run" activities that create unfair competition with your private stakeholders as this may result in conflict. Operating commercial activities yourself is a safe option only if there are currently no tourist businesses active in your area and/or there is little interest from tourism businesses to develop new activities. However, if there are (quality) tourism service providers active in your (wider) area, it may be wiser to invest in relationships with those stakeholders instead of running the business directly yourself. Possible options for consideration are:

- Direct operations by the protected-area management agency
- Indirect operations through a state-owned company
- Public-private partnership with private company or communities

### Operation of commercial activities: Action points

- **Assess** if there are private companies, NGOs and individuals that are interested in operating activities in your area and decide which services to let in concessions and which to operate yourself.
- **Make** a list of what activities could be carried out in co-operation with your stakeholders.
- **Make** an overview of what human resources and expertise you currently have and what training you may need to operate services yourself.
- **Develop** open, transparent procedures for the selection of companies for concessions.
- **Assess** training and human resource needs for the activities you want to operate yourself.
- **Assess** if your agency is legally in the position to let concessions or operate commercial activities, and what should be done to make this possible (such as developing joint-venture arrangements or state companies).

## 6.4 Donations and volunteers

An effective way of generating funds for conservation areas through tourism is achieved through **donations** by visitors to the area. There are various ways of operating these schemes, for example through setting up independent entities such as "Friends of..." organisations or through "visitor payback".



**Help from friends: volunteers can be a long-term source of small amounts of funding, but need support such as informative websites (Lake District National Park, UK)**

It often works well to ask for a direct contribution for a certain or particular project directly related to the core objective of the park and at the same time providing a visible or emotional benefit for the visitor. Examples may include: the renovation of a cultural monument or the support for environmental education of local children (especially relevant in countries where the activities of local population is not always in line with conservation). Donations should preferably be requested at the end of a visit and it is important to show that any money donated is well spent and not just used to compensate any decreasing government support. It is also good practice to show how earlier funds have been used (show pictures and testimonials).

Another form of donation is **sponsorship** by private companies. They are motivated by promotional benefits (advertisements). Larger national or international companies like to be linked with "winners" – e.g. sponsoring a sporting team or a nationally iconic protected area. Is your park a leading park in the country? Do you protect a specific species representing a national symbol? Alternatively you can work with local companies who may be willing to sponsor certain local activities, festivals or infrastructure (such as benches).

A new and growing trend is for companies to donate through their **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** policy. Unlike traditional sponsorship their main motivation is not direct promotional advantages but more long-term respect from their stakeholders, employees, existing clients and the local community. For example, more and more national and international tour operators set aside a small proportion of their profits or make a donation, per booking, to support conservation or community support initiatives in their destinations.

## Case study 31

### Selling national park "shares"

Müritz National Park, Germany

The association "Friends of the Müritz National Park" issues "shares" of the National Park for €25 each. The attractively designed shares are numbered and printed on quality paper. By buying these shares, people and businesses support the national park and in return receive a valuable memory and "collector's item" (only 2,000 shares are issued). Moreover, businesses around the park may use the share for advertising and promotion, saying: "Look, the park brings us benefits but we are also willing to invest in it."

The "shares" have been published as limited edition of 2,000 pieces and the printing cost was approximately €1,000. At €25 each, the amount of income generated from the sales of all "shares" totals €49,000. These proceeds go to the promotion of the national park, for environmental education, information boards and signs. [www.muertiz-nationalpark.de](http://www.muertiz-nationalpark.de)



Another way to generate support from tourists is by making use of their time as "**voluntourists**". These are tourists that not only wish to visit and experience the protected area but are also willing to work in the area during their holiday or visit. Working in an area provides a much deeper experience than a quick visit and is increasing in popularity.

Employing volunteers to maintain trails, manage waste, do research, guide tourists or attend information booths can provide cost-saving opportunities. Voluntourists often require lower levels of comfort and may share the ranger accommodation and facilities. In order to avoid conflict with your regular staff you will need to ensure that any volunteers are *additional* to your staff rather than *replacing* staff by volunteers. The benefits may be less direct but you will be able to increase quality and service levels in your area. More tips about creating a volunteers' programme or product development can be found in the library of background documents.

[www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual](http://www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual)

### Case study 33

#### "Voluntourism" in protected areas

Chile, Peru, USA

**Conservation Volunteers International Program (VIP) is a US non-profit organisation that provides opportunities for citizens to "get their hands dirty" doing volunteer services. Working together with local stakeholders volunteers repair trails, restore archaeological sites, replant vegetation, protect fish and wildlife, encourage community support, and learn from each other.**

At Machu Picchu Sanctuary (Peru), volunteers participate in a variety of tasks assigned by Peru's National Institute of Culture (INC) and the National Service for Protected-area management (SERNANP). Tasks vary during each expedition and may include:

- restoration of archaeological features by removing exotic or unwanted vegetation from along the trails or the stone walls of buildings and agricultural terraces;
- maintenance of Inca trails;

- restoration of areas impacted by visitor use or fire;
- planting trees;
- collecting native plant seeds to be used in restoration projects or
- monitoring restoration study plots.

In Torres del Paine (Chilean Patagonia), volunteers focus on trail repairs and resource restoration. Trail work includes widening and out-sloping the trail tread, installing dips and other water diversions, re-routing the trail away from sensitive habitat, clipping back vegetation encroaching on the trail, and moving rock to create dry trail treads or steps through steep sections of trail.

On a visit to Torres del Paine National Park in Patagonia, Chile, the organisation's co-founder explained to local rangers that many US parks invited volunteers to help. Surprised, the local rangers asked, "Why would anyone want to do that?" This discussion was a real eye opener about how people in other countries viewed voluntourism.

[www.voluntourism.org/news-supplychain64.htm](http://www.voluntourism.org/news-supplychain64.htm)  
[www.conservationvip.org](http://www.conservationvip.org)

### Donations and volunteers: Action points

- **Decide** whether a volunteer programme can benefit your area.
- **Start** with a small initiative to attract volunteers, for example by announcing on your website that you host volunteers.
- **Voluntourism Packages** can be developed by seeking co-operation with local, national and international tour operators. There are many specialised tour operators worldwide that offer voluntourism packages, often combined with language courses.

### Further Reading, Chapter 6

Find the following additional resources in the library of background documents at

[www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual](http://www.eceat-projects.org/tourism-manual)

- *Pay per nature view - Understanding tourism revenues for effective management plans* - WWF (2004)
- *Financing Protected Areas, Guidelines for Protected-area managers* - WCPA (2000)
- *Protected Area Visitor Fees – Overview* - Lindberg (2001)
- *Sustainable tourism in protected areas, chapter 9 Financial aspects of tourism in protected areas*
- *Travellers' Philanthropy Handbook, chapter 3 Voluntourism* - CREST (2011)



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## **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank the many staff from protected areas and associated organisations who contributed information. It's not possible to mention them all, but particular thanks go to:

Agnese Balandiņa; Nataliya Barysenka; Richard Blackman; Andrei Blumer; Stanka Dešnik; Petra Dippold; Hans Fransson; Cathy Hopley; Valeria Klitsounova; Martin Kaiser; Bettina Kreisel; Susan MacDonald; Josep Maria Prats; Montserrat Grabolosa Sellabona; Patrizia Rossi; Solomiya Rozhko; Heidrun Schütze; Frank Steingass

## **Photographs**

Saara Airaksinen; Broads Authority; Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; Stanka Dešnik; Hilary Fenten; Xavier Abril Ferrer; Nataliya Gnatyuk; Lyudmyla Kravchuk; Heather Lowther; Peter Mattiasson; Andrea Actis Oreglia; Royston Rascal; Joe Ross; Solomiya Rozhko; Volodymyr Tymochko; Ben Vossler

## ECEAT International

ECEAT, the European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism, promotes sustainable development by integrating tourism with biodiversity, environmental protection, local development, sustainable land use and the preservation of cultural heritage. ECEAT International is the international association serving as the independent, impartial umbrella organisation to support the common interests of more than 15 independent country branches, each promoting a marketing network of small-scale sustainable rural accommodation. The ECEAT Quality Label is recognised by both tourist service providers and travellers and validates the accommodation's quality of service, their contribution to local communities, nature conservation and the protection of the environment. [www.eceat.org](http://www.eceat.org)



## ECEAT-Projects

ECEAT-Projects is an independent not-for-profit expert organisation closely connected to the international ECEAT network. Commissioned by governments, private-sector associations and NGOs on European and international levels, ECEAT-Projects follows a business-oriented approach. ECEAT-Projects develops and implements standards, management systems, training tools and provides marketing support for sustainable tourism initiatives. Fields of activities are providing market support to global community-based tourism initiatives, rural tourism training and supporting Corporate Social Responsibility in the tour operator sector ([travellife.org](http://travellife.org)). [www.eceat-projects.org](http://www.eceat-projects.org)



## Latvian Country Tourism Association "Lauku ceļotājs"

Latvian Country Tourism Association "Lauku ceļotājs" has 350 active members; activities are focused on development of rural tourism sector as a sustainable part of rural economy. They include rural tourism product development (rural tourism accommodation, nature and heritage), provision of training, exchange and integration of experience through membership and networking activities with organisations across Europe. The Association has developed the Latvian national eco-label for rural tourism accommodations and has been involved in a number of projects for sustainable and environment-friendly tourism. LC has developed a number of training manuals, provides training seminars and organises rural tourism provider experience exchange. [www.celotajs.lv](http://www.celotajs.lv)



LAUKU CEĻOTĀJS

## EUROPARC Federation

EUROPARC is the umbrella organisation for Europe's protected areas, representing approximately 450 members. These include protected areas, governmental departments, NGOs and businesses in 36 countries, who themselves manage the green jewels of Europe's land, sea, mountains, forests, rivers and cultural heritage. EUROPARC facilitates international co-operation in all aspects of protected-area management to further and improve and conserve European shared natural heritage. EUROPARC endeavours to exchange expertise, experience and best practise and to collaborate with others to ensure the value and meaning of protected areas is at the heart of Europe. [www.europarc.org](http://www.europarc.org)



## EUROPARC Consulting

EUROPARC Consulting GmbH is the consultancy arm of the EUROPARC Federation. They specialise in the policy and practice of protected-area management and are uniquely placed to provide advice, training and expertise, as they use exclusively the skills of experts with first-hand experience in protected areas. Having such close access to the vast EUROPARC network, EUROPARC Consulting can call upon experts across the whole spectrum of protected-area management, in many European countries and languages to facilitate consulting services for clients such as protected-area authorities, government institutions and international funding bodies. [www.europarc-consulting.org](http://www.europarc-consulting.org)



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Financial support for this publication was received from the European Union LIFE+ Programme

