ADVISORY BOARD

The Advisory Board of the Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide Programme consists of leading authorities from the tourism and heritage sectors in the Asia-Pacific region.

EXPERT ADVISORY BODIES

- Members of the Asian Academy for Heritage Management, a network of institutions throughout Asia and the Pacific offering professional training in the field of heritage management
- National heritage trusts
- UNESCO Bangkok, which serves as the secretariat for the Asian Academy

IN COOPERATION WITH

- Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)
- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

CULTURAL HERITAGE SPECIALIST GUIDE PROGRAMME FOCAL POINTS

REGIONAL FOCAL POINT & NORTH ASIA FOCAL POINT
[China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea]
Institute for Tourism Studies, Macao SAR, China

GREATER MEKONG SUB-REGION FOCAL POINT
[Cambodia, China (Guangxi and Yunnan), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam]
Lao National Tourism Administration, Vientiane, Lao PDR

MALAYSIA FOCAL POINT
Penang Heritage Trust, Penang, Malaysia

SOUTH ASIA FOCAL POINT
[Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka]
Department of Tourism
Royal Government of Bhutan, Thimphu, Bhutan

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have an inquiry about the programme, please contact:
UNESCO Bangkok
Office of the Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific
920 Sukhumvit Road
Bangkok, Thailand
Tel: (66) 2 391 0577 x509
Fax: (66) 2 391 0866
E-mail: culture@unescobkk.org
www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=2627

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INTRODUCTION

UNESCO World Heritage Sites have become the most prominent tourism destinations in the Asia-Pacific region. Representing universal values, these landmark sites range from breathtaking cultural landscapes to living historic towns, from works of engineering genius to stunning architectural monuments. The tourism boom at these sites has fostered international exchange, and tourism revenue promises to bring development to these communities. Yet massive tourism pressure threatens the long-term condition and authenticity of the sites.

Sustainable tourism calls for a new breed of responsible and informed tourists. The major rise in cultural tourism has seen a demand by visitors for more meaningful interaction with both the heritage and surrounding communities. In order to contribute to the wellbeing of the sites and local stakeholders and to minimize negative impacts from tourism, heritage guides play an important role in educating the visitors about the authentic values of the site and codes of responsible conduct.

In response to these concerns, the UNESCO-ICCROM Asian Academy for Heritage Management launched the Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide Programme in 2005. This pioneering, practical and internationally-recognized training/certification programme is being implemented through active partnerships between members of the Asian Academy, training institutions from the UNESCO Asia Pacific Education and Training Institutes (APETIT) network and National Tourism Organizations (NTOs). The Institute for Tourism Studies (IFT) serves as the regional focal point with UNESCO providing technical advisory services and oversight.

GOAL

Setting new standards in the Asia-Pacific region, the Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide Programme will raise professional capacity in guiding visitors at heritage sites, in particular World Heritage sites. The programme aims to provide the highest level of visitor experience, to raise awareness about conservation issues and to foster the long-term sustainability of these sites.

OBJECTIVES

Complementing existing national training/certification courses, the advanced training/certification offered by the programme will:

• provide accredited guides the opportunity to strengthen their skills in interpreting heritage sites, with an emphasis on World Heritage Sites;
• enhance the educational experience of visitors (both local and international), leading to longer stays and repeat visitation;
• contribute to the sustainable safeguarding of UNESCO World Heritage sites by educating visitors about conservation issues and advocating codes of responsible conduct;
• benefit local communities by promoting their role as hosts and active participants in the cultural tourism industry; and
• improve career prospects for accredited guides.

TRAINING MODULES

The course curriculum comprises core, thematic and site-specific modules.

The core modules focus on issues concerning tourism at UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The six units include:

• Unit I: The Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide;
• Unit II: Understanding UNESCO World Heritage Sites;
• Unit III: Understanding and Protecting Cultural Heritage;
• Units IV and V: Guiding Visitors at Heritage Sites (Heritage Interpretation and Influencing Visitor Behavior and Experience); and
• Unit VI: Sharing the Benefits.

The thematic modules vary between subregions. They cover overarching themes that will enable guides to deepen their knowledge about specific sites and to educate visitors about broad narratives that convey the evolutionary, ecological, historic, religious, artistic and architectural linkages between various heritage sites in the region.

TRAINING APPROACH

The training approach is hands-on. The training material is delivered in a combination of lectures and interactive practical exercises. Site visits and field activities give participants the chance to put their learning into practice. Additional readings by leading experts provide in-depth reference material for further study.

PROGRAMME PHASES

The programme is split into three phases.

Phase One focuses on training-the-trainers through sub-regional workshops. The participants are drawn from training institutions from both the tourism and culture sectors.

In Phase Two, moving from the sub-regional to the national level, accredited trainers take the lead in customizing the training material for each country.

In Phase Three, accredited trainers in each country will train and certify guides at World Heritage sites, in accordance with the rigorous standards of the Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide Programme set by UNESCO and the Asian Academy.

BENEFITS

UNESCO, the Institute for Tourism Studies and the national training institutions offering the programme will officially accredit guides through the Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide programme, as an advanced supplement to existing national guide certification schemes.

On completion of the course, accredited guides will have preferential access to UNESCO materials, teaching aids for guiding visitors around heritage sites, brochures and schematic maps, and other exclusive UNESCO products.

Each site-specific module provides a definitive guide to a particular heritage site. It explains the significance and conservation issues about the site, offers useful guidelines for interpreting the site, and includes FAQs about the site.