World Heritage Tourism

Brent Lane, Senior Executive in Residence
United Nations “World Heritage Sites”

A World Heritage Site (WHS) is a natural or cultural site that has “Outstanding Universal Value”) and has been “inscribed” on the World Heritage List by the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee.

US = 24 WHS

Italy (58), China (56), Germany (51), France (49), Spain (49), India (40), Mexico (35), UK (33), Iran (31), Russia (30), Japan (25)
UN World Heritage Sites – 1,154 (2021)
Cumulative World Heritage Sites (1978+)
WHS Process takes Years

194 counties currently eligible to propose candidate sites

National Tentative List - US has 19 sites on current list

National Nomination – US nominated Hopewell for 2023

UN Evaluation – expert groups’ assessments

World Heritage Convention – annual vote on nominations
World Heritage Site Additions (avg. 26)
World Heritage’s Triple Bottom Line

Economic Development

Education

Conservation
Stonehenge - WHS Volume vs Benefit

- 1 million visitors /year
- Average stay 20-30 min.
- 50% left the parking lot
The Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks is eight archeological sites in southern Ohio.

March 2022: US National Park Service nominated it to the World Heritage List.

Will be considered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in 2023.
World Heritage Visitation Effect*

More visitors from further away
Have done research
Expect a distinctive experience
Want cultural engagement in many forms
Capable and willing to spend more
Plan to stay longer

*best case
“WHS status offers a rare opportunity for communities to reshape their local economies by offering an authentic and unique visitor experience to high impact, heritage tourists”.

100% increase in visitation within 3 years

181 new jobs and $12.5 million in economic output in the three counties where the sites are located.
Global WHS “Brand Value” Capture

Enhance local WHS cluster to attract & capture spending of high impact, cultural heritage visitors.

Leverage WHS brand to convert day trippers to overnight guests

May increase annual visitation of 150-200% and economic impact by 200% to 400%.
Differentiate WHS Visitor Streams

Heritage visitors spend more than an average visitor but desire relevant experiences and hospitalities.

Overnight visitors have 3x the impact of day visitors.

Bus loads of children or day visitors support the educational mission of World Heritage status....but provide very little economic impact.
WHS Visitors have Different Impacts

[Bar chart showing different impacts of visitors by category]
WHS = Community Empowerment

World Heritage Designation empowers host communities to capture greater economic value

Requires relevant tourism cluster to capture heritage visitors desiring unique, authentic experiences

Entrepreneurial lodgings, distinctive local restaurants, and complementary tourism experiences
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