

Heritage, cultural tourism and sustainable development in Haiti

Challenges and prospects

November 10, 11, 12 and 13, 2011
Hôtel Karibe, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

International symposium jointly organized by the State University of Haiti and Laval University, (Quebec City, Canada) under the auspices of the Honourable Michaëlle Jean, ex-Governor General of Canada and Special Envoy of UNESCO for Haiti.

This international and inter-disciplinary workshop aims to study the current challenges and future prospects for the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Haiti. Tourism is a growing sector throughout the world and has become an important source of revenue for both developed and developing countries alike. While cultural tourism is not without its pitfalls (site degradation, folklorization of local cultures, skyrocketing real estate prices, etc.), it nevertheless offers unexpected development opportunities for poor countries. Most of the large international organizations (UNESCO, the World Bank, the World Tourism Organization, etc.) now recognize that when tourism is well managed, it can become a major force in spearheading sustainable development in poor countries by helping promote the national culture, offering employment opportunities with a positive economic impact for local communities, and creating service-sector jobs that allow for the development of skills in heritage development and management.

Once known as the "the Pearl of the Caribbean," Haiti was for a long time among the area's most desirable destinations. While the deteriorating political and economic situation has reduced tourist activity over the last thirty years, the country still has a very rich heritage in the areas of history, architecture, craftsmanship, art, literature, archaeology, nature and festivals. The potential of heritage enhancement and cultural tourism for sustainable development in Haiti is all the more important since the Caribbean region is a major tourist destination and this sector of the tourism industry is the fastest growing such sector in the Caribbean region, and indeed worldwide. The themes suggested for discussion include: improvement of job training for the tourism sector, development of cultural routes presenting tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the reconstruction of airport, road, hotel and resort infrastructures, the linkage of beach and cultural tourism, and the potential for tourism around the heritage of the earthquake itself.

The organizers encourage contributions from national and international scholars who specialize in cultural tourism, as well as from students, civil servants, representatives from association circles and NGOs, tour operators, and private entrepreneurs, to reflect upon the challenges and set up tourism-related projects adapted to the situation in Haiti. The conference will also serve to make recommendations to the Haïtien government and to publish a selection of the papers for a collection of essays at Laval University Press.

All those interested in participating in the symposium are kindly requested to submit their 150- word proposal, along with a 75 word résumé, **BEFORE AUGUST 30th, 2011**, to Laurier Turgeon (Laurier.Turgeon@hst.ulaval.ca) and to Wilson Laleau (wilson.laleau@ueh.edu.ht). The selection committee will reply to all applicants by the 1st of September. Those interested in participating without presenting a paper are welcomed to contact the organizers to acquire a registration form.

