CULTURAL COMMUNITY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

SUMMARY

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The demand for travel destinations with cultural activities is increasing rapidly. Many communities and areas have opportunities for helping their economies by developing cultural tourism. However, it is important to understand what cultural tourism really is, development required, how economic impact is derived, how to develop cultural tourism, and some basic principles.

I. WHAT IS CULTURAL TOURISM?

Cultural tourism is broadly defined as travel based on the following kinds of resources:

--prehistoric life
--historic life
--ethnicity
--legends, lore
--economic development
--other foundations

II. DEVELOPMENT REQUIRED

Merely having resources is not enough. They must be made ready for visitor use: parking, information, design, control, resource protection.

Prehistoric Restoration: preparing archeological sites for visitor use; display of artifacts, crafts, customs; requires cooperation with descendants of ancient peoples.

Historic Restoration: rebuilding, restoring; converting to new uses; designing for modern use, upkeep; maintain original theme; interpret to visitors; utilize several eras.

Living History: role playing in historic period and setting; original costumes and activities; guided tours; adapted to farms, shops, homes; depict life of the period.

Museums: modern interpretation; use of period themes; displays, exhibits, tours; human and animal topics.
**Visitor Centers:** located away from fragile site; describes main theme; provides information, education, entertainment; usually includes: lobby, restrooms, information center, exhibits, interpretation programs, sales of books and slides; auditorium, and linkage with outdoor exhibits and trails.

**Interpretive Tours:** description of environments; identify with theme; applied to variety of cultural resources including history, heritage, and economic development.

**Outdoor Theaters:** special site requirements; provides for plays, dramas, celebrations, festivals, related to heritage and cultures.

**III. ECONOMIC IMPACT**

After cultural tourism attractions are developed, economic impact is derived from two sources. Admissions are often sufficient to make them self-sustaining. Many cultural attractions increase volume of visitors, stimulating demand for tourist services—lodging, food service, transportation, retail sales—but are sponsored by non-profit organizations and government agencies.

Important: cooperation between tourist businesses and attraction developers and managers.

**IV. HOW TO DEVELOP CULTURAL TOURISM**

A. **Review of Markets.** Identify existing and potential markets for cultural tourism in community and region.

B. **Review of Cultural Resources.** Study community and surrounding region for cultural resources that have not been developed.

C. **Gap Analysis.** Compare market trends with what is now available to determine gaps that suggest new potential for cultural tourism development.

D. **Discovery of Opportunity.** Identify long list of all conceivable opportunities for new cultural attraction development.

E. **Staging.** Reduce long list to stages of development. Give top priority to projects that can be implemented most readily and most easily. Initiate beginning of larger and longer-range projects.

F. **Feasibilities.** Contact three sectors of developers—governments, nonprofit organizations, commercial enterprise—for them to develop feasibility studies.
V. PRINCIPLES OF CULTURAL TOURISM

A. Clustering. Often historic buildings and sites tend to be separated, opposite from tourist market interest in larger critical masses of attractions. Interconnection can be accomplished by central visitor center, tours, themed presentations, festivals.

B. Resource Protection. Cultural resources are very rare and fragile. Poor planning, development and management can be destructive to these assets. Specialists in cultural restoration and development may be necessary.

C. Interpretation. Today's travel markets need a great amount of assistance and information to understand what they are visiting and viewing. All techniques should be employed: visitor centers, guides, exhibits, literature, presentations, tours.

D. Integration. Cultural tourism must not be treated as merely a cosmetic or superficial approach. It must involve the entire community. It must be integrated into the economic and social life of the community and area.