



HERITAGE TOURISM

Introduction

The New Jersey Historic Trust encourages organizations to develop heritage tourism products and initiatives as part of the long-term stewardship and management plans for their historic resources. Grant applications to the Garden State Historic Preservation Trust Fund may include expenses for the design, development and marketing of heritage tourism products.

Assessing your site's potential is the first step in advancing heritage tourism. Assessments include evaluating attractions and programs, visitor services, organizational capacity, preservation of resources, identification of capital needs, and tourism marketing. The New Jersey Historic Trust strongly recommends that sites undergo a heritage tourism assessment before allocating scarce resources toward product development. The National Trust for Historic Preservation identifies the main objectives of a tourism assessment as:

- To gather a wide variety of opinions and suggestions from stakeholders
- To learn about the community's history and culture
- To evaluate the current visitor experience
- To evaluate current visitor services including signage, operating hours, hospitality, etc. and identify capital needs
- To evaluate current local marketing efforts
- To assess the level of public and private support for tourism
- To meet with organizers and assess organizational capacity for program development

Heritage Tourism Assessments may be included as part of a Historic Sites Management grant proposal. The New Jersey Historic Trust encourages collaboration or "linkages" between two or more sites to maximize and/or leverage the investment being made and to enhance the visitor experience.

To view an outline identifying the types of activities typically conducted during an assessment, see:

<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/heritage-tourism/cultural-heritage-tourism.html>

A heritage tourism initiative may be included as part of a Capital Preservation Grant project, or as a Historic Site Management Grant proposal. Tourism exercises should provide products that encourage innovative public participation and education.

Examples of heritage tourism products include (but are not limited to):

- ◆ Walking tours or Bus tours
- ◆ Recorded audio tours that can be downloaded from the internet (podcast tours)
- ◆ Interpretive signs that use words and pictures to tell the history of a building, site or landscape
 - ◆ Tourism marketing plans for communities that focus on promoting historic resources
 - ◆ Collaborative campaigns that benefit multiple historic sites within a defined area
 - ◆ Audio or visual materials that enhance the interpretation of a historic site, and expand distribution of that information via the internet, CD, or broadcasting.

What is Heritage Tourism?

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism (sometimes called cultural heritage tourism) as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic and natural resources.” The National Trust pioneered the process for heritage tourism programs in 1990 by identifying five guiding principles:

- Collaborate
- Find the fit between the community and tourism
- Make sites and programs come alive
- Focus on authenticity and quality
- Preserve and protect resources

Heritage Tourism Projects Funded by the NJ Historic Trust

◆ *Bus Tour: Walt Whitman’s Invincible City*

This project created a bus tour that connected three sites associated with poet Walt Whitman in the city of Camden. The Historic Trust grant funded the development of the tour and tour script, several “test runs” of the tour for different audiences, and marketing the tour through various media.

The tour required the collaboration of three site stewards (a nonprofit organization, state-run historic site, and private business owner), included the use of a first-person re-enactor to portray Walt Whitman.



◆ ***Podcast Tours: Fighting for Freedom in Gloucester County***

This project is creating a series of audio recordings that can be downloaded from the Internet as podcasts (which can be played on a computer, mp3 player or I-pod). The recordings will provide interpretive stories for five historic sites related to events and people involved with the American Revolutionary experience in Gloucester County.



The Historic Trust grant will help fund the creation of the narratives and recordings, printed material and maps, and marketing of the new tourism product. The tour requires the collaborative effort of a county government, a regional tourism agency and a number of nonprofit organizations including a cemetery, historical society and house of worship.

◆ ***Information Kiosks: Revolutionary NJ Discovery Centers***

This project will design, develop and install information kiosks in four historical parks in the Crossroads National Heritage Area, a 14- county federally designated area associated with New Jersey's role in the American Revolution. The kiosks will provide audio visual orientation to the Crossroads Heritage Area and its hundreds of historic resources. They will also serve as models for discovery centers that will be installed at more locations throughout the region. The project requires the collaborative effort of a nonprofit organization and four publicly owned parks.

◆ ***Wayside Signage: The Princeton Ice Company in Mountain Lakes Park***

Princeton Township installed award-winning wayside signs throughout the Mountain Lakes Park. The signs used historic images and narrative to describe the site's significance as an ice making company in the late 19th and early 20th century. The Historic Trust grant helped pay for the services of a historian and graphic artist, who used previously completed research to create the sign series.



Guidelines for Successful Heritage Tourism

The National Trust suggests four steps for a successful heritage tourism experience:

1. Assess the potential
2. Plan and organize
3. Prepare for visitors; protect and manage resources
4. Market for success

Historic Site Management Grants allow organizations to hire professionals to assist with Assessing, Planning and Marketing new tourism products.

Preparing for visitors is a challenge for which individual site stewards are responsible. Historic structures and grounds must be in good repair, accessible to the public and visitor ready. However, a site may improve its visitor readiness with a series of small steps:

- ◆ providing regular hours of operation
- ◆ cross promoting with other heritage and cultural sites
- ◆ erecting signage that provide some interpretation to visitors when the site is closed

As staff and funding allow, the property steward may develop new marketing strategies with local businesses and tour operators, provide a “virtual” tour on its web site or improve physical access to the site for visitors with physical, sight or hearing impairments. These activities are fundable projects under the guidelines of the Historic Site Management Grant program.

Collaborating for Successful Heritage Tourism

While single sites can be successful in promoting themselves as tourism destinations, greater success will come from the dedication of resources and interest from the broader community, both as a public policy and economic stimulus.

From “How to Succeed in Heritage Tourism”:

Developing cultural heritage tourism is an incremental process, and communities will repeat the four steps (Assess, Plan, Prepare, and Market) described in this section at each stage of development. Keep in mind that developing a strong cultural heritage program will require an investment and a commitment—an investment of financial resources and a commitment of human resources including strong leadership.

Not every community can have a successful cultural heritage tourism program. Communities that have lost too much of their heritage, or not nurtured their cultural potential may not have the historic, cultural and natural resources it takes to develop a program that will attract cultural heritage visitors.

Tourism is a powerful economic development tool. Tourism creates jobs, provides new business opportunities and strengthens local economies. When cultural heritage tourism development is done right, it also helps to protect our nation’s natural and cultural treasures and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

TOURISM+ CULTURE + HERITAGE = SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES

New Jersey’s Heritage Tourism Master Plan

In the summer of 2010, the Heritage Tourism Task Force unveiled the Heritage Tourism Master Plan for the State of New Jersey. The plan provided guidance and recommendations for governance, funding, marketing, products, and the collection of state-owned historic sites. *Contours of New Jersey*, in summarizing New Jersey’s historical significance, identified six key themes for presenting the state’s history to the public. Important trends and the economic impact to the state, as well as a comprehensive bibliography and online resource directory are included within the final report.

To review and download the entire plan, executive summary and/or components of the final report, visit the Historic Trust’s website:

http://www.njht.org/dca/njht/touring/heritage_tourism_master_plan.html

Online Heritage Tourism Toolkits

Perhaps the best way to learn about adapting a site to heritage tourism is by example. The following toolkits have been developed by national and state preservation organizations and are available for downloading from the Internet:

America Week/National Tourism Week Toolkit - Available at
<http://www.ustravel.org/pressmedia/TWFA/toolkit.html>

Texas Cultural Tourism Basics: The Texas Commission on the Arts - Available at:
<http://www.arts.state.tx.us/toolkit/tourism/>

Utah's Heritage Tourism Toolkit: The Utah State Historical Society's Office of Preservation -
Available at: **http://history.utah.gov/heritage_tourism_toolkit/**

Virginia's Tourism Handbook: The Virginia Department of Historic Resources - Available
at: **http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/tools_of_trade/tourism1.htm**

Images: Whitman interpreter at Harleigh Cemetery in Camden; Whitall House at Red Bank Battlefield in Gloucester County; Unveiling the wayside signs about the Princeton Ice Company at Mountain Lakes Park.