

Freiburg Declaration on Heritage Interpretation

Heritage interpretation

helps people to enjoy a satisfying and meaningful experience at natural and cultural heritage sites

Heritage interpretation

is employed by the best

- parks and protected areas
- monuments and historic sites
- museums and visitor centres
- guided tours and self-guided trails

Heritage interpretation

- provokes curiosity
- broadens horizons
- reveals deeper meanings
- touches emotionally
- encourages stewardship

Heritage interpretation

- addresses and inspires visitors
- explains why a place is special

We, the participants at the first annual conference of Interpret Europe, held in Freiburg in July 2011, address this declaration to:

- ☺ Governmental and non-governmental policy making bodies at international, European, national, regional and local levels
- ☺ Owners and operators responsible for the conservation, management and presentation of natural and cultural heritage sites including museums
- ☺ Tourism industry organisations and host destinations
- ☺ Local, minority and shared-interest communities
- ☺ Educational and training institutions and organisations
- ☺ Professional and voluntary heritage interpreters

We believe that:

- ☺ Natural and cultural heritage play an essential part, in terms of biodiversity, history, sense of place and community inheritance, in the life and development of the people of Europe as a whole and of their own regions and localities.
- ☺ Heritage interpretation plays an important role in presenting and explaining this heritage and encouraging people across Europe to appreciate both the distinct and the common elements of their shared and continually-developing heritage.
- ☺ Heritage interpretation acts as a force for the greater good and can make a substantial contribution to education for sustainable development, to sustainable tourism, and to increased economic and social benefits for host communities.
- ☺ There is an urgent need, throughout Europe, for increased knowledge about the value of heritage interpretation among responsible bodies, and the promotion of good practice in heritage interpretation through the training of professional and volunteer interpreters.
- ☺ Heritage interpretation contributes to the cultural and environmental aims of international agreements, including the ICOMOS Charter on Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage.

In support of this declaration, we advocate a number of actions

We advocate that...

A ...governmental and non-governmental policy making bodies:

- 1** Formulate policies that recognise the role of heritage interpretation, ensure the provision of resources to implement these policies and foster appropriate professional standards among site operators and interpretation practitioners.
- 2** Ensure that these policies are consistent with the demands of heritage conservation and sustainable development through consultation with, and involvement of, heritage professionals, site operators and local communities.
- 3** Encourage and support cooperation in the promotion and realisation of more professional heritage interpretation and ensure that it is socially, culturally and intellectually responsible, and recognises the importance of minorities of all kinds.
- 4** Support and promote the development and implementation of international guidelines, codes of ethics and principles of good practice for interpretation.
- 5** Support and promote educational and training programmes for heritage professionals and volunteers to establish and enhance their knowledge of heritage interpretation philosophy and their skills in delivery.
- 6** Support and promote academic and social research into the effectiveness and impact of heritage interpretation on sites and communities.

We advocate that...

B ...owners and operators of heritage sites:

- 1** Operate their sites using accepted principles of good heritage interpretation so that they contribute to the conservation of heritage, to visitors' understanding and to the social and economic well-being of host communities.
- 2** Recognize that good interpretive facilities and activities make a substantial contribution to the ethical, social, cultural and financial success of their sites.
- 3** Ensure that the design, development and operation of interpretive facilities and activities achieve high standards, including those related to sense of place, host community interests and aspirations, lack of discrimination and accessibility to all.
- 4** Cooperate with research institutions to develop adequate and practical means of providing quality interpretation at heritage sites to ensure their sustainability.

We advocate that...

C ...tourism promotion organisations and host destinations:

- 1** Support and accurately promote heritage sites which make best use of interpretation to ensure authentic and satisfying visitor experiences and to enhance the social and economic benefits to host communities.
- 2** Provide educational institutions with relevant data and information to support research into the effectiveness and impact of heritage interpretation.

We advocate that...

D ...local, minority and shared-interest communities:

- 1** Sustain and interpret their unique tangible and intangible heritage to create an increased sense of worth, and share it widely to develop greater mutual understanding.

We advocate that...

E ...education and training institutions and organisations:

- 1** Develop courses, programmes and vocational training courses to educate and train heritage professionals and interpreters and to disseminate knowledge of the principles and practice of heritage interpretation and its good practice.
- 2** Develop and promote academic and social research into the effectiveness and impact of heritage interpretation on natural and cultural heritage sites, tourism destinations and local communities.

We advocate that...

F ...professional and voluntary heritage interpreters:

- 1** Employ the principles and good practice of interpretation to present and explain the significance of natural and cultural heritage generally and specifically and to encourage the understanding and appreciation of local cultural and social beliefs and traditions, skills, arts and crafts.

Heritage Interpretation

Interpretation was first defined in 1957 as an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.

[Freeman Tilden in collaboration with the US National Park Service]

Heritage interpretation facilitates non-formal learning to provoke curiosity and interest in what may be an unfamiliar topic or theme among visitors to heritage sites.

It relates a place, objects or human endeavour to the knowledge, experience, background and values of these visitors, whether tourists or local people.

It also reveals the significance of tangible and intangible heritage which people can understand and appreciate and it helps them to enjoy an authentic and satisfying experience when visiting heritage sites of all kinds.

European Association for Heritage Interpretation

Interpret Europe was founded in 2010 to bring together all those involved in the profession and to encourage its development.

It is the only pan-European body of its kind.



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