

# UTAH RECREATION & TOURISM MATTERS



Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

May 2011

No. IORT/021

## A Heritage Tourism Overview

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### What is Heritage Tourism?

*Heritage tourism* is tourism focused on aspects of history or cultural heritage. It includes events and festivals, as well as sites and attractions related to the people, lifestyles, and traditions of the past. Examples of heritage tourism sites and events from Utah include Anasazi State Park Museum, where visitors can view an Ancestral Puebloan village and replicas of the ancient building that were once present at the site; the Living Traditions festival in downtown Salt Lake City, where arts and performances from various ethnic traditions may be experienced; and the American West Heritage Center in northern Utah's Cache Valley, where visitors can witness 19th and early 20th century farm life in authentic detail.

Heritage tourism is a component of most American tourists' trips and properly promoted attractions have the potential to bring in significant numbers of tourists and significant amounts of tourist spending. For areas desiring this type of economic growth, heritage tourism may be beneficial both economically and in terms of preserving local history and culture.

### Characteristics of Heritage Tourists

According to a study By the U.S. Travel Association (formerly the Travel Industry Association), 81% of tourists (those who went on a trip of at least 50 miles from home) engaged in at least one heritage tourism activity and 21% of these travelers are frequent heritage tourists, making more than three such history/culture-related trips per year. Most heritage tourists also undertook their trip specifically because of historical or cultural events or attractions.

Most heritage tourists traveled by automobile, most stayed overnight during their trip, and most had planned their trip within only one month of actually taking it. As far as

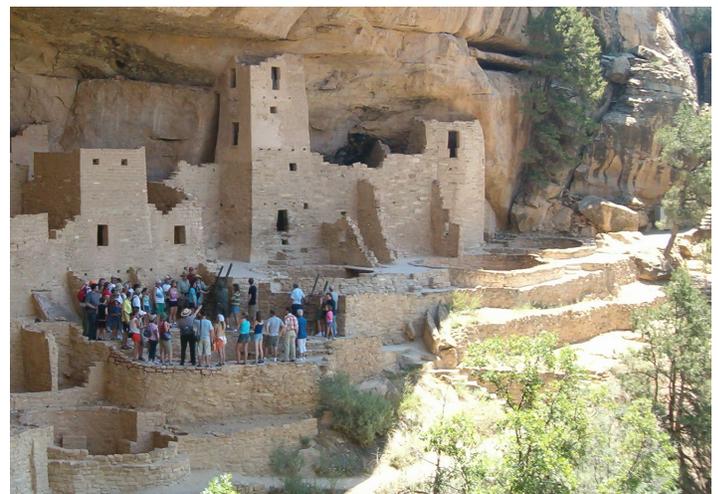
information sources for heritage tourism trips, most found out about their destinations via word of mouth, followed by internet-based sources.

About 40% of heritage tourists fell into the 35 to 54 year-old age group and more than 30% of heritage tourists have an annual household income above \$75,000. Over 30% have a household that includes children.

*Source: U.S. Travel Association (2003): The Historical/Cultural Traveler.*

### Economic Impacts

According to a study by the U.S. Travel Association, heritage tourists tend to spend more money than other tourists in the U.S. These tourists' trips tend to last longer and are more likely than other tourists' trips to include both air travel and car rentals, both of which are indicative of greater economic tourism impacts.



*Heritage Tourists at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado*

Table 1, below, presents a selection of estimates of the economic impacts of heritage tourism for U.S. states.

**The Four Steps and Five Principles of Heritage Tourism Success**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) outlines four steps and five principles important in achieving success in cultural and historically-based tourism development for communities. We recommend those involved in, or considering becoming involved in, heritage tourism development make use of these resources, which are available online at <http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org/howToGetStarted.htm>. In the two sections that follow, we present some of the main points from these documents.

**The NTHP's Four Steps**

*Step 1: Assess the Potential*

It is important to assess your areas' ability to both attract tourists and support the influx of visitors and provide the associated services they require. Such factors to consider include, but are certainly not limited to, the presence of historical, cultural, and natural attractions; events; lodging, food and other assorted services; sufficient infrastructure; the presence of local or regional organizations capable of playing a role in heritage tourism development; and means of marketing the area or region.

*Step 2: Plan and Organize*

Getting both the community and businesses behind heritage tourism is an important prerequisite of a successful heritage tourism program. Particularly important are those individuals involved in the travel and tourism industry, banking, and those whose businesses do or will potentially support tourism (food, lodging, etc.). Local government is also vital in any such endeavors. Collaborating with or obtaining support from organizations in higher levels of government (county, state, federal, and tribal nations) may also be highly beneficial.

With this sort of community support and backing behind a heritage tourism development effort, the daunting task of securing adequate funding will become somewhat easier. In addition to this, however, having a well-developed financial plan in place will be necessary in order to induce potential financial backers or partners to get on board with your project and to properly manage a project once it's underway. Possible sources of funding include local, county, state, or federal governments, businesses, and private foundations, among others.

*Step 3: Prepare, Protect, and Manage*

Long-term planning is essential to beginning a sustainable and successful heritage tourism endeavor. Communities

**Table 1** Heritage Tourism Economic Impacts and Visitation by Selected States

State	Year	Annual heritage person-trips (in millions)	Total economic impact (in million of dollars)	In-state jobs (in person-years)	In-state income (in millions of dollars)	Source
Colorado	2003	5.1 (trips to a historic area)	\$3,400	60,964	\$1,100	Clarion Associates (2005). <i>The Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation in Colorado: 2005 Update</i> .
Florida	2000	NA	\$3,721	107,607	\$2,314	Listokin, Lahr, McLendon, & Kelin (2002). <i>Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Florida</i> .
Missouri	1995-1999	3.24	\$346	8,060	\$249	Listokin, Lahr, Martin, Francisco, & McGlynn (2001). <i>Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Missouri</i> .
Nebraska	2006	NA	\$19	372	\$10	Nebraska State Historical Society (2007). <i>Preservation at Work for the Nebraska Economy</i> .
Pennsylvania	1997	21.9	NA	NA	NA	D.K. Shifflet & Associates, Ltd. (1999). <i>Pennsylvania Heritage Tourism Study</i> .
South Carolina	2001	4	\$325.6 (direct spending only)	9,097	NA	Lennox & Revels (n.d.). <i>Smiling Faces Historic Places</i> .

should prepare by ensuring that sufficient numbers of quality attractions and visitor services exist or can/will be constructed, and that these are attractive and in good repair. Along with this, the plan should take account of the availability to visitors of information about attractions and services. This includes everything from guidebooks and websites, to maps and signage.

Protecting the long-term quality and condition of heritage tourism resources is necessary to maintain exceptional cultural and/or historical experiences for visitors and will contribute to the sustainability of your community's heritage tourism industry over time. Much of this protection is best accomplished through zoning and ordinances that protect these resources (monuments, historical buildings, etc.) and their surrounding areas in ways such as regulating demolition of potentially significant historical buildings and limiting the size, placement of, and appearance of advertising signs, for example.

In managing a heritage tourism program, a clear, yet comprehensive management plan is vital in order to deal with the complexities inherent in coordinating, monitoring, and documenting the activities of the various officials, business people, and organizations who may be involved.

#### *Step 4: Market for Success*

A detailed plan is also vital for successfully marketing your community or region to heritage tourists. In order to increase awareness, it is important to contact and develop relationships with journalists and create community consciousness of your area as a heritage tourism destination. Properly directed advertising can be an effective means of marketing your community but it can be quite costly. Message repetition is one of the most important characteristics of effective advertising. In this day and age, regularly maintained websites are an important component of effective heritage tourism marketing. Also, establishing a logo or official symbols for a heritage tourism program should be considered.

### **The NTHP's Five Principles**

#### *Principle 1: Collaborate*

Due to the various organizations, businesses, governments, areas, and individuals who are necessarily involved in any heritage tourism development effort, efficient and widespread collaboration is absolutely imperative for success. Pooling resources at a regional level can vastly increase effectiveness, as can motivating real cooperation between individuals who may have had no previous interaction.

#### *Principle 2: Find the Fit*

Every community is different and this certainly holds true for the characteristics that determine suitability for—and eventual success at—heritage tourism development. Among

the myriad issues that need to be addressed, the acceptability of and attitudes towards heritage tourism development in the community should be well understood. Also important are questions of the ability of the local infrastructure (roads, emergency services, law enforcement, etc.) to cope with the influx of visitors.

#### *Principle 3: Make Sites and Programs Come Alive*

Creating memories for heritage tourists involves more than just reciting facts or printing them on a sign. Sites and exhibits are more effective by being visually stimulating or, better yet, by allowing visitors to directly interact with them.

#### *Principle 4: Focus on Quality and Authenticity*

Accurately and competently presenting your community's heritage and/or culture(s) will give visitors the most interesting and the most unique experience you can offer. An area that presents a "real" experience is more likely to produce long-term heritage tourist interest.

#### *Principle 5: Preserve and Protect*

It is important—both in community planning and in heritage tourism development—that the historical and cultural resources of your community are preserved and protected. This is true both in terms of historical buildings and local customs and sense of community.

### **National Heritage Areas**

One approach to both regional heritage tourism development and resource conservation used by areas around the country is that of the Heritage Area. National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are regional efforts centered around promotion and conservation of an area's distinctive cultural, historical, or natural features. An NHA must be designated by Congress and, once designated, NHAs are managed with the assistance of the National Park Service, who function in a solely advisory role. This process begins with a feasibility study intended to determine whether the area has both the features necessary to be designated and the community services and infrastructure needed. As of January 2010, Utah has two designated NHAs, as well as a third—the Bear River



*The historic grave of "Billy the Kid"  
in Fort Sumner, New Mexico*

Heritage Area—that is seeking designation. Utah’s two designated, and one un-designated NHAs are described in the sections that follow.

*Source: National Park Service (n.d.). National Heritage Areas website, available online at <http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/>.*

### **Great Basin National Heritage Area**

<http://www.greatbasinheritage.org/>

Great Basin National Heritage Area (GBNHA) straddles Millard County, Utah and White Pine County, Nevada, as well as the Duckwater Shoshone, Ely Shoshone, Goshute, and Kanosh Indian Reservations. In addition to numerous attractions related to Native American and Anglo-American settler cultural heritage, the GBNHA was the site of the Topaz internment camp for Japanese-Americans during the Second World War. The area is also home to numerous natural attractions including Great Basin National Park.

### **Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area**

<http://www.utahheritage.com/>

Heritage tourism attractions for the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area (MPNHA) include various sites connected to Scandinavian pioneer and Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) history, as well as Native American traditions and prehistoric sites, the history of the area’s farming and mining industries, and connections to the early U.S. film industry. World-class natural attractions are located within the MPNHA, including Bryce Canyon and Capitol Reef National Parks, the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, and the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Lake Powell.

### **Bear River Heritage Area**

<http://www.bearriverheritage.com/>

Located in northern Utah and southern Idaho, the Bear River Heritage Area (BRHA) contains numerous historical attractions related to the transcontinental railroad, the Shoshone Nation, and Mormon pioneers, among others. Many highly distinctive natural attractions are also present. Although not yet designated by Congress, the BRHA is actively seeking an official NHA status.



*A wagon ride at Utah’s American West Heritage Center*

#### **Online Resources**

##### **National Trust for Historic Preservation**

<http://www.preservationnation.org/>

This National Trust for Historic Preservation is a non-profit, membership-based organization devoted to a wide range of historic preservation issues and programs. Their Heritage Tourism Program and Cultural Heritage Tourism website (<http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org/index.html>) are specifically directed at heritage tourism development and promotion.

##### **Utah State History**

Prospering places: A toolkit for heritage development  
[http://history.utah.gov/heritage\\_toolkit/index.html](http://history.utah.gov/heritage_toolkit/index.html)

Utah State History is a state government organization with the Utah Department of Commerce and Culture devoted to public services related to history and the preservation of cultural/historical resource. In part, this deals assisting in community and rural development, partly via heritage tourism, as well as assistance to law-makers and other state and federal agencies. Their Prospering Places toolkit website is an excellent resource for those involved in or interested in heritage tourism.

##### **Other Resources**

U.S. Travel Association (2003). *The Historical/Cultural Traveler*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Travel Association.

This report contains facts about the economic and social impacts of heritage tourism, as well as data regarding heritage tourists.

##### **For More Information:**

Copies of this and other publications are available through Utah State University’s Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism, or visit our website at <http://extension.usu.edu/iort/>

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