



## HERITAGE WATCH, CAMBODIA

### DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP AWARD

### FINALIST 2009

# CASE STUDY

Operating in a challenging tourism environment, with poor infrastructure, corruption and extensive poverty, **Heritage Watch** was founded in 2003 as a non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting Cambodia's cultural heritage and bringing tangible benefits to local communities through sustainable tourism practices. Based in Phnom Penh, its goals are to prevent the looting and illicit trade of antiquities in Cambodia while promoting tourism and economic development that is sustainable and 'heritage friendly'.

In 2007, with the co-operation and support of the Ministry of Tourism, Heritage Watch launched the country's first national Heritage Friendly Tourism Campaign. The campaign actively promotes sustainable tourism principles at national level while emphasising the value of heritage sites and cultural traditions in Cambodia. It brings together the private sector,

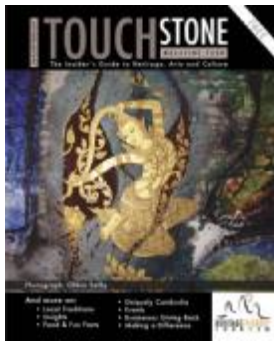


NGOs, government and academia working together to make tourism more 'heritage friendly'.

The campaign recognises and rewards businesses that give back to Cambodia and support its heritage, culture, art and local communities. The campaign also reaches out to tourists (both foreign and domestic), tour operators, local schools and universities and the broader Cambodian community to reinforce the importance of preserving Cambodia's culture and halting the destruction and looting of heritage sites. Key objectives are:

- To create through tourism greater public awareness about Cambodia's heritage
- To prevent heritage destruction and the illegal trading of antiquities
- To support and highlight sustainable tourism – including promotion of alternative destinations to alleviate stress on overcrowded heritage sites such as Angkor Wat
- To bring together the private, public, and non-governmental sectors in a nationwide campaign of collaboration and co-operation to promote the arts, culture, heritage and community development projects in Cambodia.

# CASE STUDY



The widely distributed TouchStone magazine, published by Heritage Watch, is used as a vehicle for promoting education and awareness of best practices in tourism and the value of protecting heritage sites in Cambodia for current and future generations.

The heritage preservation messages are designed to have a positive impact on preservation and the growth of sustainable tourism at many of the lesser-known but extremely important archaeological sites across Cambodia, including Koh Ker, Preah Vihear and Banteay Chmar.

To date more than 200 businesses have been certified as Heritage Friendly in enhancing local culture, environmental issues and Cambodia's heritage. The Heritage Friendly Tourism Campaign employs a unique approach to promoting sustainable tourism, cultural preservation and social development. Local businesses are encouraged to apply for Heritage Friendly Status, which requires assessment against a set of criteria evaluating their efforts to support the arts, culture and heritage; encourage sustainable tourism practices; and directly support local economic benefits.

Businesses certified as 'Heritage Friendly' are entitled to recognition in TouchStone magazine and have the right to display the 'Heritage Friendly Business' logo. These small businesses are integral to promoting local craft products, arts and culture to an outside market. The campaign showcases and encourages patronage of these Heritage Friendly businesses.

It is important that local communities have the opportunity to establish tourism businesses at heritage sites to benefit their families and lessen dependence on subsistence farming. Heritage Friendly businesses that sign up to the campaign play a key role in site development by providing the necessary finance, product development and marketing assistance to support local ventures.

Heritage Watch's approach provides a practical role model for the tourism sector as to what can be achieved when efforts are co-ordinated across the whole sector. Many well-intentioned NGOs and government agencies acting unilaterally have difficulty achieving any lasting impact on some of the more damaging aspects of tourism that threaten cultural heritage and natural environments in Cambodia. Heritage Watch's leadership shows that, by using a multi-stakeholder model, the good intentions of businesses, tourists, NGOs and government can be harnessed for positive results.

Heritage Watch also conducts research to benchmark the extent of the illegal antiquities trade and gauge trends over time – including a database tracking the major looting 'hot spots' and cross-border transit points – and tracing the flow of artefacts through international auction houses. In addition, market surveys of businesses, tourists and other key target audiences are conducted to gauge the effectiveness of the campaign over time.