



MOUNT HUANGSHAN SCENIC SITE

DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP AWARD

FINALIST 2010

CASE STUDY

Mount Huangshan Scenic Site is a protected area that includes Mount Huangshan – a World Heritage Site – in eastern China, filled with misty peaks, endemic pine trees, and natural hot springs.

But with over 2.3 million visitors annually, maintaining its stunning natural beauty and wild habitats is a challenge. Through a highly innovative management programme carried out through the Huangshan Scenic Site Administrative Committee (HSAC), Huangshan's unique ecosystem is protected through commitment to sustainable tourism principles, including:



- Blending mankind with our natural surroundings in keeping with the tradition of Chinese cultural history; and
- Balancing preservation and usage so that both benefit.

To respect these principles, HSAC's priorities include land conservation and visual aesthetics, water and waste management, energy efficiency, and the preservation of art and culture.

HSAC has adopted a two-fold system to manage the large number of annual visitors to the site. An advanced rotational system is used, closing off sections of the park at various times in order to foster regeneration. Because of the many rare species of plants and trees, park scientists carefully monitor re-growth. They also use advanced technology to regulate the flow of visitors and control crowds to minimise any negative impacts on the park.

CASE STUDY

Through the use of 58 video-cameras and equipment, monitoring over 200 vehicles and four cable-car networks, park staff can reduce or redirect large crowds on short notice. This system prevents overuse of the natural resources, and contributes to maintaining the park's quiet and peaceful aesthetics. Water conservation



management is of paramount concern to HSAC. It has installed an extensive network of water pipelines running throughout the park. These help address fire prevention and water shortages in the dry season, as well as irrigation of low-moisture areas. Fire prevention is particularly crucial given the unique and sensitive ecosystem, because the region

regularly experiences lightning strikes, and smokers are very common among the large numbers of Chinese domestic tourists who visit the park annually.

Concealed fire hydrants are placed 150 feet apart, path and bridge construction is fireproof, and staff are trained in rapid fire outbreak response. HSAC has also implemented a water reduction scheme, and has developed a programme in which the six park hotels compete annually to be the most green. Each hotel maintains a 30+ person 'green team' in charge of recycling. This programme has resulted in huge reductions of wastewater, energy and trash.

Additional energy use reduction systems include mandating that the large fleets of tourist buses visiting the park use low-emission fuel. Solar power is also used whenever possible, including park video-cameras, and all park weather stations. All power lines are run underground (some coming from stations 30 kilometres away) in order to preserve the natural character and attributes of the park.

Preservation of art, culture and traditional architecture is another key component in HSAC's work. HSAC has reconstructed over 30 ancient pavilions throughout the park, and regularly restores many of the ancient monasteries and bridges, some dating to the Ming Dynasty. As it has traditionally been an inspirational site for landscape painters and calligraphers, HSAC has founded the Huangshan Calligraphy and Painting Academy to foster additional interest in the region, and to serve as a research base for local Huangshan painters.

HSAC is also committed to having a positive impact on surrounding communities. Increasing tourism and prosperity for every village surrounding the Huangshan Scenic Site contributes to the success of tourism within the park, and increased tourism in the park means success and prosperity for the surrounding region. Through this partnership, HSAC has created over 4,500 jobs directly related to the operations of the Scenic Area, and 20,000 tourism-related jobs in the surrounding area.

Huangshan's success at managing the large-scale visitation of over 2 million visitors annually – mostly domestic Chinese tourists – while having minimum negative environmental impacts, makes it a model for other high-volume natural parks and recreation areas around the world.