

CHAPTER 2

WELCOMING VISITORS: AMENITIES AND SERVICES

Visitor satisfaction is the consequence of thoughtful planning; problems must be anticipated and solved ahead of time. There are two steps to this process: (1) Amenities -- the careful, subtle, gracious additional details that give the visitor a heightened sense of friendship, pleasure and joy. (2) Services -- the anticipation of the obvious, meeting the minimal expectations of any visitor. This chapter looks at services and amenities for the visitor, beginning with the former.

AMENITIES

One way of looking at amenities is the attempt to solve problems with style. This might include the graphics on signs, the selection of trees, shrubs and flowers, the alignment of paths, the placement of lamps, benches and chairs. All sites need a parking lot but they need not be just a sheet of asphalt.

Site administrators are managing renowned historic sites which most probably had some kind of amenity: trees, paved paths, entrance portals, a garden or a pond and running water. Recapturing or restoring these original landscape amenities is essential and will add to the depth of the visitor's experience.

This is another situation where it is important to reach out to other professionals to get help and advice. The research into learning about original amenities has progressed dramatically by expanded archeological studies and research into early diaries and archival records. If scholars cannot say exactly what a site looked like originally, they can explain what trees and plants and arrangements were popular and typical in the region during different historic periods.

Like visitor services discussed below, some amenities will be modern intrusions: lights, signs, benches and drinking fountains. Contemporary trees and shrubs can also be used in the area but this should be a professional, not a casual decision; nothing should suggest that they were part of the historic fabric. There must be a sense of fit to what is introduced.

SERVICES

Accommodations

Visitors to cultural sites require the provision of a range of accommodations, from luxury rated hotels to campgrounds. The type of cultural site being administered -- a historic city, a single urban monument, a palace complex or an archeological site -- requires that a variety of considerations be given to the policies and practices to be followed in accommodating visitors on overnight stays.

Unless a site is remote and difficult to travel to and from, it is generally advisable for you to encourage that all hotel, guest house, hostel and camping facilities be provided by the private sector or related government agencies. These should be at locations off and away from the site. Planning for, financing, developing, operating and maintaining such facilities within the site can be a complex, expensive, distracting and time-consuming administrative responsibility.

Hotels

Still, the decision might be made to provide hotel accommodations on site. The size of any such hotel facility will have to be determined by the number of visitors likely to seek its accommodations and the capacity of the site to support such a facility.

The location and design of any hotel facility within a site needs careful attention in the site's master plan. This is especially important not only in aesthetic terms but also in terms of access: all the many kinds of vehicles that must go to and from the building. It is likely that any such hotel facility will be subject to thorough review and approval by government bodies legally responsible for the protection of the site.

Given all of the protective concerns for appropriateness, it is then important that within those limits, the best possible hotel be built. It must be a hotel that will not just house guests but will contribute to the value of their visit. In the ideal, un-obtrusive hotel, there should be views of the monument from the lobby, bars, restaurants, terraces and guest rooms.

It may be appropriate to consider the adaptive use of a historic building as a hotel facility. The design of such a facility should be undertaken within the framework of a carefully drawn set of architectural standards and guidelines in order to protect, preserve and respect the significant architectural elements of the building(s). Both the architects and building contractors selected for such work should be carefully screened and their prior experience given careful consideration and investigation.

If a new building is required, it should have a cautiously drawn program not only for its functional use but also for its broad relationship to the historic environment in which it is to be placed. It should be designed in a manner so as not to intrude upon or distract from the visitor's experience of

the site. Particularly important are the siting, height, massing, exterior materials and surrounding landscape treatment used in the design.

It is imperative that the site administrator utilize properly drawn contracts and leases for any privately developed and operated facilities. Such legal documents should cover all aspects of accommodation services -- i.e., schedules of operation, selection and approval of all furnishings and decor, operational staffing standards, maintenance standards, advertising and promotion provisions, public health and safety standards, insurance and liability provisions, room rates, profit percentages between concessionaire and site administration, termination provisions, etc.

An on-site hotel must be worthy of the site but it should also be more than just a functional facility. Beside being appropriate, it should incorporate the best advice from experienced planners, hotel architects and landscape designers to assure maximum visitor satisfaction. In numerous game lodges in wildlife parks, the lodge buildings have also become viewing platforms for observation and photography. The hotel itself has become part of the park experience.

In urban historic zones, increases in international and domestic visitors can often create a situation where residential and commercial properties are acquired for conversion into hotels and/or guest-houses. If proper zoning controls are not in place, such unrestricted conversions can have a dramatic and lasting positive or negative effect on the character of the historic area. Traditional businesses and long-time residents relocate to make room for tourist commerce. A limit should be established on the total number of hotel accommodations that will be permitted within the historic zone. In some situations, authentic historic buildings have been demolished to be replaced by new hotel buildings designed in a historic style. This is not a development process to be encouraged within or near a World Heritage Site.

Guest Houses and Hostels

Smaller and less heavily visited sites may accommodate visitors in small-scale guest houses or hostels. The same overall comments made in relation to hotels apply to the consideration of guest houses and hostels. The same precautions must be observed and the same opportunities for creative, memorable facilities exists.

A good example of a successful local hotel is the Panak Tingal situated just outside the park boundary at Borobodur. Built using both local design and materials, it features local foods immaculately prepared in a glass-enclosed kitchen. It makes no pretense to international glamour but this is in the heart of Indonesia. It is clean, has clean bathrooms and, most of all, it offers the visitor a chance to walk, not far, to experience Borobodur at dawn.

Camping

In many countries, a high percentage of visitors will utilize camping as their means of individual, family or group accommodation. A remote site

may require the provision of such facilities. A maximum number of campsites should be determined and then rigidly adhered to by use of an advance reservation system if required.

Camping facilities that can properly accommodate automobiles, trailers and large mobile touring vans require more sophisticated services: gasoline, oil and other fuel facilities, sewage disposal hook-ups for vehicle systems and public toilet, shower and laundry facilities. To be operated in an environmentally safe manner, these require proper water supply and sewage disposal systems. Such campsites might also require small-scale provision stores, adequate security protection and patrols.

Public Services

A cultural site having visitors will require a variety of public services in order to function in an enjoyable, safe and sanitary manner. The following services need to be considered:

Potable Drinking Water

Public drinking fountains, dispensing a potable water supply, should be readily available to visitors in the vicinity of the site entrance(s), at food service facilities and in the vicinity of the public toilet facilities. Such water supplies should be checked on a regular basis by the public health authorities to make sure it is safe. Fountains should be clearly identified by standard international graphic symbols.

Toilets

An adequate number of men and women's toilet facilities should be available for visitors. In many instances the number of such required facilities will be governed by the applicable local building regulations. They should generally be located in the vicinity of the entrance(s), food service facilities and, at large sites, located at convenient places throughout the site. It is acceptable to locate such facilities within a historic structure that lends itself to such an adaptive use. Public toilets should be clearly identified by using standard international graphic symbols.

In many countries it is an accepted practice to charge a small fee for the use of these facilities. These fees help pay for their maintenance and cleanliness.

The location of sewers and septic tanks and fields as well as their construction require careful consideration. Sewers should always be covered and built of a highly durable, long-lasting material. They should be designed for ease of access in order to be serviced and maintained.

Where connections to a public sewage treatment facility is not possible, the necessary septic tanks and drainage fields should be located in an area not subject to any visitor use, either regular or temporary. Their potential impact on the existing water table needs to be considered. It is especially important

not to allow any activity that might result in breakage or blockage of the drainage field system. For example, do not use a septic drainage field as a temporary automobile parking lot for a special event. Septic tanks need to be located to allow for easy periodic access of necessary service trucks for pumping and cleaning.

Food Service

It may be necessary to provide on-site food services for visitors. Such services might be provided either by staff hired by the site or by a contracted commercial food company. A portion of the food-service operation might be appropriately developed as part of the historical experience and interpretation of the site.

The services might range from beverage and snack facilities to a full-service restaurant. Any such services will have to meet local health and sanitation requirements and will be subject to regular inspection and approval by governing public authorities.

The location of such facilities should be both convenient for the visitor and for ease of access by both the staff and the required service vehicles. In sites with a surplus of individual historic buildings or unused spaces within historic buildings, it may be appropriate and viable to adapt these buildings and/or spaces for food service uses. The architectural design and interior motifs should be respectful of the overall architectural character of the immediate building and site. Where adaptive uses are made, particular attention must be paid to the installation and maintenance of fire detection and suppression systems in the kitchen areas.

If commercial contract services are used to provide these services, a carefully drawn legal contract is required between the site administrator and the contractor. The contract should cover all aspects of the food-service operation, i.e., hours of operation and services, menu selection and approval, selection and approval of all public serving utensils, furnishings and decor, owner-access to the facilities, adherence to governing health and sanitary codes, pricing, profits to the contractor and owner, liability coverage, insurance, termination provisions, etc.

Public Telephones

Visitors should have access to public pay telephones. Generally they should be located at the entrance(s) and near food service and toilet facilities. Instructions for their use should be in the major languages of the visitors, and local telephone directories should be made available. Frequently called numbers -- for example for a taxi service -- can be posted near the telephones.

In many countries it is frequently possible to promote widely the existence of cultural heritage sites through their use as cover illustrations on telephone directories.

Emergency Medical Service

Basic emergency medical service kits should be available at the site's administrative headquarters. For larger sites, these kits might be appropriately maintained at several locations throughout the site. Designated staff members should have appropriate training in emergency first-aid procedures. Such training is often available through local chapters of the Red Cross or local public emergency services. All of the telephone numbers for local fire, police, rescue and medical services should be maintained at the administrative headquarters and entrance gates.

Postal

If a site is sufficiently busy, it may be desirable to have a small postal station to sell stamps and accept the posting of mail. This facility should be conveniently located near the main entrance or in proximity to the gift and sales facility. A postal facility will require easy access for servicing by postal vehicles. The design and installation of the facility, while meeting the basic standard requirements of the government's postal service, should also be designed in a manner that is sensitive and respectful of the site's architectural and historic character.

Trash Receptacles

Well-designed and durable receptacles should be conveniently placed throughout the site. They should be labeled with the accepted international symbol for trash receptacles and, if necessary, in the most commonly used languages by visitors. They should not be used as public advertising locations; often commercial companies might offer to pay for the cost of these receptacles if they have the exclusive right to advertise their product on them. Such advertising is inappropriate to the visitor experience. Trash receptacles should be built of durable materials that are complementary to the surroundings and should be designed to discourage animals and rodents from gaining easy access to them. They should be located in a manner to allow easy access by small service vehicles.

Where site visitation is exceedingly high, such as at Egypt's pyramids, a staffed site-cleaning crew may be needed to regularly clean up trash. By their presence, they become part of an anti-litter campaign; with training they can also support the guide and security efforts.

In Pakistan one famous site is considering new arrangements with its food-stall concessionaires that will make grounds-clean-up a part of the concession contract.

Garbage Removal and Disposal

One or more central garbage collection points will be required at sites. These points should be located away from visitors, and screened by appropriate fences or landscape treatments. They should also be at a location where it is easy for large trucks to gain access to the site to remove the accumulated garbage without disruption to the visitors. Such services may be either public services or those provided by contract commercial companies.

For sites generating large quantities of garbage, it is best to use covered metal containers that are designed specifically for this purpose. Since such sites tend to attract rodents, regular rodent extermination efforts will be required.

Business Retailing

Most visitors expect to be able to view, select and purchase something during a visit to a cultural site. The decisions relating to selling commercial items at a cultural site -- what is sold, who sells it and what happens to the profits are all important considerations.

Concentrations of visitors serve as a magnet to attract individual vendors. A policy needs to be established and used which allows or restricts vendors from the site. If vendors are not allowed on the site, it is advisable that the site administrator work with the local surrounding governmental jurisdiction(s) to insure some degree of control over their working locations and facilities outside of the site's boundaries. A lack of controls can result in an unattractive and unappealing environment surrounding the major and busiest entrances to the site.

If vendors are allowed on the site, experience shows that the site administrator must license them to insure control over their numbers, merchandise sold, time of operation, term of licensure, access fee, and profit sharing. The total number of individual vendors should be limited. Where competition is high, a lottery may be necessary to select eligible vendors. They should be clearly restricted to operate only within carefully designated zones. All merchandise items sold should be reviewed by the site administrator as to their appropriateness for sale within the site and their price. If vehicles are to be allowed -- moveable vans or wagons and/or temporary stalls -- the design of any vehicle should be approved before it is allowed onto the site by the administration. Vendor hours of operation need to be set. Any vendor operating within site boundaries should be expected to share some predetermined percentage of the profits with the site administration. This can be done in varying ways: as a percentage of sales reported and taken on a daily, weekly or monthly basis; as a licensure fee required on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis; and/or as a competitive bid fee for the right to sell within the site for a specified time period.

Ticketing

At those sites where a fee is charged to gain entrance, proper and adequate facilities will be required to collect the admission fee and provide the entrance ticket. The ticketing operation will often consist of two operations -- one at the main entrance gate(s) to the site and the other in an office that is established and equipped to deal with advance-group ticket sales.

The price of all tickets should be clearly posted both at the point of sale and at a prominent location where just-arriving visitors can study the pricing structure and make individual decisions on what they wish to purchase. This is especially important where there might be a series of optional tours with varying admission prices. The local language and local currency should be used. Globally, English is the language of international tourism but do what seems fitting and appropriate and efficient for your site.

Most ticketing sites will be located at the entrance(s) to the site. Their location should be clearly visible and well marked for all arriving visitors. They may be readily accommodated within a historic building that lends itself to adaptive use such as a visitor-receiving facility. The sale of admission tickets, books and souvenirs should ideally be separated so as to reduce confusing circulation patterns.

The architectural design of ticketing facilities should be respectful of the site's character. The facility should be designed with adequate means of security to protect the individuals selling the tickets, the supply of tickets and the cash receipts. Ideally, the purchaser should be protected from the weather.

At large sites, or sites not having a complete array of visitor facilities, the ticketing operation should allow visitors to exit the site and re-enter during the same day, i.e., to leave to have lunch, etc. This can be accommodated by having tickets with a multiple stub system or stamping the backs of visitors' hands.

It may be necessary at some sites to divide the site into several distinguishable units for visitors to experience. Such a system can require visitors to purchase tickets for different elements of the site that they wish to visit. This is a way of disbursing visitors to different site elements rather than having them concentrate at just the prime locations.

Group tour visitors should not be expected to stand in long lines to purchase site tickets. Their tickets should be provided to them in advance of their arrival.

High and Low Season Visitation

Most sites will experience significant variations in the number of visitors during the course of the year. This will be influenced by factors such as prevailing weather conditions, school holiday periods, religious festival dates, etc. A careful estimate of this variation in numbers should be made in advance planning for a site. This procedure will have a major influence in the design of various facilities required to accommodate visitors -- bus, auto drop-off spaces and parking, toilet facilities, etc. After an initial period of operation, this statistical variation in visitation patterns should be studied for

any possible influences it may have in site planning, programming, staffing and budgeting.

Photography Policies

It is advisable to have written policies governing the use of photographic equipment at a site and to distinguish between the policies applicable to the general public and those that apply to commercial photographers.

The policies relating to the general public should be posted in a highly visible location at the entrance. If there are areas where photography is prohibited, post the notices prominently and explain the reasons clearly. The policies that apply to commercial photographers should be available in written form.

In general, be positive about visitor photography. If managed right, snapshots and home movies can be great boosts for the country and the site. The admission price should include the use of cameras.

Use of hand-held personal film and video cameras can usually be allowed on all publicly accessible exterior portions of the site. Depending on the characteristics of a site and local customs, there is no reason to restrict the use of cameras within the interiors of historic buildings. It is important not to allow the use of flash units and video camera lights within a historic building. The repeated exposure of materials to high-intensity lights can be damaging.

There was a time when it was thought that amateur photography "competed" with the sale of postcards and souvenir books; retailers no longer believe this to be true. The sale of film and disposable cameras can be an important source of revenue.

The use of tripods and light stands by individual private visitors should not be permitted inside historic structures. The use of this equipment can easily damage both finishes and furnishings. It also interferes with visitor circulation.

Commercial Photographers

You should always retain the commercial reproduction rights for commercial use of photographs taken from publicly restricted portions of the site. A schedule of permit fees should be established and maintained in order to charge commercial photographers for the right to photograph the site from restricted areas. Contractual arrangements might also include the right of the administering organization to use the commercial photographs without the payment of a fee.

The use of specialized equipment should be restricted to officially licensed, or sanctioned, commercial photographers. When in use it should be closely supervised at all times by a member of the administrative staff. The permit or contract allowing such commercial use should always have a

provision or clause which makes the photographer responsible for the payment of repairing damaged finishes or objects.

World Heritage Sites may often be proposed for use as filming sites by major national and international movie production companies. You should have a formal written policy concerning the use of the site by large commercial undertakings. The policy and contracts should be carefully drawn to ensure that you remain in control of all aspects of the use of the site for productions. Contracts should include important elements such as the right of prior review of the movie script before granting access, to define areas of access and times for access, to place controls on the placement and use of all production equipment, the protection against damage of all site features and contents, to make provision for payment for all damage, to collect fees to be paid for the use of the site and require public credit and acknowledgment in the final product.