Conservation and tourism, the two topics of this conference, are bound together inextricably, and it is vital that the problems arising out of their relationship should be closely examined. This should be an ongoing process with cooperation between those concerned with conservation and the tourism industry.

Each of us can marvel at the emptiness of the Australian outback, watch a wintry sunset at Stonehenge or a summer sunset in the Greek Islands, experience the great gothic cathedrals of Europe or the temples of Bangkok or Bali. Who are we to say that others should be deprived of the same opportunities, even if by allowing these experiences for large numbers of people, there is the potential to hasten the process of deterioration. There is a fine line between keeping the opportunities open and at the same time ensuring that we do not prejudice the qualities of the place.

As an introductory speaker, I thought it would be most useful to undertake a brief but rather wide ranging, and at times I suspect, provocative look at 'The European Experience'. In 1985 I presented a paper (on the North Head Quarantine Station in Sydney) to a similar conference in Basle, Switzerland. Subsequently I have visited a number of cultural sites in Europe, not only for their intrinsic value, but to assess the ways in which conservation, management and tourism issues have been addressed.

Part of my work as an architect has been to prepare management and concept plans for sites in Australia where conservation has tourism potential. Goat Island in Sydney Harbour, and more recently, the old Adelaide Gaol, have been two such projects.

My paper will concentrate on the following four major questions:
• What does the average visitor want?
• How do you handle a million tourists a year?
• Can retailing and food mix with cultural heritage?
• How do other people go about interpretation?

I will also examine two case studies which briefly illustrate contrasting scales of sites – a major chateau and a small garden, both within easy reach of Paris.

**What does the average visitor want?**
The world has known human travel for as long as people have had feet! Each civilisation has produced individual travellers, but mass tourism is a phenomenon only of the last two generations. In response to this new form of economic activity, individuals and governments throughout the world hastened to erect hotels, provide airports and do everything possible to attract the new breed of traveller.

Those were the innocent days of mass tourism. Before long people realised that tourism was not a one way ticket to the good life. By the early 1980s global tourism reached the staggering level of 3.6 billion trips. Receipts from international tourism alone were US$96 billion in 1983, despite the fact that international tourism accounts for only 10 per cent of total travel journeys.

No country can afford to overlook the implications of such staggering numbers. Australia since the mid 1980s has placed tourism at the top of the national agenda, and has seen enormous increases in visitor growth as a result.

Can we assume that visitors to our heritage sites seek a cultural experience. Perhaps, but will it be the central theme of their day? Visitors, even those who become absorbed in the messages you are trying to give them, require food, lodgings and entertainment. Their buses and cars must be managed and their spending urges catered for.

Some examples of the range of tourist expectations from a cultural site will illustrate my point. They want to:
• use their imagination;
• not ruin the site they have come to see;
• not necessarily concentrate totally on culture;
• have a 'real' experience;
• balance information with pleasure;
• sit and watch the world go by;
• have good signage to encourage the search off the beaten track;
• experience the reality of the site to understand the true story;
• understand what is there;
• have creative approaches to the management and development of historic sites;
• buy local produce and souvenirs.

**How do you handle a million tourists a year?**
Don't underestimate the potential of your site. In the planning stages it is always a struggle to feel confident...
that any more than a bare handful of tourists will visit your site. The golden rule is: ‘Start out the way you want to finish’.

Establish management practices at the outset that will allow for growth of visitors without adverse impacts on the cultural heritage of the site.

Here are some examples of how others have responded to mass tourism:

- **Carcassonne** - 500,000 people per year up from the Mediterranean coast when the weather is poor. No vehicles however are allowed into the walled town without prior arrangement.
- **Stonehenge** - in 1974 a group of hippies arrived at mid summer wanting to follow the practice of the Druids by holding a small ceremony. In recent years this has grown into an illegal pop festival for as many as 30,000 people.
- **Delos** - close to Mykanos but no one is allowed to stay on the sacred island overnight.
- **St Pauls in London** - easily a million visitors a year in a church that also must celebrate regular patterns of services. Their mistake is to locate the bookshop within the nave. Many tourists show little respect for a religious sanctuary.
- **Westminster Abbey** - is regularly closed to tourists during services unless they also want to participate, yet the Abbey is a major centre of English heritage, the burial place of artists and statesmen.
- **Jerusalem** - the Wailing Wall is banned to non Jews, while the Arabs close the mosques to tourists five times per day and completely on Fridays.
- **At towns and castles like Eze, Neuchwanstein and Vezelay,** the tourists must leave the buses behind and walk to the monument. Often this is quite a climb.
- **In Avignon** - they have a tourist tram!
- **The Louvre in Paris** required a total replanning to handle five million visitors per year, and resulted in the controversial glass pyramid.

**Can retailing and food mix with cultural heritage?**

There is no doubt that a considerable portion of total income for an historic site can come from retailing and food sales. The visitor is generally in a recreational spending frame of mind, irrespective of the cultural content of the visit. Often the expectation is that there will be things to buy - more than just postcards.

Many sites, particularly the museums in Europe have raised the quality of retailing to a fine art. The bookshop in the Louvre is one of the best art book shops in Paris. My wife and I spent over $185.00 in a single visit. The visitor however is very demanding, and only quality and merchandising themes related to the historic site will suffice.

In relation to food, it is well known that if visitors stay over an hour, they will buy a snack, particularly for the children. If they stay between two and three hours, they will buy a substantial meal. A visit in excess of half a day will often encourage them to look for accommodation nearby.

Do not be too conservative in the way you accommodate diners. Casual outdoor eating is well established in Europe with little or no adverse impact on historic sites. There are however, several examples where the food or retail outlet has not been as successful.

- French provincial towns such as St. Emilion and Sarlat have successfully mixed outdoor seating with traditional streetscapes.
- **Caesarea** in Israel, where there is some of the best interpretive signage, has also some dreadful restaurant buildings within the ancient site.
- Retailing need not be on a big scale to have a negative impact. The statue of Boadacilla in London was one of the great images of English tourism promotion; the souvenir seller has other ideas.
- **Junk souvenir selling** abounds at almost major site. If it is not controlled, or removed to one side, it can overwhelm the value of the place, as it has at the **Trevi Fountain** in Rome.
- **At Ronchamps,** in eastern France, the marvellous Chapel by Le Courbusier is approached past a very ordinary entry building and shop. Must the tourist be asked to ignore these associated eyesores and concentrate on the purity of the monument?

**How do other people go about interpretation?**

Here are some brief examples of interpretation over a wide range of sites in Europe. The messages that they give the visitor will become self evident.

- The isolation of **Masada**, the mountain top fortress on the Dead Sea is emphasised by the cable car approach and the desolation once you get there.
- **Basle University School of Archaeology** is an unusual place for the only complete reassembly of all the sculpture from the Parthenon, displayed in its original context, and all by plaster casts of the original sculpture, which is now scattered around the world.
- **Signage and pathways at Caesarea** in Israel are informative and stimulate the imagination.
• The **Castle of Haut Koenigsbourg** in Alsace was reconstructed by Kaiser Wilhelm at the turn of the century. Models and old newspaper cuttings tell the story of this former ruined fortress.

• A simple sign on the **Maison Pfister** in Colmar records past restoration work stretching back to the sixteenth century.

• **Hermes**, the fashion store in Paris was gift wrapped in blue ribbon to celebrate a major birthday.

• Renoir’s house at **Cagnes-sur-Mer** retains his personal studio with a simple photo of the artist at work.

• The archaeological dig at **Akrotiri** in the Greek Islands allows the visitor to explore the work in progress and to get a feel for the buried city.

• **Yorvick** at York in Northern England has reconstructed a Viking village, but fully informs the visitor of their methodologies.

• **Lascaux II**, the Stone Age caves in France, are a scientific reconstruction of the original, necessitated when human visitation became too destructive in the original caves.

• Multilingual signage at **Acre** in Israel recalls that this city has seen many battles between Moslems and Crusaders.

• The **Metro Station** in Paris for the Rodin Museum is particularly expressive of the treasures of the museum above.

• Three displays at **Compiègne, Reims** and **Singapore** depicting major surrender ceremonies at the end of World War I and World War II have taken quite different approaches to interpretation of similar major historic events.

• The **Son-et-Lumière** in Jerusalem is an example of how powerful this technique can be to excite the imagination and to be informative.

• The **Royal Observatory** at Greenwich is one of the best interpretive displays I have visited in Europe. One can capture the long, lonely hours of nocturnal observation that were the lot of the astronomer.

**Two case studies**

Finally here are two brief case studies which will summarise my introduction to this series of workshops.

**Vaux le Vicomte** is a huge chateau on the outskirts of Paris. Annual visitation would amount to hundreds of thousands. An average visit takes between two and three hours. They have developed many sub themes; on the stables, equipage, restoration work, the extravagant interiors, the various owners, the gardens, and major historic personalities such as Louis XIV. Part of the stables have been converted into an excellent bistro. They close the chateau for one and a half hours at lunch time, thereby virtually forcing the visitor to eat there, as the chateau is quite isolated from nearby villages or towns.

By comparison, **Monet’s garden** at Giverney is a peaceful and exquisite gem with very low key signage and interpretation. Reproductions of his work line his old study, accompanied by a photo of him in that room. His studio is the shop, which also displays more examples of his work.

**Conclusion**

In summarising ‘The European Experience’ I would like to stress that you should not underestimate the potential of your site. Do not begin with sloppy management practices or site planning. They can be very hard to undo at a later stage when the site ‘hits the big time’ with hundreds of thousand of visitors.

Conservation planning for the tourism potential of heritage sites should seek to undertake a careful but creative analysis of the site to draw out the hidden themes and characteristics for interpretation. Conservation of the historic fabric is essential, but many opportunities arise for managing the interaction between tourism and conservation successfully.