

A Perspective on Tourism

Overseeing a heritage site holding the entire history of humanity – and positioned itself against a backdrop of even more ancient history relating to our planet's geological formation – has major impact on the current vision for management of a tourism site as prominent as the Isturitz and Oxocelhaya caves.

Cultural and scientific tourism site in a rural setting

The major concern in this case is finding the **proper balance** between protecting and showcasing... between upholding scientific integrity and providing access... between maintaining the active rhythm of rural life in the area and managing a flow of visitors to a largely agricultural region.

Depicting the history of man

We seek to explore the reasoned practice of tourism that **respects** the environment and the people in which it is developed, that is **responsible and sustainable**, with a primary focus on meeting and sharing, where exploration and mutual respect constitute a core of harmonious and **unified** development for all.

To this end we need to question, grasp, consider, convey, organise, explain, communicate, limit, shape, foster relationships, streamline services, target excellence on a consistent basis and, above all, **assign meaning**.

Remaining abreast of new requirements on either side

Focus on quality through a sound approach to innovation

Visitors should be made to feel '**wanted, welcome and important**' (Kenneth Hudson) in an atmosphere that is generous if not permissive. Assisting visitors in embracing ecotourism.

Developing the site's spirit

This site surviving the ages is a place of stability providing an opportunity to rediscover the reality of history, of ourselves, through the entirely natural authenticity of its underground environment and the preserved Arberoue valley.

There, visitors understand their place in time and draw on the energy present.

Management also requires formation of an on-site team equipped to focus the potential force of this questioning, this assault on the senses, this new awareness.

I **also believe** in the importance of teamwork and of maintaining a broad vision for interdependent tourism development in which each stakeholder contributes to and complements a rich and varied visitor experience built on a sound quality foundation.

Creating a network with a view to succeeding in a tourism industry at once demanding, hurried, individualistic, impatient, hungry for new sensations and experiences while also preserving the regional character deliberately incorporated into the site concept.

Highlight the expertise of the individuals working at the site and support these individuals in their efforts.

Exploring evolution

From prehistory through all of history, these caves have served as a gathering place where the notion of the sacred has always been present, as a forum for interaction, the pooling of expertise, the sharing of cultures, creative acts of all kinds. It has also doubtless been the source of fantasy and mythology such as that featuring the Laminak dwelling here underground! Laminak siloa!... The site of today should depict our ancestors' histories, beliefs, practices and cultures while at the same time offering a contemporary perspective that enriches the cycle of **evolution**.

It should be at once '**reasonable and human!**' (Khan)

Management philosophy

Juxtaposition of paradoxes: bright - reverent, modern - archaic, past - present.

Fine-tuning the reflection process, finding a place in time and space.

Drawing from the silent energy present and promoting harmony whilst respecting the unique nature of each identity in the final objective of conveying the site's message.

Seeking meaning is the guiding force behind all of our choices without demagoguery or concessions – never an easy balance.

In this place forever lives the spirit of man

Before this symphony of humanity I offer my interpretation!

It should be viewed with passion, conviction and enthusiasm. JD