



# ALULA

## BUILDING THE ULTIMATE TOURISM DESTINATION

REPORT OF THE UNESCO UNITWIN EXPERTS  
“CULTURE, TOURISM, DEVELOPMENT”

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AFALULA  
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## PREAMBLE

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From November 23rd to 30th, a group of 16 experts from 9 countries in Europe, Africa and Latin America gathered at AIUla at the joint invitation of RCU and AFALULA to brainstorm tourism development and its social, cultural and economic implications.

The experts are members of the UNESCO UNITWIN network “Culture, Tourism, Development” coordinated by Maria GRAVARI-BARBAS, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University.

UNITWIN networks serve as a prime means of capacity building through the exchange of knowledge and sharing in a spirit of solidarity. They promote North-South and South-South cooperation as a strategy to enrich institutions and field actors. They represent a closely-knit system of cooperation in research, documentation and training to facilitate exchanges and knowledge-sharing among universities, decision makers, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector.



The UNITWIN - UNESCO network “Culture, Tourism, Development” was founded in 2002 by the UNESCO Chair “Culture, Tourism, Development” from Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. In 2020, It comprises of 30 universities through the world. It represents a worldwide pool of skills and experts.

Its goals are:

- **Creating** a worldwide system of cooperation between universities in the fields of culture, tourism and development.
- **Promoting** the concepts, principles and objectives of UNESCO incorporated in its documents of reference (Conventions of 1972, 2003 and 2005 especially, the Convention of Faro 27th October 2005, and closing texts in International Conferences – Stockholm, 1998, Johannesburg, 2001).
- **Promoting tourism** in accordance with the principles and objectives of the programme « World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism», 2012.
- **A better understanding** of nature and the complex ties between tourism, culture and a sustainable development of territories.
- **Encouraging** a responsible and ethical vision of tourism as a means of sustainable development of territories and enhancing cultural diversity
- **Helping** to develop strategies and projects which are environmentally sustainable, socially fair, sensible from a business point of view and with a cultural value.
- **Getting expertise** closer to the policy decision-makers to benefit the populations, especially those in poverty.

The UNITWIN network “Culture, Tourism, Development” works closely with the tourism program of the UNESCO World Heritage Center. Its members are experts on the relationship between tourism and local development in UNESCO World heritage sites. During recent years they have carried expertise missions on several World heritage sites around the world at the invitation of local and regional governments.

The UNITWIN AIUIa mission report integrates both the “feeling” at the time of the mission, following the visits and working meetings with AFALULA and the RCU, as well as a broader reflection integrating the international experiences gathered by the entire UNESCO Chair network.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report gives the insights from 16 international experts from 9 countries and 14 universities from Europe, Africa and Latin America, members of the UNITWIN network “Culture, Tourism, Development”. The conclusions are the result of intensive one-week *in situ* experience, organized in visits, brainstorming sessions, meetings with local actors and staff from RCU and AFALULA.

The experts recognized the outstanding value of the area, which was approached in a holistic way and beyond the main archaeological sites. They consider that the future tourism development of the region will depend on the capacity to ensure the perfect conservation of the archaeological remains while connecting in the touristic experience all experiential aspects related to the cultural, natural and intangible resources.

They stress the importance of setting qualitative rather than quantitative goals in terms of future visitation. The goal of 2 million visitors will probably take years to be achieved given the competitiveness of the tourism product. The “success” of AlUla tourism development should be measured through a multi-criteria approach, including local social and cultural development, local inhabitants’ empowerment, environment enhancement, etc.

It is therefore needed to develop indicators for a holistic understanding of local development related to (but going further beyond) qualitative tourism performances. According to the experts this seems to be one of the most important tasks to implement on the site.

# MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

## TOURISM BEYOND TOURISM: ALULA'S ZEITGEIST

UNITWIN experts' understanding of current tourism challenges of the area goes far beyond tourism. The tourism sector can be used as a national and local **"mind changer"**. It can represent a powerful image-producer internationally and it can offer a "display window" for all other sectors of the local and national economy<sup>(1)</sup>. Our vision is that AIUla tourism development cannot be measured on quantitative terms only. It needs to be part of a **global strategy** for the whole region linking urban and coastal areas to the hinterland in a sustainable way and with a competitive approach.

## RESPECT THE EXCEPTIONAL ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

The archaeological site of Hegra, as an exceptional heritage site, is the **major tourism attractor**. Its overwhelming importance invites to **be extremely modest** in terms of "added" elements. Purely leisure venues or other themed infrastructures seem not to be justified here and risk to blur the main message of the site.

## ENLARGE THE CURRENT BUFFER ZONE AND/OR CONSIDER A REFORMULATION OF THE UNESCO INSCRIPTION AS A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PROPERTY

However, AIUla is much more than the archaeological site: it is a site that invites the adoption of a **holistic and systematic approach** of its natural and anthropic elements. Intensive agriculture farms located on the doorsteps of the archaeological area will represent a difficulty for further tourism and cultural development. The extension of the current perimeter protected by UNESCO and the eventual resubmission as **UNESCO cultural landscape**<sup>(2)</sup> offers the possibility of this holistic approach. The cultural landscape approach goes beyond the tangible aspects and embraces the cultural and the natural, the tangible and the intangible, and even the living entities, both humans and other living beings.

## INTEGRATE CONTEMPORARY URBAN DYNAMICS IN THE TOURISM PRODUCT

The old city of AIUla must be preserved in harmony with the new city and the nearby Arab archaeological sites by creating **a new urban dynamic** integrating tourism development. The urban population growth must coexist with the rehabilitated old city. New facilities and attractive living areas both for the local population and for tourists residing in the city in local tourist accommodation must be designed in an articulated way, assuring the preservation of the old city without transforming it into a museumfied enclave.

<sup>(1)</sup>For instance, the building of a solar energy plant in the nearby area, to provide the energy needed by the increase of the visitors and by the new touristic facilities and services that shall be constructed and made available.

<sup>(2)</sup>The term "cultural landscape" embraces a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment. Cultural landscapes often reflect specific techniques of sustainable land-use, considering the characteristics and limits of the natural environment they are established in, and a specific spiritual relation to nature. Protection of cultural landscapes can contribute to modern techniques of sustainable land-use and can maintain or enhance natural values in the landscape. The continued existence of traditional forms of land-use supports biological diversity in many regions of the world. The protection of traditional cultural landscapes is therefore helpful in maintaining biological diversity (source: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/>)

**CREATE A NEW TOURIST AREA** linked by ecological means of transportation to and within the archaeological sites and the town of AIUla. This area dedicated to tourist accommodation should be a new place for living and recreational and environmental activities far enough from the archaeological sites to have the largest possible buffer zone. The tourist zone must be able to accommodate new hotels as well as secondary residences **respecting the local's way of life.**

### **INTEGRATE INTO THE TOURIST PRODUCT THE INTANGIBLE HERITAGE ELEMENTS**

Efforts should be made to make an inventory of intangible cultural heritage. The submission of local traditions (such as, for example, the culture and exploitation of MORINGA peregrina) to **UNESCO's intangible heritage list** could be envisaged.

### **"FRUGAL" ULTIMATE LUXURY TOURISM STRATEGY**

The 10 strategic principles of AIUla Charter represent an excellent conceptual and intellectual basis for the tourism development of AIUla.

AIUla's "zeitgeist" invites the adoption of a **"frugal luxury"** approach for all implemented tourism projects and for the choice of all new infrastructures and facilities. Contrary to more conventional high-end tourism projects (such as luxury hotels, golfs, theme parks, etc.) "frugal" luxury tourism addresses visitors who appreciate rare and high quality environments (the most beautiful night sky, an exceptionally preserved nature, encounters with locals, tasting local unique gastronomy, participation in exclusive cultural manifestations, etc.) offered as "purely" as possible.

### **CONSTANT QUALITY**

A global and overarching quality requirement must characterize all actions and initiatives in architecture, product design or services.

It requires a strong **local brand** development approach, the development of **experimental local labels** with the possibility of expanding them nationally (for homestays, farm stays, local products, etc.)

AIUla must illustrate a "virtuous" example for all new-designed projects and infrastructure in terms of object and buildings design, sustainability, use of local resources, aesthetics, etc. The use of AIUla's image must also be continuously and carefully managed.

### **PUT THE LOCAL SOCIETIES AT THE VERY CENTER OF THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

Local tourism development and a fortiori local development requires the complete involvement of the local population. AIUla has the advantage of not being a tourist enclave in which tourists live isolated from the locals. It is a **living environment** in which tourists and visitors constantly interact with locals. **This interaction is a key part of their tourist experience and its authenticity.**

### **PRODUCE AN INTERNATIONAL LABORATORY FOR HERITAGE AND TOURISM EDUCATION**

AIUla can be a real pedagogical, academic and research laboratory to study the archaeological and historical sites per se (archaeology, history, anthropology, ethnology) as well as the effects of heritage development to local culture, society and economy. This implies the development of **top-level scientific, research and academic programs**, open to national and international universities though joint degrees, joint summer schools and joint research programs.

# INTRODUCTION

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A group of experts on tourism and local development, members of the UNITWIN-UNESCO network “Culture, Tourism, Development”, coordinated by Maria GRAVARI-BARBAS, Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, were invited to a Workshop at AIUla from November 23<sup>rd</sup> to November 30<sup>th</sup> by the Agence Française pour le Développement d’AIUla (AFALULA) and the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU).

The goal of the site visits and of the workshop was to produce a critical analysis of the tourism development orientations of the AIUla project as a whole and to give recommendations inspired by good practices present in other World Heritage sites around the world.

The workshop comprised<sup>(3)</sup> of on-site visits and in-room, discussion/brainstorming sessions. Two professors from Saudi Universities, Samer A. SAHLAH of King Saud University and Samer YAGHMOUR of King Abdulaziz University, participated in the group of international experts. The group had the privilege of visiting the sites with two prominent archaeologists, Abdulrahman ALSUHAIBANI, Royal Commission for AIUla in Dadan; and Laila NEHME, CNRS, in Hegra.

Régis DANTAUX, Head of Human Capital and Nicolas LEFEBVRE, Head of Tourism & Hospitality at AFALULA organized the Workshop and the on-site visits in close collaboration with RCU’s DMO team. They both gave valuable insights during the meetings.

Given the short time dedicated *in-situ*, the present report does not pretend to offer an insider’s view of AIUla’s tourism development. The international experts rather contributed with their extensive expertise on other WH sites as well as their global knowledge of tourism issues related to local development.

The aim is therefore to **offer an “outsider’s gaze” to the current development of a major tourism destination**. The experts are ready to further discuss their preliminary conclusions with AFALULA and RCU.

<sup>(3)</sup> Annex 2: the program of the Workshop

# METHODOLOGY

Though all the visits were done in common, the brainstorming sessions were organized in three different expert working groups, each one focusing on a specific theme. Two plenary sessions allowed to share the preliminary conclusions of the groups.

The three groups and related themes are:

## 1. PRESERVE THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

How to preserve this unique territory and its natural wonders as well as the experience of the untouched landscapes and silence while welcoming up to 2 million visitors?

(Rapporteur: Thiago ALLIS from University of São Paulo / Brasil)

## 2. MAXIMISE THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

How to give visitors the best experience possible while preserving the archaeological, natural and heritage assets of AIUIa and its rising place on the archaeological and historical research stage? How to offer a global experience, bringing together the natural and cultural sites, the tangible and intangible heritage?

(Rapporteur: Francesca COMINELLI from Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University / France)

## 3. INSURE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

How to better connect tourism and local development? How to invite the local communities to fully participate in the region's tourist development?

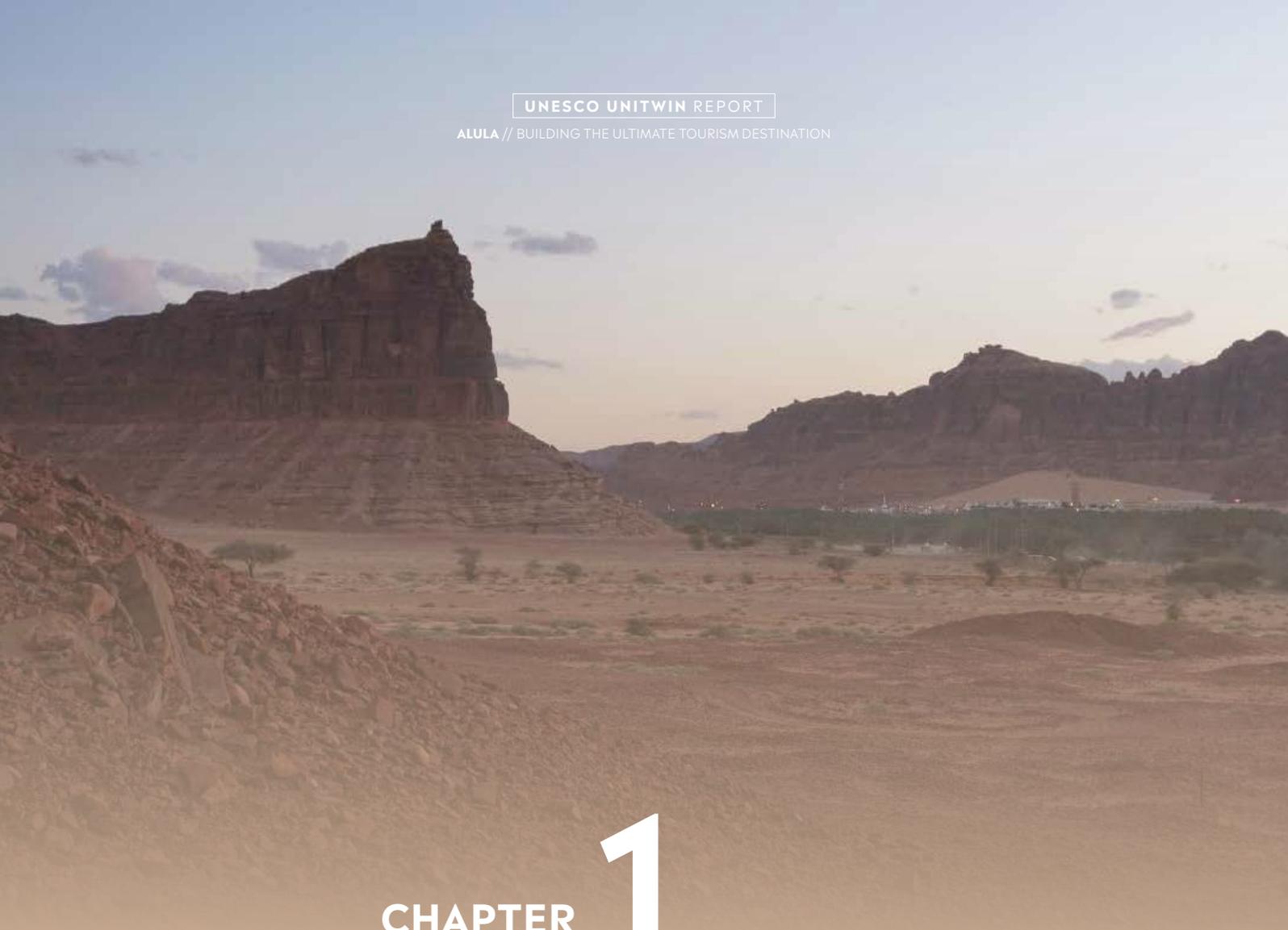
(Rapporteur: François VELLAS, University of Toulouse Capitole / France)

The 3 main questions above provided the general framework of the groups work, without however limiting the approaches. During the workshop, several main questions evolved and were reformulated in order to better reflect the site's conditions.

The report is organized into 3 chapters, each one corresponding to the above questions.







CHAPTER **1**  
**PRESERVING  
THE LOCAL  
ENVIRONMENT**

# 1. PRESERVING THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

The experts were invited to think and give input on the following general question:

***“How to preserve this unique territory and its natural wonders as well as the experience of untouched landscapes and silence while welcoming up to 2 million visitors?”***

Two preliminary points must be underlined:

- Any intervention proposed here should be understood very broadly, demanding further discussion and specification from the teams in charge of the projects (RCU and/or AFALULA)
- The experts based their analysis on their knowledge of international cases in tourism development. This “good practices” approach has however inherent limits. The international examples proposed here are considered as inspirational and not as examples to be followed per se.

## 1.1. Framing the scope: conceptualizing “local environment”

By “local environment”, three levels have been considered: micro (the sites themselves), meso (AIUla region) and macro (Saudi Arabia as the general context). Most of the discussions and suggestions here refer to the micro-level, divided into four types of heritage – for which the Framework Plan already covers draft projects (see table below).

| CATEGORY  | PROJECT <sup>(4)</sup>                                   |
|---|--|
| <b>Archaeological sites</b>                               | Project A: Hegra   |
| <b>Old town of AIUla</b><br>(urban heritage)              | Project F:<br>Old Town & Surrounding Oasis               |
| <b>Agricultural landscapes</b><br>(oasis and farms)       | Project I: Wadi Green Route<br>Project L: Cultural Oasis |
| <b>Natural elements</b><br>(protected in reserves or not) | Master Plan 3:<br>Sharaan Nature Reserve                 |

Since these projects are still in development and given the fact that the Framework Plan (for the Core Area-Master Plan 1) is under development, the discussions and proposals aim to provide food for thought in order to further develop such projects and other Master Plans.

Each category is analysed from the perspective of potential risks and threats. From this perspective, the summaries are as follows:

- (In)ability to attract investments
- Perception of the local communities
- Environmental degradation
- Unmet tourist expectations (frustration)
- Weak Infrastructures (leading to delay the tourism development)
- Perceived risks to safety and security in the region
- Economic recession

## 1.2. The categories of “local heritage” and tourism development: overview of risks and threats

### a. Archaeological sites

The archaeological sites will be the main tourist attraction of AIUla. The county has exceptional sites related to pre-Islamic heritage. Among them, Hegra (Al-Hijr - Madain Salih, World Heritage Site since 2008), offers great potential as a tourist attraction. Its attractiveness is mainly related to the monumental dimension of its tombs, its historical link with the Route of Incense (Artzy, 2007), and the visibility that the Nabatean civilization achieved in the world tourist imaginary thanks to nearby Petra (Jordan). The rest of the heritage in the area (like many other archaeological sites in the world) faces notable difficulties of interpretation at a tourist level, which reduces its ability to attract visitors. The archaeological heritage is not (easily) readable for average and not-initiated visitors. It needs interpretation, much adaptation, signage and ideally a visit supported by explanations made by experienced professional guides.

<sup>(4)</sup>All projects mentioned refer to the “Core Heritage Area” Masterplan. There are also three additional Master Plans (Kahybar, Service Areas & Urban Centers and Sharan Nature Reserve), but the Framework document does not present them in detail

On a comparative level, there are numerous examples of archaeological sites of great tourist tradition that receive thousands of visitors. In a scenario of high tourist numbers in AIUla (the number of 2 million annual visitors in a 10 years horizon has been mentioned) the main archaeological sites (Hegra, Dadan, Jabal 'Ikmaḥ, ...) will be the object of attention for a high influx of visitors temporarily. The effects of saturation on other very popular archaeological sites in the world such as Machu Pichu (Peru), Petra (Jordan) or Theotihuacán (Mexico) are well known: overcrowding, damage of the site (vandalism, accelerated erosion, garbage, etc.), changing of land use in surrounding areas or conflicts between heritage, archaeological functions and tourism. We can therefore make the hypothesis that the archaeological sites of AIUla, if not properly managed, might suffer the same negative impacts of overtourism.

#### b. Old town of AIUla (urban heritage)

The heritage of urban centres is a great tourist resource. In fact, cities are important centres of attraction for visitors who are not only interested in monuments and museums but also by vernacular architecture, customs, traditions, festivals, gastronomy, local commerce and traditional markets (multi-attraction) (Hunt, Crompton, 2008; Caldeira, Kastenholz, 2015). UNESCO uses a new term - urban historic landscape - to define the heritage values of these heritage properties. AIUla Old Town is a beautiful example of a traditional adobe built Islamic city, but nowadays it is a dead, museumfied city. This old city needs to recover its traditional urban functions (residence, commerce, services) in order to be preserved. The eventual arrival of (many) visitors to the city of AIUla, both the old city and the new urban centre, may cause overcrowding, increase in the prices of products and services, including basic needs such as food, clothing or real estate (inflation), changes in the way of life (standardization) and more generally touristification<sup>(5)</sup>. These are impacts already observed in the most visited urban tourist destinations. A balance between preservation and tourism must be achieved, even if difficult.

#### c. Agricultural landscapes (oasis)

Cultural landscapes (RÖSSLER CHIEF M., 2006; RÖSSLER M., 1998) are the heritage category that must foresee the greatest management challenges. They are linked to the socioeconomic functioning models of the societies that generate them. These are centuries-old or even millennial models. Nowadays, the lack of continuity of the traditional models of exploitation and the models of social relations that sustained these economic systems represents a great threat to the conservation of cultural landscapes. These are complex spaces where multiple stakeholders and economic activities converge. In addition, various regulations overlap with their planning instruments (environmental, territorial, heritage planning, ...).

In AIUla, the oasis associated with palm trees (dates) and fruit trees (mainly citrus) need to be preserved in the future. From an environmental point of view, lack of water and pollution of aquifers represent a clear threat directly related to the overexploitation that entails the increase in the arrival of visitors (in any of the three scenarios that could be expected- overtourism (ie, overcrowding and saturation of visitors in a given precinct or destination), undertourism or intermediary situations). Even in undertourism scenarios the water demand would already be higher than the current one, new urban developments and new accommodations will mean a higher demand for water. Therefore, there will be competition for the use of the water resource (between the tourist function and the traditional economic-agricultural function). If tourism in the future is consolidated as a more profitable activity than agriculture, abandonment of exploitation can lead to the destruction of the cultural landscape of the oasis. However, the landscape of the oasis is one of the main tourist resources and assets of AIUla. The current situation also reveals serious problems of visual pollution that threatens the aesthetic quality of the historical landscape. For example, new buildings with modern materials and particularly poor designs are built in the oasis, breaking the aesthetics, the functionality and the environmental integration of the traditional adobe constructions.

<sup>(5)</sup> Touristification is understood as the socio-economic and functional change in a given territory because of the development of tourism, which ends up bashing the rest of the economic sectors. Some authors talk about tourism monoculture, with the consequent risks to the local economy depending on a single activity. In one word, touristification is the "mise en tourisme des lieux non-touristique" (Knafo, 1996).

## d. Natural elements

Desert landscapes and dry ecosystems may suggest less ecological complexity, however there are particularly complex biotic and abiotic systems that need to be at the centre of conservation attention in AI UI region. Thus, in addition to preserving ecosystems and all their biological functions (including those potentially related to tourism), these actions should aim to ensure the conservation of strategic assets for tourism activities linked to natural environments.

The main risks for the regions natural resources are related to the sudden transformations of semi-desert ecosystems, which impact the fauna and flora, as well as the sandstone landscapes that form an important part of the region's imaginary in terms of tourism promotion.

Thus, the intense and uncontrolled expansion of existing urban areas as well as the deployment of new occupations (such as

resorts and tourist developments, or other types of infrastructure such as roads and water and electricity supply systems) - over-anthropization of natural environments - can produce ecological and landscape pressures hard to control and reverse, if it is the case.

One of the most sensitive concerns also refers to water management<sup>(6)</sup>, the use of which is expected to increase dramatically as urban centres grow, as well as the demand from floating populations of tourists.

In an integrated manner, natural resources should be incorporated at the same level of importance as cultural and archaeological resources, as the regional tourism development plan relies on a wide range of elements to promote tourism experiences in AIUIa.

## RISKS AND THREATS: SUMMARY

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Archaeological sites</b>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcrowding</li> <li>• Damage of the site (vandalism, erosion, trash...)</li> <li>• Changing of land use in surrounding areas (specially for Dadan compound)</li> <li>• Conflicts between archaeological functions (ongoing process) and tourism (in near future)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Old town of AIUIa</b><br>(urban heritage)              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Museification &amp; heritage «banalization»</li> <li>• Overcrowding (within and nearby areas)</li> <li>• Erosion</li> <li>• Accidents (risks to visitors /destination image)</li> <li>• Inflation (negative impact on local economy)</li> <li>• Changes of ways of life (standardization)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Agricultural landscapes</b><br>(oasis and farms)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of management (territorial) plan</li> <li>• Water shortage &amp; contamination</li> <li>• Loss of traditional landscape (new buildings / new materials)</li> <li>• Visual contamination: threatens the historical landscape as heritage (aesthetics aspects)</li> <li>• Transformation of traditional agriculture production: population move to more profitable economic activities</li> </ul> |
| <b>Natural elements</b><br>(protected in reserves or not) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over-anthropization of natural environments: destruction of natural forms to build roads, infrastructures, hotels, facilities for tourism, as well as a result of urban sprawl</li> <li>• Loss of natural ambiance and deterioration of the views (skyline)</li> </ul>   |

<sup>(6)</sup>It will be necessary to create a net of water collectors to retain water during the rainy season

### 1.3. International cases

Potential sources of inspiration (such as resorts and tourist developments, or other types of infrastructure such as roads and water and electricity supply systems) – over-anthropization of natural environments – can produce ecological and landscape pressures hard to control and reverse, if it is the case.

#### a. Copán (Honduras)

Copán (Honduras) is one of the southernmost areas of the Mayan civilization. It has been listed on the World Heritage List in 1980 and is one of the **major tourist sites of Honduras**. The most important archaeological site (the city of Copán), is a good example of the **alliance between heritage and tourism**, but also of the contradictions and conflicts that appear at different scales and in relation to different agents. Since the 19th century, research and recovery work was commissioned to prestigious institutions and some of the best universities in the world (Peabody Museum from Harvard University, Smithsonian Foundation, Illinois University, Carnegie Foundation, Musée de l'Homme de Paris, Pennsylvania State University,...) (Calle Vaquero, 2014<sup>(7)</sup>). Archaeological work is still ongoing and numerous tourism cooperation and development projects have been developed, financed by the World Bank, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the World Heritage Fund (UNESCO) or the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), among others.

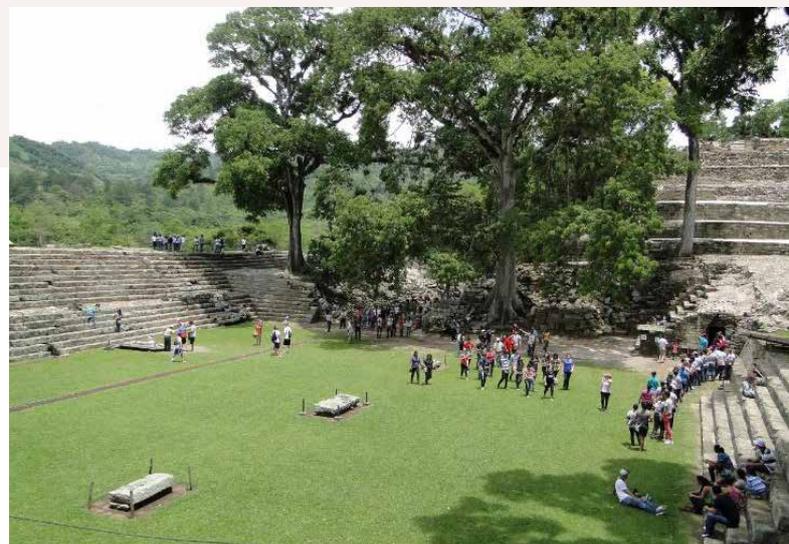
Although Copán does not receive as many visitors as other great sites in the Mayan world (Chichen Itza, Palenque or Tikal), it has maintained a **significant influx of visitors** since the early twentieth century: currently around 130,000 annual visitors. Given its heritage importance and the potential interest in its visit, tourism has always been the focus of development programs. The expectations regarding potential tourism development have

always been high. In fact, one of the last national projects developed, the Mundo Maya Regional Program, funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), proposed to exponentially increase the visitors of the Archaeological Park reaching clearly unsustainable figures for the conservation of the ruins (500,000 visitors).

The most controversial initiative was the construction of an airfield inaugurated in 2015. **The high expectations of tourism** growth created an alarm among international organizations (UNESCO, ICOMOS ...), and then the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History commissioned a carrying capacity study (García-Hernández, 2013a and 2013b). The study showed the existence of specific **overcrowding** problems that affected the most sensitive points (ceremonial altars, tomb tunnels, etc.) as well as the capacity of services and infrastructures to welcome visitors. However, the visitor growth estimates have not been met: the aerodrome ceased to operate within a few years of its inauguration and visitor numbers remain stable.

Copán exemplifies very well the dynamics of the tourist use of heritage. It is necessary to **adapt heritage restoration and conservation to tourism** (and have the appropriate tools for the tourism and heritage management (management plans, carrying capacity studies, public studies), but this alone does not guarantee tourist success. It is difficult to channel large flows of visitors to sites that are far from visitors. The archaeological heritage is not (easily) readable for average and not-initiated visitors. It needs interpretation, much adaptation, signage and ideally a visit supported by explanations made by experienced professional guides.

*Copán ceremonial center (Honduras). August 2013*



<sup>(7)</sup> Calle Vaquero, M. de la (2014). "Patrimonio y turismo en Copán (Honduras): alianzas, contradicciones y conflictos a distintas escalas". En F. López Palomeque y G. Cánoves Valiente (eds). Turismo y territorio. Innovación, renovación y desafíos. Ed. Tirant Humanidades, colección crónica. Valencia. Pp. 429-441. ISBN: 978-84-16062-16-4.

## b. Sintra and Mertola (Portugal)

Sintra and Mértola (two small cities in Portugal) serve as an example to contrast two different ways of approaching urban heritage management in tourist destinations. Sintra, world heritage city (1995) close to Lisbon, has experienced a great and recent increase in the number of visitors. It is **one of the most visited historic cities** of the country and suffers some obvious touristification processes. The historic centre is filled with accommodation, restaurants and expensive services that have generated strong inflation. The local population has moved to the periphery (**de-population in favour of tourism newcomers** mainly foreigners), and new shops and tourism services have replaced traditional commerce. It is on the list of World Heritage in Danger since 2006 as, among other reasons, the proposed **buffer zone has not been implemented**.

Mértola, on the other hand, is still on the tentative List of World Heritage and has a more sustainable tourism development model. It can be considered to have a **small-scale tourism** ("light touch tourism"). There are small restaurants and businesses run by locals. Although the economy was previously based on agriculture (small scale) and a (disappearing) port, today a balanced service economy appears. For example, it has a **research centre on site** (linked to national and international universities) and bridges between researchers and tourists (archaeological research and tourism) are established with a program called "Archaeology for All", the **archaeology as educational** tool as well tourism attraction. The local Master Plan embeds these issues.

## c. Elx (Elche, Spain)

Backing up largely on the concept of **cultural landscape**, Elx (Spain) has been listed in 2000 as a World Heritage Site. A Special Plan for the Protection of the Palmeral (2019) regulates land uses, with special reference to the **agricultural vocation of the land** - including vast **date farms and its communities**. There are two management entities: Patronato del Palmeral (with representation of the regional government) & City Council of Elche (Department of Environment). Although today it mixes public and private properties (gardens), there has been a political will to purchase land by the municipality. However, there are also some problems related to the **abandonment of agricultural functions and traditions**, and treatment as an urban garden. In fact some people think that the park has been misconstrued as an exotic garden; an image that has been mimicked by many gardens that are open to the public in general and to tourists in particular (Larrosa-Rocamora, 2003). Current challenges today are the purchasing of orchards (by public entities), repopulation of orchards and the profitability of production.

The example of the Palmeral shows the **difficulties involved in maintaining traditional work** in modern socio-economic contexts. Public management appears as an option (good but not optimal) that legally protects the site, prevents its disappearance, and maintains the formal aspects of the landscape.



View of the Palmeral of Elche (Author: Juan Carlos Soler)  
(Source : <https://www.abc.es/local-alicante/20141121/abci-plataforma-palmeral-elche-201411211206.html> (28-11-2019))

#### d. Geoparks (UNESCO) and Natural Monuments (Brazil)

**UNESCO Global Geoparks** are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a **holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development**. Their bottom-up approach of combining conservation with sustainable development while involving local communities is becoming increasingly popular. Today there are 141 listed geoparks, in 41 countries (mainly in China, with 40 geoparks in 2019). The most recent geopark Colca y Volcanes de Andagua Geopark, in Peru, established in 2019. Its purpose is “to promote the sustainable development for its inhabitants, conserve its natural resources and landmarks, and establish **geo-tourism as an innovative concept** in Peru. [...] This Geopark will encourage the celebration, maintenance and protection of the area’s geological, natural, cultural and intangible heritage” (UNESCO, 2019)<sup>(8)</sup>.

In a smaller scale, **Natural Monuments** represent one of the categories of the National Systems of Conservation Units (SNUC), in Brazil – but this is also present in environmental regulations in many countries. Its main objective is “to preserve the integrity of a **unique natural element of extreme rarity or scenic beauty**, such as a waterfall, rocks and canyon. As a unit of the integral protection group, modification of natural aspects by human intervention is prohibited”. The Natural Monument of Beberibe Cliffs, listed in 2004, aims “... to preserve the landscape of cliffs and dunes, and to organize the tourism activity in the region [Ceará State coast]”.

As a way to **engage communities** (mainly youngsters) and provide safe and valuable experiences, visits to natural areas (and also to others, like archaeological sites), **rangers or local guides** tend to be an interesting initiative. In Brazil, the communities neighbouring Serra da Capivara National Park (that combines archaeological sites and natural areas in the hinterlands of Brazilian Northeast, Piauí State) provide the labour force for tour guiding activities. **Equipe Craôs**<sup>(9)</sup> is a small local business initiative to provide local tour guiding to Serra da Capivara National Park. This is the only way to visit the archaeological and natural sites in this park – since visits are only authorized within the company of one of the local guides. This example embeds a twofold relevance: firstly, the initiative to effectively (and economically) engage social groups into tourism development of the region and, secondly, the conservation of the sites themselves are made not only by surveillance, but also by constant education (while trained local youngsters will be in charge of escorted tourist groups to the protected archaeological sites).



Visitors at Natural Monument of Beberibe Cliffs (Ceará, Brazil)  
(source: [www.travelguide.michelin.com](http://www.travelguide.michelin.com))

<sup>(8)</sup> UNESCO Global Geoparks page, available at : <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/earth-sciences/unesco-global-geoparks/list-of-unesco-global-geoparks/peru/colca-y-volcanes-de-andagua/>, retrieved 28 Nov 2019.

<sup>(9)</sup> <https://web.facebook.com/equipecraos/>

## 1.4. The categories of “local heritage” and tourism development: overview of risks and threats

### a. Hegra and AlUla archaeological sites

In the context of tourism development, the archaeological sites of AlUla will become one of the main tourist attractions of the county. Therefore, it will be necessary to propose a system aimed at managing the visitors, avoiding crowds and preserving the heritage. It would be ideal if this system had the capacity to jointly manage the movements of tourist flows that were generated around the main archaeological sites (mesoscale), depending on the carrying capacity limits of each of them. For this, it could be necessary to design and implement a centralized system of guided tours previously adapted to different demands (visiting packages to one element, two or more).

In any case, the design of the visit management system implies a previous work of choosing the elements that are going to be activated, as well as carrying out studies of carrying capacity and a visitation plan (management plan) for each site (microscale).

**Methodological sequence for the visit plans** for each site:

- **1st step:** Preparation of the Carrying Capacity / Limits of Acceptable Change Studies.

Different approaches: Visitor Impact Management (VIM) (Geldenhuis, 2004; Graefe et al., 1990; Stankey et al., 1985) / Limit of Acceptable Change (LAC) (Sidaway, 1995; Lynn McCoy, 1995), as well alternative methods. The ultimate goal is to define the maximum and optimal number (according to the defined goals and to the local expectations) of daily visitors as well as the maximum and optimal number of visitors by type (independent visitors, scholars, commercial groups, ...) (Coccosis, Mexa, 2017).

- **2nd step:** Design the visit organization system

Booking online (in advance), opening hours, seasonality, fees (regular access and special services), types & volume of visitors / day-year (groups, independent, schools, cultural, VIP, institutional visitors), types of visits (guided, auto-guided, independent-free), tourism zoning (restricted areas, corridors, service stations with shadow, water, toilets).

- **3rd step:** On-site visit flow management:

Access system and parking, internal mobility system (shuttle from visitor centre to tombs and other attractions: bus/electric cars/vans...), itineraries, visit duration, facilities for visitors (shadow spaces, toilets, picnic areas,...), global interpretation system (interpretation centre, signage, information systems like augmented reality, QR,...), security plan (accidents, restricted areas...).

### A GENERAL PROPOSITION FOR HEGRA

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Paid visit</b>                           | All visits have to be pre-booked online, according the type of the visit. Different fees & discount will apply for different type of visitors.                                       |
| <b>Guided visits only</b>                   | Tours will depart from the Visitor Center, accompanied by local guides/rangers, locally trained according an accreditation scheme to be established by RCU and Partners.             |
| <b>Fixed number of groups per day</b>       | 800 visitors/day: 2groups (25 pax/each) every 30min<br>Time for the visit: 2hours, 30 minutes. Ca. 200.000 per day<br>No-overlapping tours. Special visits to be managed separately. |
| <b>Visitor center &amp; service complex</b> | Eating and drinking will not be allowed on the site.<br>All services have to be provided at Visitor center complex, at the entrance.   |
| <b>Information system</b>                   | Orientation and interpretation info has to be designed and provided on site (physically) and digitally (app, QRs, etc).  |

This is an example of a possible organization of tourist visits in Hegra. The proposed daily visitor figures are based on a consideration (not measured or tested) of optimal mobility of visitor groups (mainly by walking). This assumes that the guided visit model (in opposition to independent tours) is one that enhances a more satisfactory and fruitful experience on heritage sites with archaeological value. Visitor numbers are handled in a way that would not require major interventions to adapt the heritage site - taken into consideration that the Master Plan presupposes its opening in the very near future (October 2020).

### b. Old Town of AIUla

Here, a decision needs to be taken: Will AIUla be a **living old town** (with local communities living there) or an openair museum (as site for visits only)?

If it is considered as a living town (like Mertola or Sintra):

- To protect the plan of urban heritage conservation (periodically reviewed)
- To propose a zoning (residential use, hotels, commerce, restaurants, etc...)
- To reflect upon engagements of local communities
- To take/implement interpretative actions: signage, visitors-information centre, interpretation centre - along with ITC tools

To creating a museum site would be easier but less engaging socially. In this case, the general task is to organize public visit system: rates, schedules, itinerary design, regulations for the different types of visitors (groups, individuals ...).

### c. Agricultural landscapes (oasis and farms)

The protection of agricultural assets – either natural or human aspects – have to be an effort combined with the general planning of land use in the whole region – especially because many oasis and wadies are directly connected to urbanized areas in the present time.

- Territorial Plan: this territorial plan could include a zoning in order to preserve the most “productive” agricultural areas and / or those associated with the visual quality of the historical landscape.
- To limit and regulate new developments (buildings, urban growing, etc), especially in areas close to or even within urbanized areas
- To engage a citizen advisory group in order to help local population with their projects (tourist projects, their houses and farms...).
- To combine future plans (agritourism) with a strategic plan related to the promotion of agricultural activity itself

### d. Natural elements

The creation of natural reserves seems to be part of the plans for AIUla region (Master Plan 3). In point of fact the “From Vision to Reality” document states:

*AIUla will be the Kingdom’s premier example of a Living Arabian Wilderness and Protected Landscape of Outstanding Beauty. From the Harrat canyons to the wadis and sandy desert, AIUla will provide a home to experience-rich journeys through time, sustainable ecological systems and wild landscapes that will be explored by those seeking adventure, leisure and a holistic cultural experience» (p. 19)*

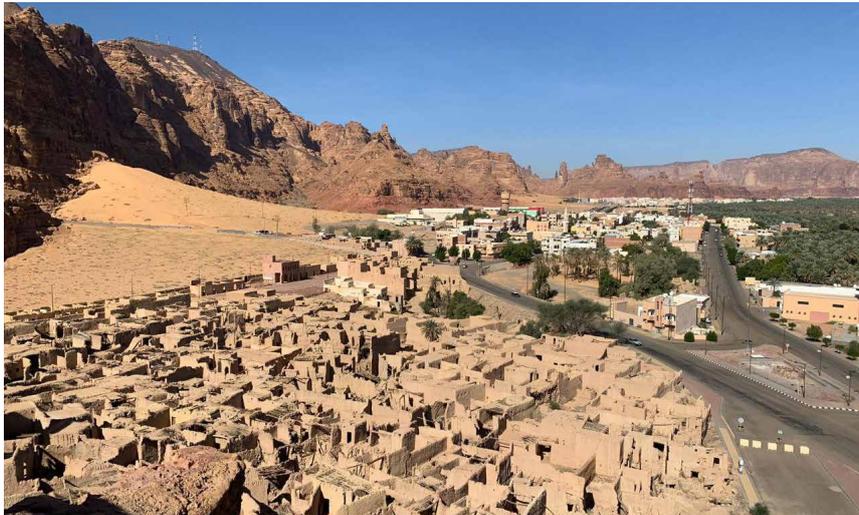
Acknowledging this as a vital strategy to protect large portions of natural environments, additional conservation legal mechanisms (such as establishing Natural Monuments or, in a larger approach, a geopark) could be employed, covering limited pieces of land, with outstanding landscape value. These would be easier to implement and enhance important tourism potentialities (especially in scenic aspects). These actions shall help to provide and guarantee tourism resources in a regional context (meso-level), displaying more and diverse (in this case, natural) attractions all over the region.

In this context, hereafter general propositions can be found, regarding natural elements, enhancing a richer and more diverse tourism experience

- To select and protect particular natural elements (not necessarily in natural reserves already existing or planned) – for instance, cliffs and particular geological elements. These could be combined with more massive conservation initiatives, as a way to compose a mosaic of small natural areas in the region. Providing more and different possibilities of tourism experiences, could be a mitigation strategy to the saturation of key attractions (such as Hegra).
- To study the possibility of bidding for a geopark, as UNESCO site, including preliminary inventories of international experiences and potential elements in AIUla to justify such bidding. The existing AIUla WHS condition could be an important argument in the bidding process, once the relevance of local heritage is already ensured.
- To enrich and to (help to) protect natural environment by local guides/rangers – boosting participation of local communities into tourism development in AIUla region. This is an easy, short-term and engaging strategy to ensure protection to the sites and visitors, as well as enhance economic opportunity for locals (specially youngsters).

## CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 1

The above presented analysis and proposals take into account the general essence brought by the Master Plan, adding suggestions (as matter of inspiration) in order to contribute to the preservation of natural and cultural resources, while also being concerned with the effective engagement of local communities (especially young people) in tourism development policies and processes for AlUla. International examples briefly presented (urban heritage sites, archaeological parks and special categories of natural reserves) bring elements to be further discussed and, where appropriate, organically incorporated into the tourism development strategies for AlUla.





## CHAPTER 2

# MAXIMISING THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

## 2. MAXIMISING THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

The second chapter aims at answering the following question: “How to give visitors the best experience possible while preserving the archaeological, natural and heritage assets of AIUla and its rising place on the archaeological and historical research stage? How to offer a global experience, bringing together the natural and cultural sites, the tangible and intangible heritage?”

### 2.1. Visitor's experience: the importance of a sustainable heritage ecosystem

The goal of maximizing the visitor's experience in AIUla needs to be treated in a dynamic and complex way, considering the multiple dimensions of the site: archaeological, historical, cultural, agricultural, economic, social, environmental, etc. Thus, the intersection between cultural heritage and tourism in the county of AIUla demands a reflection on what is to be preserved and what is not, since tourism access and use of heritage (tangible, intangible, private, public, cultural, natural) surely has an impact on its safeguarding. On the basis of what has been observed during the workshop, conservation decisions and tourism decisions within RCU and AFALULA seem to be based on a large involvement of archaeologists, historians, sociologists, architects, urban planners, policy makers, geographers, geologists, marketeers. A more structured involvement of local inhabitants and civil society in the decision-making process of the two agencies might strengthen the project.

In fact, decisions concerning the organization of the tourism industry and visitor's experiences have an impact on the conservation of heritage, it can either represent a threat to heritage maintenance, or it can also develop new uses permitting the strengthening of the links that inhabitants and visitors build towards heritage, implementing new activities and resources and creating new jobs, incomes and financial resources for heritage conservation. Heritage and tourism decisions should thus

consider the necessity of protecting heritage items, the needs of local populations, the desires of visitors, the limits of financial and human resources, the values expressed by national and international policies and agreements.

Associating local populations into the sites conception and management, along with archaeologists, policy makers, investors and all tourist actors, can also help to treat problems caused by overcrowding and overtourism, avoiding a feeling of rejection by inhabitants.

Several issues and concepts are developed within the cultural, economy and tourism studies that can be helpful in the implementation of tourism projects in relation to the conservation or restoration of cultural heritage (Hutter and Rizzo 1997; Rizzo and Throsby 2006; Licciardi, Amirtahmasebi 2012; Choi et al 2010)<sup>(10)</sup>. The economic approach tries to stress the idea of natural and cultural heritage as a cultural, natural, social capital. On one hand, cultural capital is embodied in heritage items and investments in the safeguarding of heritage, these can be seen as investments meant to increase the cultural capital. Furthermore, involving communities in heritage preservation develops cohesion among their members and strengthens social capital.

Considering these issues, it gives us a general theoretical framework to think about the development of visitor's activities in AIUla, while preserving the archaeological, natural and heritage assets of the site.

It also brings us to consider the link between cultural heritage, tourism and sustainability, also stressed by the United Nations. In view of this perspective, it is crucial to consider heritage in its multiple dimensions, as an ecosystem. In fact, the diversity of heritage items and their links can only be grasped by going beyond the boundaries of the heritage asset itself, by understanding the complex system in which it fits and in which different actors,

<sup>(10)</sup>INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL TOURISM CHARTER Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance (1999) as a general framework.

interests, management approaches will appear. The heritage ecosystem is thus made up of all the actions of a society leading to defining and maintaining the quality of a heritage. It is thus the wealth of the ecosystem that must be preserved in a long-term and sustainable economy of tourism, avoiding overuse, exploitation and unequal redistribution of resources.

Starting from the enounced principles and considering projects realized in other countries that can be inspiring for the case of ALULA, this chapter aims at answering the above question.

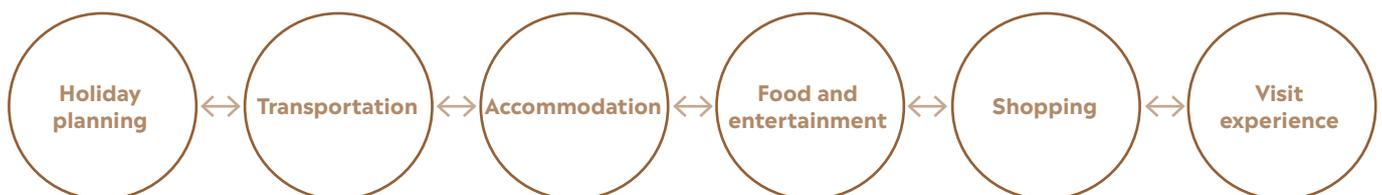
## 2.2. Tourist Value Chain

The Value Chain concept, from a theoretical perspective, was developed by Michael Porter in 1985 and defined as a combination of value-added activities that take place within an enterprise. Those activities work in a synergic way in order to provide value to customers. Moreover, if we consider the links between Value Chains of different enterprises, we obtain what Porter called a Value System (even though today the general term Value Chain is used).

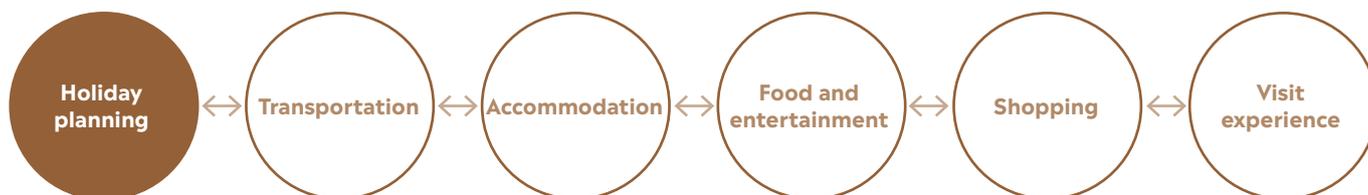
The Value Chain includes the full range of activities that are necessary to realize a product, from its conception, through the different steps of production to final consumers, as well as its final disposal after use. In the Value Chain approach, the visitor is the source of value, and value is created through his/her choices that take the form of demand to the producer, the supplier.

Following this logic, a sustainable Tourist Value Chain requires an alignment between the visitor' expectations and the Supply Value Chains. In the case of ALULA, it seems thus crucial to implement a tourism sector where a strong dialogue exists between the tourism actors, the enterprises, the public institutions, the inhabitants, and the tourists in order to ensure a global positive experience for visitors.

Value Chains can be represented in different ways, for the purpose of this report we adopt a simplified model that permits users to follow the main steps of the tourists, from the decision to plan the vacation, through the different choices concerning the trip to the destination and the activities in the destination, and finally the return to the countries of origin.



## Holiday planning



### LINKS TO THE ALULA CHARTER PRINCIPLES

#### 07\_REVITALISATION, RESTORATION AND REGENERATION

Alula's future will be a seamless continuation of its past. We will focus on revitalising and regenerating urban environments and built form for the benefit of all.

#### 05\_LIGHT TOUCH TOURISM

We will balance the opportunity to welcome and delight visitors with our duty to conserve and protect the essential qualities that make Alula exceptional.

One of the major concerns about developing tourism in Alula is how to convince tourists to visit the destination. There are mainly two reasons for this concern: the remoteness of the destination, and the perceived general country image in the international tourism market (e.g. human rights issues, cultural prejudices, fear among female international travellers, alcohol ban...). A great effort should be given to clarity, sensitiveness and effectiveness of the promotion, since a lot of funds are involved, especially in the destination's pre-opening phase. Improving the image and

attractiveness of Alula's heritage sites will help engender a national or cultural identity as well as enhance the knowledge about the destination/country. The unique value proposition to the potential visitors of Alula is the largest living landscape museum in the world. With this positioning statement Alula is branded as a new worldwide heritage destination for those seeking a unique and meaningful experience that integrates ancient history, landscape wonders, adventures, eco-tourism, hospitality and events.

| Pre-opening phase   | Post-opening phase  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>HOW TO CONVINCE PEOPLE TO COME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibitions and events branding a new world class tourism destination.</li> <li>• Cooperation with tour-operators, UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS).</li> </ul> | <p><b>HOW TO DEVELOP THE MARKET</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable competitive advantage</li> <li>• Easily accessible codes &amp; values</li> <li>• Include the site into the broader tourism area</li> <li>• Multi-product-targeted-messages branding</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>REALISTIC COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE SITE ACTUAL CONDITIONS</b></p>  | <p><b>MONITORING</b></p>  |
| <p>"The-first-man-on-the-moon" type of tourists not to expect top standards</p>   | <p>Alula Visitor Survey Center<br/>Collaboration with the local, national and international universities</p>  |

### Suggestions for the pre-opening phase:

- To present the new heritage world class tourism destination, by only sending out communication about the most iconic, tangible heritage, sculptural landscapes, iconic resorts and flagship events. As heritage represents just one component of the attraction sector that competes for visitors with a whole myriad of world tourism attractions, communications about AIUla should include different (spectacular) attractions, innovative ideas to get into the eyes of the world's tourism market.
- Ensure responsible (clear) communication on the opening of the site(s) throughout the whole pre-opening phase and through all communication channels (for example Experience AIUla website makes this clear, while Lonely Planet doesn't, which confuses potential visitors).
- Make the expectations realistic. For example, if the infrastructure is not yet perfect, present this "with style". For "The-first-man-on-the-moon" type of tourists the unpredictable service encounters or lack of amenity options can be part of the "being first" experience" in a positive way.
- Make the best of a difficult situation of visiting AIUla, its remoteness. Remote destinations continue to dominate the minds of curious travellers. They provide alternative experiences, chasing for authentic cultures and unique landscapes. They provide opportunities to experience slow tourism, while at the same time the rise sustainability issues linked to transportation.
- Use the UNESCO WH brand. The World Heritage brand signals the best in heritage protected areas. There is a specific group of international visitors who "collect" UNESCO World Heritage listed sites [about 13% of World Heritage visitors (King and Prideaux, 2010)]. Also, World Heritage branding provides a suitable magnet for visitors and provides an effective differential advantage for sites when competing for visitors with other attractions in the region. Many WHS are elevated to the status of global icon, a world wonder (the real potential of Qasr Al Farid / The Lonely Palace in Hegra).

### THE EXAMPLE OF THE ON YUKON TIME CAMPAIGN

This Canadian campaign signals a desire to associate the destination with an alternative time-space continuum and promotes the uniqueness and worth of the remote territory as a tourism destination. Firstly, this marketing campaign aims to convince visitors that the territory is accessible, and it provides comfortable amenities. Secondly, the whole campaign maintains the perception that the place is remote, because this is what differentiates it from other modern destinations (nightsapes, stargazing...).



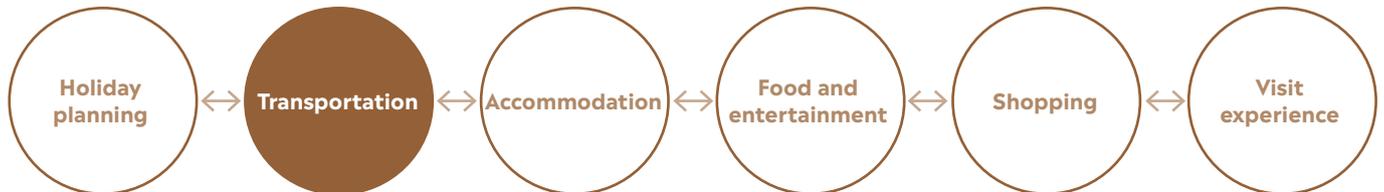
Source: [www.travelykon.com](http://www.travelykon.com); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOoxmDSsRXg> (Access: January 2020)

### Suggestions for the post-opening phase:

- Communicate sustainable competitive advantage as soon as possible. **Being new is not sustainable, while being authentic, creative and innovative is.** Include new discoveries and attractions, and continuously enhance tourist offers and visitor services.
- Include the site into the broader area, **connecting it with other attractions in the region** (part of Middle East, or 'Orient' – the parts of the world have tradition of Orientalism). AIUla is a journey through time but also around the region.
- Target **broader tourism segments** (not luxurious only). Cultural tourists, eco-tourists, experience seekers, purposeful seekers of knowledge, authenticity seekers, adventurers, collaborative (p2p) tourists etc. Expand range the of hospitality / accommodation offer (stimulate creativity and innovation in this sector).
- Provide constant expectations-satisfaction monitoring for sustainable visitor management and excellent heritage interpretation for tourists. **For this purpose, we suggest establishing an AIUla Visitor Research Center in collaboration with universities** (the UNITWIN network, being a UNESCO Chairs Programme, could be part of this establishment).

## 2. MAXIMISING THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

### Transportation



#### LINKS TO THE ALULA CHARTER PRINCIPLES

##### O6 SUBTLE CONNECTIVITY

Mobility across AlUla will be achieved through light touch infrastructure sensitive to the landscape.

##### O9 IMAGINATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

We will create an advance infrastructure network that minimizes demand on resources through its exemplar interrelationships with the environment.

#### Coordination among the macro, meso and local level

The issue of transportation is quite complex in the development of AlUla destination, since it has to deal with macro, meso and local dimensions. It concerns different points:

- How to reach Saudi Arabia
- How to reach AlUla
- How to move around AlUla county
- How to move within the main sites

Concerning the macro level, international transport is surely important to foster AlUla accessibility. The most common international transport mode is international air carriers and the regions present different international and regional airports.

Source : Google map (Access: January 2020)



Nevertheless, the localization of AIUla should make planners think about a connectivity by ferry (eventually from Egypt) and other options like car or railways. What seems important in the planning of transportation is to foster the link between AIUla and the countries of origin of the visitors that the destination wants to attract, but also at a meso scale to better connect AIUla with existing nearby local destinations (Khaybar Oasis, Red Sea, Amaala). This is a matter of creating the appropriate infrastructures and facilities, but also of working with tour-operators able to promote AIUla within a more complex tourism system. The joint work of national tour operators and global tour operators seems thus essential.

At a local scale, **the mobility within AIUla county and the sites is a major issue and one of the keys to success.** All infrastructures impacting the view of the landscape should be strongly limited and all alternative means of mobility, having a light touch on the environment, and addressing different segments of tourism, should be developed. The reuse of the ancient railway for a bike path can be taken into consideration. Nevertheless, this kind of projects do not only need infrastructures, but need conjointly to develop bike services, maps illustrating the different path options, renting services, guides, accommodations permitting bikes parks, points of restauration for bikers to eat. The French experience of “La Loire à vélo” can be inspiring in this sense.

### *Thematizing circuits*

Create thematic itineraries or mixt itineraries (Nabatean, archaeology, natural, sea and archaeology, gastronomy, desert...) is important in order to diversify the ways of reaching the destination and of circulating within the destination. Itineraries could link different UNESCO sites (ex. Petra and Hegra), link balneary locations with AIUla, connecting different places within the county.

Especially for the circulation within AIUla county, some aspects seem important to be considered:

- Air, sound and visual pollution
- Size of cars / buses / shuttles
- Speed limits to respect archaeology, nature, animals and enjoy landscapes and silence
- Parking places, equipped stops (water, food, basic services), information points (ex. for bikes)
- Alternative transports: bikes, motorbikes, electric and hybrid vehicles...
- Electrified road that recharges the batteries of cars and trucks driving on it<sup>(1)</sup>
- Roads permitting plural mobilities (not having strong visual impact on landscape)
- Different offers (luxury, average, accessible...)
- Public transports both for locals and tourists
- Design “location-based systems” APPs with itineraries, showing on the road services (sources of water, bike maintenance, information, where to eat, where to stay) and permitting to inhabitants to propose services. Those apps might include gamification elements (e.g.: treasure hunt or quizzes, aimed at different publics (children for family tourism, bike tourists, ...)).

<sup>(1)</sup> Here some information about similar experiences in Sweden:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/12/worlds-first-electrified-road-for-charging-vehicles-opens-in-sweden> (Access : February 2020)

## 2. MAXIMISING THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

### LA LOIRE À VÉLO / LOIRE BY BIKE

Developed along more than 900 km, La Loire à Vélo is one of the most interesting cycle routes in France. The itinerary crosses sites that are listed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. The paths are easy to ride, and apt to different segments of visitors (beginners, families, experts...). The itinerary proposes different paths, following the course of the river and the possibility of enjoying a natural landscape and heritage sites.

La Loire à Vélo is also the starting point of EuroVélo 6, an itinerary that extends over about 3600 km from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea, it is connected with 9 other cycle routes and over 13 networks of circuits.



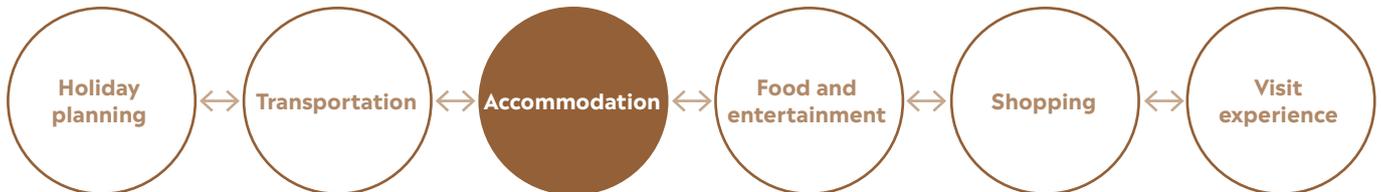
La Loire à Vélo: nature, culture and adventure

The cycling paths permit the exploration of the area, while benefiting from different services: accommodation situated less than 5 km from the itinerary, the possibility to rent bikes and to repair them, luggage transfer and bike transport as well as dedicated resting areas.

The quality of the services is guaranteed by the French "Accueil Vélo" brand, which brings together over 600 tourism service providers.

Source: <https://www.loirebybike.co.uk/homepage/la-loire-a-velo-nature-culture-and-adventure/> (Access: January 2020)

## Accommodation



### LINKS TO THE ALULA CHARTER PRINCIPLES

#### 07\_REVITALISATION, RESTORATION AND REGENERATION

Alula's future will be a seamless continuation of its past. We will focus on revitalising and regenerating urban environments and built form for the benefit of all.

#### 05\_LIGHT TOUCH TOURISM

We will balance the opportunity to welcome and delight visitors with our duty to conserve and protect the essential qualities that make AlUla exceptional.

In the last decade, the hospitality industry has been changing at a faster rate than ever before. New trends refer to renewable energy, hotel designs, alternative lodging and new technologies. A focus on environmental sustainability isn't new, but the degree to which guests expect (and prefer) eco-friendly accommodation services is. They want to stay in hotels that have integrated green practices from building materials, energy to F&B menus. As travellers crave a more local experiences, the hotel brands incorporate the local area's character into the decor, F&B products, and the personality of each hotel and resort. Also, experiential travellers seek immersive hotel experiences like yoga or fitness retreats, focused on local practices, animal encounters and unique accommodations like glamping (glamour camping), ecopods, etc.

To meet the aim of an authentic, imaginative and memorable journey through time (the brand identity of AlUla), needs to enhance the tourist experience, and to meet seasonality peaks and niche segments, we suggest diverse types of accommodation offers.

#### Pre-opening phase:

- Classic Hotels / Iconic Resorts: luxury hotels and resorts with locally inspired design, architecture and landscaping; excellent service, environmental sustainability, use of local materials and technological innovation.
- Desert Glamping / Glamping Resorts (luxurious camps).

## 2. MAXIMISING THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

### GLAMPING AND LUXURY ESCAPISM

Glamping (“glamorous camping”) describes a style of camping with amenities and, in some cases, resort-style services not usually associated with “traditional” camping. Glamping has become particularly popular with 21st-century tourists seeking the luxuries of hotel accommodation alongside “the escapism and adventure recreation of camping”

The success of the concept is based on the unusual aspect of the accommodation and the assurance of a higher or lower level of comfort (bedding, catering, sanitary facilities).

A large number of companies offering glamping fall within the scope of an ecotourism approach (“ecocamping” concept) for the protection of the environment, sustainability and eco-responsibility and promote the eco-labels that have been awarded to them. To this end, holidaymakers use collective sanitary facilities.



*Clayoquot Wilderness Resort, Vancouver Island*



*Dunton River Camp, USA, in the shadow of the San Juan Mountains*

<https://www.bestproducts.com/fun-things-to-do/a1271/luxury-glamping-with-hot-tubs/>

### THE ECO-LODGE ADRÈRE AMELLAL (SIWA, EGYPT)

Adrère Amellal is an eco-lodge located sixteen kilometres from the charming town of Siwa. Nestled at the foot of the “White Mountain”, it hosts 40 rooms, all built in traditional Siwan style and local materials. The walls are made of salt-rock, and palm is used for the roofs. Every room is unique, combining distinction and authenticity. Earth buildings blend naturally in the landscape, and furniture and crafts are based on talented local artisanship. Other features include ancient olive and palm groves, slow-bubbling Roman springs, and a cuisine that includes traditional dishes cooked in honey-glazed clay pots. All herbs and vegetables are handpicked daily from the organic garden.

With no electricity and no telephone (cell phones are not permitted outside the room), Adrère Amellal is in perfect harmony with its natural surroundings. Torches, beeswax candles and infinite stars illuminate the setting while old style braziers warm the cool evenings.

A plethora of activities are available: relaxing by the pool which is fed by a natural spring and is free of any chemicals, refreshing oneself by Lake Siwa, discovering the sand dunes of the Great Sand Sea, travelling back in time in Old Shali and its historic fortress.



#### A SANCTUARY WITHIN A SANCTUARY.

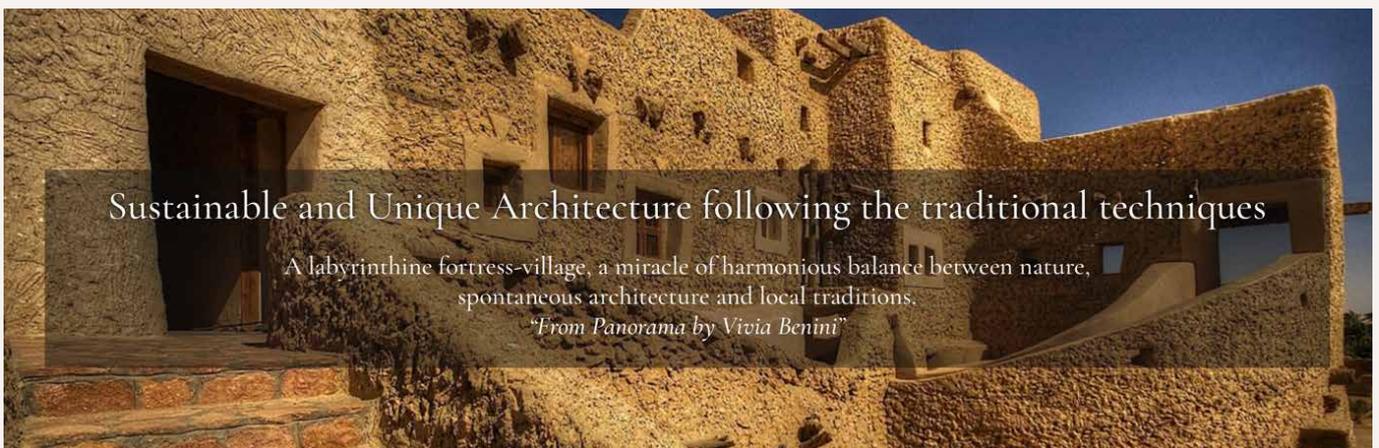
*The aura around Adrère Amellal is spectacular*

A step into another world. A world that is not dependent on electricity, air conditioning, or room service but instead on preserving the natural beauty of the surrounding area.

Adrère Amellal provides a breathtaking view of the salt lake or of the surrounding oasis every where you look. Doors and furniture are made from olivewood and at night, the only source of light are the numerous beeswax candles, lanterns and the desert sky.

*From “The Travel Mag”*

*by Lena Aloumari*



### Sustainable and Unique Architecture following the traditional techniques

A labyrinthine fortress-village, a miracle of harmonious balance between nature, spontaneous architecture and local traditions.

*“From Panorama by Vivia Benini”*

Source: <https://www.adreeramellal.com> (Access: February 2020)

## 2. MAXIMISING THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

### Post-opening phase:

- B&B and Farms (Local residents' flats, homes and farmhouses, designed with the help of the RCU Public Design Studio).
- Creative and eco accommodation pods - creative and innovative accommodation units inspired by local landscape and nature.

### THE EXAMPLE OF A-Z WEST SHELTERS, JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA

The site consists of 10 sleeping pods, called wagon stations, as well as a communal outdoor kitchen, open-air showers and composting toilets. It's a sort of a cross between a retreat and a residency and a normal campground. The pods can easily be collapsed, moved and reassembled. Guests enter their pod by unlocking and lifting up the front panel, which can be propped up and left open. The panel has a transparent strip that enables occupants to view the surrounding landscape and sky while lying on their bed. The campsite, created by artist Andrea Zittel is open to other artists, hikers, campers or those who are engaged in other forms of cultural or personal research. The site is open two seasons each year – one month in the fall, and one in the spring. Guests can reserve a pod for one to two-week periods and are expected to contribute to the functioning of the camp. The cost is \$120 per week. Tours of the site are also available for visitors on a regular basis, with the possibility of increasing the number of visits to accommodate extra interest.



Source: <https://www.dezeen.com/2016/08/19/wagon-station-encampment-andrea-zittel-tiny-camping-pods-creative-refuge-california-desert/> (Access: January 2020)

- Dispersed hotel in old town AIUla to enhance tourist experience and to bring life back to town and community.
- Desert Ethnic Camps (authentic non-permanent accommodation in ethnic tents - Biet Shaer; authentic tents and services provided by the local camp business / suppliers).
- Self-accommodation areas – parking or camping open areas that provide security, main facilities and services for tourists with their own caravans, cars, tents or just sleeping bags to enjoy open sky camping). Self-accommodation areas should have a very low visual impact and be scalable in order to adapt to specific demands (e.g. student summer schools, festivals, high season,...).
- To encourage creativity and innovation in the accommodation sector, we suggest **establishing an International Summer School of Art and Design in AIUla on a yearly basis** (in collaboration with the local university and its national and international partners with art and design students).
- To ensure adequate and sustainable hospitality standards in different types of accommodation, we suggest establishing a local Applied Institute for Hospitality and Services in AIUla. Besides the graduate study programs in hospitality, the institute should provide certified courses, for example train the trainers program for promoting AIUla hospitality, and local educational programs to improve the wide range of host-guest interactions in hospitality and visitor services.

**“LES CARNETS DE TENDANCES” /  
TREND BOOKS (AUTOUR DU LOUVRE LENS, FRANCE)**

The trend books have been developed in the framework of the project “Autour du Louvre Lens” which aims at the creation of a new tourist destination in Lens, in the North of France. The concept study of the destination has been carried out by Lidewij Edelkoort and Studio Edelkoort. The design of the destination and its values emanate from the heritage of the region, its history, its work, its industry, its particularities, its singularity, its aesthetics, its signature.

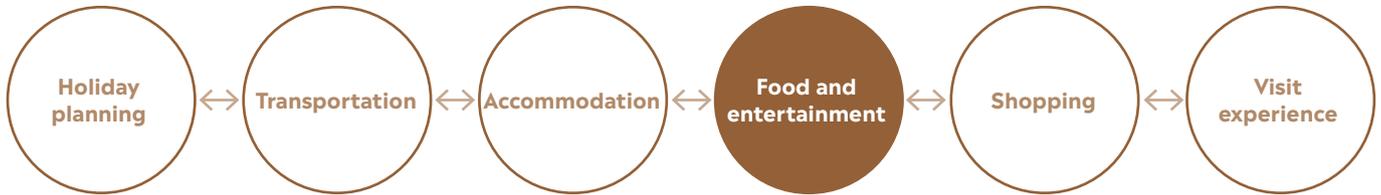
Concerning the accommodation issue, the trend books propose several typologies of accommodation that take into account the fact that the development of Airbnb and the solidarity economy are shaking up the codes of conventional accommodation: the bedroom at home is transformed into a hotel, and hotels want to look like houses, if not campsites.



The trend books state also that, facing the multiplication of natural disasters, designers around the world compete in ingenuity for the creation of emergency habitats, this minimum space which paradoxically seduces us: it meets our requests for new Robinsons, ready to live a moment away from everything, with few resources.

Source: [http://www.autourdulouvre.lens.fr/sites/louvre.lens.fr/files/content/files/carnet\\_de\\_tendances\\_3\\_final\\_-\\_hebergement\\_restaurant\\_bien-etre\\_0.pdf](http://www.autourdulouvre.lens.fr/sites/louvre.lens.fr/files/content/files/carnet_de_tendances_3_final_-_hebergement_restaurant_bien-etre_0.pdf)  
(Access: February 2020)

**Food and entertainment**



**LINKS TO THE ALULA CHARTER PRINCIPLES**

**03 SUSTAINING ECOSYSTEMS AND WILDLIFE**  
AIUla’s ecological assets will be restored and safeguarded.

**04 BALANCED AGRICULTURE**  
AIUla’s agricultural practices will be exemplar, contributing to re-establishing AIUla’s historic oasis and water balance.

**05 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**  
We will balance the opportunity to welcome and delight visitors with our duty to conserve and protect the essential qualities that makes AIUla exceptional.

**08 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**  
AIUla’s people are central to its long-term success. We will work closely with all communities to develop capacity and opportunity to participate in its transformation and renewed potential for prosperity.

There is a major diversity of experiences that can be developed in connection with AIUla county resources, enterprises and inhabitants. What seems important here, it is not to list the typology of experiences that can be implemented, but to suggest a methodology that could be useful for the identification of the cultural and natural resources of the area, that can inspire the tourism sector and more broadly the cultural and creative sector. The development of experiences for tourists should thus start with studies related to local traditions, heritage elements building local identity, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) items. The study of this elements can be conducted partially within the

project of implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention that expects the creation of local registers of ICH involving experts and communities. These studies can create the basis to develop activities related to intangible cultural heritage, involving locals. Capacity building programs can also be implemented in order to develop the skills and competences to sustain new activities and businesses. Dedicated spaces for training, incubator of start-ups, co-creation can also be designed as an important step of this project. The development of experiences for tourists will be thus an output, secondary to the maintenance of a vital heritage dynamic.



### CONNECTING VISITORS WITH TERRITORIES AND FARM PRODUCTION (EXPERIENCE TO BE ADAPTED TO MORINGA OIL, DATES, ORANGES...)

Within the experiences that connect the territories with local productions, the case of Finca Propria could be taken as a model to be replicated, adapting it to the possibilities of the region we are analysing and to its tourism development project. The project has been implemented in the agricultural region of Mendoza, in Argentina, known for the wine production. The farmers give the option to visitors to become owners of a vineyard row within a farm dedicated to the production of high-end wines, and allow the possibility of having a quantity of bottles produced with the grapes that visitors harvest each year on their own land, between February and April. The labels of the bottles can be personalized with a name and signature. The case of Finca Propria is developed in the world of wine, but can easily be applied to numerous products of the land and that, in the local case, could be applied to plantations of lemons or oranges, to the dates and fruits of the earth that are used for the elaboration of edible products, or cosmetics, for example. look like houses, if not campsites.



Source: Propia <https://www.fincapropia.com> (Access: January 2020)

### TRIPS DEVELOPED BY LOCAL INHABITANTS

Incorporating local populations into development projects is the key to their sustainability. An example that could be taken as a model is a unique experience on the Qom Culture Route, in the province of Chaco, in Argentina. Trying to innovate and offer emerging destinations that combine culture and nature, the trip proposes sharing in the daily life of the Qom and Creole women of Monte Chaqueño, who for the first time open up to tourism. That is why it is also a trip only for women, who will live an experience of immersion in the intimacy of a different culture, and tastes, traditions, artisan techniques, myths, legends, songs and ancestral stories.

If we start from the basis, measured with patterns of Western culture, the role of women in Saudi Arabia takes place in a very different cultural context, this could be a possible and achievable example when considering the incorporation of local women into tourism development projects with sustainability criteria.

**Un viaje al Chaco**  
para una experiencia única  
en la Ruta de la Cultura Qom

**Del 16 al 19 de Noviembre de 2018**



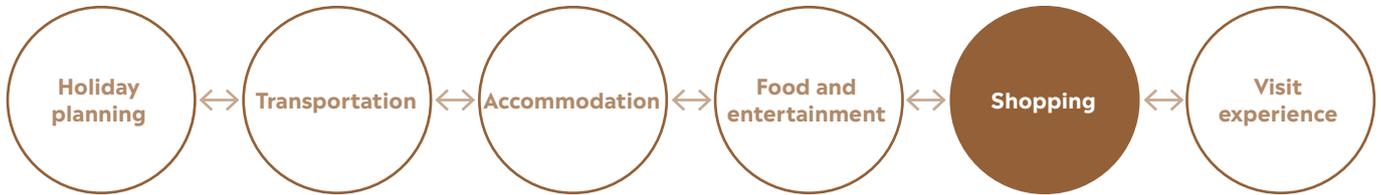
En esta oportunidad "Mazama Destinos Naturales y Culturales" te propone un viaje inédito. Intentando siempre innovar y ofrecer destinos emergentes, este viaje se destaca por reunir los dos aspectos que nos caracterizan: la cultura y la naturaleza.

Se trata de una propuesta nueva, no sólo para nosotras que iremos como visitantes sino también para las mujeres Qom y criollas que nos esperan. Por eso, será **un viaje sólo para mujeres**, dado que es la primera vez que recibirán turistas, abriendo las puertas de su intimidad. Con ellas:

- ❖ Recorreremos el monte para conocer sus plantas y animales silvestres, y cómo ellas los nombran.
- ❖ Conoceremos sus plantas medicinales, comestibles y las que tienen poderes o son "mágicas".
- ❖ Escucharemos sus mitos, leyendas y canciones ancestrales.
- ❖ Comeremos sus comidas típicas.
- ❖ Participaremos de un taller de cestería con maestras Qom.



### Shopping



#### LINKS TO THE ALULA CHARTER PRINCIPLES

##### 08 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

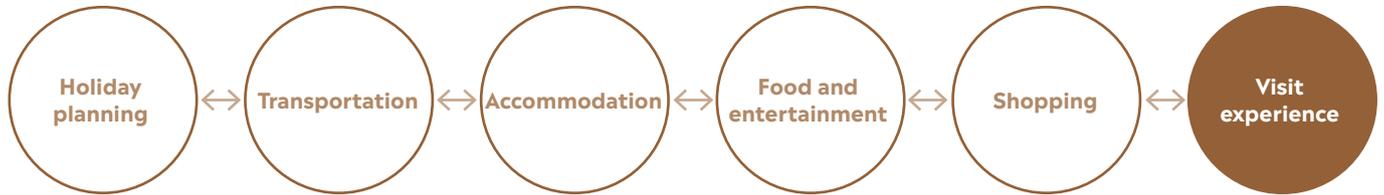
AlUla's people are central to its long-term success. We will work closely with all communities to develop capacity and opportunity to participate in its transformation and renewed potential for prosperity

The tourist's experience is a complex combination of factors, and services and merchandises provided by local retailers and vendors are an important part of it. Shopping creates a significant opportunity for visitors to become exposed to the host culture (Tosun et al., 2007). In particular, in a destination as AlUla, locally made handicrafts and souvenirs designed as tourist products, may reflect elements of local culture.

Since local shopping in AlUla is not yet developed and indeed not ready for tourism, new shopping facilities should be established

within the destination. Tourist shopping facilities might not be developed separately from places, where local people shop. In fact, the findings from previous studies (Tosun et al., 2007) suggest that **visitors are interested in shopping where destination's residents shop**. In this sense, places such as the traditional market in AlUla and the Bedouin market represent interesting points for promoting the local products as the Arabic coffee, Moringa oil, dates, soaps, pottery, stone carving, basket weaving, felt making, natural dyes, incense or perfume.

## Visit experience



### LINKS TO THE ALULA CHARTER PRINCIPLES

#### 01 SAFEGUARD THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

We will be the custodians of the natural and cultural landscape of AlUla.

#### 02 HERITAGE, CULTURE AND ARTS GLOBAL DESTINATION

AlUla will be a cultural destination of heritage and the arts that draws visitors, and enriches the lives of AlUla's communities.

According to Masterplan 1, the essence of AlUla is condensed in the core area, which will be the main focus for visitor's experiences. The core heritage area typifies all key assets in AlUla: the lush palm oasis, spectacular geological formations and, crucially, the most significant cultural heritage landmarks encompassing 4,000 years of civilization. The development of this area will be compatible with the safeguarding of natural and cultural landscape in order to make of AlUla a heritage, culture and arts global destination.

Due to the importance of the natural and cultural landscape of the core area, its interpretation should be planned from a regional perspective. In order to provide a regional and historic perspective, thus the Belvedere could be an interesting point for starting the visit. An interpretation/welcome centre in this strategic point would help to gain a better understanding of the Nabatean way of life and settlements, the incense road and the historical evolution of the region. Certainly, interpretation centres should be created in order to enhance and value the heritage linked to a locality or a region. In this way, it is important that the existence of an interconnection and contextualization of the heritage within the area exists. Therefore, we are talking about a cultural project intimately linked with cultural tourism, which takes advantage of the situation and serves as a focus that promotes other resources of interest, other singularities or peculiarities of the area, such as: gastronomy, typical products, local festivals, cultural manifestations, among all. Obviously, in order to make this possible it is important to involve the inhabitants into the project.

Considering Hegra as the central point of the core area, we propose a controlled visiting system in order to foster its conservation. For this reason, the development of a website is important where visitors can book and buy the tickets for the visit in advance. Due to the cultural value of Hegra, it could be interesting to open an interpretation centre. The reutilization of the existing buildings at the train station for an interpretation centre and visitor centre is advisable, not only because of the reutilization of the existing infrastructures, but also because they are part of the history of the region.

The visit to Hegra is recommended to always be made in the company of professional guiding services and following a defined circuit with some panoramic points that can be completed by archaeological halls (spaces to contextualize the site and obtain information). There are many examples of archaeological halls in the Region of Castilla Leon (Spain). An interesting example is the one of Las Médulas, a World Heritage Site from the Roman period. The site is a roman mine comprising an extended territory, including paths for visitors and archaeological halls presenting explanations in order to understand this site (Ruiz del Arbol 2008). An archaeological hall should be a stop with a simple explanation, pictures, panels or audios/videos. The main objective of this place should be the explanation and interpretation of the site as a "Journey through time" focused in the Nabatean period, its relationship to Romans, the economy, the life lived in this period, nomad life, and the composition of the Nabatean art with many oriental influences (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria). This last point of view is important to understand and to show the network of influences created by the Incense Route.

## 2. MAXIMISING THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

### LAS MÉDULAS, LEÓN (CASTILLA LEÓN, SPAIN)

Date of Declaration as a World Heritage Site: 1997.

Site: Las Médulas

Location: Southwest of El Bierzo, León Province.

Opening Hours: Depending on the time of the year:

More information:

<http://www.fundacionlasmedulas.info/> (Access: January 2020)

Fares: Normal rate 2 Euros, students 1.5 Euros, groups and retired members 1 euro and free for kids up to 8 years old.

Castilla Leon Region is the more extensive region in Spain and is home to eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Pilgrims' Route to Santiago, Burgos Cathedral, the Sierra de Atapuerca Archaeological Sites, Las Médulas Natural Monument in Leon, the cities of Avila, Salamanca, Segovia and the Siega Verde Archaeological Sites (Salamanca). Las Médulas, represents a fantastic landscape resulting from the gold exploitation by the Romans, and it was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/803>). After centuries of mining inactivity, las Médulas have become an attraction among tourists due to their beautiful landscape and museum consisting of an archaeological hall with detailed description of the period when the largest open cast gold mine in the Roman Empire operated

There is a visitor centre (Park House of Las Médulas) where visitors can obtain an overview of the natural monument and details of places of interest and routes. There are audio-visual resources, as well as 360° panoramic images of several of the sites in this natural space and materials to help visitors plan their day (<https://patrimoniounatural.org/casas-del-parque/casas-del-parque/casa-del-parque-de-las-medulas>). The fees are 1 € for general visitors and 0,5 Euros (reduced) for specific visitors.

The archaeological hall is a didactic space with interactive panels on life in the pre-Roman Iron-age settlements, the Roman settlements and the Roman mines (<https://www.turismocastillayleon.com/en/art-culture-heritage/cultural-spaces/archaeological-hall-las-medulas>). The fees are 2 € for general visitors and 1,5 Euros for groups)

The different routes allow different combinations of greater or smaller distance depending on the visitor's interest (the time they are able to spend on the site and the distance they wish to cover while in the site). The routes can be designed according to three dimensions: type of journey (linear or circular), type of way (on foot or by bike) and the difficulty of the route (low, medium and medium - high). There are 8 circular routes. Seven of them are recommended on foot and three by bike. This is an example of how the visitor can plan the visit in accordance with the time or with the physical conditions (<https://www.turismocastillayleon.com/en/countryside-nature/natural-areas/las-medulas>).

Source: <https://www.turismocastillayleon.com/en/countryside-nature/natural-areas/las-medulas>

As in other sites and areas in the region of Castilla y León, the interpretation can overflow the site itself, and cover a wider area, within a regional interpretive program. Such is the case of Atapuerca, Burgos (World Heritage since 2000) where an annular interpretation has been proposed, within three concentric rings: the site, the interpretation centres of Ibeas de Juarros and the town of Atapuerca, and the Museum of "Evolution Humana de Burgos" (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/989>) (Boj y Luque, 2007).



Archaeological Hall of Las Médulas. Outside

Source: [www.minube.com](http://www.minube.com). Accessed December 2019



Atapuerca. Source: Instituto del Patrimonio, Atapuerca.  
Source: Instituto del Patrimonio. Assessed December 2019



Experimental Archaeology Center.  
Source : Fundación Atapuerca. Assessed December 2019

Due to the specific conditions at Hegra Site, the mobility within the site can be approached on foot, but also using other electric transportation (bicycles, shuttle, train). It is important to take into account the accessibility of tourists with disabilities.

Different storytelling can be designed around the four main elements of the site: Town, Tombs, Diwan and Oasis. For example, one storyteller can be IBN BATTUTAH (a medieval traveler who visited AlUla) in order to reach also the “Travel through time”. It is advisable the development of Apps for the site, light site signs and eventually some gaming experience for some publics. In particular, augmented reality features appear to be relevant here: they can project historical layers and interpretation perspectives onto what travelers experience themselves while on place. To do so, it is important to ensure top quality information, availability of different languages and cultural localization of messages, well rooted reconstructions. Additionally, in order to make such tools available, areas where wifi-connections and re-charge stations for smart phones are to be offered.

Digital tools will help not only to provide and (broad)cast messages, but also as a way of getting constant feedback, both in terms of usages (through digital analytics) as well as distributing surveys or asking questions in the right moment/place.

For tourists interested in the restoration works or even in the archaeologist activity it is proposed that it could be possible to visit specific spaces “under work”. There are some positive experiences of this, as in Santa María Cathedral (Vitoria, Spain) (Lasagabaster, 2016).

## 2. MAXIMISING THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

### AN INTERPRETATION CENTRE FOR THE ATACAMA DESERT, CHILE

In 2013, the C.I.D. project was established to provide a base for investigations into the contemporary relationship between architecture and the landscape. Situated between San Pedro de Atacama and Ayquina, in a region recognized as the world's driest desert, the building was created to explore the nature and culture of the environment. A clustered configuration of six volumes are covered with a corten steel exterior, which over the years will weather to an appearance of rust. Each division presents a different view of the surrounding landscape. The site includes an observatory, research labs and a central patio area that is shielded from the wind in order to be used as a small oasis, with its own ecosystem and vegetation.



<https://www.ignant.com/2017/11/24/an-interpretation-centre-for-the-atacama-desert/>

### ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL IN VITORIA (BASQUE COUNTRY, SPAIN)

#### UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE WITHIN THE ROADS OF SANTIAGO DEL NORTE "OPEN RESTAURATION"

Since 2015 on the World Heritage List, linked to Santiago de Compostela Road. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/669>

Site: St. Mary's Cathedral

Location: Vitoria, País Vasco, Spain.

More information: <https://www.catedralvitoria.eus/en/home/>

There are four different visits with different prices.

It is also possible a "virtual tour": <http://vr360.catedralvitoria.eus/>

The Cathedral of Santa María de Vitoria is open for works. For a few years, Vitoria attends the restoration works of its old cathedral, and contrary to what usually happens in works of this type, the intervention is open to citizens, who can see and understand the transformation. The Cathedral of Santa María de Vitoria has ceased to be a ruined building to become a focus of tourist attraction. The Santa María Cathedral Foundation is the entity in charge of managing and developing the Restoration Master Plan of the most emblematic temple with the greatest historical value in Vitoria Gasteiz.

The Foundation not only manages the architectural recovery of the Cathedral. It also develops cultural and tourist activities for its enhancement. These include guided visits to restoration works, more than six hundred thousand people have visited attracted by the possibility of seeing a live restoration, congresses, seminars, conferences with prestigious writers, with Open for works is an impressive way of manifesting the social function of heritage; It is a suggestive or suggestive way to communicate an essential criterion in the execution of the project is that of "Open restoration".

The criterion that guides the project is that of the social function of cultural heritage. On the basis of absolute respect for the monument, we seek the public investment obtained a return based on the maximum profitability - social, cultural, formative, urban, tourist, etc. - that the action can grant to society as a whole. Each one of the 365 days of the year, the work remains open for visitors and also for schools or institutes that participate in specific visits and in children's workshops (archaeology, stained glass, history, Gothic art, etc.) It offers adaptations, in a programming and sequencing that includes teaching practices and materials, at ages between 6 and 18 years. In addition, they are planning activities aimed at high school students with more technical content (construction aspects, photogrammetry, material behaviour, etc.).



Source: <https://www.catedralvitoria.eus/en/home/>  
Vitoria Cathedral. Source : <https://www.vitoria-gasteiz.org/>.  
Accessed December 2019

Finally, at the end of the visit it is advisable to provide a satisfaction survey in order to know the perceptions of the visitors, and also to improve the quality of the experience. It should be interesting to keep in touch with the visitors, through newsletters and social networks content management. As previously mentioned, they will serve both to convey messages, as well as to "listen" and interpret visitors interests and feedback not directly sent to the destination.

### CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 2

This approach to visitor's experiences through the Tourist Value Chain permits the raising of the main issues that concern the development of the tourism sector in AIUla. Tourism is surely one of the key industries able to drive economic growth. Nevertheless, it is crucial that the sector, combining accommodation, distribution, transportation, and public services, always takes into account the objective of preserving AIUla's landscape, as an ecosystem. The essence of tourism is also human capital and human sharing and the development of the Tourist Value Chain cannot be imagined without tourists, inhabitants, workers, investors and public actors. Appropriate places for sharing of information and the implementation of ambitious educational programs go along with the development of the sector.





CHAPTER **3**  
**ENSURING  
LOCAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND  
INVOLVEMENT  
OF LOCAL  
COMMUNITIES**

### 3. ENSURING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Ensuring the involvement of local communities is the best way to connect tourism to sustainable local economic and social development. AIUla framework must invite the local communities to fully participate in the region's tourist development.

So far, for understandable political and historical reasons mainly due to the novelty of cultural and leisure tourism in the country, AIUla tourism development project appears to be a predominantly top-down initiative. However, the project's success will depend on a correct balance between its goals and local capacities. **Locals should be part of the picture throughout at all steps.**

According to the cultural manifesto of AIUla (*Cultural development and founding strategic principle No 8 : Local Community development*): **AIUla's people are central to its long-term success.**

The manifesto further indicates *"We will work closely with all communities to develop capacity and opportunity to participate in its transformation and renewed potential for prosperity"*.

- AIUla's people will be the guardians of its heritage and nature.
- Local communities will be central to, and benefactors of, the cultural offer
- AIUla will be a new engine of cultural production

UNITWIN proposals focuses on 5 main goals:

- *Local Pride*
- *Education, training and capacity-building*
- *Development of the creative economy*
- *Awareness of tourism positive social, cultural and economic inputs*
- *Tools to encourage local entrepreneurship*

#### 3.1. "Proud of AIUla"

In order to ensure a sense of belonging, commitment and local entrepreneurship, locals should be proud of AIUla: By fully understanding its archaeological, historical and cultural importance as well as the importance of its rich past as an asset for future economic development.

**"Proud of AIUla" program** goal is to improve awareness on the specific importance of this site (It is the first site inscribed on the UNESCO WH list for Saudi Arabia; one of the few Saudi Arabian sites with an ad hoc Royal Commissions; home to one of the first Arabic kingdoms; inhabited continuously for 3000 years; an authentic and integral old city; extremely interesting natural and geological landscape)

"Proud of AIUla" actions would be to set up awareness campaigns/initiatives: meetings, media, online campaigns.

#### Proposed initiatives

##### 3.1.1. "AIUla ambassador" training program

- *Public*: Local inhabitants and local businesses owners;
- *Expected output*: Knowledge of the importance of the local and regional heritage and development of local pride of being from this place;
- *Expected impact*: Knowledge of (international and national) visitor's expectations and of their "cultural codes";
- *Timeframe*: Implementation and beginning of the project: short term; Impacts: short/medium/long term;

This short-length training program aims to give all the locals involved (permanent inhabitants and workers) the knowledge to understand why the AIUla site is unique as well as why national and international visitors are rushing there. It will also give the necessary knowledge about the cultural codes of international visitors in order to facilitate intercultural communication and exchange.

### THE AMBASSADORS PROGRAM OF THE EPISCOPAL CITY OF ALBI, WH PROPERTY SINCE 2010

The Episcopal city of Albi implemented an ambitious Ambassadors program<sup>(12)</sup>, based on an ad hoc chart (the *Chart of the Albi values*<sup>(13)</sup>).

Presented in 2011, Albi's territorial promotional approach allows for everyone to join the dynamics set in motion since the inscription of Albi by UNESCO, by participating in the attractiveness of the Albigensian region. Everyone can get involved, whatever their activity, by registering as an **ambassador for Albi**. According to the campaign, "you just have to love Albi and want to help discover it through your hobbies, your passions, your professional or associative activities" ...



According to one of the terms of the chart, the actors of the Albi territory are invited to:

- implement the new international status of Albi, city of the world, by taking a stronger interest in international life, by opening it up to all nationalities and cultures, and by pursuing decentralized cooperation;
- to participate in the influence of Albi and its international visibility through the development of external relations while strengthening its corporate culture;
- to be ambassadors outside Albi by highlighting the potential of the Albigensian territory, especially of its actors and their dynamism.

### 3.1.2. "Driver / guide" program and associated label

Encourages locals, through a training and label program, to offer vehicle guided visits in surrounding areas (these visits do not concern archaeological sites, which should only be visited guided by experienced and ad hoc trained guides). Trained drivers/guides receive a quality label which gives them the possibility to be on the official list of drivers/guides of AIUI. They receive regular training to update their knowledge of the site. In order to guarantee the quality of the label, the drivers/guides must also comply with quality standards in terms of practical and content knowledge, regularly certified by the program

- *Publics*: Local inhabitants
- *Expected impact*: offering visitors a list of certified visitors/guides, who are able not only to drive to different places, but also to give insight on the visited sites.
- *Timeframe*: Short term for the implementation of the training; medium term for the "label" program offered to trained driver/guides.
- *An example*: "My daily traveller<sup>(14)</sup>" in Paris and many other programs in other cities/regions

<sup>(12)</sup> <http://www.albi.fr/devenez-ambassadeurs>

<sup>(13)</sup> [http://www.albi.fr/sites/default/files/kiosque/Charte-des-valeurs-albigeoises\\_0.pdf](http://www.albi.fr/sites/default/files/kiosque/Charte-des-valeurs-albigeoises_0.pdf)

<sup>(14)</sup> <https://www.mydailydriver.fr/fr>

### 3. ENSURING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

#### 3.1.3. “Farm Culinary experiences” and associated label

This project aims at bringing together and presenting in an Internet site the oasis farmers who accept to open up their farms for breakfast, lunch, dinner, picknick or visits. This approach implies that the creation and distribution of a local label, is able to guarantee the quality of the farms offered particularly of its products, its setting, environment and hygiene conditions.

The label may be given to farmers after training in food management and hospitality. It must be renewed periodically, after short additional trainings and inspection visits to the farms.

- *Publics*: Local farmers
- *Expected impact*: Encourage local farmers even without accommodation capacity, to host visitors for lunch or dinner
- *Timeframe*: Medium term for the infrastructure development and the labialisation.

#### “(PETIT DÉJEUNER/BREAKFAST) OU DÉJEUNER À LA FERME/LUNCH AT THE FARM”<sup>(15)</sup>

Several initiatives exist in France, for example, bringing together national or regional France under the umbrella of ad hoc labels.



#### 3.1.4. “Environment enhancers program”

This program aims at sensitizing local populations to the environmental, aesthetic and property issues. It invites all local inhabitants and local business actors to participate in the preservation of the local environment, cleaning of the sites, and the visual impacts of inappropriate public space uses. It also introduces visitors’ cultural codes approaches and international tourism standard in terms of environment and nature preservation.

- *Public*: Entire population
- *Expected impact*: Preservation of the environment and clean city
- *Timeframe*: Short term for development of the campaign; medium term for the development of infrastructure

#### 3.2. Education, Training and capacity-building

Tourism and hospitality activities require ad-hoc knowledge and skills, which should also be available within the local community. Moreover, it is crucial to ensure an overall understanding of tourism as well as of the heritage resources by the local population.

The goal is to provide good/high quality training in the needed skills on training projects and education projects.

#### Proposed initiatives

##### 3.2.1. “Heritage Classes”

This initiative is aimed at all kids aged 8 to 10 years old in AIUla School. The classes can take place during one whole week (Heritage Classes) or during a series of days or half days (Heritage Workshops) during which the school students visit with a specialized mediator of the main local and regional sites, learn about history, archaeology, geography, geology, etc. in an interactive approach. The main goal is to immediately offer young students, the necessary intellectual and methodological tools to understand the importance of the local archaeological and historical sites. Heritage Classes can be integrated into the local school kids’ regular educational program. One of the main advantages of the program is that it reaches families, since the kids become the ambassadors and the defenders of heritage.

<sup>(15)</sup> [https://www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com/se-restaurer#ancre\\_segment\\_2643](https://www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com/se-restaurer#ancre_segment_2643)

- *Public:* Primary Schools, and through them all families (gender balanced activity)
- *Expected impact:* Awareness of the importance of archaeological, Islamic, Ottoman heritage; of its tangible and intangible components; of natural and cultural aspects
- *Timeframe:* Implementation & beginning short term; impacts: medium/long term

#### “CLASSES DU PATRIMOINE” (HERITAGE CLASSES), FRANCE

This is a French National program implemented locally: one week of classes and on-site visits, in an animated/interpreted approach, by “animateurs du patrimoines”. (Cultural Heritage Facilitators)

Different cities, such as for example the city of Angers in France, implemented specific programs covering the main periods (Angers the origins of the city; Angers at medieval times; or Angers in the 19th and 20th century)<sup>(16)</sup>.



#### 3.2.2. Tourism programmes in local schools and local University branches

This initiative aims at offering Schools and University students (all disciplines) a basic tourism training. The aim is to show the local youth the diverse and multiple dimensions of local tourism development and its importance in terms of economy, culture and social development. The class and field visits on tourism will offer a global understanding of the local resources, the reasons for

which national and international visitors come to the area, and the several implications of the tourism development. A “serious game” approach can be introduced, encouraging the students to play the role of a Junior “Minister of Tourism”

- *Publics:* Colleges, high schools, local university branch (gender balanced activity)
- *Expected impact:* Awareness of social, cultural and economic importance of tourism and of business opportunities; pride of being from AIUla
- *Timeframe:* Implementation & beginning short term; impacts: medium/long term

#### WHACY<sup>(17)</sup> : WORLD HERITAGE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)

The goal of WHACY is to raise awareness of the universal value of the 39 UNESCO World Heritage Sites located in the SADC region<sup>(18)</sup> in a fun way through the digital quiz. The audience are students aged 16-19 (grades 10-12) from schools based in SADC countries.

During the first phase of the campaign (Jan-Dec 2014) more than 100K students in SADC region have been exposed to WHACY either online or offline in the CD-ROM version of the quiz. Afterwards, WHACY has been used for the “Junior Minister” of Tourism competition by RETOSA, The Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa. WHACY has now become a mobile app, available for both Android and iOS.



<sup>(16)</sup> <http://www.angers.fr/vivre-a-angers/culture/patrimoine/angers-patrimoines/le-jeune-public/la-classe-de-patrimoine/index.html>

<sup>(17)</sup> [www.whacy.org](http://www.whacy.org)

<sup>(18)</sup> The SADC region is composed of 15 countries: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These 15 countries host 39 UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHs) which cultural and natural heritage has been recognized as having outstanding universal value

### 3. ENSURING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

#### 3.2.3. University degrees in Hospitality, Tourism and Heritage in AIUla

This initiative aims at creating an important and ambitious academic environment specializing in Cultural/Heritage tourism and Hospitality, able to attract students from Saudi Arabia and internationally. Joint degrees could be developed in relation to the universities of the UNITWIN network “Tourism, Culture, Development” offering a university platform bringing AIUla professors and experts from major international universities. The aim is to develop a creative and innovative medium, and an academic laboratory addressing main challenges and opportunities related to tourism and hospitality.

- *Publics*: Taibah University students
- *Expected impact*: Providing a higher education level in these fields, and links with other subjects through ad-hoc elective courses or specializations (e.g.: Architecture, Engineering, Health, Agriculture, Economics)
- *Timeframe*: Implementation and beginning medium term; Impacts: medium/long term
- *An example*: Members of the UNITWIN - UNESCO network “Culture, Tourism, Development”

#### 3.2.4. Educational programs on World Heritage OUV and tourism implications

This program offers specialized knowledge to students of different disciplines (art, archaeology, geography, geology, management, history, economy, etc.) on World Heritage (WH) and the specific challenges and opportunities related to the local development of a WH site. The program focuses on the “5Cs” of the World Heritage convention: Credibility, Conservation, Capacity building, Communication, Community development. It can be offered as a physical, hybrid or digital module (OER - Online Educational Resource, MOOC - Massive Open On-line Course) integrated to existing degrees.

- *Publics*: University students
- *Expected impact*: Mastering the specific requirements of tourism management on WH sites and Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)
- *Timeframe*: Implementation and beginning of the project: short term; Impacts: short/medium/long term
- *An example*: MOOC “Tourism Management at UNESCO World Heritage Sites”<sup>(19)</sup>

#### 3.2.5. Online Training of international Travel Agents and Tour Operators about AIUla

- *Publics*: International travel agents and Tour operators
- *Expected impact*: to provide them with an ad-hoc free online training about AIUla, its opportunities and values. That will help to brand AIUla in the right way, stressing for instance the sustainability issues, at the same time offering to international travel trade a major tool to buy-in and to start promoting in a competent way this new destination
- *Timeframe*: Implementation and beginning of the project: short term; Impacts: short/medium/long term
- *An example*: Switzerland Travel Academy ([www.myswitzerland.com/academy](http://www.myswitzerland.com/academy))

#### 3.2.6. Master and PhD international Summer /winter schools

AIUla offers a particularly stimulating ground for short-time academic and educational activities such as workshops and Summer/Winter schools. These international gatherings can bring AIUla students from all around the world who can meet with students from the local branch University. Organized on specific themes (Cultural tourism management; Cultural and Heritage planning; archaeology interpretation, etc.) approached in a transdisciplinary way, they can offer the possibility to Master and/or PhD students to present papers, posters, films, performances, etc. They can alternate oral presentations, field works and field visits, round tables, exhibitions, etc.

- *Publics*: University students, academic communities, researchers from AIUla, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the World
- *Expected impact*: Master the specific requirements of tourism management on WH sites; leave an international experience in AIUla; encourage academic and research links with students and professors from top universities all around the world.
- *Timeframe*: Implementation and beginning of the project: medium term; Impacts: short/medium/long term

<sup>(19)</sup>[www.fun-mooc.fr/courses/course-v1:Paris1+16012+session01/about](http://www.fun-mooc.fr/courses/course-v1:Paris1+16012+session01/about)

### SUMMER SCHOOL OF THE UNESCO CHAIR IN ICT (INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES)<sup>(20)</sup>

The goal of WHACY is to raise awareness of the universal value of the 39 UNESCO World Heritage Sites located in the SADC region<sup>(18)</sup> in a fun way through the digital quiz. The audience are students aged 16-19 (grades 10-12) from schools based in SADC countries.

During the first phase of the campaign (Jan-Dec 2014) more than 100K students in SADC region have been exposed to WHACY either online or offline in the CD-ROM version of the quiz. Afterwards, WHACY has been used for the “Junior Minister” of Tourism competition by RETOSA, The Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa. WHACY has now become a mobile app, available for both Android and iOS.

### 3.3. Development of the creative economy

Tourism is closely connected with creative industries, mostly micro or SMEs. The goal is to ensure local micro and SME involvement in the tourism development of AIUla to promote development of new enterprises based on the creative economy.

#### Proposed initiatives

#### 3.3.1. - Development of an AIUla Brand for local products

This quality brand can be given, as a certification, to selected local products of AIUla which offer excellent quality, innovative marketing, sustainable packaging etc. Criteria such as local origin, biological agriculture, respect of the animals, can be defined in order to give the brand to selected product.

- *Public:* Local entrepreneurs
- *Expected impact:* Enhancement of AIUla brand and comprehensive brand management of local products
- *Timeframe:* Medium term for development of the strategy
- *An example:* Albi WH city brand Management <http://www.marketing-territorial.org/2014/11/marketing-d-albi-un-premier-bilan-apres-quatre-ans.html>

#### 3.3.2. - “Creative AIUla” or “Share your talent” program

Local inhabitants have several “talents” (in arts and crafts, in cooking, in agriculture, in building constructions, etc.) The aim of this program is to allow tourists to learn from local everyday activities, in a creative approach which will not only allow them to see how these activities are performed by the local inhabitants, but to co-produce them.

- *Public:* Local businesses (Gender balanced activity)
- *Expected impact:* Turn local knowledge and traditions to means for creating new encounters between locals and tourists (invite an allow tourists “to do with” locals – cooking, music, fashion, etc.)
- *Timeframe:* short/medium term
- *An example:* “Creative Paris”; “Creative Barcelona”, Marrakech Créatif: <https://marocmama.com/spark-your-creativity-in-marrakech/> etc.

#### 3.3.3. - “Experiential AIUla”: production of a portfolio of experiential activities (existing and to implement)

These programs aim at defining with local inhabitants and local entrepreneurs, a portfolio of possible activities to be offered to the tourists and visitors in AIUla: experiential and of-the-beaten-tracks visits, tasting of local products, visits to the local markets, harvesting in farms, etc.

- *Publics:* Local inhabitants and local businesses (training program for the co-creation and co-writing of the portfolio with locals)
- *Expected impact:* Awareness of the range of intangible heritage and of its tourism potential; safeguarding of existing traditions; promotion of creativity
- *Timeframe:* Short term for the portfolio; medium term for the implementation of the activities
- *An example:* Airbnb experiences

<sup>(20)</sup><http://www.unescochair.usi.ch/activities-2/summer-schools/summer-school-2018>

### 3. ENSURING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

#### 3.3.4. - New Label “Farmstays” program

This program offers tourist accommodation on local farms. It involves the development of the necessary infrastructure in the farms (quality and carefully furnished bedrooms, breakfast rooms and outdoor spaces), the training of the farmers (hospitality, linguistic skills, soft skills as well as basic management notions). It also presupposes the development of quality indicators and inspection rules ensuring the constant quality of the program. Participating farms could be recognized by an ad hoc label (ie “Farms of AlUla”) and presented on a platform offering both a good visibility and the insurance of a quality label. The program can encourage cooperation with artists and designers from Saudi Arabia and the region. Can serve as a basis to globally think about the quality of the architecture, local materials, local products, etc.

- *Publics:* Local farmers
- *Expected impact:* Development of accommodations in farms
- *Timeframe:* Medium term for infrastructure development and label creation
- *Exemple:* “Accueil paysan” (Farmers welcome)  
([www.accueil-paysan.com/en/](http://www.accueil-paysan.com/en/))  
“Gites de France” (French Cottages)  
<https://www.gites-de-france.com/fr/nos-sejours-themes/la-ferme>

#### EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICES:

##### PALM GROVE OF ELCHE, UNESCO WH SITE AS CULTURAL LANDSCAPE IN ELCHE, SPAIN.

The Palm Grove of Elche (Palmerar d’Elx) designates a system of date palm orchards in the city of Elche (Spain). It is the only palm grove of its type anywhere in Europe, the northernmost of its kind and one of the largest in the world, surpassed in size only by some in Arab countries. It is a good benchmark example for a global and coherent branding and marketing of a cultural product covering the landscape itself as well as the local products of palm grove farms: dates, pomegranate, jujube, citrus...

#### Infrastructures

##### Hotel Herto del Cura (1972), integrated to the landscape

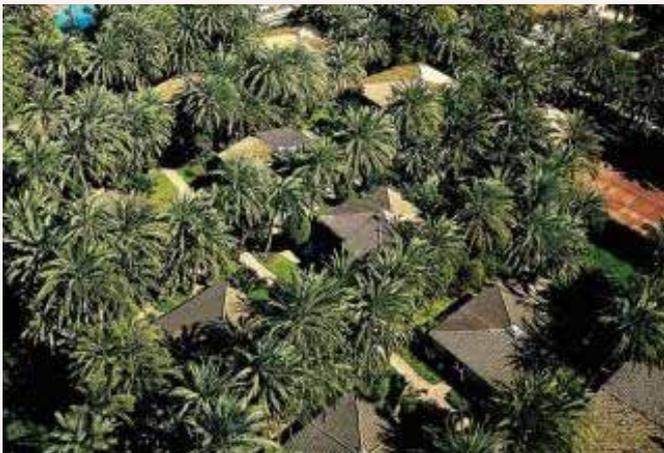
The Hotel Huerto del Cura, «The Parish Priest’s Orchard», takes its name from the most emblematic palm grove. It is the historic property of the Orts Serrano family, who run the hotel. The Hotel Huerto del Cura is an urban resort hotel, a forest in the city, in which palm trees such as the bougainvillea’s cacti, and a whole exuberance of large plants surrounds the path that leads to the bungalows where the rooms are located, almost all of them on the ground floor, many decorated in colonial style, in harmony with what can be seen through the large bay windows. The furniture is made of teak wood; the colours ochre, Siena and beige dominate; the fabrics are made of linen and cotton.

Source : <https://www.nativehotels.org/fr/hotel/hotel-huerto-del-cura-alicante-fr/>

#### Palm Grove museum

With the advent of UNESCO’s World Heritage Listing in 2000, the City Hall created the Palm Grove Museum and Interpretation Centre. A traditional 19th century house was chosen as the ideal setting for this museum and educational facility. The museum experience is complemented by a walk outside in the grove where a specialised palm worker or “palmerero” shows the white palm plaiting skills in the workshop annex of the museum. New craftsmen and women are trained in this traditional cottage industry. Craft courses are offered, which can last for seven months. However, higher qualification in this trade is only awarded after three years of supervised training.

Source : <http://www.visitelche.com/>



Hotel Herto del Cura (1972)  
 (source: <http://www.elche.me/imagen/hotel-huerto-del-cura-1972>)



Palm Grove museum

**Gastronomy**

Traditional and Creative



**Tourism Experiences**

The Palm grove offers a whole range of experiential activities to visitors such as demonstrations on the palms, dates and palm leaves, harvesting, etc. An agri-food festival is organized locally.

### 3. ENSURING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

#### 3.3.5. - Volunteering programs to restore the old City of AIUla

This initiative invites young people from all around the world to participate in selected restoration projects in the AIUla old city. Young people work under the supervision of an engineer, architect or archaeologist. During the day they work on the restoration and in the afternoons, they have the possibility of visiting the area. For the participants, this project offers the possibility of an extraordinary experience, and offers them an insider's knowledge of traditional architecture and construction techniques.

- *Publics*: Young people from all around the world
- *Expected impact*: Restoration of some selected projects in AIUla; possibility to attract young people; create interactions and encounters with local societies; offer an alternative tourist product
- *Timeframe*: Medium term for organisation of the conditions of the restoration sites
- *Example*: "REMPART" (<https://www.rempart.com/>)

#### THE REMPART WORKCAMP: "USEFUL HOLIDAYS"

Thousands of people - young and old - have chosen to take action in safeguarding heritage by participating in international volunteer workcamps. They restore and enhance hamlets, castles, churches, that are either protected or not as historical monuments. Thanks to their civic commitment, they contribute to the animation (facilitation) of the territories while taking pleasure in acting with others. REMPART is a network of 180 local associations, all of which work in favor of heritage. Under the slogan "Heritage Mission", they organize international volunteer workcamps. During the summer, thousands of volunteers come from the four corners of France and from abroad to restore sites together and discover techniques.

No special skills are required for the participation in the restoration of a chapel, a washhouse or a fortress. Specialized educators/mediators pass the traditional gestures to the participants. Depending on the mission they choose, they can learn the basics of stonecutting, forging, and masonry, stained glass, lime plaster...



The Castle of Coucy<sup>(21)</sup>, France, one of the REMPART restoration sites

<sup>(21)</sup> <https://www.coucy-lechateau.com/tourisme-%C3%A0-coucy-son-histoire-son-patrimoine-ses-balades/lieux-%C3%A0-visiter-dans-coucy/visite-du-ch%C3%A2teau-de-coucy-et-ses-remparts/>

### CONCLUSION CHAPTER 3

The main objective of the chapter 3 is to underline the necessity and importance of associating local populations, at all levels, in the tourism and heritage development of the area. Successful tourist development examples all around the world show that success depends, to a great extent, on the local populations involvement without which it is not possible to achieve the tourist goals. AIUla has the advantage of not being a tourist enclave in which tourists live isolated from the locals. It is a **living environment** in which tourists and visitors constantly interact with locals. **This interaction is a key part of their tourist experience and its authenticity.** Many tourists would be frustrated to only visit archaeological sites - may they be as great as Hegra is - without knowing anything about current life in the area, without tasting local products or interacting with local population. This interaction is not however always easy in a totally spontaneous way. **It needs to be prepared.**

UNITWIN Experts wished also to underline the importance of educational projects starting from the very young and developing till the university degrees. AIUla can be a real pedagogical, academic and research laboratory to study, Essentially, the archaeological and historical sites per se (archaeology, history, anthropology, ethnology). But it also can be a site to study the effects of heritage development to local culture, society and economy. This implies the development of top-level scientific and academic programs, open to national and international universities though joint degrees, joint summer schools and joint research programs.



## GENERAL CONCLUSION

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The UNITWIN experts are impressed by the quality of the site and by the coherence of the overall approach of the tourism development of the site by the RCU and AFALULA. It is clear to all that AIUla is a major example of an emerging tourism destination. The UNITWIN experts make suggestions having in mind the idea of the exceptionality of this unique site, both in terms of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage as well as a future major tourism destination.

In terms of tourism, the main objective is to attract visitors and convince them not only to come once, but also to come back to AIUla (tourism loyalty model: Rajesh, 2013). KSA population is 33 million, to attract 1,2 million national per year as domestic visitors is a challenge on short/medium term. To attract 0.8 million international tourists per year needs a long-term strategy and cannot only be a marketing and communication target. Analysis on demand by segmentation with regards to domestic, regional and international markets is needed. After several years of implementation of its tourist product, and with very competitive prices, today the Petra site (Jordan) attracts approximately one million visitors (a number which represents according to several studies over-tourism regarding the capacity of charge of the area). However, not to reach the targeted number of 2 million is not a problem per se. Tourism success must be measured with qualitative rather than quantitative terms.

For future tourism development, the buffer zone between the main tourism infrastructures (mainly hotels) should be revised. The current perimeter protected by UNESCO is limited. The resubmission of the UNESCO property as a cultural landscape could carefully think about this perimeter. This is a challenging proposal but a very stimulating one, since the preparation of the cultural landscape submission would invite all actors to think about the site in a holistic approach. In any case, and in the current situation, a reflection of the buffer zone is needed, taking inspiration from other WH sites (for example UNESCO WH site of Iguazu Falls Parc comprises of a well-protected and designed 9 km buffer zone). Beyond the buffer zone, new tourist areas should be designed in a distance of approximately 40 km.

A current challenge for AIUla is the lack of accommodation. Luxury hotels and villas could not be enough to reach the needs of accommodation capacity. Additional hotels and new tourism zones are needed to respond to tourism expectations.

Air Transport is also a major challenge for future tourism development. International tourism implies air access with enough capacities and competitive air fares. Hospitality and tourism investors will require a precise air transport strategy, not only airport investment.

The development of AIUla needs a careful design of tourism products to reach segmentation demand expectations such as tourism for seniors, study tours, family stays or wellness vacations. This relates also to a fair pricing strategy which is a key point to attract international tourists.

All of the above challenges are inherent to any emerging destination. But not all emerging destinations have the incredible possibilities AIUla has, thanks to both its exceptional resources and state-of-the-art tourism vision driven by RCU and AFALULA. However, we must keep in mind, that the success of AIUla will finally be measured by a huge range of criteria related to economic but also geopolitical, social and cultural issues. Tourism development in AIUla goes far beyond tourism.



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## ANNEX 1: LIST OF THE PARTICIPANTS

|                         |             |  |
|-------------------------|-------------|--|
| <b>ALLIS</b>            | Thiago      | University of São Paulo                        |
| <b>BREZOVEC</b>         | Aleksandra  | University of Primorska                        |
| <b>CANTONI</b>          | Lorenzo     | Università della Svizzera italiana             |
| <b>COMINELLI</b>        | Francesca   | Paris 1 Panthéon-University                    |
| <b>CRAVIDAO</b>         | Fernanda    | University of Coimbra                          |
| <b>FUENTES MORALEDA</b> | Laura       | Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid            |
| <b>GARCIA HERNANDEZ</b> | Maria       | Complutense University of Madrid               |
| <b>GRAVARI-BARBAS</b>   | Maria       | Paris 1 Panthéon-University                    |
| <b>MORERE MOLINERO</b>  | Nuria       | Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid            |
| <b>PINTO DOS SANTOS</b> | Norberto    | University of Coimbra                          |
| <b>RAMOS</b>            | Carmen      | National University of Tres de Febrero         |
| <b>SAHLAH</b>           | Samer A.    | King Saud University                           |
| <b>SOW</b>              | Abdoul      | University Gaston Berger, Saint-Louis, Sénégal |
| <b>TRESSERRAS JUAN</b>  | Jordi       | Universitat de Barcelona                       |
| <b>VELLAS</b>           | François    | University of Toulouse Capitole                |
| <b>YAGHMOUR</b>         | Samer       | King Abdulaziz University                      |
| <b>NEHME</b>            | Laila       | CNRS   |
| <b>ALSUHAIBANI</b>      | Abdulrahman | Royal Commission for AIUla                     |
| <b>DANTAUX</b>          | Régis       | AFALULA - Human capital Director               |
| <b>LEFEBVRE</b>         | Nicolas     | AFALULA - Tourism & Hospitality Director       |

### PERSONS MET :

|                  |           |   |
|------------------|-----------|---|
| <b>FOOTE</b>     | Rebecca   | RCU - Head of Heritage & Archaeology        |
| <b>JONES</b>     | Phillip   | RCU - Chief Destination Marketing Officer   |
| <b>SAFOUANE</b>  | Youssef   | RCU - Head of Social & Economic Development |
| <b>ALSAKRAN</b>  | Rami      | RCU - Capabilities Development Manager      |
| <b>NICHOLS</b>   | Jim       | RCU - City Management Director              |
| <b>ARICI</b>     | Francesca | RCU - County Planning & Zoning Director     |
| <b>EILENBERG</b> | Anne      | RCU - Senior Urban Planning Specialist      |
| <b>ALIMAM</b>    | Ahmed     | RCU - Engagement delivery Lead              |
| <b>AL REBH</b>   | Hussain   | RCU - County Planning & Zoning Manager      |
| <b>MOLES</b>     | Jeremy    | AFALULA - Architecture & Development        |

## ANNEX 2: PROGRAM

| DATES                            | ACTIVITY   |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup></b> | Travels to Riyadh  |
| Evening                          | Arrival to Riyadh. Installation and night at the hotel   |
| <b>Sunday 24<sup>th</sup></b>    | Flight to AIUla  |
| Morning                          | Arrival and installation at the Shaden Resort  |
| Afternoon                        | <p><b>As of 2 pm : General presentation of the workshop. Objectives and expectations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction on AIUla development plan and perspectives by ESD, DMO, CZP, HNAC and City Management teams from the Royal Commission for AIUla (RCU), with Regis Dantaux, Head of Human Capital &amp; Nicolas Lefebvre, Hospitality and Tourism Director, AFALULA</li> <li>• Introduction on the methodology of the workshop by Maria Gravari-Barbas</li> </ul> |
| <b>Monday, 25<sup>th</sup></b>   | <b>Hegra site visit</b> under the direction of Laila Nehmé, Director of Research at CNRS - UMR 8167 Orient & Méditerranée - Full day   |
| <b>Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup></b>   | <b>AIUla Sites visit - Full day</b><br>(Harrat al Huwayrid, Jabal Ikmaah & Old Town under the direction of Ahmed Allmam)   |
| <b>Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>As of 10 am, presentations and discussion with AIUla Stakeholders and heads of programs</b><br>- RCU participants to be confirmed   |
| Morning                          | Followed by a plenary Workshop session: fine-tuning of the work methodology.   |
| Afternoon                        | <b>As of 3 pm, Dadan site Visit</b> under the direction of Abdulrahman ALSuhaibani, Archaeologist, consultant for RCU  |
| <b>Thursday 28<sup>th</sup></b>  | <b>Work in Groups</b> (international experts + Saudi Colleagues) - Full day  |
| <b>Friday 29<sup>th</sup></b>    | <b>Work in Groups</b> (international experts + Saudi Colleagues)   |
| Morning                          |  |
| Afternoon                        | <b>Synthesis</b>   |
| <b>Saturday 30<sup>th</sup></b>  | <b>Restitution &amp; Discussion</b>  |
| Morning                          |  |
| Afternoon                        | <b>Working session of international experts.</b> Next steps and writing procedures   |
|                                  | Departure to airport (around 7 pm)   |
| Evening                          | Flight back to Riyadh  |
| <b>Sunday Dec 1<sup>st</sup></b> | International flights from Riyadh  |







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