



E-TOURISM THROUGH CULTURAL ROUTES

E-Cultural Routes can offer unique variations of the traditional cultural route as complex and fascinating mosaics of regional and local culture. They can provide visitors and local inhabitants alike with new understandings of the past and a meaningful vision of modern cultural diversity in a region long characterized by active geographical, social, cultural, and economic interaction. The main objectives of an e-cultural route are:

- Valorisation, promotion, presentation and preservation of cultural sites and regions
- Preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage as a means of improving the surroundings in which people live and as a source of social, economic and cultural development for the local authorities participating to the route
- Development of new technologies and virtual exhibits on the life, peoples, and cultures that can be simultaneously held in urban and rural communities along the cultural route and that are linked with each other through an Internet portal
- Create a two way communication in the presentation of Cultural Heritage, where users of the cultural route can express and share their personal feelings and experiences regarding the cultural heritage that they have visited

Themes An e-cultural route has a certain theme and/or historical period and a confined territory. The cultural route partners will reflect the domain of Cultural Heritage, its architectural styles, and artifacts — and no less important — their



The Landscape of Wieringen (Netherlands)



The Town Hall of Oudenaarde (UNESCO World Heritage)

continuing tangible and intangible legacy. The partners propose sites that creatively express the traditions and patterns of life that characterized the theme or period and which still play an important part in contemporary life. This connection between past and present is of prime importance for the potential development of tourism and other community activities. The associated partners in the implementation of this route will then be heritage site managers and museum curators, local authorities, community groups, and relevant SMEs. In addition to the presentation of immovable heritage, the route will highlight intangible culture, such as cuisine, art, music, customs, holidays, and festivals that provide the bridge between modern life and a shared historical legacy. The sustainable development of local communities will also be the centre core of establishing criteria for the design of this e-cultural route.

As a test case an e-cultural route will be developed for the Francia Media area that extended from Friesland to Slovenia (www.franciamedia.org). This cultural route will link and promote sites with early medieval heritage that provided the kernel of a distinctive identity that



The St.-Laurentius Church in Ename at the River Schelde

has developed and evolved over the centuries. Rather than just linking sites along a macro-route within this geographical area, a molecular structure will be built with micro-routes extending locally and reconnecting at due time. Local Route-Systems can take many different forms, ranging from marked walking tours with PDAs to car routes with brochures. This molecular structure gives each city or region the freedom to develop and maintain their own route as a part of the bigger cultural route concept, a common database structure however binds these different micro-routes together and provides the central portal website with the necessary information.

Visit at own pace. "Allow visitors to experience Cultural Heritage at own pace" is one of the principles of the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter ('99). This e-cultural route application makes the users experience this right abundantly. Within the personalized portal each user can discover Cultural Heritage his own way even before or after the visit. Prior to a visit, users can easily plan their own route, they can search for routes and sites that match their interests, they can fully plan their trip by adding sites, museums, events etc. to a personal and printable

route-program... During the visit, they can acquire digital souvenirs and content that are added to their portal. After the visit users can publish a personal travel journal and share their experiences and ideas about certain routes and sites with other visitors, friends and family, creating a digital community around the route theme.

This way the portal will be a unique two-way communication medium that lives from constant input by museums, local authorities, communities, tourist professionals as well as involvement from visitors, schools, families ...

Technical specifications

The e-cultural route application consists of two technologies: a personalised portal website and a network of micro-route systems that will be managed locally.

For this showcase the Hogeschool van Utrecht developed a graphical and HTML based prototype based upon the conceptual design of the portal by the Ename Center. As an example of a micro-route the Hogeschool van Utrecht also developed a local system for the region of Wieringen (Netherlands). This micro-system is based upon the TimeScope 3 software, developed by the Ename Center and IBM. This content management system is an Open Source XML and Java environment, build upon an Apache Tomcat server.

The completely distributed nature of the application allows to create networks of musea, monuments and sites, cooperating around a central theme, while every museum, monument or site remains responsible for its content. The integration requirements for a museum or site are very low, only an Internet connected PC is required

Partners

This showcase is being realized with the support of :

- ▶ Ename Center for Public Archaeology and Heritage Presentation, Belgium
- ▶ Hogeschool van Utrecht, Netherlands
- ▶ The University of Surrey, UK
- ▶ Gewest Kop van Noord-Holland, Netherlands



Interested?

Are you interested in this showcase? Do you think that this approach can help you in creating effective Cultural Heritage presentation projects or can be integrated in new research projects? Please contact Heidi Tency (heidi.tency@enamecenter.org) of the Ename Center at +32 55 232445.

EPOCH is a Network of Excellence on Intelligent Cultural Heritage within the IST (Information Society Technologies) section of the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission. EPOCH showcases demonstrate innovative solutions and technological integration for target application areas in the Cultural Heritage domain. As they are created with real world content, they stimulate creative thinking about the use of the technologies in Cultural Heritage, and are used to validate new technological approaches with key stakeholders in the Cultural Heritage domain. For more details, visit the project web site:

www.epoch-net.org

EPOCH is funded by the European Commission under the Community's Sixth Framework Programme, contract no. 507382. However, this leaflet reflects only the authors' views and the European Community is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.