

FRANCE IS UNDER-EXPLOITING ITS CULTURAL HERITAGE



A report delivered to the government pointed out that France's cultural heritage was often "too distant from important tourist routes" and calls on all players in the French tourism sector to work together for the common good.

France's cultural heritage, its museums and monuments, is still often too far away from the main tourist routes. **With more than 14 000 monuments classified as historic and 42 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, France has at its disposal treasures** which arouse great interest, but which often "suffer from a lack of notoriety", was the summary given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean-Marc Ayrault.

He underlined the fact that "this cultural heritage is now being under-exploited at the national level". The public policies in the domains of culture, cultural heritage, tourism and urban planning "need to be better articulated" and "synergies need to be established", insisted the minister.

Imbalance between Paris and French Regions

Martin Malvy, who presides over the association "Sites & Cités Remarquables de France" (Remarkable Sites and Cities of France), and former President of the Midi-Pyrénées region, delivered, his report on French tourism to the Quai d'Orsay titled "54 suggestions for the increase in tourist visitations to France by properly exploiting our cultural heritage".

"Despite the very wide ranging distribution of our cultural heritage over the entire national territory, there still exists an important imbalance between the attractiveness of Paris as compared to the other French regions," summarized the author who also reiterated the fact that in 2015, out of the 17 sites which received more than one million visitors, 14 are located in Paris or its surrounding areas, such as Versailles.

The organization of transportation and communications is also very centralized, and cultural heritage destinations "in the broadest sense, are oftentimes located in areas which are at a considerable distance from the main communication routes," he added.

The report also pointed out the fact that small amount of investment funds allocated to the Regional Directorates of Cultural Affairs (DRAC) demonstrates the "important imbalance" in favor of the l'Ile-de-France region, and also that the promotion of cultural heritage "involves many players".

Working Together for French Tourism

In order to counteract this under-exploitation, the report recommends for example "mobilizing the transportation sector in the interest of guaranteeing better accessibility, upgrading the hotel complexes [...] located outside of the metropolitan boundaries or even inciting the cultural heritage sites to resort to crowdfunding".

In conclusion, the report calls upon the different stakeholders to "move beyond their

individual stances and to work together for the common good". Jean-Marc Ayrault also made an appeal for "the strengthening of ties between French tourism and cultural sectors. We need to create a network of cultural tourism and cultural heritage tourism which brings our operators together, such as the Center for National Monuments, but which also brings the relevant ministries and territories into the fold".

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