

FRENCH STUDY FOCUSES ON HISTORIC MONUMENTS



The French General Directorate for Heritage (Ministry of Culture), the General Directorate for Enterprise (Ministry of the Economy and Finance) and Caisse des Dépôts publish, in the collection of economic studies of the DGE, an analysis on the tourist development of historic monuments.

The study aims "to apprehend in a global way the challenges and levers of action for the development of commercial tourist activities within historic monuments" (in the sense of listed or classified monuments). It proposes an "operational presentation of good practices and legal and financial arrangements available to project leaders with the aim of encouraging economic projects". **More broadly, it also formulates "recommendations for strategic actions to initiate a national dynamic in favor of the development of the sector".**

The 120–page document begins with an inventory, reminding us that the State owns only 4% of the French historic monuments, 49% are privately owned and 47% are owned by local authorities. It also offers feedback on historical monuments converted to tourism attractions, highlighting "multiple successes, but a lack of knowledge of the offer". In this case, the products developed may be accommodation (in particular hotels), individual or group catering, rental of spaces (commercial, event, training, work) or the cultural offer of visits, entertainment or exhibitions.

A certain number of data are binding on project leaders and define the real nature and potential of the tourist conversion of historic monuments: location of the property, property data of the monument or even the status of the owner, with the remark that "public owners rarely exploit commercial tourist facilities. They rely, specifically for the hotel industry, on private operators". The study also points out that the complex economic equation requires long–term investment.

The study also examines the various players involved in the enhancement of historic monuments. The dichotomy is quite simple between the public sector which accompanies the actors and simultaneously manages sites, and the private actors who are either associations exercising a lobbying and support role, or cultural or tourist operators who manage monuments.

In terms of investment, the main players are Caisse des Dépôts (equity and quasi–equity investments, aimed exclusively at real estate projects) and its subsidiary Bpifrance, which manages the France investissement tourisme (FIT) fund, "which finances French tourism and leisure businesses with ambitious development programmes".

The study then examines cultural tourism demand profiles, which "suggest many opportunities for this sector of commercial tourism facilities in heritage sites", subject initially "to more precise data on demand profiles and thus to market research by investors". It also identifies six "major business models and their development tools" (three with hosting and three without hosting), based on three types of interventions: a multi-site or multi-brand model, a proprietary operator model and a non-professional model.

The study concludes with a series of operational recommendations. These include "eleven main criteria determining the overall feasibility of a tourism development project", an operational toolbox in the form of a series of "tool sheets", and four "general recommendations" addressed to the government and public stakeholders.

These first recommend developing and enhancing data on historic monuments offering market tourism activities and potential historic monuments to develop this type of activity in order to encourage projects. The study also suggests creating a "Tourism and Heritage" center of excellence to act as a catalyst, promoter and defender of the sector, but also to set up a national support system for project leaders and a strengthening of public authorities at all levels.

Finally, the study recommends organizing "support for the emergence of heritage tourism projects structuring on a territorial scale, by promoting, within France tourisme ingénierie, support for this type of project and by encouraging investment by Caisse des Dépôts".

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