

Sustainable Tourism and UNESCO World Heritage Inscription: Challenges and Prospects for the Island of Djerba, Tunisia

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Abstract:

Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on 18 September 2023, the island of Djerba offers a compelling case study for examining the tensions between tourist development and the conservation of a living cultural landscape. As Tunisia's foremost tourist destination — accounting for a quarter of the country's total overnight stays — Djerba stands at the intersection of two often conflicting imperatives: mass tourism and the stewardship of a site recognised for its Outstanding Universal Value. This article interrogates the extent to which UNESCO inscription can serve as a driver of sustainable tourism, by analysing its anticipated effects on visitor flows, heritage governance, and community participation. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach that combines documentary analysis, recent statistical data, and international comparative perspectives, the study proposes an analytical framework for evaluating the conditions required for sustainable tourism on a serial heritage site as complex as Djerba.

Keywords:

Sustainable tourism, UNESCO World Heritage, Djerba, living cultural landscape, over-tourism, heritage governance, conservation.