

Best practice 10: Provins, decades of realistic tourism strategy

Scale: Urban

Stage of tourism development: Growing

Main objectives: Tourism quality management/ Balanced tourism growth (year-long activity)/ Destination promotion.

Categories of effects:

Effects on urban governance

- Cultural tourism strategy
- Steering government

Effects on quality of life

- Urban economy
- Social life

Provins is located in the South-East of Ile-de-France (Paris region). Belonging to this rather wealthy region, the city could not hope to attract industrial or service firms, who preferred to settle down 10 km further, in the Champagne region (a rather poor region), where they could profit by many subsidies from the State and from the EU. As Provins had a consistent heritage (dungeon, walls, medieval precinct...), though in a very poor shape, the mayor decided in the 1960s, - at the time against all odds - to convert the city into a cultural destination. Provisions were made with the French Heritage body (*Architecte des Monuments Historiques*) to restore the heritage of Provins: not to refurbish it thoroughly which could have lasted some 40 years, but to bring to light a selected part of it, enough to make it significant to the public, which was done after about 5 years. After the first section was done, Provins soon became a day-visitors destination (1 hour from Paris), and, little by little, a tourist destination as restaurants, shops and accommodation were created. Its main attractor became its Medieval Festivals. The rest of the restoration went on at its own pace; Provins was first labelled Ville d'Art & d'Histoire, and, much later, became a UNESCO World Heritage City. Provins is quoted here among "best practices" as an example of a city where a tourism strategy has been carefully selected among other economic options, and then firmly carried out.

Source: Ministère de la Culture/Monuments Historiques; DATAR (*Direction à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale*).

Links:

<http://www.provins.net/>

<http://www.provins-medieval.com>

<http://www.whc.unesco.org/>