

## **Best practice 28: Fougères, the right cultural priority for a tourism development, France.**

**Scale:** Historical centre

**Stage of tourism development:** Beginning

**Main objective:** Urban and regional development/Destination promotion.

Categories of effects:

### **Effects on urban governance**

- Cultural tourism strategy
- Destination management

### **Effects on quality of life**

- Urban economies

Fougères is a city of 25 000 residents, located in the eastern part of French Brittany, at about 45km from the sea. It has a huge unique medieval castle, the only fortress in the area, dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. As all the region of Brittany (*Bretagne in French*), Fougères has been a tourism attractor, a place for many day visitors to the castle and a much fewer number of tourists who would stay a night or two in the local hotels, mostly on tours. In the 1990s, Fougères has suffered from a severe desindustrialization, mainly in the field of its local speciality: luxury shoes, manufactured for Haute Couture. One by one, the factories closed. And very few others, in other activities, came to replace them so that the unemployment was very high. So the Municipal Council of Fougères thought that it was his duty to find other orientations and tourism was one of them. The end of the 1990s was mainly spent in studying and testing new opportunities for tourism in Fougères: in the field of outdoors activities, a close pond was changed into a bathing area, with a camping sites and “gîtes” (rentals in rural areas, with special local character; in the field of culture, heavy renovations were made in the town centre buildings at its gardens, in the medieval area and on a Benedictine cloister; also in the field of culture, but with a view of diversification, studies were carried out on a project of eco-museum dedicated to the 2 centuries old story of the shoes manufactures. At the beginning of the years 2000, it appeared that these initiatives were pretty positive but not convincing for the tourism development: it showed clearly that Fougères needed to first capitalise on its main asset: its notorious castle. Therefore, the Municipal Council decided to focus its efforts on it. A marketing study showed that the tourists in this area of Bretagne are mostly repeat family visitors, people who would not visit the castle every year; it also showed how the visitors who pay for an entrance fee want to see not only walls, but also inside presentations. Therefore the castle needs to undergo two main changes: first, add a permanent exhibition within the towers and all indoors rooms of the castle: furniture, statues, paintings, written explanations.... Second, organise frequent events during tourism season, such as festivals, games for children, temporary exhibitions...This strategy is contrary to a usual cultural argument, which would not show any preference for any cultural theme; but in terms of tourism development, the city had to state clearly its priorities according to the tourists’ expectations. Therefore, the focus on Fougères Castle was mandatory.

**Source:** COC

**Link:**

<http://www.ot-fougeres.fr>