IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2014 **(archived)**
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Please note: this is an archived Conservation Outlook Assessment for Mount Huangshan. To access the most up-to-date Conservation Outlook Assessment for this site, please visit https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Mount Huangshan

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
China
Inscribed in: 1990
Criteria:
(ii) (vii) (x)

Site description:
Huangshan, known as 'the loveliest mountain of China', was acclaimed through art and literature during a good part of Chinese history (e.g. the Shanshui 'mountain and water' style of the mid-16th century). Today it holds the same fascination for visitors, poets, painters and photographers who come on pilgrimage to the site, which is renowned for its magnificent scenery made up of many granite peaks and rocks emerging out of a sea of clouds. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2014 Conservation Outlook

Good

The outlook for maintaining the aesthetic and natural values of Huangshan looks promising with a core area largely uninhabited and a well-funded and well-staffed management system in place. The major threats of increasingly large numbers of visitors are being dealt with and prospects for continuing to control these threats are good. Given its celebrity status as “the loveliest mountain in China,” attention will continue to be lavished on the site and there should be improvements in interpretation and in managing visitor flow to reduce congestion at popular locations in the park.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Low Concern
Trend: Data Deficient

The magnificent scenery and dramatic landscape of the site have been preserved and the trend in management has been to improve these values since inscription by removing shacks, doing afforestation and fire control, limiting hotel construction, improving interpretation and tourism, dealing with pine wilt disease, and better managing the rapidly increasing numbers of visitors.

Overall THREATS

Low Threat

Pine wilt disease and the negative impacts of high numbers of visitors and increasing visitation – congestion, waste, litter, trampling of vegetation, interference with wildlife - constitute the major threats to the site. Water scarcity in the dry season also poses the threat of wildfires. Natural hazards such as wind and storms threaten trees, landslides, and dams, but are not as significant. Hotel construction and the need for other visitor facilities could impinge on the scenic

values and visitor experience of Huangshan.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Highly Effective

The rugged character of the site and the largely uninhabited nature of the core area, with no pressures to extract resources from within the park, give Huangshan a large degree of natural protection. A well staffed administration with clear legal authority integrated at the provincial level means the site is well-managed and even the highest threats of high number of visitors and pine wilt disease are being effectively dealt with, along with the threat of wildfires. The master plan also includes effective measures for minimizing threats coming from the buffer zone and for limiting future hotel construction that would detract from the scenic values of Huangshan.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

► Magnificent scenery and dramatic landscape formed by complex geological history

Criterion:(vii)

Mount Huangshan is renowned for its magnificent natural scenery which includes massive granitic boulders and ancient pine trees which are further enhanced by cloud and mist effects. This dramatic landscape includes formations of natural stone pillars, grotesquely-shaped rocks, waterfalls, caves, lakes and hot springs, formed by its complex geological history. The property features numerous imposing peaks, 77 of which exceed an altitude of l,000 m, with the highest, the famous Lianhua Peak (Lotus Flower Peak), reaching up to l,864 m (SoOUV, 2013).

► Outstandingly rich flora with endemic species

Criterion:(x)

Mount Huangshan provides the habitat for a number of locally or nationally endemic plant species, several of which are globally threatened. Its outstandingly rich flora contains one-third of China's bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and over half of its pteridophytes (ferns). Species endemic to Huangshan include 13 species of pteridophytes and 6 species of higher plants, with many other species endemic to the region or to China (SoOUV, 2013).

▶ Important vertebrate fauna

Criterion:(x)

The exceptional flora of Mount Huangshan is complemented by an important vertebrate fauna of over 300 species, including 48 mammal species, 170 birds, 38 reptiles, 20 amphibians and 24 fish. A total of 13 species are under state protection, including the Clouded Leopard Neofelis nebulosa (VU) and the Oriental Stork Ciconia boyciana (EN) (SoOUV, 2013).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

Low Threat

The large and increasing numbers of visitors to this celebrated site has implications for visitor experience, waste, and litter, as well as impacts on vegetation and wildlife, but measures have been taken to limit this threat. Water scarcity in the dry season exacerbates forest fire danger, but measures are being taken to deal with wildfires, such as a fire brigade and the construction of water ponds. A major threat is pine wilt disease, which is being controlled by monitoring and other measures. Natural hazards include wind, lightning, rain and snow, which cause landslides and damage to tree and dams.

▶ Habitat Shifting/ Alteration

High Threat
Inside site

Mount Huangshan has a relative shortage of water resources due to its special geographic condition and the problem gets worse in the dry season, which poses great difficulty for forest fire control and fire fighting, as well as vegetation conservation (ACMHSS, 2002).

▶ Storms/Flooding

Low Threat
Inside site
Outside site

Natural hazards such as wind, thunder, rain and snow sometimes cause damage to trees, landslides and destruction of dams (ACMHSS, 2002).

▶ Solid Waste

Low Threat
Inside site

The large number of tourists in certain areas during holidays and festivals is a major problem when sewage treatment and litter become difficult to control (WCMC, 2011).

▶ Tourism/ visitors/ recreation

Low Threat
Inside site

The large number of tourists in certain areas during holidays and festivals is a major problem when water quality, sewage treatment and litter become difficult to control (WCMC, 2011). Mt. Huangshan is one of the most popular scenic landscapes in China, with annual visitation at 1.2 million and increasing at 10% per annum. The construction of three cable cars has exacerbated the problem of congestion at popular spots such as Lotus Peak, which detracts from visitor experience (Mission Report, 1998). Negligent acts of a few tourists cause damage to the tourist resources, including smoking, which can cause forest fires, and trampling on vegetation (ACMHSS, 2002). In addition, some tourists feed and disturb Tibetan macaques with adverse effects for both people and monkeys (McCarthy, 2009; Ruesto, 2010; Yong, 2013).

▶ Fire/ Fire Suppression

Low Threat
Inside site

The scarcity of water aggravates the danger of fires. A 50-man fire brigade and water storage pools dug beside tracks help deal with the problem

(WCMC, 2011).

▶ Invasive Non-Native/ Alien Species

High Threat
Inside site
Outside site

Natural and artificial spreading of pine wood nematode threatens the safety of pine resources of Mount Huangshan. Actions are being taken to fight pine wood nematode, establish bio-isolation areas, and monitor pine wood nematode (ACMHSS, 2002).

▶ Water Pollution

Low Threat
Inside site

The large number of tourists in certain areas during holidays and festivals is a major problem when water quality and sewage treatment become difficult to control (WCMC, 2011).

Potential Threats

Very Low Threat

The construction of hotels and visitor facilities in response to increased visitation could detract from the scenic values of Huangshan and interfere with visitor experience, as well as cause waste and litter disposal problems. However, this threat has been minimized by measures that have been taken to reduce the number of hotels, increase prices for staying on the mountain, and limit any future hotel construction.

▶ Tourism/ Recreation Areas

Very Low Threat
Inside site
Outside site

The Administrative Committee of Mount Huangshan Scenic Site strictly controls construction (ACMHSS, 2002).

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Research

Mostly Effective

Recent researches have been made into the mountain’s water resources, air quality, state of sewerage, pine nematode control and general environmental management (WCMC, 2011). Biodiversity research is carried out and a conservation zone of Tibetan macaques has been established (ACMHSS, 2002). Extensive research on interactions between tourists and Tibetan macaques has been carried out (McCarthy, 2009; Ruesto, 2010; Yong, 2013).

► Tourism and interpretation

Mostly Effective

The mountain is increasingly targeted by tourists, and foreigners are being encouraged to visit it. Where in 1989 there were only 500,000 visitors, numbers rose between 1996 and 2001 from 867,000 to 1.34 million, 50-70,000 being foreigners. Several areas have been developed to cope with the pressure. There is an educational centre, museum and art centre, a 70 km network of rock stairways and footpaths many of them stone paved, to 400 marked scenic spots (WCMC, 2011). Mount Huangshan is now one of the most popular scenic landscapes in China, with annual visitation at 2.74 million and increasing at 8.96% per annum (SoOUV, 2013).

► Relationships with local people

Data Deficient

The core area is uninhabited with the exception of monks in monasteries and mountain hotel staff so relationships with local people within the site are limited (WCMD, 2011). The master plan aims to safeguard the scenic area within a framework of sustainable development for the local community (soOUV, 2013). An expanded buffer zone might provide increased opportunities to improve local community engagement and benefit sharing (IUCN Evaluation, 1990). There is no information on relationships with local

people outside the park.

▶ Legal framework and enforcement

Highly Effective

Huangshan is a National Park protected under the Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics (1982), the Forestry Law (1982), the Law on the Management of Scenic and Historic Interest Areas (1985), and the Law on the Protection of Wildlife (1988) (SoOUV, 2013).

▶ Integration into regional and national planning systems

Mostly Effective

The Huangshan Administrative Committee in Charge of Sites of Scenic and Historic Interest (also known as the Huangshan Scenic Area Administrative Committee (HSAC)) was set up by the Huangshan Municipality to be responsible to the Bureau of Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection of Anhui Province (WCMC, 2011).

▶ Management system

Highly Effective

The 120-man Huangshan Administrative Committee in Charge of Sites of Scenic and Historic Interest has worked to implement the 2002-2010 management (and its successor) for the conservation and management of the beauty and scenic resources of the site. These were divided into eight tourist and five protection zones and graded on a scale of three, each grade having its own set of conservation regulations. Cultivation, livestock grazing, fuel wood gathering, hunting, and industrial and mining enterprises are prohibited. Construction is also prohibited within the buffer zone if it is likely to impinge on the quality of the landscape (WCMC, 2011). A Master Plan for the property is currently under implementation. Objectives of this plan are to balance conservation of the property with tourism promotion, to ensure the safeguarding of the scenic area within a framework of sustainable development for the local community, and to raise conservation management standards by “digitizing, systematizing, refining, and humanizing” the property’s management regime (SoOUV, 2013).

► Management effectiveness

Highly Effective

Protection, conservation and management of the property have been strengthened by the establishment of the Management Committee of Huangshan National Park directly under the authority of Huangshan Municipality (SoOUV, 2013). In 1999, the HSAC was awarded the Melina Mercouri international prize for the safeguarding and management of culture landscapes by UNESCO, the first winner of this kind in Asia. In 2010, the HSAC was one of the three finalists for the Tourism for Tomorrow Award sponsored by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the first winner of this category in China (Huangshan Administrative Committee). The property is well protected, but the large number of tourists in certain areas during holidays and festivals is a major problem (WCMC, 2011).

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Highly Effective

During a visit to the site in 1996, the Director of the World Heritage Centre was pleased to note that the Chinese authorities had given serious consideration to the recommendations of a training workshop held in 1993, with the support of the World Heritage Committee. The management of waste disposal was improved and the site's natural and aesthetic values were maintained in an exemplary way (SOC, 1996).

► Boundaries

Highly Effective

Huangshan covers an area of 15,400 ha with a buffer zone of 14,200 ha (soOUV, 2013). It measures 40 kilometers long from north to south and 30 kilometers wide from west to east (Huangshan Administrative Committee). The boundaries of the park and the buffer zone are clearly delineated (Park Map, undated).

► Sustainable finance

Highly Effective

The available funding from ticket income and businesses run by the

administrative unit is sufficient for adequate management of the site (ACMHSS, 2002). Tourist revenues are the main source of funds and in 2003 brought in RMB/Yuan1.8 billion (US$217million) and funds are also appropriated annually by central and local governments (WCMC, 2011).

► Staff training and development

Mostly Effective

There is a complement of 2,700 staff: 281 in management, 318 technical staff, 601 regular staff and 1,500 temporary staff. More training is needed (WCMC, 2011). The 2002 periodic report notes the need for staff training on resource protection, tourism, service skills, management, aesthetics, psychology, laws, safety and art, and for staff development providing on-the-job training for the management staff, inviting professors from prestigious universities to give academic lectures or special seminars, and selecting some staff to go abroad to study (ACMHSS, 2002).

► Sustainable use

Highly Effective

Since no use of resources from the site is allowed, there are no problems with sustainable use, other than uses of the site for tourism and recreation, which are being addressed.

► Education and interpretation programs

Mostly Effective

The visitor centre celebrates the scenic and cultural significance of the site. The 1998 mission recommended the need for bio-diversity interpretation as well and the Huangshan Administration agreed to do it in a new section of the centre (Mission Report, 1998). There is no information on whether this has been done.

► Monitoring

Highly Effective

Since 1980, the scenic resources of the property have been jointly assessed by the provincial Bureau of Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection, the Huangshan Administrative Committee in Charge of Sites of

Scenic and Historic Interest and Qinghua University, to provide a scientific basis for its conservation. An Environmental Monitoring Station has been set up and automatic monitoring by remote sensing is being installed (WCMC, 2011).

Overall assessment of protection and management

Highly Effective

The rugged character of the site and the largely uninhabited nature of the core area, with no pressures to extract resources from within the park, give Huangshan a large degree of natural protection. A well staffed administration with clear legal authority integrated at the provincial level means the site is well-managed and even the highest threats of high number of visitors and pine wilt disease are being effectively dealt with, along with the threat of wildfires. The master plan also includes effective measures for minimizing threats coming from the buffer zone and for limiting future hotel construction that would detract from the scenic values of Huangshan.

▶ Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site

Data Deficient

There is little information on the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site.

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

▶ Magnificent scenery and dramatic landscape formed by complex geological history

Low Concern
Trend:Stable

The spectacular peaks, rock formations, and other elements of scenery, with

the exception of pines, are not in much danger. The park has taken effective measures to deal with problems associated with large numbers of visitors by limiting hotel construction and taking care of waste and litter. Congestion at popular viewpoints, exacerbated by the construction of three cable car systems, detracts from visitor experience, but plans are in place to spread visitation around and develop a one-way path to improve visitor flow. Pine wilt disease has the potential to threaten gnarled pines that contribute to the spectacular scenery, but measures are being taken to keep it out of the park (SoOUV, 2013; WCMC, 2011; Jing, 1998).

► Outstandingly rich flora with endemic species

Data Deficient
Trend:Data Deficient

Data deficient

► Important vertebrate fauna

Data Deficient
Trend:Data Deficient

Data deficient

Summary of the Values

► Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values

Low Concern

Trend: Data Deficient

The magnificent scenery and dramatic landscape of the site have been preserved and the trend in management has been to improve these values since inscription by removing shacks, doing afforestation and fire control, limiting hotel construction, improving interpretation and tourism, dealing with pine wilt disease, and better managing the rapidly increasing numbers of visitors.

Additional information

Key conservation issues

▶ Controlling pine wilt disease

National

Pine wilt disease threatens pines that make up a major part of the flora and scenic beauty of Huangshan. Can be partly addressed by the management authority but also needs help from the national government and the international community since the problem extends beyond Huangshan.

▶ Increasing visitation

Local

Increasing, very large visitation numbers need to be managed to preserve the scenic values and visitor experience, to avoid congestion, and to control waste and litter. The local management can handle the problem, although assistance from international funding and expertise would be helpful.

▶ Forest fires

Local

Dry conditions at certain times of the year threaten forests, but fires are being handled by the Huangshan management.

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

▶ Is the protected area valued for its nature conservation?

As a high profile site celebrated for its spectacular mountain scenery, Huangshan serves an important role in showcasing the need to conserve nature for aesthetic, spiritual, and cultural as well as biological and

geological reasons. More interpretation of biodiversity is needed, but this may have already been done.

► **History and tradition, Wilderness and iconic features, Sacred natural sites or landscapes**

Huangshan highlights the importance and development of landscape painting in Chinese history and culture and provides continuing inspiration for artists and photographers today as an icon of mountain beauty. Huangshan can play in important role in reminding the Chinese people of the value their culture has put on nature and its preservation for aesthetic, cultural, and spiritual reasons as a way to motivate environmental conservation in general.

► **Outdoor recreation and tourism**

As one of the most highly regarded and visited mountain sites in China, Huangshan provides experiences of nature for millions of visitors and enough income from tourism to make its management sustainable and provide income for local communities. The management of tourism and its associated problems in the park provides a model for other sites in China and elsewhere.

Summary of benefits

Huangshan is a showcase of many different reasons for promoting the conservation of nature, from scientific reasons to those of culture, aesthetics, and spirituality. The site highlights the importance of Chinese landscape painting, a genre of art for which China is famous. The renown of Huangshan as “the loveliest mountain in China” draws many people to the site and provides experiences of nature for many Chinese as well as income from tourism that ensures sustainable funding for park management and income for local communities.

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	Administrative Committee of Mount Huangshan Scenic Site		The 2003 Periodic report notes a project of “Automatic Air Quality Monitoring System of Mount Huangshan Scenic Site” with loans from American Import and Export Bank has been approved by the state. It is not clear if the project is ongoing
2	Administrative Committee of Mount Huangshan Scenic Beauty Site		The main conservation concern for site managers is the advance of pine wilt disease throughout eastern China and its progress through Anhui Province. The site management is undertaking strenuous quarantine efforts to limit its entry to the site by banning the importation of untreated timber and only using local seedlings in re-afforestation. Special research and interventions are being undertaken on the protection of ancient and famed trees, forest fire control, pine wood nematode control.
3	School of Resources and Environmental Engineering Anhui University		Research was done on potential pathogen transmission risk in non-human primate ecotourism in 2009 and 2009. Earlier research on tourist and Tibetan macaque interactions at an observation point were done in 2005 and 2006. It is not clear if research in this area is still ongoing.

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