IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2017 **(archived)**
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Please note: this is an archived Conservation Outlook Assessment for Pyrénées - Mont Perdu. To access the most up-to-date Conservation Outlook Assessment for this site, please visit https://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org.

Pyrénées - Mont Perdu

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
France, Spain
Inscribed in: 1997
Criteria:
(iii) (iv) (v) (vii) (viii)

Site description:

This outstanding mountain landscape, which spans the contemporary national borders of France and Spain, is centred around the peak of Mount Perdu, a calcareous massif that rises to 3,352 m. The site, with a total area of 30,639 ha, includes two of Europe's largest and deepest canyons on the Spanish side and three major cirque walls on the more abrupt northern slopes with France, classic presentations of these geological landforms. The site is also a pastoral landscape reflecting an agricultural way of life that was once widespread in the upland regions of Europe but now survives only in this part of the Pyrénées. Thus it provides exceptional insights into past European society through its landscape of villages, farms, fields, upland pastures and mountain roads. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2017 Conservation Outlook

Good with some concerns

The overall state of conservation of Pyrénées-Mont Perdu World Heritage site is good with some concerns. Established in 1997, this mixed and transboundary site includes areas that had been already protected, among which two National Parks. Since its inscription, the site has remained in an overall good state, with some threats affecting its diverse values - the main ones being the potential impacts of climate change, impacts of tourism infrastructure and activities and the decline of agro-pastoral activities. The major concern in terms of protection and management has been the lack of effective transboundary cooperation. Significant progress has been achieved, however, with the establishment of a transboundary management board in 2012.

Current state and trend of VALUES

Good
Trend: Stable

The outstanding scenic values of the site have been relatively well preserved with some localized impacts on the landscapes, mainly from tourism-related infrastructure. The geological features of the site remain well preserved.

Overall THREATS

Low Threat

Current and potential threats to the site are relatively low are unlikely to affect the site’s Outstanding Universal Value in the medium term. The main current threats include impacts from tourism infrastructure and activities, effects of climate change and abandonment of agro-pastoral activities. Potential threats are mainly related to possible increase in visitation.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Mostly Effective

Strong institutions exist in both countries with two national parks forming the core of the management system. However, a lack of transboundary cooperation has been a concern for a long time but with the establishment of a joint management board in 2012, it is expected that cooperation will be improved.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

► Outstanding scenic landscape

Criterion:(vii)

This transboundary site (France and Spain) is centered on the peak of Mont Perdu that rises to 3,352 m in the Pyrénées mountains. It is an outstanding scenic landscape with meadows, lakes, waterfalls, caves and forests on mountain slopes. This diversity of landscapes results both from a specific geological structure with an important north/south contrast and from singular climatic asymmetries, with climatic gradients varying between the northern side (humid) and the southern side (dry), and also from the east part of the Pyrenean massif subject to a maritime influence and the west part influenced by a coastal Mediterranean climate. These north/south and east/west climatic gradients result in a combination of dramatic alpine phenomena and a unique biological setting, characterized by a mosaic of vegetation that encompasses five vegetation types (sub-Mediterranean, collinean, montane, subalpine, alpine). (IUCN, 1996; Justification for inscription, WHC website, retrieved 2014).

► Remarkable geological landforms

Criterion:(viii)

The calcareous massif of the Mount Perdu displays a serie of classic geomorphological landforms, such as deeply-incised canyons and spectacular cirque walls. The most geologically outstanding portion of the Pyrenees is the calcareous massif centred on Mont Perdu peak. On the

northern slopes (France), the landscape is much more abrupt with three major cirque walls, while on the southern slopes (Spain), Mont Perdu (or Monte Perdido) has three radiating spurs with two of Europe's largest and deepest canyons that gradually slope to the Iberian Piedmont. (IUCN, 1996; Justification for Inscription, WHC website, retrieved 2014).

Other important biodiversity values

► Rich biodiversity and area of interest to science and conservation

The site is the centrepiece of the Pyrénées within the Iberian Highlands Biogeographical Province. All the phytogeographical elements of Western Europe can be found in this small area. There is a rich plant diversity (3,500 species and subspecies) and endemism (5%). The site supports many wildlife species typical from the Pyrenees, and insect fauna is especially rich (particularly lepidoptera and coleoptera) (IUCN, 1996). Mammals include the marmot and ungulates such as the Spanish ibex (Capra pyrenaica), of which there were only three female individuals (NT) at the time of inscription. The insectivorous Pyrenean desman (Galemys pyrenaicus) occurs in lowland elevation. The avifauna, reptiles, amphibious species are very rich and comprise some rare or endemic species such as Calotriton asper, Tetrao urogallus, or Gypaetus barbatus (IUCN, 1996, Monitoring Mission Report ICOMOS/IUCN/UNESCO, 2007). The official justification for the site's inscription thus concludes that the area is of high interest to science and conservation (WHC Website, retrieved 2014), being important on a regional basis for its species diversity biodiversity.

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

Low Threat

Current threats affecting the site are low and mainly related to tourism infrastructures, climate change impacts and decline of agro-pastoral activities. Although it is difficult to assess and to cope with threats related to climate change, threats related to tourist infrastructures are relatively well addressed by the local authorities and legal framework. Some notable efforts (but still insufficient) are made in terms of supporting pastoral activities and transhumance practices.

► Roads/ Railroads

Very Low Threat
Outside site

The opening of international corridors increases road traffic. There is also heavy road traffic in the direct surroundings of the site during summer season due to the high tourist frequentation of the area (Parc national de Pyrénées, 2001). However, roads inside the site are today all closed to traffic both on French and Spanish sides, or under close regulation in Troumouse case (SOC, 2014)

► Temperature extremes

High Threat
Inside site, scattered(5-15%)

The 2007’s Monitoring Mission Report (IUCN/ICOMOS/UNESCO, 2007, p.21) underlines threats related to climate change and especially the accentuation of glacier’s thaw, leading to their total disappearance in the mid-term horizons.

► Tourism/ Recreation Areas

Low Threat
Inside site, localised(<5%)
Outside site

Tourism infrastructures exist in the close surroundings of the site, and sometimes inside it. This includes ski stations, numerous housing and leisure

structures, roads, hiking trails, car parks, caravanning facilities, etc. Most of these are located outside the site and are subject to management rules related to the diverse protection status of this mountainous area (peripheral zones of national parks, ZPPAUP, site classé loi 1930). This important protection system provides the area with legal framework that regulates the development of tourist infrastructures, but tourism economy remains very important locally and potential threats need to be continuously addressed. Higher concerns were expressed regarding some infrastructures, which were pointed out as “incongruous activities” when the site was inscribed on the WH List (IUCN, 1996). This refers to two roads and car parks within the protected area in Boucharo and Troumouse (France). Troumouse road works will begin in 2018, by removing the car park and substituting vehicles access with a shuttle system. Boucharo’s road was closed soon after the designation but car park still remains. It is anticipated that the road will be destroyed and replaced by a path accessible to disabled persons.
Regarding the Gavarnie theatre festival, after many years of conflicts and negotiations between the WHC, State Partie (France) and local authorities and communities (Monitoring Mission Report, ICOMOS/IUCN/UNESCO, 2007), concrete management propositions were made in 2014 (Rapport des Etats français et espagnol au comité du Patrimoine mondial de l’UNESCO, 2014) and their implementation is currently in process. The WHC underlines the significant progress made for the sustainable management of Troumouse road and the efforts concerning the relocation of Gavarnie festival. In response, a study has been undertaken to identify potential new sites for the relocation of the festival, but none alternatives was relevant. Based on these findings, local authorities have decided to maintain the actual location, while reducing visual impacts of this event on landscape, in line with the “Sites Classés” Law (1930).

► Changes in traditional ways of life and knowledge systems

High Threat
Inside site, extent of threat not known
Outside site

The decline of agro-pastoral activities in the area is considered as a high concern and a threat to the cultural landscape (Monitoring Mission Report, IUCN/ICOMOS/UNESCO, 2007). Changes in land use indeed affect both landscapes structures and diversity (Mottet et al.2006), and decline of agro-

pastoralism also erodes local ecological knowledge. Agro-pastoral activities benefit financial and technical support from State and local authorities in France (8 pastoral units) and mainly from the Ordesa National Park in Spain (6 pastoral units). They depend mainly on European public aid (common agricultural policy) that can be renegotiated and on tourism (farmers' pluriactivities). Transboundary workshops have been organized on “pastoralism and cultural landscapes” including actions to promote and valorize pastoral culture. These actions already undertaken to support agro-pastoral activities in the site should be strengthened in order to sustain at long term,the pastorals units, essential to the management of landscapes (SOC, 2014).

Potential Threats

Low Threat

The main potential threats include abandoning of summer pastures in the future, and increase in visitation and consequently in road traffic.

► Changes in traditional ways of life and knowledge systems

Low Threat
Inside site

Changes in agro-pastoral activities affect uses of pastures, and may especially threaten mountain summer pastures, which are more difficult to reach. This implies changes in vegetation types in higher areas and modifies some habitats for local species.

► Avalanches/ Landslides

Low Threat
Inside site

Avalanches (winter) and landslides may increase due to climate change.

► Tourism/ visitors/ recreation

Low Threat
Inside site, extent of threat not known

Potential future developments of tourism activities may increase changes affecting local landscapes if not sustainably managed. Tourists’ mobility

inside the site is mostly pedestrian (hiking trails) and some areas support high frequentation during the high touristic season – notably Gavarnie cirque on the French side and Ordesa Canyon on the Spanish side (Parc national de Pyrénées, 2001). Tourist visitation at the Gavarnie site is estimated at 100,000 vehicles per year, ie approximately 270,000 visitors (2011). Future management of the area should consider the potential threats if frequentation increases.

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Relationships with local people

Some Concern

There is no permanent resident population within the site nor regular users of natural resources. OUV and boundaries of the WHS are not well known by local people and stakeholders living outside. In France, some conflicts emerged after the repeated requests from WHC to relocate the Gavarnie summer festival as local population is very much attached to this cultural event (Benos R. et al. 2008). These tensions partly explain the perception of the WH status as a constraint by some people. Local population is also insufficiently involved in the management of the site, although the National Parks Act of 14 April 2006 increases the participation of local stakeholders and elected representatives on the board of directors (shared governance).

► Legal framework

Highly Effective

The legal framework is adequate as the property overlaps protected areas fully recognised in both legislations (revised 2006 national parks law in France). This transboundary site includes areas belonging to the Pyrenees National Park (France,) and to the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park (Spain), under IUCN category II and that fall under respective protected areas legislation in each country. (Rapport des Etats français et espagnol au comité du Patrimoine mondial de l’UNESCO, 2014, SOC 2014). On the French side, 60% of the property overlaps with the Pyrénées national park. and others

areas are covered by a Natura 2000 site « Estaubé, Gavarnie, Troumouse, Barroude » and a « site classé » (IUCN category III). A program called « opération Grand Site Gavarnie/Gèdre » was launched in 1990 in Gavarnie to enhance the management of touristic frequentation (parking spaces and reception facilities). Other projects are under definition to accomodate peripherical sites (cirque de Troumouse et d'Estaubé, Ossoue, Boucharo).

► Enforcement

Mostly Effective

WHC decisions are being implemented : both countries sent a joint report in 2014 (approved by the 38 COM 7B57) recalling that Col des Tentes-Col du Boucharo road has been closed in 1997 and committing to do the same with Troumouse road. Actions to mitigate Gavarnie festival impacts on natural pastures have been taken and without any relevant alternative for its relocation, this event will remain at the same place. A transboundary management committee has been established and meets regularly. The joint management plan is currently under elaboration and will provide support to pastoralism activities. However, a further evaluation will be needed to monitor the implementation of these decisions.

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Mostly Effective

Both National Parks are well integrated into national systems.

► Management system

Some Concern

The main concern is the lack of transboundary coordination. This situation started to evolve in 2012 when a joint management committee ("comité directeur conjoint transfrontalier") was created (SOC 2014). It initially gathered 20 members (10 French representatives and 10 Spanish representatives) and 2 more members (representatives of local livestock farmers) have joined it since then. In addition to the joint management committee, a technical group composed of managers from both national parks and representatives of local and regional authorities meets 4 to 5 times a year to implement management actions in common. But there is no legal structure to ensure the sustainability of this governance structure.

Both national parks have effective and updated management plans (Plan rector de uso del parque nacional de Ordesa y Monte Perdido in Spain, Charte du parc national des Pyrénées in France). But global management system is partially adapted to maintain OUV as the joint plan (charte de coopération commune 2010-2020) is partially implemented. In the framework of a tri-national cooperation programme (POCTEFA) involving France, Spain and Andorra, the “Projet Pyrénées Mont Perdu Patrimoine mondjal (PMPPM)” has been launched to support integrated management of the property, with four sets of actions : training, awareness, governance and joint management plan (to be validated by the joint management committee). The POCTEFA programme will support the implementation of a three-year action plan, including the definition of a buffer zone and a nature trail.

► Management effectiveness

Some Concern

Equipment and facilities are adequate and well maintained. A study has been undertaken to renovate the area from Garvanie village to the cascade (more than 2 million €). It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the new transboundary management committee as well as the management plan. At its 38th Session the World Heritage Committee requested the two States Parties to submit a joint updated report by December 2018 (Decision 38COM 7B.57).

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Some Concern

Since 2013, recommendations on the management of Troumouse road (French side) are the object of a new 10-years management plan to regulate traffic and to limit touristic frequentation (SOC, 2014). Recommendations on Gavarnie festival are progressively addressed and measures to mitigate main impacts are positively undertaken. European and national financial supports have been obtained by the States Parties in order to support extensive herding and value pastoral culture. However, these resources concern the entire massif and the WHC has encouraged the States Parties to strengthen measures inside the site (SOC, 2014).

► Boundaries

Mostly Effective

The limits of the site are adequate, with a landscape unit centered on the Mont Perdu calcareous massif (IUCN, 1996). However, site boundaries are different from the existing protected area complex, which may present some challenges in terms of management of the site (“site classé” and “periphery protection area” legal basis may not be sufficient for long term protection) (IUCN, 1996). Some suggestions were made in 2007 (Monitoring Mission Report, 2007) to include Béstué area (Spanish side) for its cultivated terraces as part of the cultural landscape. As the site mainly concerns higher summer pastures, it was also suggested to include intermediary zones in order to facilitate the understanding of cultural landscapes (Bestué and Vallon de Larri in Spain, and Plateau de Saugué and Bernatoire in France) (Monitoring Mission Report, 2007). No buffer zone has been designed at the time of inscription, but a study is under way with the support of POCTEFA funds to define an optimum perimeter based on landscape criteria.

► Sustainable finance

Some Concern

Budget is globally insufficient and needs to be increased to cover all management costs. Over the past 5 last years, financing was mainly provided by regions (57%) and multilateral funding (19%). The costs related to the joint management of the property essentially depend on a European funding (POCTEFA programme 2007-2013 and 2014-2020) which provides opportunities for management activities and technical studies (2,3 millions €) but is not enough to modernize visitors facilities (Gavarnie house of the park).

► Staff training and development

Some Concern

Human resources are globally adequate even if additional staff would be necessary to address all the management issues, in particular a full time position to facilitate the joint management between both sites. The staff is well trained and competent for management and environmental awareness activities, however some specific issues need capacitation (research,

tourism).

▶ Sustainable use

Mostly Effective

Agriculture practices are environmentally compatible. There has been a decline in tourism visitation over the last 5 years.

▶ Education and interpretation programs

Mostly Effective

The site presents a high potential for geotourism and geosciences teaching (a geopark has been established on the Spanish side). There is an effective educational program for schoolchildren living in the peripherical areas of the Pyrénées National Park (PEZIS) but environmental interpretation activities are not fully focused on OUV components. Few guided tours are available for visitors. Within the framework of the Poctefa programme, exchanges and annual visits are organized with tourist operators to make them aware of the World Heritage site.
The site received in 2013 the international dark sky reserve label, which allowed development of night tourist activities.

▶ Tourism and visitation management

Mostly Effective

Information centres are well equipped on both sides but there is a need for a multilingual harmonized marking. Projects for the construction and renovation of visitor facilities are not sufficiently funded. There is also a lack of cooperation between the managers and tourism industry to interpret the property values. A peage in Troumouse and shuttles will be set up as part of the rehabilitation of the site.

▶ Monitoring

Mostly Effective

National Parks develop monitoring programmes on both sides on local fauna and flora, but not completely focused on OUV components, with the exception of a landscape study that characterizes the attributes of the

property in the Gavarnie area.

▶ Research

Mostly Effective

Long-term research programmes are run by a number of universities (for example in archaeology). The Pyrénées National Park has adopted a scientific strategy 2015-2027 focusing three thematic priorities linked to the OUV (natural cultural and landscape heritage, human activities and global changes) (stratégie scientifique du parc national des Pyrénées). This strategy is based on the conclusions of an assessment of previous research activities carried out (2010), which underline the need for rebalancing scientific knowledge between fauna and flora, and reinforcing monitoring methodologies.

Overall assessment of protection and management

Mostly Effective

Strong institutions exist in both countries with two national parks forming the core of the management system. However, a lack of transboundary cooperation has been a concern for a long time but with the establishment of a joint management board in 2012, it is expected that cooperation will be improved.

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

Some Concern

The main concern is the lack of sustainability of the transboundary management system of the property. The situation started to evolve in 2012 when a joint management committee was created (Rapport des Etats français et espagnol au comité du Patrimoine mondial de l’UNESCO, 2014, SOC 2014). The committee initially gathered 20 members (10 French and 10 Spanish representatives), and two more members representing local livestock farmers have been added since then. To coordinate this body and its technical group, financial resources mainly depend on short-term European projects (three years).

► Best practice examples

Pyrénées national park has been recognized in 2014 as a IUCN green list site. Overlapping with the park, the Ossau nature reserve has contributed to recover a population of vultures from dozen remaining couples in the 1970s to hundreds nowadays. This best practice has been shared through Panorama Solutions website. Reintroductions of Iberian Ibex are also effectively running.

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

► Outstanding scenic landscape

Low Concern
Trend:Stable

The outstanding scenic values of the site have been relatively well preserved with some localized impacts on the landscapes (IUCN Consultation, 2014).

► Remarkable geological landforms

Good
Trend:Stable

The geological features of the site remain well preserved.

Summary of the Values

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

Good

Trend: Stable

The outstanding scenic values of the site have been relatively well preserved with some localized impacts on the landscapes, mainly from tourism-related

infrastructure. The geological features of the site remain well preserved.

► **Assessment of the current state and trend of other important biodiversity values**

Low Concern

Trend: Stable

The biodiversity values of the site have been well preserved, but are facing some threats, in particular potential impacts of climate change and decline of grazing and agro pastoral activities.

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

► **Outdoor recreation and tourism**

The site is an important area for tourism and outdoor activities, which benefit to local populations.

► **Water provision (importance for water quantity and quality)**

Clean water provision, snow (tourism), food source for cattle (Spanish animal grazing on French territory)

► **Importance for research**

Long tradition of scientific research which could be used for educational programs and improved land use planning.

► **Contribution to education**

The site has several information centres (managed by National Parks) aiming

to disseminate information.

Summary of benefits

The aesthetic values of the site have led to an important development of recreation and tourism in the area. Nature and sight-seeing tourism are an important activity for the area, from an economic perspective, but also from a more culturally and educational perspective, as exemplified by the efforts of the French and Spanish national parks to inform public and raise awareness on local nature, cultural landscapes and conservation issues.

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	POCTEFA (programme opérationnel de coopération territoriale Espagne-France-Andorre)	From: 2014 To: 2020	Interreg V-A Programme Spain-France-Andorra. European territorial cooperation program set up to promote the sustainable development of the border territory between the three countries. It provides support for tourism, landscape interpretation and agropastoralism.
2	Gavarnie-Gèdre municipality		Closing of Troumouse road and relocation of car park are being carried out in the framework of the POCTEFA programme.

Compilation of potential site needs

№	Site need title	Brief description of potential site needs	Support needed for following years
1	N.A.	Joint bilingual marking and information system	
2	N.A.	Joint research and monitoring programmes on OUV components	
3	N.A.	Assessment of climate change consequences on water regime	

№	Site need title	Brief description of potential site needs	Support needed for following years
4	N.A.	Interpretation programme of the site's outstanding universal value for local actors	
5	N.A.	Labeling of tourist services (hotel, restaurant tours)	

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