IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2017 **(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

2017 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: Stable

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 moving some of the administrative unit out of Mount Huangshan, environmental protection, forest conservation and management, fire control, limiting hotel construction, improving interpretation and tourism, dealing with pine wilt disease, and better managing the rapidly increasing numbers of visitors. (Consultation with HSAC, 2017)

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, 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, 88 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; Consultation with HSAC, 2017).

► 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 16% of China's bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and 13.46%of its pteridophytes (ferns) Consultation with HSAC, 2017. There are 132 family, 696 genus and 1714 species of angiosperm, accounting for 58.2%, 23.8% and 7.0% of the total number of angiosperm in China (HSAC, 2014). 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 68 mammal species,183 birds, 31 reptiles, 28 amphibians and 32 fish (Consultation with HSAC, 2017). 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 rock fall and damage to trees.

▶ 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, scattered(5-15%)
Outside site

Natural hazards such as wind, thunder, rain and snow sometimes cause damage to trees and bamboo, and rock fall (ACMHSS, 2002, Consultation with HSAC, 2017).

▶ Fire/ Fire Suppression

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

The scarcity of water aggravates the danger of fires. A 132-man fire brigade and water storage pools dug beside tracks help deal with the problem (WCMC, 2011; Consultation with HSAC, 2017).

▶ Invasive Non-Native/ Alien Species

High Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)
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 plant quarantine stations, and monitor pine wood nematode (ACMHSS, 2002; Consultation with HSAC, 2017).

▶ 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).

▶ 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, widespread(15-50%)

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 330 million in 2016 and increasing at 6.33% per annum(Consultation with HSAC, 2017). 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).

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
Outside site

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

other accommodation facilities is prohibited within Mr. Huangshan (Consultation with HSAC, 2017). However, given the high and increasing numbers of visitors pressures to develop additional infrastructure will remain.

▶ Air Pollution

Data Deficient
Inside site, throughout(>50%)
Outside site

Huangshan region, in which Mout Huangshan is located, is affected by acid rain, and the major pollutant (sulphur dioxide) comes from more industrialized provinces to the south (Wu et. al., 2015). It is now classified as a moderate acid rain region (PH 5.0), but then worsened again in 2016 when PH went under 5.0 again and the frequency of acid rains reached 96%, an increase of 23.8% (AHEPB, 2017). There is no information on the specific impact of acid rain on Mount Huangshan but it is thought that high altitude forests are especially vulnerable as they are often surrounded by clouds and fog which are more acidic than rain.

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

▶ Relationships with local people

Mostly Effective

The core area is uninhabited with the exception of mountain hotel staff so relationships with local people within the site are limited (WCMD, 2011). In 2007, 16 villages in 5 towns and 1 forest farm, under the jurisdiction of the Huangshan District, in the periphery of Mount Huangshan were classified as buffer zone. The population of the 5 towns and 1 forest farm number 60,000 (HSCG, 2006; Xu et. al, 2015). The master plan aims to safeguard the scenic area within a framework of sustainable development for the local community (soOUV, 2013). The cooperation between the Mount Huangshan and Huangshan District government has been fostered steadily, culminating in the signing of an official agreement with the aim to step up the management of the site and the local communities. According to the agreement, both

sides agree to cooperate and coordinate on 18 areas, mainly forest fire control, pine wood nematode control, infrastructure planning and construction, tourism development and marketing, emergency response, and supply of local produce. In short, HSAC provides financial, technical and managerial support, and tourism development opportunities to the local communities in the buffer zone in exchange of their support and cooperation in forest fire and pine wood nematode control and compliance with the relevant HSAC regulations. An annual meeting between HSAC and representatives of the local communities is held to exchange views and discuss for better cooperation. (Consultation with HSAC, 2017) The local communities benefit substantially from the presence of the Mount Huangshan. (Han et. al., 2017)

► Legal framework

Highly Effective

Huangshan is a World Natural and Cultural Heritage site and a National Scenic Area 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; HSCG, 2006). In practice the most relevant pieces of legislation are the Regulation on the management of the Huangshan Scenic Area (HAS), which was first adopted by the Anhui Province People’s Congress in 1989 and amended in 1997, 2006, 2010, and 2014, respectively (AHPC, 2014) and the Master Plan for the HSA approved by the State Council of the Chinese government (HSCG, 2006). More than 100 pieces of bylaw and regulation have been promulgated based on these two constitutional legislation, which form the whole legal framework to govern the management of Mount Huangshan. (HSAC, 2016)

► Enforcement

Mostly Effective

Enforcement of the relevant regulations appears effective. Significant efforts are being taken to control visitation (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

► 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 to be responsible to Huangshan Municipality, Housing and Construction Department, Office of Land and Resources , Department of Environmental Conservation of Anhui Province (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; Consultation with HSAC, 2017).

► Management system

Highly Effective

The 552-man Huangshan Administrative Committee in Charge of Sites of Scenic and Historic Interest has worked to implement the 2007-2025 management (and its successor) for the conservation and management of the beauty and scenic resources of the site. These were divided into nine management zones, each zone having its own set of conservation regulations (Consultation with HSAC, 2017). 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 16,060 ha with a buffer zone of 49,000 ha (HSCG, 2006). 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 (HSCG, 2006).

► 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/Yuan360 million (US$43.4million) and the figure was increased to RMB2.525 billion in 2015 and funds are also appropriated annually by central and local governments (WCMC, 2011; Consultation with HSAC, 2017).

► Staff training and development

Mostly Effective

There is a complement of 552 staff supported by a body of varying temporary workers (Consultation with HSAC, 2017). 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 consumptive 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 and the Huangshan Geological Museum celebrate the scenic and cultural significance of the site. In both facilities there is a section dedicated to biodiversity. An education program was first launched at Zhaixi Primary School but was then expanded to all the primary and middle schools throughout the Huangshan district. A 6-episode TV program was aired on the CCTV-1, CCTV-9 and Anhui Satellite TV channels in early 2014 to reach the greater general public. A series of activities, including seminar, lectures, brochure, posters, are organized each year to celebrate the National Cultural Relic Day. (HSAC, 2016).

► Tourism and visitation management

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. The trend continued in the new century when visitation reached 10,9million in the period 2006-2010, with an annual average of 2.18 million. (HSAC, 2010) The figures were 14.652 million and 2.9 million, respectively for 2011-2015 (HSAC, 2016). The visitation rose to 3.3million in 2016. Many measures have been taken to cope with the impact of increased visitation. For example, a rotation system has been adopted as early as 1987 when scenic sites in Mount Huangshan selected sites to be

closed down for a period of time to recover (HSCG, 2006). Hotels in Mount Huangshan would be gradually moved outside and overnight stay is discouraged. New sites in and around areas have been developed to divert the pressure. Visitors are subject to limited sight-seeing packages in peak season. (Consultation with HSAC, 2017) 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).

► 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 and Sun Yat-Sen Universities, 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).

► 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). Prominent scientists from research institutions and universities have been appointed as Chief Scientists to guide the HSSA research staff. 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). A base-line biodiversity survey has been completed . A GEF project (2014-2018) is underway to promote biodiversity and sustainable use in the Huangshan Mountain region (Consultation with HSAC, 2017).

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

Highly Effective

Less than 40 km away, the pine wood nematode is regarded the biggest threat to the pine forests, the principal element of the Mount Huangshan scenery. Back in 1999, a pine wood nematode prevention system has been installed to check its spread. In 2009, a 3-prong approach, with a budget of RMB96 million, has been adopted to combat the invading pine wood nemadode, the so-called pine tree cancer. First, a 4km wide and 100km long biological break belt has been built around Mount Huangshan in which all the pine trees have been cleared. Second, a 3-tier forest pests monitoring network has been completed, consisting of 1 general station, 5 branch stations and 22 check points, and covering the whole area of Mount Huangshan. Forest plants quarantine station has been set up and assisted by electronic monitoring system, in order to conduct strict examination of all wood and bamboo products entering into Mount Huangshan. No pine wood and its products are allowed to enter Mount Huangshan. Since 2013, small wood products carried by postage offices and courier companies are also subject to strict examination. Third, a proactive coordination system is adopted to extend the control measures to neighboring counties and districts. This approach proves to be most effective in fending off the disease out of the door of Mount Huangshan. In a similar way, a cooperative mechanism is also formed with the local communities in the buffer zone. In this mechanism the local communities agree to observe the forest fire control regulation and form volunteer fire brigades while HSAC provides financial incentives in return. This arrangement contributes to the proud record that no forest fire broke out in the past 37 years. (Consultation with

HSAC, 2017)

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: Stable

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 moving some of the administrative unit out of Mount Huangshan, environmental protection, forest conservation and management, fire control, limiting hotel construction, improving interpretation and tourism, dealing with pine wilt disease, and better managing the rapidly increasing numbers of visitors. (Consultation with HSAC, 2017)

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

► **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 wood nematode 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 pine timber and its products, and only using local seedlings in re-afforestation. (Consultation with HSAC, 2017) Special research and interventions are being undertaken on the protection of ancient and famed trees, forest fire control, pine wood nematode control.

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
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.
4	Huangshan Administrative Committee, FAO		With FAO as the international implementing agency and HSAC as the national implementing agency, the Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use In Huangshan Mountain Region Project spans 5 years (2014-2018). The total budget of the project is USD13.7million, among it are USD2.72 million in grant from GEF. The project site includes Mount Huangshan, several nature reserves in the Huangshan Mount region and 5 villages in the vicinity of those reserves. It consists of 35 activities, including the establishment of a Huangshan Mountain biodiversity research center, biodiversity survey and database, conservation assessment of the project nature reserves.
5	Zhejiang University		Biodiversity survey in Huangshan-Tainmushan and Xianxialing-Wuyishan mountains in eastern China program was approved by the Ministry of Science and Technology in 2015. It is implemented by 14 institutions, leading by the Zhejiang University. It spans between 2015-2020 with a total budget of RMB12.4 million. The program aims to support regional biodiversity survey, collection and preservation of specimens, compiling and updating of regional biodiversity encyclopedia, internet platform sharing biodiversity data in eastern China and species resources that are open to the general public. Its findings will help provide scientific knowledge and technical support to the decisions on the management and conservation of the biodiversity resources and environment in Mount Huangshan.

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