IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2014 **(archived)**
Finalised on 20 October 2014

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

2014 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. However, lack of transboundary cooperation has been a concern for a long time. As a transboundary management board was established in 2012, it is expected that transboundary cooperation will be improving.

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 Pyrenees mountains. It is an outstanding scenic landscape with meadows, lakes, 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 classic geological land forms, including deep canyons and spectacular cirque walls. The most geologically outstanding portion of the Pyrenees is the calcareous massif centered on Mont Perdu peak. On the north side (France), the landscape is

much more abrupt with three major cirques, while on the southern slopes (Spain), Mont Perdu (or Monte Peridido) has three radiating spurs with deep 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

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 are only three female individuals. 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 conservation and science (WHC Website, retrieved 2014).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

Low Threat

Current threats affecting the site are low and mainly relate to tourism infrastructure, effects of climate change 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.

► Tourism/ Recreation Areas

Low Threat
Inside site
Outside site

Tourism infrastructure exists 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 situated 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, mountain area regulation in terms of development e.g. “site classé loi 1930”, etc.). 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 eventual threats need to be continuously addressed. Higher concerns were expressed regarding some infrastructure, 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) (Boucharo’s road and car park were closed soon after the designation), and a seasonal event requiring temporary infrastructures: a theater festival in Gavarnie. After many years of conflicts and negotiations between the WHC, States Parties (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. Though this relocation still fails, visual impacts of the festival have been reduced and the WHC encourages the State Party to pursue reduction of the impacts and prospection for an alternative spot outside the WHS (SOC, 2014).

► 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 changes

High Threat
Inside site

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.

▶ Changes in traditional ways of life and knowledge systems

Low Threat
Inside site
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. Actions already undertaken to support agro-pastoral activities in the site should be strengthened and made durable in order to guarantee, on long term horizons, the upholding of pastorals units, so essential to a sustainable 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

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). Future management of the area should consider the potential threats if frequentation increases.

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Research

Mostly Effective

Long-term research programmes are run by a number of universities.

► Relationships with local people

Some Concern

There have been some conflicts after the the repeated requests to relocated the Gavarnie summer festival to another place as part of the 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.

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Mostly Effective

National Parks are well integrated into national systems.

► Management effectiveness

Data Deficient

As a new transboundary management committee has been recently created , it is too early to assess the effectiveness of this new joint management system. 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

Recommendations on the management of Troumouse road (French side) are since 2013 the object of a new 10-years management plan to regulate traffic and to limit tourist frequentation (SOC, 2014). Recommendations on Gavarnie festival are progressively addressed and measures for the event’s impacts reduction are positively undertaken. European and national financial support have been demanded 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, the site's boundaries are different from the existing protected area matrix, 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 landscapes. 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).

► Sustainable finance

Mostly Effective

Budgets appear sufficient. 590000 € were allocated to the WHS, and as support to pastoral activities. (Rapport des Etats français et espagnol au comité du Patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO, 2014).

► Staff training and development

Data Deficient

Data deficient

► Sustainable use

Mostly Effective

Agriculture practices are environmentally compatible.

► Education and interpretation programs

Data Deficient

Data deficient

▶ Tourism and interpretation

Mostly Effective

Well equipped information centers (on both sides). Lack of multilingual harmonized marking.

▶ Monitoring

Mostly Effective

National Parks conduct monitoring programmes on both sides on local fauna and flora.

▶ Legal framework and enforcement

Highly Effective

This transboundary site includes areas belonging to the Pyrenees National Park (France) and to the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park (Spain) which 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).

▶ Management system

Mostly Effective

The main concern is the lack of transboundary coordination. 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 comprised 20 members (10 French representatives and 10 Spanish representatives). 2 more members (representatives of local livestock farmers) have been added since then.

Overall assessment of protection and management

Mostly Effective

Strong institutions exist in both countries with two national parks forming the core of the management. However, lack of transboundary cooperation has been a concern for a long time. As a transboundary management board was

established in 2012, it is expected that transboundary cooperation will be improving.

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

Data deficient

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.

Other important biodiversity values

▶ **Rich biodiversity and area of interest to science and conservation**

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 are only three female individuals. 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 conservation and science (WHC Website, retrieved 2014).

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 so far been well preserved, but are facing some threats, including potential impacts of climate change and abandonment of grazing and agro pastoral activities.

Additional information

Key conservation issues

▶ **Climate change**
Global

Specific potential impacts are related to glaciers and vegetation change.

▶ **Communication and work with local communities**
Local

Local communities need to be more involved into the management of the site and the World Heritage values of the site need to be better communicated.

▶ **Lack of transboundary cooperation**

National

The recent (2012) creation of a transboundary management is a positive step, but its effectiveness is still to be evaluated.

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

▶ **Outdoor recreation and tourism**

The site is an important area for tourism and outdoor activities.

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

Clean water provision

▶ **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	NP and local communities		Rehabilitation of transhumance routes

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	

REFERENCES

№	References
1	Benos R. Cazenave Piarrot A., and Milian J, 2008. Pyrénées-Mont Perdu Patrimoine Mondial : un espace montagnard à l'épreuve de la protection et de sa gestion.
2	IUCN, 1996. World Heritage Nomination, IUCN Technical Evaluation, Pyrénées-Mont Perdu (Spain – France).
3	Justification for Inscription, WHC website, retrieved 2014
4	Monitoring Mission Report ICOMOS/IUCN/UNESCO, 2007. Joint ICOMOS/IUCN/UNESCO (WHC) Expert Reactif Monitoring Mission Report, Pyrenees-Mont Perdu (France – Spain).
5	Mottet A., Ladet S., Coqué N., Gibon A. (2006). « Agricultural land-use change and its drivers in mountain landscapes: A study in the Pyrenees », in Agriculture, Ecosystem and Environment, pp. 296-310.
6	Parc national de Pyrénées, 2001. Etude quantitative du Parc national des Pyrénées et de la réserve du Néouvielle. Du 15 juin au 15 septembre 2001. Eole, 44p.
7	Rapport des Etats français et espagnol au comité du Patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO, 2014
8	SOC, 2014. State of Conservation Report, 36 COM 7B.37.