

Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia

2020 Conservation Outlook Assessment

SITE INFORMATION

Country: Turkey
Inscribed in: 1985
Criteria: (i) (iii) (v) (vii)



In a spectacular landscape, entirely sculpted by erosion, the Göreme valley and its surroundings contain rock-hewn sanctuaries that provide unique evidence of Byzantine art in the post-Iconoclastic period. Dwellings, troglodyte villages and underground towns – the remains of a traditional human habitat dating back to the 4th century – can also be seen there. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2020 Conservation Outlook

Finalised on 02 Dec 2020

GOOD WITH SOME CONCERNS

The conservation outlook for Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia is good with some concerns regarding excessive tourism impacts on the site. Göreme's natural beauty was comparatively well preserved at the time of its inscription, however construction activities to accommodate the growing number of tourists visiting the site has put pressure on its scenic value. The provision of hotels and services for these visitors tended to overwhelm the park and surrounding villages in the absence of a management plan and trained park personnel. The growing awareness among the stakeholders, both public and private, is now leading to somewhat better protection of the natural beauty of the Göreme Valley and its surroundings. However, implementation of the management plan is hindered by the lack of management unit inside the park and inadequate staffing for monitoring and controlling. There is a need for more research to define tourism carrying capacity in order to improve visitor planning and tourism management. Overall, previously identified threats and management deficiencies identified persist in this 2020 assessment and in areas have degraded. The value of the site's natural beauty (criterion vii) appears to be intact, but without improvement in the management, staffing, monitoring, and stakeholder interaction this may deteriorate in the future along with the cultural values.

FULL ASSESSMENT

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

High Threat

In spite of prohibition of construction activities in the area, construction of illegal buildings has damaged natural and historical texture. At the same time, in the area of visible terraces of Göreme Valley, development of tourist service areas has resulted in increased disturbed scenery. There are also other threats such as transportation and energy infrastructure which are having negative impact on steppe ecosystem and landscape values of the park.

► **Recreational Activities**

High Threat

(Uncontrolled tourism)

Inside site, widespread(15-50%)

Outside site

The impacts of uncontrolled tourism are of some concern and would be mitigated if the long considered park proposal was acted upon. [IUCN Technical Evaluation, 1985] The heavy pressure of mass tourism is also a threat. (WCMC, 2011). According to RAPPAM assessment undertaken in 2009, tourism and daily recreation activities were considered as a threat with a low increase in trend (Stanciu et al 2009).

The tourism cannot be controlled all over the park due to inadequate number of staff. There is one manager in Nevşehir and one ranger at the park for daily monitoring of the whole park who have many other responsibilities (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

The question of uncontrolled tourism was addressed in Demircivi (2017) after completion of the 2017 Outlook Assessment. The report concurred with this justification for the assessment.

► **Recreation & Tourism Areas**

High Threat

(Construction of hotels and tourist infrastructure)

Inside site, scattered(5-15%)

Proliferation of infrastructure associated with the requirements of mass tourism [State of Conservation (SOC),1988] Construction of tourist hotels in safeguarded areas [State of Conservation (SOC),1992] Transportation (road network) was defined as a high threat in RAPPAM 2009 assessment (Stanciu et al 2009).

There is illegal housing inside the National Park especially at residential areas.

At tourism destinations, visual integrity of the site has been impacted by infrastructure(IUCN Consultation, 2017)

The question of adverse impacts of construction of infrastructure to support mass tourism to the natural values was addressed in Demircivi (2017) after completion of the 2017 Outlook Assessment. The report concurred with this justification for the assessment,

► **Erosion and Siltation/ Deposition**

High Threat

(Natural deterioration and erosion)

Inside site, localised(<5%)

There is natural deterioration at geological formations and archaeological values due to wind and water erosion and human disturbance (Somuncu and Yigit 2009)

In recent years, due to construction of irrigation dams and ponds in the region, the humidity has been increasing which accelerates the natural deterioration (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

In general erosion is a critical element of the natural values, and is the cause of the landforms.

However, accelerated erosion is a threat.

► **Livestock Farming / Grazing**

Very Low Threat

(Grazing)

Inside site, scattered(5-15%)

RAPPAM 2009 report stated that grazing by sheep coming from surrounding villages occurred inside the park (Stanciu et al 2009). Since it was seen scattered and number of animals was descending, it was not

considered as a high threat.

No significant grazing has been reported in recent years (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

► **Roads, Trails & Railroads**

High Threat

(High traffic rates and associated vibration threaten the natural values)

Inside site, scattered(5-15%)

According to the study by Demircivi (2017), completed after the 2017 Outlook Assessment was published, vibrations and noise resulting from the traffic which threatens the natural values of the property: There are motorways near some valleys (e.g., Dervent valley) and some rock formations (e.g., fairy chimneys in Paşabağı and Ürgüp, and the ones on the Göreme-Ortahisar road). In order to resolve negative impacts resulting from the traffic, the passes on those roads may be limited to only tour buses or closed to all motor vehicles depending on the alternative roads.

Potential Threats

Low Threat

Potential threats to the site include earthquakes and other environmental influences such as wind and water erosion, all of them being minor threats. In recent years, due to construction of irrigation dams, humidity becomes another potential natural pressure on geological formations.

► **Earthquakes/ Tsunamis**

Low Threat

(Earthquake damage)

Inside site, extent of threat not known
Outside site

Earthquake damage to some of the cones and pillars over the years has previously been reported (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01)

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management



Some Concern

The area was established as a historical National Park in order to protect and develop the national and cultural elements of the area for scientific and aesthetic reasons. The General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Park Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Affairs, are jointly responsible for the site (IUCN/WCMC Data Sheets, May 2011). The management of Göreme depends greatly on the maintenance by the indigenous population of their traditional agriculture and lifestyles. The present condition of the site is good. (WCMC, 2011) The protection of areas identified as important is assured by land-use zoning, by restrictions and regulations on building and by the preservation of traditional values. The strictly protected Zone 1 is the core of the Park. Zone 2 forms a buffer zone around Zone 1. (WCMC, 2011)

The environmental plan report (MOFW 2015) states that there is cooperation of Municipalities under the name of Cappadocia Union in order to address the issue of constructions. However, Demircivi (2017) presents evidence that a unified Management Plan for the area is needed to understand, monitor, and respond to threats in a consistent manner. Currently the multiple jurisdictions have different plans, and the park staff is insufficient to convey important restrictions to stakeholders and residents.



Some Concern

There are national, regional, and local public authorities involved in management of the site. The current management system is not sufficiently effective and better coordination between responsible bodies is needed. (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle I). Currently the multiple jurisdictions have different plans, and the park staff is insufficient to convey important restrictions to stakeholders and residents (.). In order to ensure effective management and protection, there is a strong need to formulate new management strategies and policies, after determining and analyzing the current status and related issues in these areas. (Somuncu and Yiğit, 2010)

According to RAPPAM 2009 and management effectiveness report in 2015, management effectiveness of Göreme National Park is lower than average. There is no park management unit inside the park. According to RAPPAM 2009, the inventory, visitor management, staff management (training) of the area, number of staff and collaboration with locals are not adequate. As such, a unified Management Plan for the area is needed to understand, monitor, and respond to threats in a consistent manner (Demirçivi, 2017).

- ▶ **Mostly Effective**
Status of boundaries of the site adequate. The buffer zone has been defined and is adequate. (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01). The strictly protected Zone 1 is the core of the Park. Zone 2 forms a buffer zone around Zone 1. (IUCN/WCMC Data Sheets, May 2011) However, notes that the location and significance of boundaries is not always clear to local stakeholders (Demirçivi, 2017).

- ▶ **Some Concern**
All areas are subject to their own legislation within their own boundaries. (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01)
The management plan of the National Park was prepared in 1971 however there are inadequacies in implementation of the plan (MoFW 2015). The management plan was revised in 2013 (www.milliparklar.gov.t).
There are regional and environmental plans which include Göreme National Park. There is a 1/100,000 scale environmental plan prepared by Ministry of Environment and Urbanization which was approved in 2006 and renewed in 2013. The plan shows land use and environmental decisions outside the park. However, a unified Management Plan for the area is needed to understand, monitor, and respond to threats in a consistent manner (Demirçivi, 2017). Currently the multiple jurisdictions have different plans, and the park staff is insufficient to convey important restrictions to stakeholders and residents.

- ▶ **Some Concern**
In cooperation with UNESCO a campaign was organized in 2002 to involve the local population (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01).
However, currently there is very low cooperation with local people (MOFW 2015, Güngör 2016).
Site managers, when it is required, meet with local people in order to receive their opinions about planned activities under management plan.

- ▶ **Mostly Effective**
11976 -Göreme Valley and surroundings protected by Decree A-69 of the High Council of Monuments and Historic Sites under the Cappadocia General Conservation Plan which required the preparation of detailed development plans. 1983 - The protection of the site further assured under the Cultural and Natural Assets Act 2863. 1986 - Established as a Historical National Park under National Parks Law 2873. (WCMC, 2011) 2004 - New boundary for the Cultural and Tourism Conservation and Development Area determined. Protection arrangements are sufficiently effective. (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01) In May 2017 Draft Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Law was submitted to the chairman of the Parliament for discussion. Some stakeholders have raised concerns about the proposed changes (IUCN Consultation, 2017).

- ▶ **Some Concern**
Inadequate staffing was mentioned in recent management effectiveness assessments (RAPPAM in 2009 and the management effectiveness assessment conducted by Ministry of Forest and Water Affairs in 2015). Lack of staff results in inefficient enforcement of relevant regulations.

- ▶ **Mostly Effective**
One of the recommendations of the Committee expressed in 1985 when site was inscribed was to proceed with the legal formalities for the setting up of the Göreme National Park which was implemented.
(UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01)

► **Data Deficient**

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► **Mostly Effective**

There is no core funding. Funding for conservation and protection provided by state budget, municipalities and foundations. Funding for management is insufficient; funding for protection and conservation is adequate. (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01)

Rappam 2009 report stated that there was increased funding from the central government. Management Effectiveness Report in 2015 also stated that there is adequate annual funding from the central government (MOFW 2015). However, feasibility research and planning is required for an effective management of the budget.

► **Some Concern**

Staff are provided by the Ministry of Culture and the Governorship of Nevsehir. There is no information available on the number of staff. (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01) National Park staff provided by the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs. There are annual education programmes but there is no systematic training programme specific to park (RAPPAM 2009, MOFW 2015). Inadequate staffing was noted in RAPPAM 2009 assessment, and this inadequacy has been consistently stated since, for example in the management effectiveness assessment conducted by Ministry of Forest and Water Affairs in 2015 and in Demirçivi, 2017 such as to indicate that inadequate staff levels is a persistent problem with park management.

► **Mostly Effective**

There are some education and interpretation programmes in place. (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01)

► **Mostly Effective**

The Park received 593,000 visitors in 1994. More recent figures are not available (IUCN/WCMC Data Sheets, May 2011). All kinds of services and facilities are provided for the visitors throughout the site. Staff show good performance with interpretation and visitor management. (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01)

Since 2014, there is a declining trend in visitor numbers. According to DOSİMM statistics the visitor numbers are; 1,080,88 in 2014; 975,712 in 2015 and 509,131 in 2016. According to management effectiveness report in 2015, management of tourism and visitors including providing proper infrastructure is not effective. There is need of arranging facilities and control of tourism movement in the park.

► **Some Concern**

There is a current lack of any monitoring within the site for natural values (Demirçivi, 2017).

► **Mostly Effective**

Several universities are involved in some research activities.

Overall assessment of protection and management

► **Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site** **Some Concern**

The overall low efficiency of management effectiveness (Demirçivi, 2017, RAPPAM 2009 and MoEF 2015) also hinders effective responses to threats originating from outside the site.

► **Good practice examples**

This is one of the best known World Heritage sites and national parks in Turkey. The World Heritage status is better known than the national park, thus the communication of WH can be a best practice example.

State and trend of values

Summary of the Values

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

Trend: Stable

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

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

Göreme is an exceptional representation of the close relationship between man and his environment in particular as regards the use of underground caves as churches for worship. (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01)

Factors negatively affecting provision of this benefit :

- Overexploitation Impact level - High, Trend - Continuing

There are damages to ruins and uncontrolled tourism.

► **Sacred natural sites or landscapes**

Rare and natural formations and features of exceptional beauty are found in the landscape, reflecting varying conditions of resistance as well as the works of man. (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01)

► **Outdoor recreation and tourism**

Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia receive well over half million visitors a year. The heavy pressure of mass tourism is also a threat. (IUCN/WCMC Data Sheets, May 2011)

Summary of benefits

A spectacular landscape entirely sculpted by erosion with sacred landscapes in the form of subterranean dwellings and places of worship. The wilderness value is manifested in natural formations and features of exceptional beauty).

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

No	Organization	Brief description of Active Projects	Website
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1	Governorship (of Nevsehir)	Research studies are being carried out at the research centre in the governorship. The integration of the various conservation and development plans of eleven towns in the region may provide a solution within the management plan to be prepared in the near future in accordance with the revised conservation legislation. (UNESCO, Periodic Report, Cycle 01)	
2	UNESCO/UNDP/ICCROM	A number of Cappadocia's staff have received training at ICCROM in Rome. Studies have also been made locally on earth-sheltered housing, traditional water management and modern tourism. (IUCN/WCMC Data Sheets Jan 1988, updated 8-1995, 10-2007, May 2011)	
3	A number of Cappadocia's staff have received training at ICCROM in Rome. Studies have also been made locally on earth-sheltered housing, traditional water management and modern tourism. (IUCN/WCMC Data Sheets Jan 1988, updated 8-1995, 10-2007, May 2011)	Management of national park and visitors.	www.milliparklar.gov.tr
4	UNESCO	Safeguarding the Churches of Cappadocia, Turkey: Conservation of Rock Structures and Wall Paintings Project funded by Japan's Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation of World Cultural Heritage	
5	Ministry of Forest and Water Affairs, Nevşehir Province Directorate	Architectural and landscape project for designing viewing platform, pedestrian roads.	
6	Ministry of Culture and Tourism	Pazarbağları archaeological site landscape project.	
7	Ministry of Forest and Water Affairs, Nevşehir Province Directorate	Renovation of tourism infrastructure.	

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