

Friends of World Heritage

Discover. Share. Preserve.

Friends of World Heritage is a grassroots initiative dedicated to raising awareness and funds for the protection of UNESCO World Heritage sites—places around the world internationally recognized for their outstanding value as natural and cultural treasures. The initiative was created by the United Nations Foundation and its partners are: Expedia, Inc. (NASDAQ: EXPE) and UNESCO's World Heritage Centre.

Our mission is to grow a community of travelers and other supporters that together can act to help protect the world's most precious resources, and promote sustainable economic development in and around some of the world's most popular travel destinations. United by the belief that sometimes the best souvenir is not what you take home, but what you leave behind, together we are helping to protect and preserve these special places for generations to come.

The **Friends of World Heritage Fund** supports communities in and around World Heritage sites in the developing world by funding projects that encourage local economic development and help alleviate poverty. 100% of funds raised go directly towards community-based conservation and sustainable tourism projects at sites. All donations (up to \$50,000 per year) are matched by both Expedia and the UN Foundation, turning \$1 into \$3.

Friends of World Heritage at Work: Supporting Sustainable Livelihoods in the Gulf of Mexico



The Site and its Challenges

Boasting turquoise waters and rugged islands, high cliffs and sandy beaches, the **Islands and Protected Natural Areas of the Gulf of California** is a World Heritage site of striking natural beauty. Known by Jacques Cousteau as “the world’s aquarium,” the site is home to at least 891 fish species and 39% of the world’s total number of marine mammals.

Coastal fishing is a traditional livelihood in the area, and the primary source of income for many local families. Growing pressures on marine resources, however, have begun to pose a threat to the conservation of this site and to its local economy.

The Solution

The **Friends of World Heritage Fund's** donation of \$30,000 will support the **Niparajá Natural History Society**, a local non-profit organization in Baja California, Mexico. Niparajá is working with a group of 30 local fishers to help them develop ecotourism activities such as kayaking tours and nature walks around the Espiritu Santo Island, part of the World Heritage site, as an alternative to fishing. Together, Niparajá and the fishers' cooperative will launch an ecotourism venture, monitor socioeconomic changes for the local community, build relationships with local government, and educate locals on the unique value of the region's marine ecosystem.

By supporting these steps, Friends of World Heritage aims to create a conservation blueprint that is replicable for other community cooperatives in the area. Amy Hudson Weaver, Program Coordinator for Marine Conservation at Niparajá, attests to the impact of Friends of World Heritage funds: “Without [these funds], the cooperative would have very little support for all its activities—from planning, to capacity building, to administration.”

What is World Heritage?

World Heritage sites are places around the world that have been internationally recognized for their outstanding natural or cultural value. The 851 sites currently on the UNESCO World Heritage List include Independence Hall, Stonehenge, the Galapagos Islands, the parks, forests and wildlife reserves of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the historic Centre of Prague, the Pyramids of Egypt and the Great Wall of China.

For more information, visit:
www.FriendsofWorldHeritage.org

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Friends of World Heritage at Work: Responding to Natural Disaster in the Yucatán

The Site and its Challenges

Located on the eastern coast of the Yucatán peninsula of Mexico, **Sian Ka'an** is a UNESCO World Heritage site that contains tropical forests, mangroves, and a section of the world's second largest barrier reef. It is home to rich flora and fauna, including more than 300 species of birds and other endangered and rare species such as jaguars and manatees.

In August 2007, category 5 Hurricane Dean struck Sian Ka'an and destroyed infrastructure, housing, and income-generating activities for an overwhelming number of people in this region, the majority of whom are indigenous Mayans living well below the poverty line.



The Solution

When World Heritage sites and surrounding communities face emergency situations—including natural disasters like hurricanes—Friends of World Heritage can launch a fundraising campaign to provide timely assistance to help local people and sites respond and recover. In response to Hurricane Dean, **Friends of World Heritage raised \$62,000 to support immediate recovery efforts** for local communities from individuals and partners. That support provided food for over 2,050 families in twelve Mayan communities, including 10,250 kilos of bean seeds and 2,050 packages with 8 types of seeds for garden products. The funds also covered the purchase of over 150,000 plants to support reforestation efforts for an area that lost almost 70% of its tree cover, as well as lobster shades for communities to resume sustainable fishing practices.

Today, Friends of World Heritage donations have empowered local communities to rebuild. As Julio Moure, local coordinator for COMPACT—a project of the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme in Sian Ka'an—reports, “the feeling among locals is one of total thanksgiving for all the help they've received in rebuilding after Hurricane Dean. “It benefits everyone to share ideas and resources to promote nature, local communities, and traditional cultures. We believe that preserving Mayan heritage in Sian Ka'an is preserving global heritage, and that reforestation here will help protect and enhance our global community. We are all in the same boat.”

Additional FOWH Fund Grant Recipients

The **Belize Audubon Society** received \$29,961 to promote best practices and conservation awareness for scuba diving operators around the Blue Hole National Monument, part of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve World Heritage site.

The **Dominica Save the Children Fund** received \$30,000 to create an alliance of community-based sustainable tour operators around Morne Trois Pitons, the first natural World Heritage site in the eastern Caribbean.

The **Academia de la Lengua y Cultura Mayas de Quintana Roo** received \$24,043 to develop a botanical garden to raise awareness and cultural pride for local biodiversity among the Mayan people near Sian Ka'an World Heritage site.

For More Information

Visit www.FriendsofWorldHeritage.org to learn more about World Heritage sites in need, share responsible travel tips, and donate to the Friends of World Heritage Fund.