

Research Article

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM: THE CASE OF DELLYS IN ALGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Cultural heritage is an invaluable resource for the development of cultural tourism. It offers a wide range of economic and social opportunities, contributing to job creation, income generation and the promotion of local identity. However, to fully exploit its potential, heritage needs to be carefully integrated into an overall tourism strategy. Such a strategy must include specific measures for the preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage.

Recognizing the profound synergies between cultural heritage preservation and tourism development strategies, we undertook an in-depth analysis of the current heritage situation in the town of Dellys. This analysis identified the challenges and opportunities associated with heritage enhancement in the context of tourism and local development projects.

The results reveal that the implementation of the current tourism strategy in Dellys is not fully achieving its objectives. Nevertheless, its effective realization, coupled with better coordination between players in the sector, could make a significant contribution to safeguarding, revitalizing and enhancing the town's heritage.

Keywords: *Development, Heritage, Tourisme*

Introduction

The notion of heritage has undergone a significant evolution in the field of spatial planning. Initially perceived as a collection of elements to be preserved and protected, it is now seen as a valuable asset for local development, capable of generating positive economic and social spin-offs (Aït-Kaci, 2020). This evolution is part of a global context in which knowledge and protection of natural and cultural heritage constitute a major challenge, mobilizing a

multitude of players and calling on a wide range of skills, instruments, methods and techniques (Belalia & Aït-Kaci, 2022).

Heritage is generally associated with the notion of stability and continuity, representing the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of a community. It manifests itself through historical monuments, archaeological sites, cultural traditions, artistic expressions and many other elements that constitute the identity of a people (Aït-Kaci, 2021).

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On the other hand, tourism embodies a modern form of development and consumption, characterized by mobility and the search for new, enriching experiences. It is a fast-growing economic sector, attracting millions of travellers every year from all over the world to discover a variety of cultures and heritages (Belalia & Aït-Kaci, 2022).

Li (2003) highlights the tension inherent in the relationship between heritage and tourism. Indeed, these two concepts sometimes seem at odds with each other. The static, unchanging nature of heritage contrasts with the dynamism and constant evolution of tourism.

However, Kneubühler (2011) offers a different perspective, suggesting that heritage can be seen as a cultural product derived from tourism. This view highlights the dynamic that exists between these two concepts, with one influencing and shaping the other. The development of tourism can indeed contribute to the enhancement of heritage, its preservation and transmission to future generations (Aït-Kaci, 2020).

UNESCO plays an important role in promoting cultural tourism as a means of preserving cultural and heritage values. The organization recognizes that heritage preservation requires popular and public support, which can be achieved through responsible and respectful tourism. UNESCO therefore encourages the development of strategies and projects that promote synergy between tourism and heritage (Park, 2013), while ensuring the preservation of site authenticity and the involvement of local communities.

From this point of view, heritage has an intrinsic value linked to its historical, cultural and symbolic importance for a community. This value is inseparable from a people's identity and heritage. Heritage also has an exchange value, as it can be exploited for economic purposes, notably through cultural tourism (Butowski, 2016).

The development of cultural tourism makes it possible to showcase a city's heritage wealth, attract visitors and generate income and jobs. What's more, tourism can play a crucial role in safeguarding threatened heritage, providing financial support for sites in difficulty (Aït-Kaci, 2021).

The 2018 UNWTO study highlights the importance of different elements of cultural heritage in tourism. Archaeological and historical sites, religious monuments and sites, local traditions and customs, arts and crafts, and cultural events immaterialize the creation of quality public spaces and the diversification of leisure activities, making the territory more attractive to residents and tourists alike (Montgolfier, 2010).

The aim of this article is to examine the complex, multidimensional relationship between cultural tourism and heritage in the Algerian town of Dellys. The analysis will focus on the potential and challenges of developing cultural tourism in Dellys, taking into account the town's specific cultural and heritage characteristics.

Heritage and Tourism in Algerian legislation

Planning policy takes the form of series of instruments and development plans at different levels of government.

Law 01-20 of 12 December 2001 on National Planning and Sustainable Development

The 01-20 law of 12 December 2001 on national planning and sustainable development defined guidelines and planning instruments designed to ensure the harmonious and sustainable development of the national territory. It includes the following instruments related to the country's sustainable development

- The national planning strategy.
- Master plans for major infrastructure and public utilities.
- Regional development plans.
- Provincial development plans (the *wilaya*).
- Master plans for metropolitan areas.

Table 1. Overview of sustainable development instruments in Algeria

INSTRUMENT	OBJECTIVES
The national planning strategy.	Provide directives applicable to the entire nation and specify the basic strategic requirements for national development and sustainable spatial development policy.

INSTRUMENT	OBJECTIVES
The coastal development master plan.	Define specific requirements for the conservation and recovery of popular, but fragile inshore and coastal spaces.
The blueprint for land protection and the fight against desertification.	Land protection.
Regional land use plans.	Consistent with the national planning strategy guidelines, specify requirements for each region. Coastal regions must include the requirements found in the coastal development master plan
Local development plans for the organization of public services in the domains of: ❖ internal areas; ❖ the environment; ❖ the hierarchy and thresholds for the urban framework;	Consistent with the regional development plan, specify requirements for each <i>wilaya</i> , notably with respect to the environment, urban development and reinforcement.

Chapter II of Law 01-20 concerns the National Territorial Development Scheme (SNAT). In particular, Article 14 concerns mountainous (southern) regions and prescribes the preservation and careful use of natural resources, the protection and development of the national ecology the development of agriculture, reforestation, biodiversity protection, improved communication networks, and the protection, preservation and enhancement of cultural, historical and archaeological assets (ACT 2001-01).

In terms of implementation, the SNAT provides a set of instruments aimed at the harmonious development of the country and its regions:

- ✓ The master plan for protected natural areas.
- ✓ The water master plan.
- ✓ The transport master plan.
- ✓ The agricultural development master plan.
- ✓ The master plan for the development of fisheries and fishery products.
- ✓ The energy networks master plan.
- ✓ The blueprint for communication services and infrastructure, telecommunications and information.
- ✓ The master plan for academic and research structures.
- ✓ The training master plan.
- ✓ The health master plan.
- ✓ The master plan for tourism development.
- ✓ The master plan for goods and services, and major cultural facilities.

- ✓ The sports and major sporting facilities plan.
- ✓ The master plan for industrial areas and activities.
- ✓ The master plan for archaeological and historical areas.

The master plan for tourism development specifies conservation arrangements, and the extension, protection and use of agricultural, rural and pastoral spaces. The framework encompasses the Agricultural Sector Development Program. The master plan for archaeological and historical areas defines terms for economic development and tourism infrastructure, given the specific nature and potential of the regions, and their economic and cultural needs.

Overall Law 01-20 does not include any implementing legislation specifying the relationship between the different instruments, or how to integrate heritage into planning policy and development. In terms of the development of the country's heritage, the master plan for archaeological and historical areas attempts to reconcile the imperatives of the preservation of cultural assets and the requirements of economic development.

SDAT 2025: A Strategy for Enhancing the Value Of Our Heritage

The SDAT 2025 is a strategic document designed to develop tourism in Algeria in a sustainable and inclusive manner. It is part of the

Schéma National d'Aménagement du Territoire (SNAT 2025) and is based on the law on regional planning and sustainable development. (ARZOUR, FOURA. 2019) Accordingly, the SDAT 2025 forms the backbone of Algeria's new tourism policy, and aims to enhance the country's tourism potential by focusing on five key issues: increasing foreign currency earnings and stimulating the economy, creating job opportunities, local development, enhancing Algeria's heritage and promoting the country's image internationally. Essentially, this policy aims to position tourism as a factor of openness and intercultural dialogue, thereby enhancing the value of our country's rich and diverse cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. It also aims to ensure that tourism makes an active contribution to creating a climate of peace and mutual understanding between different cultures.

Indeed, the tourism economy is closely linked to the territory, which is an expression of history and cultural diversity. Algeria's historical, cultural and natural heritage is a major asset for the development of tourism. In this way, the territory becomes the place where tourists travel, produce and consume, and local players, whether public, private or associative, can contribute to tourism production.

The Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement Touristique (SDAT) 2025 therefore places a strong emphasis on cultural tourism. This promising segment aims to enhance Algeria's rich historical and cultural heritage and contribute to the diversification of the national tourism offering.

The Tourism Development Master Plan (SDAT) 2025 has drawn up a strategy to promote Algeria's rich historical and cultural heritage. This strategy is based on different principles:

The plan envisages the enhancement of historic sites through a policy of preservation and the creation of tourist circuits to facilitate their discovery. Next, the museographic offer is taken into account, thanks to the establishment of a national scheme aimed at structuring and enriching existing museums. At the same time, promotional actions targeting the local population will be developed, as well as educational

initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the importance of cultural heritage (SDAT 2025).

Remembrance tourism will also be encouraged, with a focus on commemorative sites of specific historical and cultural significance. In addition, to facilitate the discovery of science and technology, the tourist offer is structured around dedicated spaces, such as planetariums and science palaces. In addition, a network of Maisons du patrimoine and Ecomusées will be set up to preserve traditional trades and promote cultural heritage (SDAT 2025).

In terms of cultural and festive offerings, the SDAT encourages the organization of festivals, craft fairs, concerts and other cultural events. These events attract tourists and highlight Algeria's artistic and cultural diversity.

And finally, the SDAT encourages collaboration between public and private players to develop sustainable cultural projects. These can include restoration initiatives, temporary exhibitions and educational programs.

By implementing these axes, Algeria can strengthen its appeal as a tourist destination while preserving its cultural heritage for future generations.

Presentation of Case study: Dellys

Along the Algerian coast, 105 kilometers east of Algiers, lies the long-forgotten town of Dellys. Its current name, "Dellys", is a simplification of its Arabic-era name "Tedelles", which can be associated with "Adellas", meaning a plant that lives near waterways and is called "dis" in French, itself derived from the Greek name "Adyma".

Located at the eastern end of the wilaya of Bouverdès, the commune of Dellys covers an area of 5132 hectares and has an estimated population of 32,954 (according to the RGPH 2008). A Daïra administrative center since 1984, it comprises the communes of Afir, Benchoud and Dellys.

Dellys has a varied topography. The south-eastern part of the commune is dominated by mountainous terrain, while the eastern part is marked by ridge slopes that slope down towards the Oued Oubay, offering picturesque landscapes. To the west, the hills gradually diminish, giving way to the Oued Sébaou valley, another of the region's major rivers.

This topographical diversity offers Dellys considerable economic and tourist potential. The commune is renowned for its agricultural produce, fishing resources and traditional

crafts. What's more, its exceptional natural setting and varied landscapes make it an attractive destination for tourists.



Figure 1

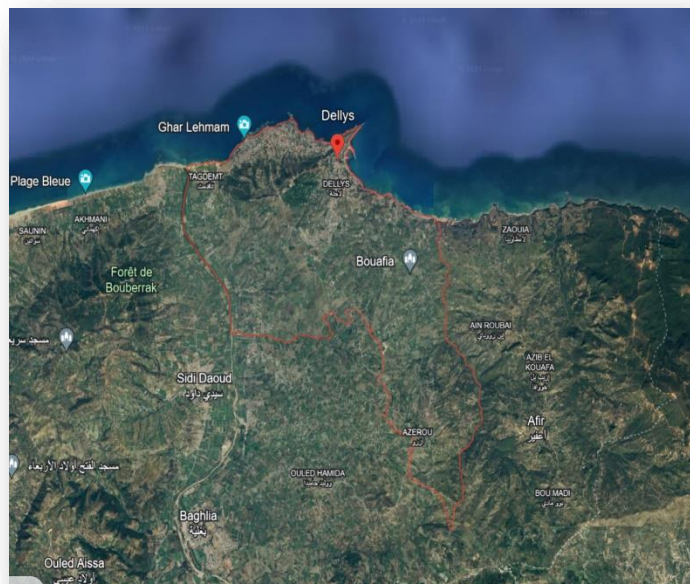


Figure 2

Figure 1 and 2. Dellys situation

The heritage potential of the town of Dellys

The town of Dellys is the result of a harmonious superposition of different civilizations that have left their mark over the centuries. In fact, the town's archaeological remains, historic buildings and urban development are a convincing illustration of the complex process that has contributed to the formation of its current

identity. These diverse elements give Dellys an exceptional heritage potential, acting as an authentic temporal gateway capable of offering residents and visitors an immersive experience through its history.

This region is characterized by vast spaces rich in historical and archaeological resources and scattered natural sites of great interest.



Figure 3 . The Roman cistern



Figure 4. The port



Figure 5 . Bengut lighthouse

The intangible heritage

The Dellys region boasts a rich and varied intangible heritage, with craftsmanship playing

a key role. (Atzeni,, Mocci,, Oggiano,, Di Simone, Pau,, Akretche, Chaabani,, Sadmi, & Casanovas,2012)...

Handicrafts: Handicrafts play a central role in Dellys' intangible heritage. The region is known for its handcrafted musical instruments, the creation of wooden models of various types of boats, and the perpetuation of traditional maritime craft-making.

In this context, the craft of basketry, known locally as "Doum" in reference to the dwarf palm tree, occupies a place of choice. At the same time, Dellys' chaabi music is an inseparable part of the local identity.

Craftsmanship: The art of basketry, known locally as "Doum" in reference to the dwarf palm tree, occupies a special place in Dellys craftsmanship. This ancestral know-how

translates into the creation of baskets, hats and other utilitarian and decorative objects.

Music and gastronomy Dellys' chaabi music is another integral part of the local identity. Passed down from generation to generation, it is deeply rooted in the lives of the local people. Dellys' culinary art enriches this intangible heritage, offering a variety of local specialties that reflect both its maritime heritage and its unique culinary culture.

Dellys' culinary art complements this intangible heritage by offering a variety of local specialties reflecting both its maritime heritage and its unique gastronomic culture.



Figure 6 . Basketry crafts



Figure 7. Musical instrument crafts

Methods

This article explores the links between heritage and cultural tourism in the town of Dellys. Its main objective is to assess the city's capacity to preserve its heritage while developing sustainable tourism.

To carry out this study, we conducted surveys with key institutions such as the tourism directorate, the Assemblée Populaire Communale (APC) and the daïra, as well as the consultancies responsible for heritage preservation in the region and travel agencies. These surveys enabled us to gather information on various aspects related to our study.

In addition to these surveys, we carried out a multi-criteria analysis. This analysis will enable us to evaluate different tourism development options according to a set of predefined criteria, such as heritage preservation, job creation, income generation and respect for the environment.

The validation of these different criteria was based on several sources of information, including literature research, similar case studies, and legislative guidelines. The combination of these data will enable us to obtain a complete and in-depth view of the current situation. On

this basis, we will be able to formulate pertinent recommendations aimed at strengthening heritage preservation and promoting sustainable tourism development

Result and Discussion

As part of our survey, we had the opportunity to talk with officials from the Boumerdès wilaya Tourism Department (DTA). The DTA is an official and essential partner in the development of tourism activities in the region. Its main mandate is to promote the tourism image of the Boumerdès wilaya, focusing on regional planning, information and tourist orientation.

During our interviews, respondents stressed the importance of heritage and cultural tourism as fundamental elements of the tourism sector. In particular, they stressed the major role played by heritage in the tourism configuration of the town of Dellys. This role is illustrated by the existence of two tourist expansion zones (ZET) in the region: Tagdempt and Les Salines, which boast solid tourism potential.

However, one important observation needs to be made. Despite the area's heritage classification under the 2007 PPSMVSS guidelines, heritage does not appear to be directly integrated into the city's tourism strategies. This observation highlights a possible disconnect between heritage potential and tourism development orientations.

Another point of note is the limited collaboration between tour guides, travel agencies and the Tourism Department. This results in limited data collection on tourist flows to the city.

It was also noted that the Tourism Department provides a platform entitled "<https://algeriatours.dz/fr>" offering a specific tourist itinerary for the town of Dellys. However, adoption of this platform remains modest, and the proposed itinerary is very limited in terms of heritage enhancement.

According to these actors, the development strategy of the wilaya of Boumerdès is based on several main axes.

- Promoting Boumerdès as a destination: Policies have been put in place to preserve and enhance the region's cultural heritage. The integration of crafts is also envisaged to contribute to local development.

- Balanced distribution of tourism activities: Planning is aimed at distributing tourism activities throughout the year.
- Promotion of means of transport: Particular attention is paid to facilitating visitor mobility.

Associations and travel agencies generally share the view that responsibility for tourism development lies primarily with the Tourism Department. They point out, however, that decisions taken by the latter are often unilateral and do not sufficiently incorporate the views of local stakeholders, with the notable exception of the APC and services deemed essential. This situation leads to limited collaboration with local players, as also mentioned by the Boumerdès Wilaya Department of Culture.

This situation persists despite recognition of the central role of heritage in the development of tourism in the town of Dellys. In addition, it should be noted that efforts to preserve heritage are hampered by legal and ministerial constraints, making it considerably more difficult to implement initiatives aimed at conserving and enhancing Dellys' heritage.

From the perspective of local players, the consultancy in charge of the city's PPSMVSS highlighted a worrying legal issue, particularly concerning the Casbah: the legal status of properties within the Casbah poses a major challenge. Most of these properties are either privately owned or religious property (Waqf), making their management and preservation a complex issue. The issue of state-owned property also presents obstacles to overcome, due to various ministerial ordinances.

This complex legal situation creates constraints and difficulties in implementing restoration and development projects within the city.

Local travel agencies are more interested in international tourism than domestic tourism. However, it is important to note that significant changes are underway in this area. Some agencies are gradually beginning to pay more attention to national tourism.

At the same time, tour guides from the surrounding regions are working hard to highlight Dellys' architectural heritage, particularly the Kasbah. They work closely with local agencies

and associations, reflecting a collective commitment to promoting the region's rich heritage.

Local associations attach great importance to cultural events. They organize film exhibitions, conferences, cultural and beach activities for young people, as well as volunteer clean-up initiatives.

These actions make the associations active players in the preservation of the region's culture. They recognize, however, that the primary responsibility for this preservation lies with the governing bodies and essential services.

Construction of the evaluation tool: Multicriteria analysis

According to researchers such as Hwan Suk Chris, who have proposed more than 150 individual indicators of sustainable development related to the economy, society, environment, culture and politics, we have listed the indicators frequently used in tourism sustainability research in recent years.

Economic dimension: Issues related to the economic impacts of tourism, measured by the benefits and costs generated by tourism activity over the long term, are presented in Table 1.

- Several factors influence the economy of the tourist destination, such as seasonality or the attractiveness of offers to tourists, making economic revenues variable and unstable.
- The volume of tourism spending in the destination and the existence of a tourism policy geared towards tourism services are a function of economic development.

Social dimension: Social impacts are grouped into four basic aspects,

- Excessive traffic, individual behavior, safety levels, moral conduct and traditional culture can upset the sociological balance of destinations.
- On the other hand, tourist satisfaction is linked to satisfaction with guide service, excursions and the overall tourism experience.

- Tour guides need to have in-depth knowledge, particularly of local accommodation, services and history.
- Protecting historical and cultural heritage is also important to providing tourists with a rich experience. Efforts to protect heritage enrich both the local population and local governments.
- Finally, residents' attitudes towards tourists also influence the latter's experience. When tourism improves residents' quality of life (protecting the environment and increasing profits), they are more welcoming to tourists.

Environmental dimension: Issues relating to the protection and conservation of biodiversity, natural resources and cultural heritage are included.

- Some territories, mainly rural areas, are highly vulnerable to human activities.
- In terms of environmental impact, tourism's main risks are pollution, the disappearance of natural areas and environmental erosion and degradation.

Based on research and studies on factors linked to heritage preservation and the implementation of a cultural tourism approach, we have identified a series of criteria and indicators relevant to the development of a heritage-based tourism activity. These criteria are divided into three fundamental dimensions: social, economic and environmental, and are grouped into 10 key areas:

- Cultural and historical heritage ;
- Tourism infrastructure ;
- Local interaction ;
- Environmental sustainability ;
- Safety and security ;
- Accessibility ;
- Culinary offer ;
- Promotion and visibility ;
- Immersive experience ;
- Economic development

The chosen criteria are evaluated according to a qualitative weighting system developed in consultation with the stakeholders involved: the Boumerdès wilaya Tourism and Crafts De-

partment, the Boumerdès wilaya Culture Department, the consultancy commissioned to design the "Plan Permanent de Sauvegarde et de Mise en Valeur du secteur sauvegardé de la ville de Dellys" ("PPSMVSS"), as well as various local associations, travel agencies and the Dellys crafts center. We opted for a qualitative

measurement scale organized as follows: Very poor or unsatisfactory, Poor or partially satisfactory, Average or acceptable, Good or satisfactory Very good or excellent. These indicators are assessed using a predefined, balanced 5-point scale.

Table 2. Rating scale used in the evaluation

1	2	3	4	5
Very poor or unsatisfactory	Poor or partially satisfactory	Moderate or acceptable	Good or satisfactory	Very good or excellent

The overall profile obtained from the radar diagrams highlights areas of cultural tourism where there are shortcomings requiring improvement. These areas require priority

attention to resolve the issues identified, while offering prospects for future development to promote tourism in the city.

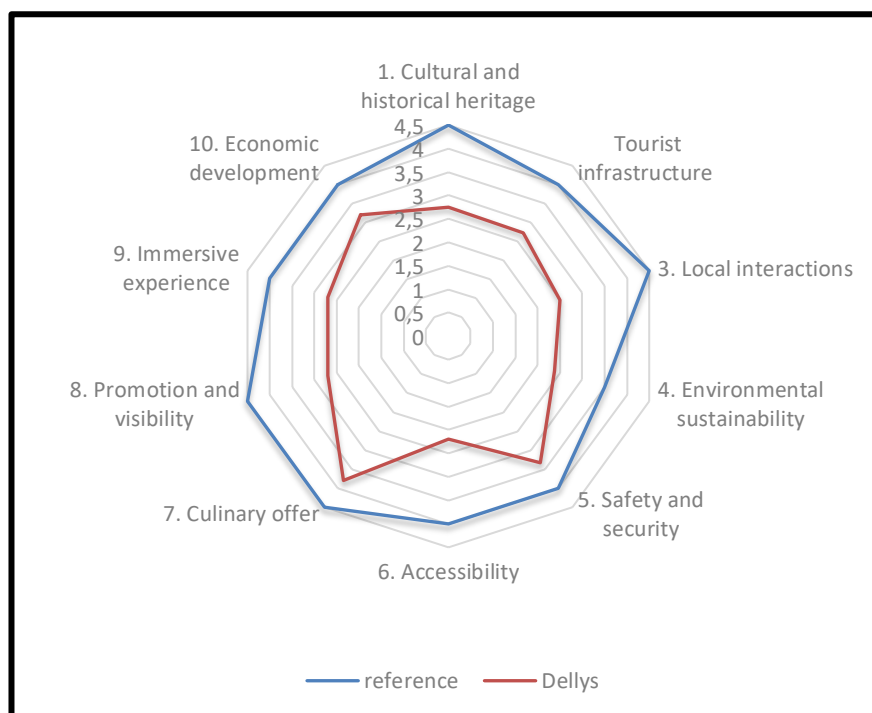


Figure 8. Radar diagrams

The assessment of Dellys' tourism potential highlights strengths and weaknesses in several key areas. This analysis will enable us to propose concrete actions to develop cultural tourism in a sustainable and inclusive way.

Accessibility

The town of Dellys is only accessible via the RN24, which can lead to problems of congestion and saturation. In addition, the lack of

suitable parking facilities for tourists is a major obstacle.

Local interaction and environmental sustainability

The local population is welcoming, but initiatives to stimulate interaction with tourists are needed. Similarly, environmental awareness and sustainable practices need to be encouraged.

Historical and cultural heritage, immersive experience, promotion and visibility

The lack of suitable tourist infrastructures, insufficient heritage conservation and poor communication are all obstacles to the development of cultural tourism.

Economic development, safety and culinary offerings

The city offers a dynamic economy, a safe environment and a rich and varied culinary offering.

Measures for improvement

Heritage is a fundamental pillar of any cultural tourism strategy in Dellys. However, its exploitation alone is not enough to guarantee sustainable tourism development. In fact, a multitude of other aspects need to be taken into account to ensure a harmonious and sustainable development of the sector.

These key elements include

- Tourism infrastructure: Adequate, modern infrastructure is essential to welcome visitors and offer them the best possible experience. This includes the development of varied accommodation, restaurants, leisure facilities and efficient transport.
- Local interaction: Encouraging interaction between tourists and the local population is essential to creating an authentic and enriching experience. This can be achieved through local guided tours, cultural workshops, community events and other initiatives.
- Environmental sustainability: The integration of environmental sustainability principles is essential to minimize the impact of tourism on the local environment. This involves implementing eco-responsible practices in tourism infrastructures and services, as well as raising visitors' awareness of environmental protection.
- Safety: Tourist safety is a sine qua non for the development of tourism. Measures must be taken to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for visitors, in collaboration with local authorities and law enforcement agencies.
- Accessibility: Facilitating access to the destination is crucial to attracting tourists.

This means developing adequate and diversified transport infrastructures, as well as efficient reception and information services.

- Culinary offerings: Local gastronomy is an important part of the tourism experience. Enhancing the value of culinary specialties and promoting a rich and varied culinary offering can contribute to the destination's appeal.
- Promotion and visibility: An effective communications strategy is essential to make the destination and its assets known to potential tourists. This involves developing targeted marketing campaigns, participating in trade shows and using digital tools.
- Immersive experience: Offering tourists an immersive, authentic experience is a key differentiating factor. This can be achieved by showcasing the region's cultural and historical heritage.

Conclusion

Heritage is an essential element of a cultural tourism strategy, but it is not enough. To ensure sustainable tourism development, other aspects need to be considered, such as tourism infrastructure, local interaction, environmental sustainability, safety, accessibility, culinary offer, promotion, visibility and immersive experience.

Cultural tourism is more than just visiting historical sites. It is a territorial development tool that attracts visitors, generates economic spin-offs, reconnects with historical roots, celebrates cultural diversity, promotes local know-how and crafts, and improves the quality of life of residents.

To enhance the value of Dellys' heritage and make it an attractive tourist destination, it is essential to strengthen the involvement of local authorities and stakeholders of a steering committee made up of public and private players, and the organization of consultations and training sessions with local stakeholders.

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