

Discovering the Ripa Pannonica – Innovation in interpretation and visitor management at the Limes heritage sites along the Danube

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Abstract

The Limes represents the border line of the Roman Empire at its greatest extent in the 2nd century AD. The Ripa Pannonica, the outer frontier of the Roman Pannonia province lies in the Carpathian Basin along the Danube. This heritage, as Frontiers of the Roman Empire – Ripa Pannonica in Hungary, was submitted in 2009 on the Hungarian World Heritage tentative list by the Secretariat of the Hungarian World Heritage Commission and the National Office of Cultural Heritage, as an extension to the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site. Due to the physical obstacle of the Danube, hardly any man-made obstacles like earthworks, walls or forts needed to be built: consequently, the site mainly takes shape on regional planners' and educated potential visitors' mental maps, a virtual product of their collective historic awareness.

In recent years, although major efforts have been made to develop the heritage of the Limes as a cultural route, and to create the network of stakeholders necessary to create and maintain a visible and feasible tourist product, progress has been relatively slow and difficult. Since the area along the Limes has been redeveloped countless times during the last 2000 years, it is an additional challenge to visualise the Roman theme as the core of the planned cultural route, as opposed to developing a non-thematic linear tourist product along the river Danube.

Based on expert interviews and site visits, the proposed paper aims to analyse the interpretation and visitor management techniques used at selected sites of the Ripa Pannonica, with special emphasis on their contribution to awareness-building as well as their effectiveness and efficiency in visitor experience creation.