



**World Natural Heritage
Protection and Research
Center**

Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural
Development of the People's Republic of
China

UNESCO World Heritage Forum Series 2014

The 2014 UNESCO World Heritage Forum Series will take place in Shilin, Yunnan Province, China, from 4-5 June, 2014. Jointly organized by UNESCO Beijing Office and the Natural World Heritage Protection and Management Center of the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of China (MHOARD), this forum will be hosted by the Shilin Scenic and Historic Area Administration Bureau. Supporting agencies include the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) China Office, the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITR_AP), the World Heritage Research Center of Peking University, the Tourism Research Institute of Nanjing University and the Tourism Research Center of Yunnan University. The Forum is sponsored by the Mercedes-Benz Star Fund.

Initiated by UNESCO Beijing Office, the World Heritage Forum Series has been held annually since 2012. The main purpose of the fora is to address major pressing challenges faced by World Heritage sites in terms of management, conservation and utilization, and to build a platform for relevant stakeholders to exchange and network in research, management and practices of World Heritage sites.

The theme of the 2014 Forum is Tourism Development and Rural Social-Economic Prosperity at World Heritage Sites. The Forum will involve renowned experts and scholars in the field of World Heritage tourism and community development, World Heritage site managers and governmental officials from around the world, as well as local stakeholders. Main participants of the Forum will include Mr. LI Rusheng, Deputy Director of the Urban Construction Department of the Ministry of Housing Urban-Rural Development of China (MOHURD), Mr. LIU Jiafu, Director of the World Natural Heritage Protection and Research Center of MOHURD, Ms. Beatrice KALDUN, Head of Culture Section of UNESCO Beijing Office, Prof. Walter JAMIESON from Thammasat University, Thailand, Prof. Mike ROBINSON from the University of Birmingham, U.K., Prof. SONG Feng from Peking University, Prof. ZHANG Jie from Nanjing University, Prof. ZHANG Chaozhi from Sun Yat-sen University, Ms. ZHUANG Youbo from Tsinghua University, Prof. DENG Yongjin from Yunnan University and other academics and experts in the field of World Heritage and tourism.

Topics to be discussed include: strategic overview of the relationship between World Heritage conservation, tourism development and local prosperity; challenges and opportunities of tourism development for World Heritage and local communities, and collaborative approaches to achieve sustainable balance between the three. Case studies under different national systems will also be presented, ranging from the management experiences of national parks in the United States, to the preparedness to future tourism pressure at Mount Laojunshan of the Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Areas World Heritage site in China.

As the host of this forum and as a typical case for discussion – being one of the 3 sub-sites of the South China Karst World Heritage site – Shilin is also a national scenic and historic area with comparatively long history of tourism development in China. Shilin is regarded as the world's best example of stone forests and it distinguishes itself by having the longest geomorphological history, spanning 270 million years. It is the best example of this landform within the South China Karst. Along with the profound impact deriving from China's socio-economic development and especially urbanization, the relationship between World Heritage conservation, tourism development and local socio-economic prosperity has become increasingly complex. In this context, in order to establish a long-term mechanism for a collaborative approach and sustainable development, the local government and the World Heritage site management authorities of Shilin have made considerable efforts through investigation and research, the findings of which will be presented and discussed with participants at the forum.

Considering the importance and representativeness of the Forum theme, the outcome of the Forum is foreseen to make a significant contribution to the scientific research, policy making and management practice in heritage protection, tourism development and local prosperity at World Heritage sites in China and beyond.