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## MUSEUMS & TOURISM

18 MAY - INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY

2009



[http://icom.museum/2009\\_contents.html](http://icom.museum/2009_contents.html)

## International Museum Day 2009



### ICOM and WFFM launch International Museum Day 2009 on “Museums and Tourism”

On or around 18 MAY 2009, thousands of museums on all continents will be celebrating ethical, responsible, sustainable tourism, showing how heritage can bring tourists and local communities together in new, mutually beneficial relationships.

Alissandra Cummins, President of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and Carla Bossi-Comelli, President of the World Federation of Friends of Museums (WFFM/FMAM) unveiled a joint effort to showcase ethical tourism on International Museum Day 2009 this year. How can museums foster a new relationship between visitors and the local communities which rarely have a chance to meet to promote sustainable development?

Cummins suggests: “It’s the heritage connection. Heritage is our shared identity-as humanity, as community. It’s whatever people like to think about themselves, whatever they believe in and however they choose to express it. “Museums & Tourism” encourages museum professionals and volunteers to work together with visitors and tourists, creating interactions with local communities in order to experience heritage both inside and outside of the museum walls.”

ICOM created International Museum Day in 1977 to encourage awareness about the role of museums in the development of society. Momentum has been rising unabated ever since. In 2007, ICOM celebrated “Universal Heritage” and last year, ICOM inaugurated its own “Social Change and Development” with the first virtual global museums event ever at The Tech Museum of Innovation on Second Life. In real life, the Day garnered record-breaking participation in most museums holding events on 18th of May 2008. More than 20,000 museums in 90 countries from Australia to Zimbabwe participated.

This May, museums will host contests, workshops, conferences, performances, stay open day and night, and devise new virtual or real tours where itineraries lead to and from museums and local sights. As opposed to the standard tour, museum itineraries are embracing awareness-raising, educational, thematic, historical or chronological tours, with spice and passion, based on collections and sharing expertise. Inspired by World Heritage tours and high-end museum travel, the aim is to bring deeper mutual understanding drawing knowledge from heritage experienced together. “For visitors, tourists and locals along with curators and volunteers,” –states Cummins – “International Museum Day can become a bonding experience.” ([http://icom.museum/2009\\_contents.html](http://icom.museum/2009_contents.html))

ICOM and the WFFM, along with UNESCO, UNWTO, ICOMOS, ICCROM and other organizations have long emphasized the importance of heritage awareness for sustainable tourism. “The ICOM-WFFM “Declaration for Worldwide Sustainable Cultural Tourism” is a first step in a long term project partnering our organizations to tackle this new challenge,” declared WFFM President Carla Bossi-Comelli. “Since friends deal more directly with visitors, a majority of whom are tourists, we are ideally positioned to promote respect for our heritage. It is fundamental to focus clearly the role of associations of friends in undertaking actions that speak louder than words. ICOM and WFFM should bear in mind their own Code of Ethics as a fruitful source of principles to engage local communities.”

Reacting to public and private agendas to develop museums to boost tourism as new destinations and given the present financial crisis, ICOM and WFFM hope “ethical tourism” and “heritage bonding” will put communities back into the equation, starting on International Museum Day 2009. “There’s no reason why this won’t be the beginning of some new lifetime relationships! In any case, it’s surely a new way of looking at both tourism and museums!” adds Julien Anfruns, new Director General of ICOM.

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