

AUSTRALIAN ALPS THEMATIC INTERPRETATION STRATEGY

Creating strong bonds between Experience Seekers and the Australian Alps

Prepared for the Australian Alps National Landscape Inc.



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“
Tell the stories. Bring out the character
of the people, back then and now ... and
their relationship to this amazing
environment.”

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Context

The adoption of the Australian Alps as a National Landscape and its development as a destination for the high yield international target market, the Experience Seeker, brings a new emphasis to visitor communications. At the highest level, this will see the positioning of the Australian Alps as a destination in the international market, as part of Tourism Australia's marketing of iconic national landscapes.

The National Landscape is a cornerstone for continuing efforts to build a sustainable tourism industry across the Australian Alps and acknowledges that in gearing the destination to Experience Seekers, there will be flow-on benefits for the domestic visitor market.

As a result of the emerging destination and its unique image, highly-targeted interpretive communications that build the brand is a high priority.

Interpretation has a vital role in shaping visitor perceptions of a destination, through both purposeful communication and its capacity to inform and drive the development process for visitor experiences that deliver the Brand promise.

The Australian Alps Thematic Interpretation Strategy has been prepared as part of the *Australian Alps National Landscape Tourism Master Plan* development process.

1.2. Purpose of the strategy

This Interpretation Strategy aims to provide a blueprint for Brand-aligned interpretation development across the Australian Alps area, keeping a seamless focus on strong, consistent messages across the experience cycle, from marketing communications to delivery of on-site experiences and post-visit communications.

The purpose of the strategy is to:

- provide a high-level road map for enhancing the Australian Alps visitor experience, revealing the meaning and depth of the place and its people with reference to the Alps Brand;
- ensure that interpretation is focused on the needs and desired experiences of the end users as opposed to an internal perspective;

- set a direction for integrated interpretation across state/territory borders and land management jurisdictions; and
- foster the integration of interpretation into future public and private infrastructure development.

1.3. Methodology

The Interpretation Australia Association defines interpretation as “a means of communicating ideas and feelings which enrich people’s understanding and appreciation of their world and their role within it”. It does this through provoking thought and response, revealing new insights, and helping people make personal connections with the material being interpreted.

There is a clear distinction between simply giving facts and information, and the broader intent that is achieved through interpretation’s power to reveal new perspectives.

This Interpretation Strategy uses the world best practice approach of Thematic Interpretation, based on 20 years of communications psychology research and centred on the needs of the visitor.

Thematic Interpretation recognises that the most powerful impressions people take away with them from a site or place are the conclusions – or meanings – they have drawn from the facts presented. Information is therefore tailored to assist visitors in understanding the local place in a way that informs their own lives.

This is done through the use of themes, which are high-level ideas deliberately designed to help visitors easily gain ‘take-home’ messages.

The methodology in developing the Australian Alps Interpretation Strategy has included:

- review of background documents;
- analysis of the current and potential Australian Alps visitor experience for the international Experience Seeker market targeted by Tourism Australia;
- scoping of key interpretive features in relation to the Australian Alps Brand;
- site familiarisations;
- scoping of desired audience experiences based on existing tourism research and drawing on local anecdotal evidence;
- development of themes, drawing on theme-writing workshops conducted at Beechworth and Jindabyne as well as informal contributions at meetings conducted as part of the consultation process for the *Australian Alps National Landscape Tourism Master Plan*;
- consideration of the tourism framework outlined in the *Australian Alps National Landscape Tourism Master Plan*; and
- media selection for delivery of themes to audiences.

2. DESIRED VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Experience Seekers pursue immersive, engaging experiences that are real opportunities to interact with local places and culture. They prefer personalised experiences rather than mass tourism, are well-educated, leaders among their peers and environmentally-conscious.

They are interested in insights rather than facts and in inquiry and discovery as a basis for developing understanding, rather than force-fed information. They seek to understand a destination in its own right but are also open to the way in which the holiday experience enriches, challenges or shapes their perspectives of their own lives.

While they have high expectations, they want information delivery consistent with the authentic sense of place and they perceive value in the context of the environment and timing in which it is delivered.

Being tertiary-educated and inquisitive, these individuals understand how brands work and operate. As such they understand and would expect brand messages to be succinct, focused on their motivations and provide a credible, compelling message. ... These people are mature in communication terms ...".¹

Research shows that Experience Seekers are avid users of technology and like to learn from and share information with their peers.

3. AUSTRALIAN ALPS BRAND

The essence of the Australian Alps Brand is the 'Spirit of the Challenge'. The Brand positioning statement is a promise of:

- *mountain range upon mountain range and uninterrupted horizons;*
- *a mystical place of ever-changing weather, of winter snow and summer wildflowers, of gnarled snow gums and local characters;*
- *spend time and learn from the people and their stories on the rooftop of Australia.*

Journey through the high country where nature and heritage culture will inspire and challenge your spirit.

It is a Brand offering a high level of engagement with a vast landscape yet delivered through personal, intimate encounters at the local level. Its power and excitement suggest an experience that will enliven and transform those who visit and lead to a lasting bond with this distinctive place and people.

It is mystical and adventurous yet down-to-earth; uplifting and awesome yet remote and challenging. It offers a promise of personally meaningful connection and interpretation is a key means for delivering on this promise.

¹ Tourism Australia information brochure on "Australia's Ideal Visitor: The Experience Seeker".

4. INTERPRETIVE PRINCIPLES

The following principles for development of interpretation draw on consultation conducted as part of the *Australian Alps National Landscape Tourism Master Plan* development process:

- Interpretation must reflect or help to build one or more themes established in the *Australian Alps Thematic Interpretation Strategy* – these themes are the primary filter for determining specific media and content.
- Interpretation development and delivery should support the Australian Alps tourism framework, as outlined in the *Australian Alps National Landscape Tourism Master Plan*.
- Static interpretive media will be visually low-key to avoid impairing natural and cultural heritage values – central to the attraction of visitors to the Australian Alps.
- Delivery of static interpretation will occur in interpretive nodes or focus on selected locations for maximum impact, as opposed to signage or installations that are widely scattered or fragmented.
- Where possible, any introduced interpretive elements will be integrated with or enhance existing infrastructure.
- In keeping with the Australian Alps Brand, interpretation will emphasise direct engagement with the environment through sensory aspects of the experience.
- Interpretation will take into account the fact that contemplation is a form of activity facilitating powerful and personal connections to place. For example, orienting visitors to a particular viewline could enable effective interpretation delivery.

5. EXISTING INTERPRETATION

Stakeholder consultation has acknowledged that current interpretation across the Australian Alps is patchy, with inconsistent presentation and varying levels of quality. Interpretation is currently provided face-to-face through guided tours, with the majority of static interpretation delivered in National Parks and focused on flora and fauna.

Local interpretation on the whole is not connected to the greater Australian Alps context or the key Brand strengths of human interaction with a sweeping, dramatic landscape. This is currently a significant missed opportunity to build strong visitor understandings and connections with the Alps, both in content and presentation. The Australian Alps National Parks Co-operative Management Program has recognised this in developing an *Australian Alps National Parks Style Guide* to introduce a visual identity across National Parks within the Alps.

The absence of central messages or 'big ideas' makes it difficult to structure interpretation in a way that meets visitor needs or to set a direction for development of strategic interpretation. It is also a barrier for tourism organisations, land managers, resort operators and tourism operators in developing interpretive materials relevant to the Experience Seeker.

In addition, there is little cross-linking of key sites or features to help visitors build a holistic sense of their experience or to support self-selection or discovery that reflects their own particular interests, whether walking, wildlife, bird-watching, cultural heritage or a myriad of other natural and cultural values learning that the Australian Alps offers.

6. POTENTIAL INTERPRETATION

With the introduction of an Australian Alps Brand and the Tourism Master Plan, there is now an opportunity to build strong, inter-related interpretation, across the destination and geared to the needs of the Experience Seeker.

Targeting of a discrete interpretive audience ensures that what are often scarce interpretive resources are not diluted. At the same time, interpretation developed for the Experience Seeker is likely to have wide appeal to other interpretive audiences, whether domestic or intrastate.

This establishes a defined paradigm within which interpretation can function and be actively and effectively managed. It also provides a strategic basis for ongoing collaboration of public and private organisations and individuals who deliver interpretation as part of visitor experiences.

The most critical interpretive need across the Australian Alps is for interpretation delivery to establish a meaningful context for the Alps as a whole, carried into each level of the visitor journey – from regions to specific sites or experiences. In establishing the meaningful context in a crafted way, it is essential to communicate what makes each place special or significant in relation to the Brand and interpretive themes, before interpreting specifics about local features or values.

Visitors such as Experience Seekers expect interpretation to be easily accessible. Establishing the context provides a doorway through which they can enter and engage with subject matter – and feel that the interpretation is geared to them.

7. INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Themes are, in effect, the main take-home messages that a destination, National Park, tourism operator or tourism organisation wants visitors to leave with. They are the kinds of messages that you want the visitor to share with friends, families and neighbours on their return home.

Thematic Interpretation is based on determining the themes – the messages that visitors carry home – at the beginning of the interpretive planning process and then designing interpretation to structure and facilitate delivery of the themes.

Themes sit at the heart of the interpretation process. At the level of this Strategic Interpretation Plan, themes provide an umbrella from which local messages – in effect, sub-themes – can be stepped down.

The following Australian Alps themes are expressed as statements of intent. The tone and style of their communication to visitors will depend on the delivery media and the location.

7.1 Four themes

Themes draw on outcomes of theme-writing workshops held as part of consultation for the Tourism Master Plan. The suite of four themes for the Australian Alps, with examples of the range of underpinning ideas that can build or reinforce them, are:

Theme 1

In the Australian Alps, you can know the call of the true spirit of Australia, birthed in an unforgiving yet exhilarating landscape.

The theme is a 'launching pad' for connections to:

- the mythological aspect of the Alps – its symbolism and the way its presence transcends our daily human lives, and the way in which the legends and myths are part of Australians' national identity;
- Indigenous heritage and connection to country;
- the Australian-ness of the mountains, snow gums, wildlife, and the introduced brumbies;
- the risk-taking and adventure of the mountain cattlemen and the big human story of the Snowy Hydro Scheme and the gold mining heritage ("the way people have lived here in the past and still do!");
- the remarkable effort in developing the ski industry and skiing as a sport; and
- the capacity for all of this to touch visitors deeply and affect their perspective and understanding of their own lives.

Theme 2

Nature unleashes its full force in the Australian Alps, shaping dramatic landscapes with fire and ice – and changing our view of the world, too.

The theme is a creative 'launching pad' to the juxtaposition of:

- searing wildfires and their rejuvenation and other roles in the ecology of the Alps; and
- ice in winter, combined with snow metres deep, and the way it leads to key features in the landscape, from snow gums to alpine waterways and the adaptations of flora and fauna – "... cool-climate specialist plant and animal

species that have evolved unique physiological characteristics enabling them to survive in an environment subject to extreme climate variation.”²

It also plays with the juxtaposition of the Alps in relation to stereotypes of Australia as an ‘outback’ nation, e.g.:

- international expectations of beaches, open spaces and summer heat contrasted with the Alps’ snow, alpine features and vast mountain ranges.

And it also provides a doorway as a context for iconic natural features such as Australia’s highest mountain, Mt Kosciuszko and for the Alps’ water story.

Theme 3

In the vast, rugged landscapes on the rooftop of Australia, the characters and stories loom larger-than-life and their energy lives on in today’s Australian Alps communities.

The theme is a creative ‘launching pad’ for:

- the big character-driven stories of surviving in the Alps and the high-profile locations such as Mt Kosciuszko/the Snowy River; and aspects such as making a living, building communities, and working and raising families in isolation and a harsh climate;
- insight into the universal human qualities that the stories and sense of place combine to foster resilience, non-conformity, determination, outsiders vs belonging, inspiration etc
- contemporary lifestyle – how do people survive and thrive in remote towns and communities.

Theme 4

Away from the deserts and beaches of the hot, dry continent of Australia, there’s a surprising place where you can have fun in the snow.

Connects with:

- “the wettest, coldest part of the hottest, driest continent” – skiing or being in the snow in Australia has the “braggability factor” for international visitors;
- start of multi-million dollar snow sport and snow play industry – from Kiandra Snowshoe Club in 1861 to today’s significant ski slopes and resorts;

² Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves, National Heritage Listing, 2008.

- Australia's role in international skiing;
- fun aspect of being in the snow, regardless of skiing or sport interests.

7.2 Using the themes

Working with themes at the local level

Themes set the direction for messages at the local level and should be integrated into locally-based interpretation, using local features and strengths as the building blocks to deliver the themes.

Use of themes across the destination at a range of levels is an important part of establishing a quality of seamlessness for the visitor experience.

Include intangibles

The Brand offers an experience of personal change-making through immersion in a spirit of place and people. It is therefore important that interpretation delivery makes links between tangible elements (the physical features that visitors can see and touch) and the intangible qualities (those that are symbolic or represent beliefs and values that are a universal part of our human experience).

8. INTERPRETATION DELIVERY

8.1 Recommendations

8.1.1 New way of thinking

Interpretation is a core tool for the creation of memorable visitor experiences. Using it to maximum advantage requires a new way of thinking for the Australian Alps – and a willingness to take interpretation 'outside the box'.

This requires awareness-raising of the value of integrating interpretation into product design and development across the tourism spectrum – not only guided tours/activities and National Parks attractions but also accommodation, visitor services, restaurants and tourism retail.

Visitor services staff in town and parks-based visitor centres and other tourism-related service delivery staff are key players in providing seamless interpretation across the Australian Alps and in enhancing the local visitor experience. Industry communication and training programs should aim to raise awareness of the need to incorporate interpretation into front-line roles, as well as support skill development in ways to appropriately engage visitors and deliver interpretive messages.

The experience may be remarkably different from one visitor to the next, depending on the choices made by the visitor along the way. But the availability of theme-driven interpretation in public settings, commercial products and from websites and individual operators enables visitors – across their varying journeys – to make meaningful connections and leave with strong take-home messages focused in a consistent 'zone of understanding'.

True integration of interpretation will also result in operators and tourism groups understanding the need to provide cross-linkages and referrals so that visitors are guided in taking a seamless journey – one of understanding and insight.

A coordinated effort is essential to drive implementation of Thematic Interpretation and operator take-up across the Australian Alps, as well as forge partnership arrangements. Options include the appointment of a dedicated co-ordinator, the assignment of co-ordination responsibilities as part of existing roles or the establishment of an interpretive working group.

8.1.2 Strength of small tourism operators

The Australian Alps tourism sector is characterised by a high level of small operators. This is a strength for interpretation delivery as the region's tourism operators in many cases have untapped potential to deliver face-to-face and other interpretation.

Due to the scale of many businesses, they can provide personal, meaningful interpretation relating to their offering or the wider sub-regional or regional offering, as part of booking, on-site and post-visit activities. This kind of relationship development yields benefits for individual operators and the Australian Alps as a whole.

Many operators may not even recognise that their lifestyle, location, or property could be the foundation of a meaningful interpretive experience that is delivered informally through a story incorporated into their website or product brochure, or designed into their tourism product.

“Visitors are often wanting to know a lot about our family and how we came to be here and do what we do: all the lifestyle stuff. It took a while before we realised this is part of how they figure out what makes this place tick.” – workshop participant

Region-wide workshops – potentially in conjunction with Australian Alps Brand workshops – would show operators how to work with the *Australian Alps Thematic Interpretation Strategy* to provide a richer experience for their customers, one they would wholeheartedly recommend to others and that may even lead to a return visit.

8.1.3 Focus on clusters, journeys and experience loops

In keeping with the Tourism Master Plan framework, interpretation delivery focuses on the destination as a whole; clusters, journeys and experience loops; and tourism products.

An interpretation delivery plan to be developed by stakeholders for each cluster, key journey and experience loop will guide integration of interpretation into experience development and help ensure that interpretation at this level 'plugs into' the wider Australian Alps Brand and experience.

8.1.4 The people factor

Stronger emphasis is needed on people and their stories, lifestyle and interaction with the challenging environment. This can occur as part of static interpretation, online, digital media, print materials and through face-to-face interpretation and at local events.

8.1.5 Consistent visual identity

A working party with representation from Australian Alps National Parks, alpine resorts and RTOs should determine the best framework for applying a consistent visual identity across Australian Alps interpretive devices. This will take into account

relationships between the Australian Alps Brand identity, the Australian Alps National Parks style guide and local branding requirements.

Consideration should be given to establishing a core set of graphic elements to provide flexibility across diverse needs while still enabling the application of an identity that amplifies the destination message.

8.1.6 Use of relevant technology

Experience Seekers have a preference for technology that meets their needs. Appropriate technology can also help to minimise the introduction of signage into natural areas.

Options for consideration include podcasts, vodcasts, web-based interpretation, Google Earth access, delivery of interpretation via mobile phones, and wildlife 'cam' revealing animal behaviour in natural habitats.

8.1.7 Development of interpretive e-kit

Due to visitor needs and the dispersal of operators, there is merit in the development of an interpretive e-kit, with relevance to all sub-regions. The kit could form the basis of a training program.

The e-kit should include simple templates with a Brand-aligned masthead, available for operators to use in producing their own fact sheets or interpretation hand-outs in relation to their story, activity, accommodation property, location or other features of interest. Other support materials could include PDF files with guidelines for using themes to present locally-based information, examples of how different types of operators could integrate interpretation into their product design and websites, and suggestions for how to engage with customers to enhance their experience.

8.2 THE ROAD MAP

The following media matrix focuses on delivery of interpretation to the Experience Seeker. It matches themes to delivery media for the identified audience, providing a strategic approach to communication with visitors.

It shows the need for a stepped communications approach across the experience cycle – from pre-visit to returning home.

Interpretation delivery will vary for audience sub-sets, depending on country of origin. For the purposes of the media matrix, the Global Experience Seeker is the audience.

AUDIENCE: GLOBAL EXPERIENCE SEEKER

MEDIA	Theme 1 Spirit of Australia	Theme 2 Fire and ice	Theme 3 Mythical people & stories	Theme 4 Snow
PRE-VISIT				
Australian Alps website	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tourism Australia, Vic, NSW, ACT websites and travel media kits	✓	✓	✓	✓
RTO websites and travel media kits ³	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parks, resorts, operator websites ⁴	✓	✓	✓	✓
Introductory audio/vodcast for downloading from key websites	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reference to themes in regional and operator marketing collateral	✓	✓	✓	✓

MEDIA	Theme 1 Spirit of Australia	Theme 2 Fire and ice	Theme 3 Mythical people & stories	Theme 4 Snow
ON-SITE				
Develop and implement an Interpretation Delivery Plan for each of the Clusters, as per the following:				
<p>Baw Baw Cluster</p> <p>(Mt Baw Baw – Rawson – Erica – Walhalla village area)</p> <p>The cluster has particular strengths in delivery of Themes 1 and 3.</p> <p>Interpretation Delivery Plan to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop cluster-focused audio podcast for download from regional/operator websites • Identify and prepare an interpretive profile/story for a 	✓		✓	✓

³ Themes at this level are delivered with a greater focus on cluster points of difference and particular local strengths and the way they illuminate the themes.

⁴ Theme delivery at this level is built on the linking of site-specific strengths, features and atmosphere to the Alps-wide take-home messages.

<p>key contemporary and a key historic character for the Cluster, for use on websites and in print materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify critical locations for orientation/interpretation to present an Alps and cluster focus, particular emphasising the cluster's point of difference – <i>the thrill of life in the mountains, then and now.</i> Ensure that local interpretation establishes the Australian Alps connection. Support Baw Baw Alpine Village enhancement of interpretation and visitor information. Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships supporting interpretation delivery. 	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Buller Cluster (inc. Mansfield – Mt Buller – Mt Stirling area)</p> <p>The cluster has particular strengths in delivery of Themes 1 and 3.</p> <p>Interpretation Delivery Plan to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop audio podcast for download from regional/operator websites, focused on cluster strengths. Identify and prepare an interpretive profile/story for a key contemporary and a key historic character, for use on websites and in print materials. Identify critical locations for orientation/interpretation to present an Alps and cluster focus, taking into account key visitor stopping points. Incorporate interpretation as part of leading lookouts, e.g. Powers Lookout north of Mansfield). Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships supporting interpretation delivery. 	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Bogong Cluster (towns and resorts from Wangaratta to Omeo along the Great Alpine Road, Bogong High Plains Road, and King Valley food/wine area)</p> <p>The cluster has particular strengths in delivery of Themes 1 and 4.</p> <p>Interpretation Delivery Plan to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop cluster-focused audio podcast for download from regional/operator websites Identify and prepare an interpretive profile/story for a 	✓	✓	✓	✓

<p>key contemporary and a key historic character, for use on websites and in print materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify critical locations for orientation/interpretation to present an Alps and cluster focus, taking into account key visitor stopping points. Incorporate interpretation into leading lookouts, e.g. Razorback Range (Mt Hotham), The Horn (Mt Buffalo). Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships supporting interpretation delivery. 	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Kosciuszko Cluster (inc. towns and resorts along the Kosciuszko Alpine Way and associated drives between Jindabyne and Corryong)</p> <p>The cluster has particular strengths in delivery of Themes 1, 2 and 4.</p> <p>Interpretation Delivery Plan to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop cluster-focused audio podcast for download from regional/operator websites. Identify and prepare an interpretive profile/story for a key contemporary and a key historic character for use on websites and in print materials. Identify critical locations for orientation/interpretation to present an Alps and cluster focus, taking into account key visitor stopping points. Mt Kosciuszko peak – establish interpretation node as part of arrival experience off chairlift, including incorporation of an orientation sign. Develop interpretation as part of improvements to leading lookouts at Charlottes Pass and Scammels Lookout. Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships supporting interpretation delivery. 	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Yarrangobilly (Emerging) Cluster (inc. Tumut, Tumbarumba and towns along the Snowy Valley Way; Yarrangobilly Caves precinct)</p> <p>Interpretation Delivery Plan to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop cluster-focused audio podcast for download from regional/operator websites Identify and prepare an interpretive profile/story for a key contemporary and a key historic character, for use on 	✓	✓	✓	✓

<p>websites and in print materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify critical locations for orientation/interpretation to present an Alps and cluster focus, taking into account key visitor stopping points. • Identify key sites for static interpretation of Indigenous culture that will support further development of Indigenous guide-led experiences. • Include interpretation as part of improvements to leading lookouts. • Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships supporting interpretation delivery. 	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Develop an Interpretation Delivery Plan for key journeys and experience loops, using the most relevant themes. This will help to ensure the delivery of an integrated experience and associated marketing.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Develop Australian Alps-wide training program to encourage operators to develop personalised interpretation tours, orientation, fact sheets, informal/formal presentations etc.)</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Develop Australian Alps Brand-aligned interpretive merchandise, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • postcard series featuring Characters of the Alps (image & brief vignette developed around theme). Designed as collectibles. • high quality DVD focusing on the leading Brand-aligned experiences identified in the Tourism Master Plan. • book product featuring walks combined with interpretation and geared to a price point of about \$10 • T-shirts with a character/story 	✓	✓	✓	✓

MEDIA	Theme 1 Spirit of Australia	Theme 2 Fire and ice	Theme 3 Mythical people & stories	Theme 4 Snow
POST-VISIT				
Operators to develop give-aways as reinforcers post-visit, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bookmark • CD of images or video footage taken during a multi-day, multi-modal or other experience • CD of images showing the destination in the opposite season (snow vs green) to encourage repeat visit <i># reinforcers costed into product price</i>	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓	✓ ✓
Operator follow-up after visit, reinforcing relevant themes e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • newsletter • email messages • customer survey incorporating reinforcement interpretive messages 	✓	✓	✓	✓

8.3 EVALUATION AND MONITORING

Evaluation and monitoring is important for the success of interpretation programs and activities in meeting the audience needs.

An evaluation program should be incorporated into development of destination-wide interpretation training and cluster/journey/experience loop delivery plans, with operators encouraged to include interpretation evaluation as part their activities.

Cluster-based and operator-based interpretive programs should be evaluated and monitored at three key stages:

- pre-implementation, when brochures, signs or prototypes of installations are tested with the audience using, for example, mockups on-site or in focus groups;
- during the early stages of interpretation delivery, to determine if interpretation needs modifying for greater effectiveness. Options include unobtrusive observations of the way visitors are responding to or using interpretation; noting increases or decreases in site impacts; or regular debriefing of frontline staff;
- a comprehensive evaluation after a reasonable period of operation, often after a year.