



CAMINOS DE **ARTE** RUPESTRE PREHISTÓRICO  
PREHISTORIC **ROCK ART** TRAILS  
CHEMINS DE L'**ART** RUPESTRE PRÉHISTORIQUE

Cultural route  
of the Council of Europe  
Itinéraire culturel  
du Conseil de l'Europe



## Good Practice Handbook for the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails”



## I. Historical Background

On 15 July 2005, the institutions forming the European Network of the First Population and Prehistoric Rock Art (known by its initials in Spanish – REPPARP) signed an agreement in Santillana del Mar (Cantabria) which initiated the process of studying the technical and administrative process leading towards the application to the Council of Europe for the recognition as a European Cultural Route for the prehistoric sites with rock art open to the public in the associated regions.

Within this agreement, the technicians of the associated public administrations and other organisations with responsibility in the management of Cultural Heritage were authorised to begin the technical and administrative process that would lead to the recognition as a European Cultural Route for the project, which since 2007 has been known as “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails” (also known by its initials in Spanish – CARP). Between 2008 and 2010 the project increased in dimensions, both in the number of associated regions and the number of rock art destinations belonging to the Trails, which finally reached 120 sites (from the original number of 48).

As an essential part of this process, a Good Practice Handbook was drafted (a technical action plan), which would help to homogenise the management of the sites and give the Trails uniformity in terms of the integral management of the destinations included in it. A European Cultural Route is an itinerary which runs through one or several countries, and is organised around a theme whose historical, artistic or social interest is seen as European, either because of the geographical emplacement of the route or because of its content and meaning.

Within this framework, first the European Network of the First Population and Prehistoric Rock Art (REPPARP) in southwest Europe (Ariège, Aragón, Cantabria, Asturias, Ciudad Rodrigo – Castilla y León, Castilla-La Mancha, Comunitat Valenciana and Andalusia), and since 2008 the International Association “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails”, together with the Local Government Councils and Departments with responsibility in Cultural and Archaeological Heritage in the regions associated with the “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails” project, have designed a Cultural Route whose aims are to conserve, know, disseminate and facilitate the access for society to the legacy of the first prehistoric populations in Europe, with their rock art as the main thematic point.

The Trails consists of archaeological sites belonging to European prehistory which hold prehistoric rock art of scientific, artistic and cultural interest, also including museums and similar centres devoted to Prehistory and Rock Art in Europe.

Therefore, in the committee meeting of the Interreg IIIB SUDOE REPPARP project, held in Cuenca on 7 June 2005, it was unanimously agreed to initiate the administrative and technical

process leading to the validation of the route formed by the visitable rock art and archaeological sites in the associated regions as a European Cultural Route.

The agreement signed by all the political and social authorities in the regions originally participating in the Interreg IIIB SUDOE REPPARP project, in Santillana del Mar (Cantabria) on 15 July 2005 was the first step in the application to the Advisory Committee of the European Institute of Cultural Routes for the ensemble of archaeological sites to be recognised as a European Cultural Route, within Resolution (98) 4 on the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes.

Finally, on 6-8 May 2010, in the Eureka Building of the Council of Europe, the project was explained to the Advisory Committee on Cultural Routes, who gave a positive report on the project. On 10 June 2010, the General Direction IV, Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, of the Council of Europe, officially informed that the "Prehistoric Rock Art Trails" project had been recognised as a European Cultural Route.

Previously, in October 2005, a Technical Seminar was held in Ciudad Rodrigo (Salamanca, Spain) with the title "Good Practice in the Management of Rock Art sites open to the Public", in which technicians in the associated regions, coordinated by José Antonio Lasheras Corruchaga (as Director of the Seminar) approached the matter, and drafted a first working document.

Shortly afterwards, technicians of the eight public administrations with responsibility in Cultural Heritage in the eight regions at that time associated with the REPPARP network, held a technical meeting in Zaragoza (2 December 2005) which was able to define the Handbook, which was accepted by the International Association CARP (an association registered on 27 May 2008), which was the continuation of the Interreg IIIB SUDOE REPPARP project, and which is currently the managing body of the Council of Europe Cultural Route "Prehistoric Rock Art Trails".

The present document is therefore the Good Practice Handbook, for the management of rock art sites belonging to Council of Europe Cultural Route "Prehistoric Rock Art Trails". It was drafted by the following technicians:

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- Ángeles Hernández Prieto and Abigail Pereta Aybar (Government of Aragón)
- Pascal Alard (Ariège)
- Pilar Noval Vallina and Ángel Villa Valdés (Principality of Asturias)
- Ramón Montes Barquín (REPPARP Technical Coordinator)
- Pedro Fernández Vega (Autonomous Community of Cantabria)
- José Antonio Lasheras Corruchaga (Director of the Seminar, and of the Museum of Altamira)
- Alfonso Caballero Klink (Government of the Communities of Castilla La Mancha)
- Jesús del Val Recio (Junta de Castilla y León)
- Francesc Llop i Bayo (Comunitat Valenciana)

## II. Definition

The Good Practice Handbook comprises a series of actions and measures aimed at modernising, with technical criteria, the integral management of the Rock Art included in the Council of Europe Cultural Route “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails” (initially called “First Population and Prehistoric Rock Art in Southwest Europe”) promoted by the Interreg IIIB SUDOE REPPARP project (from 2005 to 2007) and by the International Association CARP (since 2008).

This Handbook does not have a regulatory or executive character and does not affect the ownership and management of the sites in the European Cultural Route currently managed by the A.I. CARP. It aims to cover the ideal common characteristics affecting them or which may be applied and, using and integrating the work already carried out and the experience of the owners and managers of each site, share the information for the mutual benefit of all.

These actions and measures pursue the aim of consolidating this heritage resource as a solid offer within the range of Cultural Tourism that the European regions and countries associated with A. I. CARP continue to provide, as part of their policy for development and the promotion of tourism and culture.

This plan of integral management is based on four main pillars: PROTECTION, RESEARCH, CONSERVATION and DISSEMINATION of the prehistoric legacy comprising the offer of this European Cultural Route, where the actions of promotion, dissemination and modern cultural tourist management are priorities of the destinations, with the appropriate technical criteria.

## III. Handbook Objectives

The main objective of this document is to establish the conditions that should govern the integral management of the rock art sites comprising the European Cultural Route “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails”.

Although this handbook has no executive power, its objective is to give the institutions and other organisations with responsibility in the management of the European Cultural Route a consultative instrument referring to all the necessary aspects that ensure the protection, conservation and restoration, promotion, knowledge and public dissemination of the Rock Art Heritage of the partner regions, as well as their research and transmission to future generations. The administrations and authorities involved, with responsibility in the management of the sites, have expressed their wish to advance in the management of European Rock Art, in the framework first of the Interreg IIIB SUDOE REPPARP project and since 2008 of the International Association CARP.

With this plan, the administrations and other organisations with responsibility in the management of Rock Art Heritage will be able to promote, together and within the Cultural

Route, the conditions that enable the right of access to culture and the highest guarantees of conservation, as well as facilitating citizens' enjoyment. They will equally disseminate knowledge and stimulate the appreciation of rock art, which is a cultural icon common to all the associated regions

The main objectives of this Good Practice Handbook are:

1. Coordinate the applications of the technical mechanisms for the legal protection of the sites.
2. Express the need to document the rock art sites.
3. Propose parameters of conservation and prevention, appropriate to each case, that will guarantee the optimal conservation of this heritage for future generations.
4. Propose basic criteria for the physical protection of the sites.
5. Encourage and facilitate scientific research and the dissemination of the results in society.
6. Normalise regimes and conditions of access to the sites within the European Cultural Route "Prehistoric Rock Art Trails", based on a technical diagnosis of their state of conservation and real potential to receive visits.
7. Improve the service of attention to visitors at the sites offered to the public in this Cultural Route.
8. Propose the creation of a network of reception, information and interpretation centres for Prehistoric Rock Art in Europe.
9. Promote coordination in tourism and cultural management within each of the associated regions, with regards to this heritage, linking it to local authorities and other organisations involved in regional development.
10. Encourage working in a network, establishing basic criteria in common and unifying tasks to produce synergy and close collaboration, in which the infrastructures and experiences of each partner community are at the service of all.
11. Integrate A. I. CARP in the national and international channels of global management of archaeological resources (networks, international associations, etc).
12. Create a high-quality cultural tourism product, with a common image and analogous services, by developing a strategy of public enjoyment compatible with conservation.

#### IV. Good Practices to be abided by at the destinations in the European Cultural Route “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails”, managed by A.I. CARP.

This Good Practice Handbook proposes a common model for this heritage, on the foundation of what has already been achieved by administrations and other organisations with responsibility in the matter, while respecting the particular circumstances of each site.

##### 1. PROTECTION

- All the archaeological sites included in the Cultural Route are *Monument Classé* (France) and *Bien de Interés Cultural* (Spain) and should have a legally defined protection area or buffer zone.
- The visits should be accompanied by staff who will take care of the security of the site and of the visitors.
- The visit to a rock art site is always an exceptional thing. Each destination will establish the conditions in which the visits will be made, guaranteeing the conservations of the sites and limiting the activities that could lower the quality of the visit. In any case, the visitors will always follow the instructions of the guide or guard.

##### 2. RESEARCH

- The continual training of the staff attending to the public will take place locally and through joint action-
- The managers of the destinations in the Cultural Route will arbitrate research programmes such as:
  - Coordination and encouragement of scientific research on Rock Art Heritage.
  - Annual Plan of scientific publications and scientific outreach about the rock art sites in the route.
  - Periodical organisation of seminars and scientific meetings for researchers (the scientific community).

##### 3. CONSERVATION



- Special attention should be given to the conservation of the natural surroundings of the sites. Rock Art should always be found in harmony with the landscape, and with a biogeographical environment preserved in the best conditions.

- Any action taken in the site or its surroundings should be legible and reversible, minimising the visual and environmental impact. The natural topography of the sites should not be modified.

≥ Caves should be closed with a gate that is appropriate to the form of the entrance or entrances. The gate should take into account the specific environmental particularities of the caves (need, or not, for exchange of air with the exterior). The installation of an alarm system (by radio or remote digital technology) is recommended.

≥ Open-air sites, rock-shelters and boulders should be protected with a perimeter fence, which as far as possible should avoid affecting the view of the rockshelters or boulders. When this is not possible, the fence should be adapted to the form of the rock-shelter, to avoid affecting the interior of the rock-shelter in a way that would interfere with the correct understanding of the whole site (and not only the decorated part). The installation of an alarm system (by radio or remote digital technology) is recommended.

- The access should be adapted to and in proportion with the natural environment and peculiarities of the site.

- The conservation of rock art should always be entrusted to qualified higher technicians who, preferably, have had experience in this field. The authorities responsible for the sites should contract a technician who is responsible for their conservation and monitoring.

- All the sites included in the Cultural Route should carry out a detailed study of the environmental and microbiological conditions affecting their conservation. This will be used to plan the measures to be taken at the site and their surrounding area. The basic parameters of conservation will be permanently assessed and made public at least every two years.

- The sites should have an environmental monitoring system to determine the natural conditions and potential alteration to the environmental parameters that visitors might cause. This will be compulsory in the case of caves and optional for rock-shelters and other open-air sites. The basic parameters should include air temperature, CO<sub>2</sub> content, relative humidity, air circulation and microbiology.

- In connection with the above point, each site will establish its real loading capacity. This will take into account the total surface area, the interior route open to the public, the environmental conditions of the site under natural conditions, the security of the rock art and any other archaeological phenomenon at the site, the safety of the visitors and available human resources.

#### 4. OUTREACH

- Appropriate information and understanding of the sites should be given to the visitors by specifically trained staff.
- All the sites should be provided with the minimum essential resources for the staff to work with dignity and appropriately, and for visitors to carry out visits with a high level of satisfaction.
- The groups of visitors should not be too large. The maximum number of people in the group will be determined according to the conservation, characteristics of the site and the quality of the visit.
- Each destination will establish stable opening hours and days. Any modification should be notified immediately on the CARP project website ([www.prehistour.eu](http://www.prehistour.eu)).
- The work of tour agents and operators who create products based on the destinations in the Cultural Route should be collaborated with and assisted.
- Close relationships and collaboration should be established between the destinations in the Cultural Route and the museums on the same theme that custody and exhibit portable prehistoric artefacts.
- The European Day of Prehistoric Rock Art will be promoted, as an “open day” to encourage the public to visit rock art heritage.
- The destinations included in the Cultural Route will display an emblem of the Route.
- Joint action promoting the route will be carried out periodically, in which the supply of information about the sites will be centralised in order to offer correct and rigorous information about the sites.
- The authorities responsible for the destinations in the Route will design programmes for socio-cultural participation, such as:
  - Organisation of progressive and continual teaching and educational activities, in collaboration with Education Departments and other cultural institutions.
  - Periodical organisation of lectures, talks and temporary exhibitions (for the general public).
- It is recommended that the destinations should have a system for requesting information and for bookings.



- A system for the assessment and quality control of the destinations in the Route will be put into operation. The characteristics of the visitors and the potential public will also be studied in order to design future outreach strategies.

## V. Stages in the Application of the Present Handbook

In order to put the present Good Practice Handbook into operation, the members of the association A. I. CARP, and therefore of the Council of Europe Cultural Route “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails”, have established the following stages for its application:

### Stage 1. Diagnosis.

In the first stage, with a duration of one year, the present state of the management of the sites will be determined. A full diagnosis of each site must be made by completing the model of Diagnostic Record attached in Appendix 1.

The specific objectives of this stage are:

- to obtain a technical diagnosis of the situation of the rock art sites forming the Cultural Route, as regards their protection.
- to obtain a specific technical diagnosis of the situation of the sites open to the public, as regards their conservation conditions.
- to achieve a diagnosis of the situation of the heritage at these sites, as regards their cultural and tourist management.

### Stage 2. Information sharing. Technical assessment of the situation

Once the information has been obtained, a technical commission will be formed (with at least one representative from each member of the A. I. CARP). This will determine the specific needs of each site, to ensure the efficient application of this Good Practice Handbook.

The duration of this stage is estimated at no longer than 2 months.

Stage 3. Application of Good Practices. Homogenisation of the conditions of protection, conservation and cultural/tourist management at the sites in the Cultural Route.

A period of one year will be established to put the Good Practice Handbook into operation at all the destinations forming the European Cultural Route.

After this time, a technical commission will inspect the destinations to verify definitively the suitability of each site to be included in the Cultural Route.

## VI. Addendum to the Good Practice Handbook (2010)

This section includes a series of aspects and matters suggested by the European Institute of Cultural Routes, and these have been accepted and subscribed to by the partner institutions in the International Association CARP and participating in the European Cultural Route “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails”.

This section therefore aims to complete the handbook drafted by the institutions that promoted the Route “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails” and adapt its contents to the new guidelines of the Council of Europe for European Cultural Routes during future years.

1. The European Cultural Route “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails” is based on the Prehistory and Prehistoric Rock Art in all the countries represented in the Council of Europe. Although the route initially covers the regions that originally developed the route, the aim is to progressively add other regions and countries, especially members of the Council of Europe and, if possible, of surrounding regions (for example, Maghreb, Near East, Russia, etc.). It should therefore be made clear that a decided intention exists to open this route to other regions/countries. However, the following aspects should be taken into account:

- i. There is no Rock Art in many countries in Europe and surrounding areas, because they were not populated by humans for much of Prehistory (generally for bioclimatic and/or environmental reasons: over half of Europe was covered by ice in the last Ice Age). Alternatively, they are regions where the rock art has not been conserved because of the absence of optimum geological conditions for its conservation (areas with no karst caves, for example).
- ii. In many places, although rock art exists, it is not shown to the public because of the lack of infrastructures, conservation problems, difficult access or simply because of ignorance about the art.
- iii. The lack of research in some regions means that at the present we do not know whether or not rock art exists in these places. Thus, there are places where rock art is not known because of the absence of archaeological surveying.

2. The present project possesses a well-defined management model, which is based on a specific body for the long-term promotion and management of the resulting European Cultural Route:

- i. The International Association CARP, as its statutes shows, has been founded to manage this cultural route.
- ii. There is a large technical commission of specialists in the service of the management and dissemination of the route.
- iii. The Route “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails” possesses a Good Practice Handbook which is a guide to the management of this route.

3. The route has an undeniable tourist vocation. In this respect it should be borne in mind that most of the regional governments forming part of the route have departments with the double condition of Departments for Culture and Tourism. In addition, this project includes Local Action Groups (rural development networks, organisations managing Leader projects, organisations for tourist information in rural areas, etc.) which possess consolidated infrastructures and mechanisms for the promotion of tourism. One of the objectives of the International Association CARP is precisely that of promoting this route for tourism, as expressed in Article 2 in its Statutes: OBJECT: The object of the said association is to promote and disseminate the rock art sites forming the Itinerary “Prehistoric Rock Art Trails”. The association will generate a high quality cultural and tourist offer, with the aim of promoting the development of the mainly rural territories where the sites are located.

4. The Route aims to work intensely in the field of the promotion and knowledge of European Society, especially of young Europeans. Therefore, the following actions will be carried out, among others:

- i. The project website will provide tools for the knowledge and dissemination of European rock art, especially developed for school-age children (infants and primary age) in Europe.
- ii. Visits to rock art sites will be offered to educational institutions (primary and secondary schools and universities) through specific promotion programmes.
- iii. The establishment of a “European Rock Art Day” aims to be one of the essential activities devoted to knowledge about Prehistoric heritage among future generations of Europeans.
- iv. Specific educational workshops for school-children will be organised at the destinations in the route.
- v. Educational guides will be published in all the regions, devoted to the interpretation of Rock Art, to facilitate school-children’s access to the evidence of the first European

art.

5. As well as the dissemination and promotion of the archaeological sites, other multidisciplinary activities connected with Rock Art will be encouraged; for example, the conservation of the environment and landscape in which the sites are located, and the creation of educational routes around the caves and rock-shelters (with the aim of combining cultural and environmental values). In the same way, the view of Rock Art as part of European Art History will be promoted, with specific initiatives aimed at relating the first art of Mankind with the art of historical times and even with contemporary art, which has often been inspired by prehistoric cave art (Picasso, Miró, etc).

6. The access of all people to Rock Art will be promoted. In this respect, the access of disabled people to the destinations will be an objective. Member Museums and Interpretation Centres will work towards access for the blind, deaf and physically disabled to prehistoric rock art, wherever it is possible to adapt the sites (caves, rock-shelters, open-air outcrops) for visitors with all kinds of disabilities.

## APPENDIX 1

Model of Diagnostic Record:

Site (Cave, Rock-shelter, open-air outcrop, ...)

- ✓ Location
- ✓ Signposting
- ✓ Infrastructures (access)
- ✓ Infrastructures (protection)
- ✓ Infrastructures (illumination)
- ✓ Infrastructures (others)
- ✓ Staff
- ✓ Management of staff
- ✓ Opening-hours
- ✓ Daily/Annual limit on number of visitors
- ✓ Visiting groups
- ✓ Reservations (way to book visits)
- ✓ Ticket prices
- ✓ Information for visitors
- ✓ Conservation of surroundings
- ✓ Conservation of cave/rock-shelter/open-air site
- ✓ Conservation of rock art

- ✓ Conservation infrastructures
- ✓ Needs requested by staff
- ✓ Staff requirements
- ✓ Infrastructure requirements detected
- ✓ Observations