

Principle Four: Focus on Quality and Authenticity

BEST PRACTICE: HandMade in America Criteria for Visitors Services

With the increase in popularity – and product availability – of cultural heritage tourism, destinations must seek strategies to demonstrate the point of difference and excellence in experience offered to visitors. Several strategies have been introduced to define and qualify authenticity, visitor services, and integrity of product.



The Role of Visitors Services

HandMade in America uses criteria guidelines for the *Craft Heritage Trails of Western North Carolina Guidebook*, and the *Farm, Gardens and Countryside Trails of the Blue Ridge Guidebook*, to recognize not only the need for authenticity and quality but also the need to qualify service visitors. Criteria focusing on the visitor include:

- Locations must be easy to access and visitor friendly. *If site is a residence, there should be a separate entrance that is well marked on door and on mailbox or sign visible from road. If customers/visitors are an inconvenience to the business because it mainly caters to wholesale accounts, its inclusion in the guidebook won't do the business or the visitor any good.*
- All sites must be open to the public and provide interpretation. *Because the guidebook leads the visitor to rural areas in a numbered order, it is not practical to (include) places that have irregular hours. If the artisan cannot be there at all times, we recommend finding someone to "studio-sit" or other creative solution. Also, in the case of studios, the hope is that the craftspeople will provide information/ interpretation/ demonstration of craft whenever it's convenient.*
- Craft studios must be open to the public, have specified hours for business/visitation at least two days a week, and if the form is filled out by a third party, permission from the studio craftspeople.
- Events such as craft fairs, demonstrations, educational experiences or cultural events including music, dance, theatre or entertainment (such as storytelling) to be included on the back of the trail maps. Events should be on an annual basis so that marketing materials are useful for a three-year period at minimum.

- Restaurants should feature indigenous mountain foods as a part of their standard menu and must be of above average quality – a minimum should be a “blue plate” special with foods of the region. “More is better” and it can range from a meal at the Market Place in Asheville to the Jarrett House in Sylva to Little Creek Café in Shelton Laurel (Madison County.)
- Business-owners or managers of all approved sites will be required to attend a regional hospitality orientation course to facilitate the trail visitation process. At this time trail participants will have an opportunity to meet with businesses/attractions included on the tour.

For more information:

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