California Cultural & Heritage Tourism Corps

California is blessed not only with geographic diversity, but with an abundance of historic sites, structures, corridors, attractions, destinations and agricultural heritage. Throughout time, many societies have contributed to that heritage, and their legacy of arts, culture and history attracts millions of visitors to California each year. Those visitors, in turn, help preserve and sustain California's culture and heritage through their spending and support.

In an effort to support this type of tourism, the California Cultural & Heritage Tourism Corps (CCHTC) was born, in association with the California Travel and Tourism Commission (CTTC). This council hosts workshops throughout the state in each of California's 12 regions. It also hosts an annual statewide three-day Cultural and Heritage Tourism Symposium to connect arts, culture, and heritage groups from all over the state. Attendees meet to discuss the promotion of cultural heritage tourism in their regions, learn about resources available to support the marketing of the region, and also how to drive visitation to their area. Top speakers from all over the country share their knowledge and expertise to support cultural marketing and preservation. The annual Symposium also addresses funding options and encourages cross-regional cooperation and synergies. Research is also shared to incorporate the benefits of cultural heritage assets to a community to draw in visitation.

The California Cultural and Heritage Tourism Corps is a major player in bringing together many different perspectives—preservation, tourism, economic development, the arts, local residents, private concerns, elected officials, and public land managers—to develop cultural and heritage tourism in California. The goal of these efforts is to provide authentic, high-quality experiences rooted in the unique indigenous culture, history, cultural landscape, sense-of-place, arts, as well as agriculture and other rural industries of a given locale or heritage area. People travel to California discovery these places unique places derived from history, living landscapes and California's rich cultural mix.

Cultural and heritage tourism has emerged as a promising vehicle for tourism and economic development for many communities throughout California. While tourists have always been attracted to destinations for their interesting culture and history, tourism professionals throughout the state need to be aware of the potential role cultural and heritage tourism can play in their destinations' tourism economy, and need to be supported in their efforts to actively seek ways to package their destinations' culture and heritage in new and innovative ways. Destination authenticity, which differentiates and has the potential to bring out the unique attributes of each community, has also become an important marketing tool.

CTTC and CCHTC are working to integrate cultural/heritage components into CTTC's tourism building and promotion efforts. CCHTC's goal is to develop strategic efforts that showcase California as the premier cultural/heritage destination for the purpose of increasing visitation to and within the state.