



World Tourism Organization

UNWTO

Tourism and Biodiversity

Biodiversity – the web of species and ecosystems that makes up our planet – provides us with the vital services our lives depend on. Yet this rich diversity is being lost at an alarming rate, due largely to unsustainable human activities.

With areas of unique natural beauty attracting large numbers of visitors, **biodiversity is one of tourism's greatest assets** – its natural capital – and fundamental to its long-term growth. Every year, millions of tourists fulfil their urge to see and experience the wonders of nature, snorkelling among coral reefs, wildlife spotting on safari, or trekking through rainforests. All these activities depend on healthy and intact ecosystems. Even a beach holiday requires clean water and a functioning coastal ecosystem.

Tourism is thus a biodiversity dependent sector and committed to protecting the diversity of life on Earth.

Did you know?

- Developing countries control the largest proportion of global biodiversity, giving them a competitive advantage in tourism.
- Tourism provides an incentive for preserving and protecting areas of natural beauty and diversity.

When developed and managed in a sustainable way, **tourism can be instrumental in safeguarding biodiversity**. Tourism is a key source of economic income and employment for local communities, which in turn provides direct income for nature conservation. Sustainable tourism preserves land for nature, offering alternative livelihood options to those who may otherwise resort to less sustainable land use.

With millions of people traveling the globe each year, **tourism is also an ideal vehicle for promoting awareness of the importance of biodiversity** to all of our lives and the urgent need for its conservation.

The work of UNWTO

Over the years, UNWTO has taken-up various actions within the framework of global targets for biodiversity and is actively engaging within the United Nations to sustain the planet's irreplaceable natural wealth – in particular through an agreement with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the international treaty designed to sustain nature's rich diversity.



The **UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism**, a comprehensive set of principles guiding tourism development, calls on all tourism stakeholders to safeguard the natural environment with a view to achieving sound, continuous and sustainable growth. It also recognizes nature tourism and ecotourism as particularly conducive to enriching the tourism sector.

Many of UNWTO's tourism projects implemented through the **Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty initiative (ST-EP)** have a biodiversity focus, whether supporting a zip-line through the forests of Laos or an eco-lodge in a wildlife corridor of Kenya. UNWTO also counts on a **Specialized Unit on Tourism and Biodiversity** based in Bonn, Germany, which develops biodiversity related tourism projects and offers advisory services to UNWTO Members on issues of tourism and biodiversity upon their request, under the overall guidance and supervision of the UNWTO Secretariat.

Concerned by the continued loss of biological diversity, the UN General Assembly declared 2010 the **International Year of Biodiversity**. To coincide with the year, UNWTO held World Tourism Day 2010 under the theme Tourism and Biodiversity; a unique opportunity to demonstrate how tourism not only depends on the conservation of biodiversity for its long-term growth, but can also significantly contribute to its protection.

World Tourism Day 2010 brought together government representatives from around the world, leading biodiversity researchers and private sector representatives who crafted the **UNWTO Recommendations on Tourism and Biodiversity**. These recommendations were presented to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at which delegates shaping a global strategy to save the world's ecosystems took note of tourism's role in safeguarding biodiversity.

“The income generated by sustainable tourism can provide important support for nature conservation, as well as for economic development. Furthermore, sustainable tourism can help to raise awareness among tourists and local communities of the importance of biodiversity to our everyday lives.”

United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES:

UNWTO Consulting Unit on Tourism and Biodiversity - biodiv.unwto.org

Tourism and Biodiversity: Achieving Goals towards Sustainability - publications.unwto.org

Practical Guide for the Development of Biodiversity-Based Tourism Products - publications.unwto.org

UNWTO Recommendations to the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity - unwto.org/pdf/UNWTO_Recommendations.pdf

UNWTO Sustainable Development of Tourism Programme - sdt.unwto.org