



Tourism in the Green Economy

Over the past years, and particularly since the start of the global economic crisis, a widespread consensus has emerged on the need to build a new economic paradigm. Multiple crises – in climate, biodiversity, fuel, food, water and the economy as a whole – have led to calls for a new development model: a “green economy”.

A green economy is one which is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defines a **green economy** as one that **“results in improved human-wellbeing and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities”**.

Did you know?

- Tourism is one of ten economic sectors identified in the Green Economy Report, whose greening would increase prosperity, create employment and reduce poverty.
- Under a scenario of green investments, tourism would make an even larger contribution to GDP, with significant environmental benefits including reductions in water consumption (18%), energy use (44%) and CO2 emissions (52%).

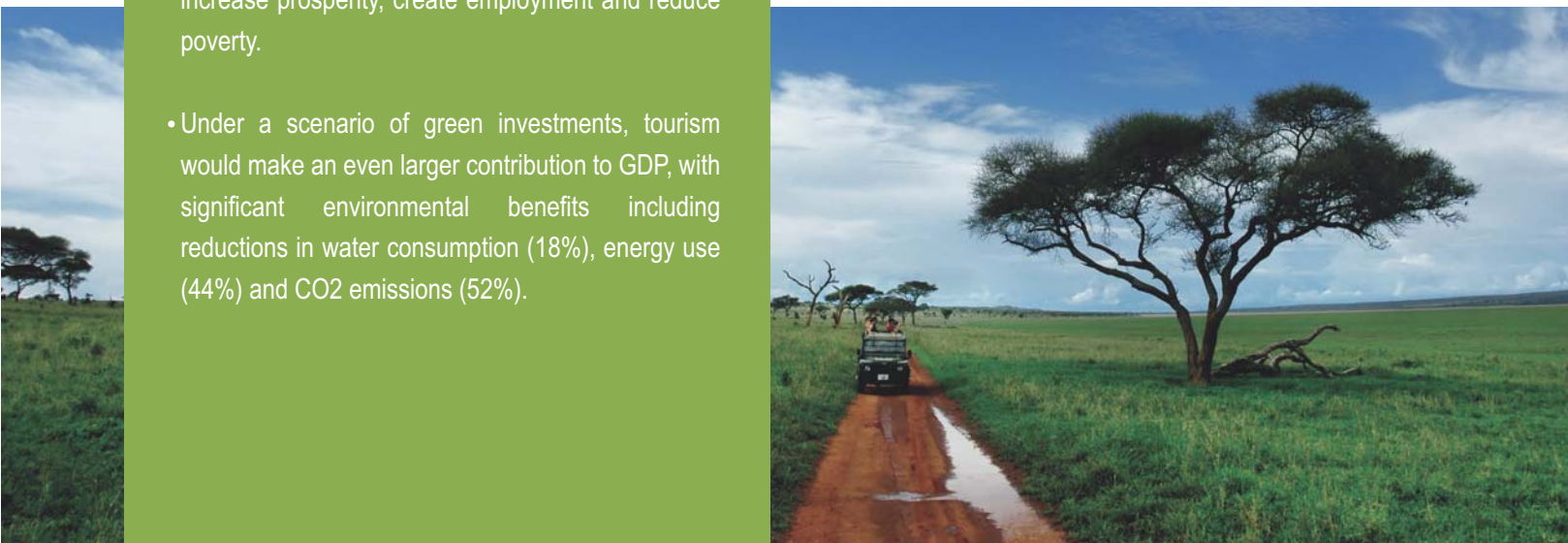
The UN Green Economy Report demonstrates that the greening of economies is not a constraint on growth, but rather a new engine of development, able to create decent jobs, reduce poverty and address major environmental challenges.

Tourism, finds the Report, is one of the ten economic sectors best able to kick-start the transition to a sustainable and inclusive green economy.

“Making tourism businesses more sustainable will foster the industry’s growth, create more and better jobs, consolidate higher investment returns, benefit local development and contribute to poverty reduction, while raising awareness and support for the sustainable use of natural resources.” Tourism Chapter of the Green Economy Report, produced by UNEP in partnership with UNWTO

Tourism Advancing Sustainable Development

Tourism is today one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world. **In 2012, one billion international tourists and over four billion domestic tourists are expected to travel the world, generating more than US\$ 1 trillion in international tourism receipts.** The sector currently accounts for 5% of direct global GDP, 30% of the world’s services exports and generates one in twelve jobs worldwide.



For many developing countries, tourism is one of the main sources of foreign exchange. Tourism is of particular importance for the world's 48 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), ranking among the top three sources of export earnings for nearly half of all LDCs.

According to the UN Green Economy Report, the **greening of tourism**, which involves significant investment in efficiency improvements in energy, water and waste systems, would **stimulate job creation, especially in poorer communities, with increased local hiring and sourcing, and have a positive spill-over effect on other areas of the economy.** The direct economic contribution of tourism to local communities would also increase; maximizing the amount of tourist spending that is retained by the local economy.

Finally, a **green tourism economy** would ensure significant environmental benefits including **reductions in water consumption, energy use and CO2 emissions.** Given tourism's sheer size and reach, even small changes towards greening can have significant impacts.

With adequate policies and investment, the tourism sector can be at the forefront of the transformation to a green economy. Greening the growing tourism sector would strengthen its capacity to generate economic growth, jobs and development worldwide, while protecting the environment for future generations.

Green Economy Report: main findings

- Tourism is one of the most promising drivers of growth for the world economy, but is accompanied by significant challenges.
- Green tourism has the potential to create new jobs, support the local economy and reduce poverty.
- Investing in the greening of tourism can reduce the cost of energy, water and waste and enhance the value of biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural heritage.
- Tourists are increasingly demanding the greening of tourism.
- Much of the economic potential for green tourism is found in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which need better access to financing for investing in green tourism.
- Destination planning and development strategies are the first step towards the greening of tourism.
- Government investments and policies can leverage private sector actions on green tourism.



FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES:

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

UNWTO – Journey to Rio+20 - icr.unwto.org/en/content/journey-rio20-0

UNEP – Green Economy Initiative - unep.org/greeneconomy/