



World Tourism Organization

UNWTO

Tourism and Sustainability

Securing the future of our planet requires meeting the economic and social needs of the present without undermining the fragile ecosystems that sustain us and jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This vision of progress is at the heart of **sustainable development**; **the idea that social, economic and environmental issues are inseparable** and that the future will depend on how well we balance these three pillars when making decisions today.

Given tourism's importance in the global economy, the sector has a responsibility to take the lead on the path towards sustainable development. At the same time, with cultural and natural resources at the core of its business, tourism has a vested interest in doing so.

Did you know?

- Sustainable tourism is not a distinct or special form of tourism. Rather, all forms of tourism should strive to be sustainable, including what is known as 'mass tourism'.
- UNWTO estimates that international tourist arrivals will reach 1.8 billion by 2030. Meeting this growth in a way that mutually reinforces economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection is the challenge facing the tourism sector.

The work of UNWTO

UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as, **"tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"**.

Thus, sustainable tourism should make optimal use of environmental resources, respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities and provide viable, long-term socio-economic benefits to all.

Sustainability is at the heart of UNWTO's mandate and all of its activities. By developing policy guidelines, providing sustainable tourism indicators and monitoring sustainability through worldwide observatories, UNWTO supports the tourism sector to incorporate sustainability principles into its day-to-day operations as well as in its long-term planning.

The work of UNWTO in the sustainable development of tourism is grouped around the **three goals of sustainability: environmental protection, social equity and cohesion and economic prosperity.**





Environmental preservation

Sustainable tourism recognizes that the future of the tourism sector depends on protecting life in all its diversity. It integrates economic and ecological concerns by, for example, conserving natural areas which, in turn, generates increased revenues from tourism for future conservation.

UNWTO guides and supports the tourism sector as it strives to better understand the relationship between tourism and its impact on the environment. The Organization has developed guidelines for governments on sustainable tourism policies; designed sustainable tourism indicators; and is part of global initiatives including the **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria**: worldwide criteria for the minimum requirements that hotels and tour operators should strive for in sustainability.

The **Davos Process on Tourism and Climate Change**, initiated by UNWTO in 2007, is the Organization's climate change response framework and outlines a clear commitment to adapt to changing climate conditions, mitigate emissions, apply new technologies and secure financing to assist poorer regions and countries.

Social equity and cohesion

Respect for, and understanding of, cultural diversity between nations and peoples is a key principle of sustainable development. As a sector built on human interaction, tourism plays a key role in fostering greater respect and tolerance between cultures. It is a considerable force for the conservation of historic and cultural heritage and, by providing a

source of income based around local culture, can encourage communities to value their cultural heritage more highly.

The **UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism** is a set of principles intended to guide tourism stakeholders in the development of tourism. The ten articles of the Code set out the rights and responsibilities of travelers, operators and governments in ensuring maximum benefits for tourists, local communities and their natural and built environments. UNWTO is regularly involved in on-going efforts to raise awareness of specific ethical concerns related to tourism, including gender equality, cultural preservation, corporate social responsibility and the protection of children from exploitation in tourism.

Economic prosperity

Tourism is a driver of economic growth, accounting for 5% of global GDP and hundreds of millions of jobs worldwide.

Sustainable tourism's contribution to poverty reduction and development is increasingly recognized. Its geographical expansion and labour intensive nature support the spread of employment and can be particularly relevant in remote and rural areas where many of the world's poorest live.

Through its technical cooperation, UNWTO is working to maximize the economic and employment benefits of tourism and the fair distribution of these benefits throughout local communities. To date, UNWTO has implemented over 90 **Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP)** projects in more than 30 countries fostering poverty reduction through tourism development.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES:

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

UNWTO Technical Cooperation and Services Programme - cooperation.unwto.org

Climate Change and Tourism - sdt.unwto.org/en/content/climate-change-tourism

Global Code of Ethics for Tourism - ethics.unwto.org

Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers - publications.unwto.org