



FEBRUARY 2017

# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR DEVELOPMENT

FACTSHEET



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction   | 3  |
| What is sustainable tourism and how is it different from normal tourism?   | 5  |
| Why has 2017 been designated the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development?                            | 6  |
| How can sustainable tourism help in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals?                                       | 7  |
| How does sustainable tourism affect local communities?   | 8  |
| How can sustainable tourism protect cultural and natural heritage?   | 9  |
| Is there a role for sustainable tourism in fostering mutual understanding, peace and security within and among states? | 10 |
| Conclusion   | 11 |
| Further reading  | 12 |

## AUTHORS:

Shada Islam  
Director Europe & Geopolitics  
shada.islam@friendsofeurope.org

Amanda Rohde  
Programme Assistant  
amanda.rohde@friendsofeurope.org

# INTRODUCTION

The world may be an increasingly uncertain place, but people's thirst for adventure and travel remains strong. The global tourist sector is thriving. In 2014 there were 1.6 billion tourist arrivals globally, up from just over half a million in 1995. In 2015 tourism was ranked as the third largest global export category, behind fuels and chemicals. Creating nearly 10% of global gross domestic product and 30% of global service exports, the tourism sector is thought to support one in every eleven jobs worldwide. Developing countries possess 16.2% of this global market share.

Providing opportunities for economic growth and employment, tourism is a cross-cutting sector that has an impact on a wide range of other fields. Given its impact on the environment and natural resources, cultural heritage, regional peace and security, gender roles and more, tourism has the potential to inflict either great harm or great good.

How can tourism be managed sustainably, in a way that creates memorable experiences for tourists while at the same time improving the livelihoods of communities and preserving both natural and cultural heritage?

The 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (IYSTD) aims to raise awareness of sustainable tourism and develop solutions to the problems tourism may pose. Friends of Europe, with its expertise in sustainable development, has produced this brief factsheet to provide answers to key questions on sustainable tourism and its importance.

The information contained in this publication is by no means exhaustive. We have focused on the impact of sustainable tourism on underrepresented groups, the environment, cultural heritage and peace and security. We have relied on data from a range of sources, including the World Tourism Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Travel and Tourism Council.







# WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM NORMAL TOURISM?

Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, tourism has received increasing recognition for its potential to act as a tool for development. Unlike standard tourism, sustainable tourism has been defined by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a UN agency, 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.”

To be considered sustainable, UNWTO states that tourism should:

1. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.



# WHY HAS 2017 BEEN DESIGNATED THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR DEVELOPMENT?

In 2015 the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (IYSTD). The aim was to raise awareness of sustainable tourism's impact on global development. The UNWTO is facilitating the organisation and implementation of the IYSTD, which will work within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to support changes in policies and behaviour that can contribute to achieving the SDGs.

The IYSTD aims to promote the role of tourism in the following areas:

1. Inclusive and sustainable economic growth
2. Social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction
3. Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change
4. Cultural values, diversity and heritage
5. Mutual understanding, peace and security

---

## CASE STUDIES

The European Commission actively promotes good practice in sustainable tourism. Through its European Tourism Indicators System the Commission is able to measure the sustainability performance of tourism destinations. By developing specific EU Ecolabel criteria for tourist lodging and campsite services the Commission has created an incentive for those managing accommodation to show that they keep to certain environmental standards. Such sustainably-minded tourism actors can also register to the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), allowing them to promote their high-quality services. In addition the Commission co-funds sustainable transnational tourism products that have the potential to contribute to the growth of tourism. Such products include cycling routes, nature tourism and cultural routes. In 2015 the sustainable tourism projects funded this way included:

- VisitBrabant's Promoting International Tourism for Culture and Heritage Van Gogh Europe project, which aims to increase tourism to heritage sites related to painter Vincent Van Gogh across France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy. Encouraging more transnational tours and visits to these less-frequented destinations should result in a growth of sustainable tourism across more rural regions with strong Van Gogh heritage.
- The Catalan Tourist Board's Hiking Europe project aims to promote rural transnational routes, spreading out tourists who are often concentrated in specific locations and thereby distributing the economic benefits of tourism. At the same time the routes will showcase the cultural and natural heritage of the relevant regions.
- The Westcountry Rivers Trust's FishTrail project aims to improve angling tourism in Europe, including by ensuring environmental sustainability practices. Such practices will include the promotion of 'catch and release' activities with wild fish, environmentally-friendly fishing methods, and encouraging relevant small businesses to re-invest in environmental improvements.

# HOW CAN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM HELP IN ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS?

As a global phenomenon, tourism has wide-reaching effects. When carried out sustainably, tourism can have an incredibly positive impact on societies and environments. In this respect, sustainable tourism has an important role to play in achieving the SDGs. For example:

## **Goal 1: No Poverty**

As sustainable tourism increases in a region, so too does the demand for goods and services. With this demand comes opportunity, creating jobs and encouraging entrepreneurship. As money flows out of tourists' pockets, community members receive more income and have the opportunity to rise out of poverty.

## **Goal 4: Quality Education**

To have a thriving tourism sector, communities must be able to provide a well-trained workforce. With an understanding of the benefits of sustainable tourism there is an incentive for governments and businesses to invest in education and vocational training. As people receive relevant training they will learn about a variety of related topics, increasing general education levels.

## **Goal 5: Gender Equality**

Tourism is one of the sectors with the greatest proportion of women working as employees and entrepreneurs. By providing jobs and room for the creation of additional entrepreneurial enterprises, sustainable tourism creates more opportunities for women's empowerment. As women fill these positions they increase their ability to participate in society and improve their overall standing.

## **Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**

Urban tourism increases the need for accessible, clean and safe cities and communities for both residents and tourists. As the call for sustainable tourism increases, it will be answered with smarter cities comprised of green infrastructure, revitalised areas previously left to deteriorate, and preserved heritage sites.

## **Goal 14: Life Below Water**

Rates of tourism are highest in coastal and maritime areas, increasing demand for a healthy marine environment. When tourism is managed sustainably to offer the most pleasant maritime experience, marine conservation comes to the fore.

## **Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**

Tourism requires interaction between people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Through interaction, people are able to learn from and about each other, improving tolerance and understanding. When sustainable tourism benefits and employs communities, it offers a means of safe, legal income, helping to keep vulnerable people out of dangerous yet lucrative work.

# HOW DOES SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AFFECT LOCAL COMMUNITIES?

As tourism increases in a region, so too does the call for employment. The tourism sector employs a higher proportion of women and young people than other sectors, and the number of women employers is nearly twice that in other sectors. As these demographic groups have more professional opportunities, they gain skills allowing them to take on greater roles in their communities.

- Data provided by the World Travel and Tourism Council shows that in 2015 more than 107 million jobs were directly created by tourism, while around 284 million jobs were supported by the sector both directly and indirectly. These figures are expected to increase to 136 million and 370 million respectively by 2026, with tourism supporting one in every nine jobs by that time.
- Among G20 nations, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa are expected to have the fastest-growing tourism sectors. The strongest growth of non-G20 states is expected to take place in Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia.
- By providing micro loans to local entrepreneurs, people receive the capital they need to get a new business off the ground. For example, when a woman receives a small loan to start a juice stand she can expand her operations, taking on more workers and opening more stands.
- As a country's tourism sector develops, communities must necessarily develop, including by obtaining both language and business skills. As people become better educated, the community's human capital is further developed.
- GIZ, the German international development agency, suggests that if every traveller enjoying a package tour in Mexico spent one dollar per day on the local market the country's economy would receive a yearly influx of approximately US\$60m. This sum is more than Mexico receives from the majority of donor countries.

---

## CASE STUDIES

GIZ is currently involved in around 50 projects related to tourism. These projects promote environmental protection and conservation, as well as the inclusion of small- and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism sector.

- Since the 2005 International Tourism Bourse in Berlin, GIZ has continued to promote and engage in dialogue on social and working standards in the tourism sector with travel industry representatives, NGOs and unions.
- In Albania GIZ is working to help the country merge the interests of nature conservationists, farmers and a blossoming tourism industry. Nearly half of Albanians live in rural areas where an injection of tourism could bring a much-needed economic boost. In the mountainous north, hiking tourism has been greatly improved: trails are better mapped and marked, guides trained and local accommodation in private homes made available. GIZ has supported the improvement of 40 guesthouses in the region. Around 2,000 families benefit from this and other improvements in the tourism sector. The development of sustainable mountain tourism protects the natural environment as well: 40,000 hectares of countryside in the north have now been designated as a nature park.



# HOW CAN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PROTECT CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE?

Tourism can take its toll on the environment. As tourist areas increase in popularity they draw larger crowds, placing a strain on local resources, increasing pollution and leading to the degradation of wildlife habitats. But when managed sustainably, tourism can contribute to environmental conservation. At the same time, it can be a driver for managing cultural and natural heritage. Sustainable tourism spurs on the revitalisation of older buildings and spaces and reinvigorates traditional customs.

- Tourism can place a strain on local energy, food and raw material resources. The number of inhabitants in some tourist destinations multiplies by ten during the high season, exacerbating the drain on resources that may already be in short supply. It is therefore of the utmost importance that sustainable options be used.
- The tourism industry can contribute financially. Contributions can be made directly to environmental conservation (by allocating part of revenue directly to protection and management of resources) or more indirectly (for example, through government taxes on tourist goods, services and activities).
- By properly analysing environmental resources before building tourism facilities, developers can choose cleaner production techniques and find ways to make conflicting issues compatible.
- Travellers themselves can play a role in sustainable tourism. By consulting websites and travel agents they can check whether the accommodation they book meets certain social and environmental responsibility criteria.
- As the number of plants and animals becoming extinct steadily rises, many countries have established wildlife reserves and introduced laws protecting certain species. These measures are a boon to nature tourism and have allowed some endangered species to thrive.
- The UN's education and culture agency, UNESCO, and the European Commission have launched a project to create European heritage routes, encouraging the promotion and preservation of cultural, natural and intangible heritage sites across the continent.
- As part of UNESCO's World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme, 'how to' guides and practical training have been developed to help site managers to manage tourism more sustainably across Africa, at locations including the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Lake Malawi National Park, Maloti-Drakensberg Park and Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls.

# IS THERE A ROLE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN FOSTERING MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, PEACE AND SECURITY WITHIN AND AMONG STATES?

By its very nature, the tourism sector requires interaction between people of varying cultural and religious backgrounds. As tourists and local communities come to learn about each other, there are better chances to build the mutual tolerance and understanding that is necessary to avoid violence and insecurity.

- Countries with more sustainable tourism sectors are less prone to violence and conflict. Tourism is resilient against increases in violence and conflict in non-conflict countries.
- The need to attract tourists and maintain a thriving tourism sector can encourage governments to maintain peace among their citizens. It can also lead them to work harder to create a welcoming environment for tourists.
- Between 2008 and 2015 the Global Peace Index, which measures the relative position of nations' and regions' peacefulness, saw an overall decrease in scores of 2.4%. The scores for conflict-affected countries fell by 6.6% and those for non-conflict-affected countries dropped by 1.4%. Meanwhile the Tourism Index – a ratings tool developed by the World Travel and Tourism Council and the Institute of Economics and Peace – saw scores fall by 14.8% in conflict-affected countries but rise by 12.8% in non-conflict-affected countries.
- Tourism is a resilient sector. It is not unusual for countries not systemically affected by conflict to witness a decreased score in the Global Peace Index and a simultaneous improvement in their Tourism scores. In Ukraine the contribution by tourism to GDP increased from 2.65% to 4.95% between 2014 and 2015, despite the country's ongoing conflict.
- Tourism opens minds. As people travel and meet others with different backgrounds, they are likely to experience increased levels of tolerance. At the same time, being introduced to travellers helps communities to become more understanding of what may be foreign cultures.

---

## CASE STUDIES

---

Civil wars, disease, poaching and loss of habitat have led wild mountain gorillas to become critically endangered. To protect these animals, authorities in Rwanda have introduced rules governing tourist behaviour in gorilla habitats and have increased fees for gorilla trekking permits and park admission. These fees are used to fund conservation programmes and to educate communities on the benefits of local wildlife.

At the same time, the revenue makes up the salaries of park rangers and tour guides, providing an alternative source of income to Rwandans who might otherwise turn to poaching or activities that cause harm to these animals and their environment. As a result of these efforts, the mountain gorilla population has witnessed an overall increase over the last years.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear that tourism, when carried out sustainably, can be a global force for good. It encourages mutual understanding, environmental conservation and preservation of cultural heritage. It promotes economic prosperity and employment opportunities for even the most vulnerable groups. To achieve the benefits of medium- to long-term sustainability, states and enterprises must take these criteria into account.





# FURTHER READING

[“How tourism is protecting Rwanda’s mountain gorillas”](#)

Africa Geographic, 9 March 2016

[“International tourism, number of arrivals”](#)

World Bank, 2016

[“International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development”](#)

UNWTO

[“Research”](#),

World Travel and Tourism Council

[“Supporting Tourism for Development in Least Developed Countries”](#)

UNWTO, September 2016

[“Sustainable Development of Tourism”](#)

UNWTO

[“Sustainable Tourism”](#)

European Commission, 2016

[“Sustainable tourism: A driving force of job creation, economic growth and development”](#)

International Labour Organization, 17 May 2016

[“Sustainable Tourism Capacity Building in 4 Africa Nature Sites”](#)

UNESCO.

[“Tourism”](#)

GIZ

[“Tourism and Environmental Conservation”](#)

United Nations Environment Programme

[“Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals”](#)

World Tourism Organization, September 2015

[“UNESCO and the European Commission join hands in promoting cultural routes for sustainable development”](#)

UNESCO, 22 February 2016

Our work on international development issues is led by the Development Policy Forum (DPF), which was set up by Friends of Europe in partnership with development actors such as Germany's Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), France's Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the United Nations and the World Bank.

The DPF network is a major partner in the expanding global and European conversation on sustainable and inclusive development. Through its activities and publications, the DPF aims to raise awareness of development issues and encourage fresh thinking on issues such as Agenda 2030, new financing models for growth and development, humanitarian assistance and the role of women in development.



Rue de la Science 4,  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 300 28 12  
Fax: +32 2 893 9829  
info@friendsofeurope.org  
friendsofeurope.org