



CONCEPT NOTE

Travel & Tourism - a vital ally for delivering the Biodiversity Plan

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Concept

The Travel & Tourism sector has a central role to play in the transition to a nature-positive world. As an agent of positive change for communities, local economies and biodiversity, sustainable tourism is a beacon of hope that is already critical to conserving our planet's ecosystems and natural resources. Harnessing these benefits and optimising tourism's potential, for instance through aligned policies between national tourism and biodiversity protection, can advance and accelerate the delivery of national biodiversity action plans and the UN Biodiversity Plan, conserving our natural heritage for future generations.

Introduction

Travel & Tourism, a growing sector, provides 1 in 10 jobs globally and contributes more than 9% of the world's GDP, with international tourism revenue expected to reach US\$1.89 trillion in 2024.^{i, ii} Beyond driving economic growth and development on every continent, in almost every country, the sector empowers local communities, and often galvanises local people and governments to better protect their cultural and natural heritage.ⁱⁱⁱ

Travel & Tourism is one of only six economic sectors with more than 80% of the value of its goods and services highly dependent on nature^{iv} – from the demand for raw materials to the popularity of nature-based tourism. Over 50% of its market share is driven by nature tourism and the desire to explore new environments, which is predicted to grow year on year, and generate US\$ 665 billion annually by 2030.^v ^{vi} Wildlife tourism, a component of nature tourism, contributes millions of dollars a year to protected areas and surrounding communities, strengthening conservation efforts and encouraging local environmental stewardship. Reportedly, for every dollar spent on protected areas and nature-based tourism, the rate of return is at least six times the original investment,^{vii, viii} demonstrating the sector's potential as a "Guardian of Nature".

Nature Positive Tourism

The tourism sector was singled out in the Cancun Declaration (CBD COP13, 2016) for its ability to lead a wider transition to a nature positive world. Shortly after CBD COP15 (2022), where the World Tourism Organisation attended the High-Level Segment, the World Travel & Tourism Council, the World Tourism Organization and the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance formed the Nature Positive Tourism Partnership to help the sector meet its obligations under the UN Biodiversity Plan. The "Nature Positive Tourism" approach,^{ix, x} devised in collaboration with ANIMONDIAL, sets out a four-phase framework for business and is accompanied by a Toolbox of practical tools and insights to guide sector transformation by integrating biodiversity values, minimising harms on nature (e.g. resource use and pollution) and leveraging and investing in nature restoration in destinations. Through their trade associations, as well as the high-level Partnership, Travel & Tourism businesses are now being encouraged and supported to adopt a Nature Positive Tourism approach.

Transform tourism by advocating for responsible travel

The Nature Positive Tourism Partnership is focused on inspiring a global movement towards more sustainable and resilient tourism. Its aim is to harness the potential of Nature Positive Tourism, and to innovate, expand and deepen the sector's contributions to nature, ensuring that it remains a driving force for conservation for decades to come. Objectives include:

1. **Align and develop synergies between national tourism and biodiversity policies** - Seeking policy alignment between tourism and environmental protection authorities to recognise and enhance synergies, including by establishing mechanisms for Tourism to support PCAs and NBSAPs. **(GBF Targets 2, 3, 18 & 21)**
2. **Incentivise a sector shift towards circular and regenerative models** – Encouraging national tourism authorities to adopt policies that encourage sustainable and responsible business activity, and discourage unsustainable activities (e.g. through tax breaks, public sector loans and green financing). **(GBF Targets 4, 5, 9, 14, 16 & 18)**
3. **Encourage effective public-private-community partnerships** – Empower and enhance collaborative efforts involving tourism businesses, local and national authorities, conservation bodies and local communities to preserve the environmental integrity of biodiverse regions. **(GBF Targets 11, 12, 20 & 22)**

Concerning the UN Biodiversity Plan,^{xi} sustainable Travel & Tourism contributes to delivering:

Target 2 (area restoration) - by connecting people with nature, fostering environmental responsibility and conservation, and directing sustainable finance towards national conservation priorities (e.g. NBSAPs);

Target 3 (30x30) - by creating economic opportunities in protected and conserved areas, especially those that have integrated sustainable-development objectives and strong governance (e.g. IUCN Green List sites), and by collaborating with governments to implement sustainable tourism practices as a means to protect and restore vulnerable ecosystems;

Target 4 (extinction risk) - by capturing value from rare and threatened species through their role as a tourism asset for the destination;

Target 5 (preventing overexploitation of wildlife) - by viewing wildlife as a valuable commodity and a key component or asset of the destination, making Endangered species more valuable alive than dead, and advocating the sustainable sourcing of animals for food (e.g. fishing);

Target 9 (sustainable use of species) - by providing sustainable biodiversity-based activities that are consistent with customary sustainable use by Indigenous Peoples and local communities (c.f. UN General Assembly Resolution 69/233 (2014) calling on the UN to promote sustainable tourism as an instrument for achieving the MDGs/SDGs);

Target 11 (nature-based solutions) - by fostering collaborative efforts between tourism businesses and local communities to support nature-based solutions and preserve valuable ecosystem services for mutual benefit;

Target 12 (urban spaces) - by providing economic and policy incentives for the creation and enhancement of natural spaces in urban areas;

Target 14 (policy integration) - noting Travel & Tourism is one such sector that has 'significant impacts on biodiversity' and further, it connects nature, economic activities and local communities - by integrating biodiversity and its multiple values into policies, planning and development processes, poverty eradication initiatives, environmental impact assessments, etc., it has the capability of advocating and supporting the integration of these values in other areas (e.g. infrastructure, transport, etc);

Target 16 (consumer choice) – Travel & Tourism brings people closer to nature, and by tourism businesses adopting measures to minimise negative impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity, transparently reporting progress, and offering travel choices, this educates people on the inequalities that exist and providing access to alternative lifestyles and technologies to champion sustainable consumption;

Target 18 (phase out or reform incentives) - by providing the activities which have been recognised as effective at achieving biodiversity conservation through indirect positive incentive measures (as recognised in [2018 CBD Agenda](#) p10 of 78;

Target 21 (access to information) - by contributing to the knowledge management and monitoring of biodiversity indicators in multiple locations across the world and of the unique traditional biodiversity knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities celebrated through sustainable tourism practices;

Target 20 (innovation and collaboration) - by investing in and creating a market for environmental technologies, including the global South, and by strengthening research and monitoring capacity through collaborative actions such as citizen science and logistic support;

Target 22 (IPs & LCs) - by protecting and supporting the interests and rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities through the collaborative development of sensitive tourism opportunities, enhancing the local economy while reducing impacts on nature, and stimulating self-directed local development.

Conclusion

Like many sectors, Travel & Tourism can contribute to biodiversity loss and needs to take urgent action to mitigate those impacts. Unlike most other sectors, however, it also has huge potential to drive positive action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss across society. Just as tourism activities are vital to the effective management of many protected areas, the global Travel & Tourism sector has a vital role to play in ensuring the delivery of the UN Biodiversity Plan around the world. Without a full engagement and collaboration with the sector, critical opportunities to meet the Targets of the Biodiversity Plan will be lost and achieving the 2050 Goals will be an even greater challenge.

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12 August 2024

ⁱ *Economic Impact of Travel & Tourism* (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023)

ⁱⁱ *UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, Volume 21, Issue 2* (UNWTO, 2023)

ⁱⁱⁱ *Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-being* (UN Convention on Biological Diversity, 2016)

^{iv} *Nature Risk Rising: Why the Crisis Engulfing Nature Matters for Business and the Economy.* New Nature Economy series (2020). https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_New_Nature_Economy_Report_2020.pdf

^v World Travel and Tourism Council. "The Economic Impact of Global Wildlife Tourism. *The World Travel & Tourism*" (2019). Accessed July 31, 2024. <https://wtcc.org/Portals/0/Documents/Reports/2019/Sustainable%20Growth-Economic%20Impact%20of%20Global%20Wildlife%20Tourism-Aug%202019.pdf?ver=2021-02-25-182802-167>.

^{vi} *Ecotourism Market Size, Share & Growth 2022-2030* (Grand View Research, 2020) www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/ecotourism-market-report

^{vii} *Inter-American Development Bank. "Fostering Sustainable Tourism Across Latin America and the Caribbean"*

^{viii} *World Bank. "Banking on Protected Areas: Promoting sustainable nature-based tourism to benefit local communities"* (2021)

^{ix} *World Travel & Tourism Council. "Nature Positive Travel & Tourism."* (2022)

^x *Nature Positive Tourism Partnership. "Nature Positive Travel & Tourism in Action."* (2024)

^{xi} *UN Convention on Biological Diversity. "Biodiversity Plan for Life on Earth."* (2022)