

Biodiversity



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Tourism for development and nature conservation

Resources for tourism planners and practitioners

Tourism

Biodiversity is a key tourism asset for developing countries

What is biodiversity, and why is it important to poverty alleviation and development?

Biodiversity can be described as the diversity of life on Earth.

Simply put, biodiversity is the variety/range of difference among all living things, the places they inhabit, and the interaction between the two. Interactions between the various components of biodiversity make the Earth inhabitable for all species, including humans. Biodiversity is directly responsible for around 40% of the world's economy, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, forestry and pharmaceuticals, and for services such as clean water, soil fertility and temperature regulation. For poor urban and rural communities, biodiversity is the ultimate source of livelihood and is intricately linked to health, culture and social habits.

Approximately 45% of the Earth's forests have been cleared, and other ecosystems, including wetlands and coral reefs, are also threatened. It has been estimated that 34,000 plant and 5,200 animal species are currently in danger of extinction. Current extinction levels are many hundreds if not thousands of times higher than average rates over geological time.

70% of the world's poor live in rural areas and depend directly on biodiversity for their survival and well-being. Urban communities also rely upon biodiversity, not only for the production of food and other necessary goods, but also for ecosystem services such as the maintenance of air and water quality and the breakdown of waste.

Biodiversity is a key tourism asset for developing countries

Many tourism attractions in developing countries are closely linked to biodiversity, such as protected areas, unspoiled mountains, beaches and islands, traditional ways of life and native culture, charismatic wildlife and natural landscapes. Developing countries control the largest proportion of global biodiversity. They comprise the majority of the Parties to the CBD, and many of the megadiverse developing countries are also mainstream tourism destinations with over 5 million international arrivals per year (South Africa, Peru, Mexico, and Brazil).

Biodiversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the global agreement that addresses biodiversity. It was established in 1992, and has 191 National governments as Parties today, with three main objectives:

1. the conservation of biodiversity,
2. the sustainable use of its components, and
3. fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

The Secretariat of the CBD was established to support the goals of the Convention. Its principal functions are to prepare for, and service, meetings of the Conferences of the Parties (COP) and other subsidiary bodies of the Convention, and to coordinate with other relevant international bodies.

The Secretariat's tourism activities provide bridges and links between various thematic programmes of work (such as island biodiversity, marine and coastal biodiversity, forests, and invasive species) In 2004, the Convention has adopted the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, and a User's Manual has been developed to provide technical assistance for its implementation.

With the support of the French and German governments, the SCBD has established a "Biodiversity for Development" unit to demonstrate the benefits of biodiversity to development and poverty alleviation, to integrate biodiversity into relevant industry sectors and development processes, and to disseminate information.



Tourism plays a crucial and increasing role in developing countries

Tourism is one of the most dynamic economic sectors in many developing countries. International tourism revenues in developing countries have increased from US\$43 billion to US\$222 billion from 1990 to 2006, a five-fold increase.

International Tourism Income (in billion US\$)

| | 1990 | 2000 | 2006 | Growth rate |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|-------------|
| World | 264 | 474 | 733 | 177 % |
| High Income Countries | 221 | 352 | 511 | 131 % |
| Developing Countries | 43 | 122 | 222 | 416 % |

In 2005, tourism represented over 70% of exports of services and was the primary source of foreign exchange earnings in 46 out of 50 of the world's least developed countries (UNWTO, 2008).

Developing countries are receiving an increasing share of a growing international tourism market. In 2007, global international tourist arrivals grew to 898 million, 6% over 2006 levels. Arrivals in developing countries, however, grew by 8%. The market share of developing countries has grown to 40% of worldwide international arrivals - up from 34% in 2000.

Tourism services within developing countries provide direct and indirect opportunities for numerous economic activities and wealth creation at the local and regional level. Tourism is also relatively labour intensive, and offers important opportunities in reducing poverty.

The tourism industry is a particularly important sector for women (46 % of the workforce are women) as their percentages of employment in most countries are higher than in the workforce in general (34 - 40% are women, ILO data). The informal sector plays a very important role in terms of income generation through tourism, particularly for women, and community based tourism initiatives, especially for local women's groups and co-operatives, can be an accessible and suitable entry point for women into the paid workforce.





Development

Why does it matter to tourism professionals?

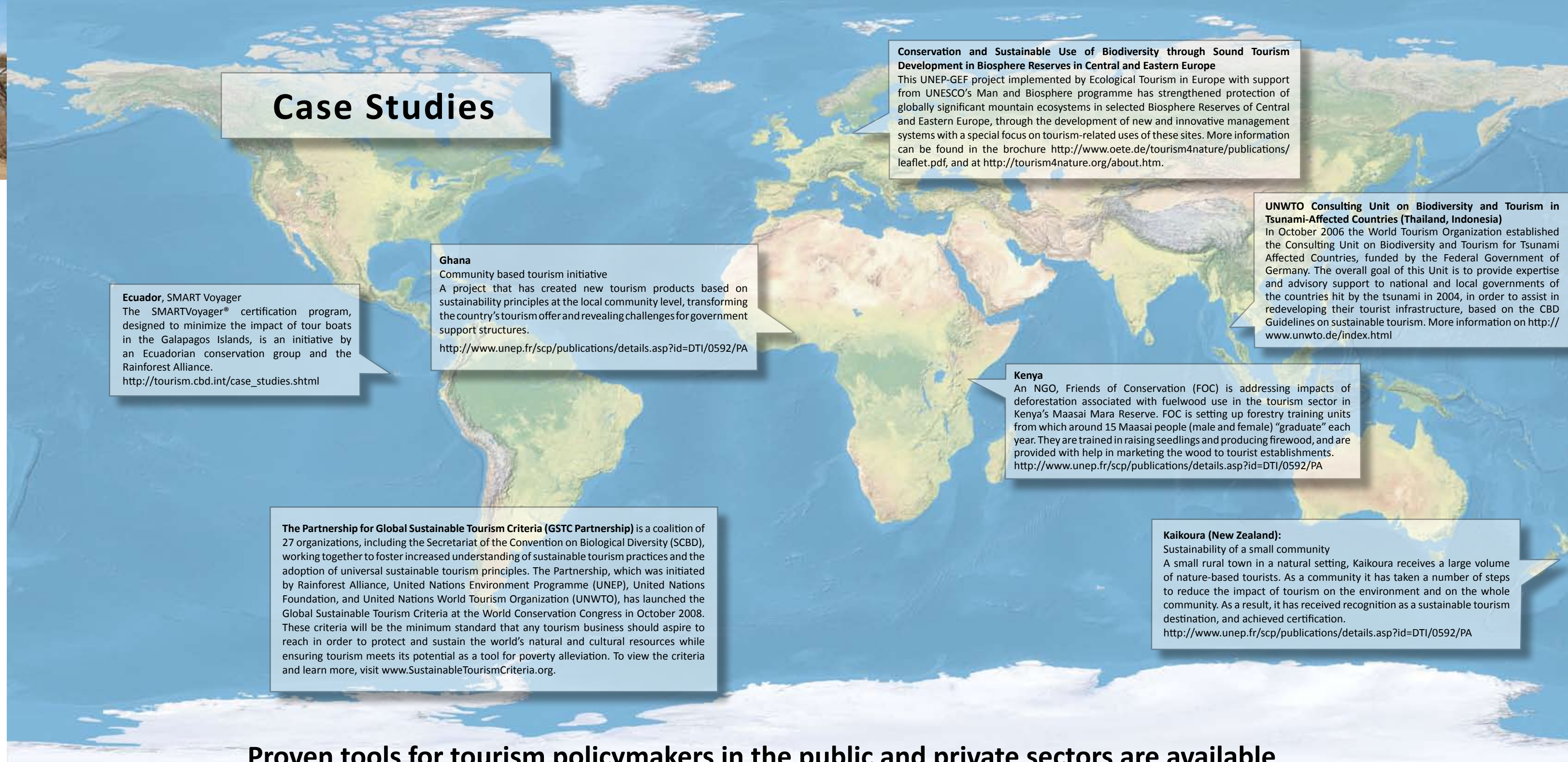
Most leisure tourists look for beaches and coastal environments, rural and natural landscapes, national parks and mountainous regions – all of which harbour significant biodiversity. Additionally, nature-based and adventure tourism attract growing numbers of people to observe animals and plants in natural destinations. A clean environment is in each tourist's expectations. Unfortunately, tourism has a large and growing environmental footprint, and is a source of increasing stress on already fragile ecosystems.

Travelers, tourism planners and operators, governments, investors, and professionals all have an inherent interest in the conservation and sustainable use of resources; biodiversity is, after all a vital asset to the tourism industry. Many tourists will not return to polluted or degraded destinations. Sustainable planning and management are in the industry's long-term interest.

Sustainable tourism can help preserve the biodiversity that attracts tourists, while providing economic benefits to the local and national economies

Poverty reduction cannot be achieved if biodiversity is compromised by uncontrolled tourism development projects. The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity can and must be incorporated into tourism development policies and strategies that also bring social and economic benefits to host communities. The tools to facilitate and support these guidelines are available and have been tested in many developing countries.

Development



Case Studies

Ecuador, SMART Voyager
The SMARTVoyager® certification program, designed to minimize the impact of tour boats in the Galapagos Islands, is an initiative by an Ecuadorian conservation group and the Rainforest Alliance.
http://tourism.cbd.int/case_studies.shtml

Ghana
Community based tourism initiative
A project that has created new tourism products based on sustainability principles at the local community level, transforming the country's tourism offer and revealing challenges for government support structures.
<http://www.unep.fr/scp/publications/details.asp?id=DTI/0592/PA>

The Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC Partnership) is a coalition of 27 organizations, including the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD), working together to foster increased understanding of sustainable tourism practices and the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles. The Partnership, which was initiated by Rainforest Alliance, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Foundation, and United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), has launched the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria at the World Conservation Congress in October 2008. These criteria will be the minimum standard that any tourism business should aspire to reach in order to protect and sustain the world's natural and cultural resources while ensuring tourism meets its potential as a tool for poverty alleviation. To view the criteria and learn more, visit www.SustainableTourismCriteria.org.

Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity through Sound Tourism Development in Biosphere Reserves in Central and Eastern Europe
This UNEP-GEF project implemented by Ecological Tourism in Europe with support from UNESCO's Man and Biosphere programme has strengthened protection of globally significant mountain ecosystems in selected Biosphere Reserves of Central and Eastern Europe, through the development of new and innovative management systems with a special focus on tourism-related uses of these sites. More information can be found in the brochure <http://www.oete.de/tourism4nature/publications/leaflet.pdf>, and at <http://tourism4nature.org/about.htm>.

UNWTO Consulting Unit on Biodiversity and Tourism in Tsunami-Affected Countries (Thailand, Indonesia)
In October 2006 the World Tourism Organization established the Consulting Unit on Biodiversity and Tourism for Tsunami Affected Countries, funded by the Federal Government of Germany. The overall goal of this Unit is to provide expertise and advisory support to national and local governments of the countries hit by the tsunami in 2004, in order to assist in redeveloping their tourist infrastructure, based on the CBD Guidelines on sustainable tourism. More information on <http://www.unwto.de/index.html>

Kenya
An NGO, Friends of Conservation (FOC) is addressing impacts of deforestation associated with fuelwood use in the tourism sector in Kenya's Maasai Mara Reserve. FOC is setting up forestry training units from which around 15 Maasai people (male and female) "graduate" each year. They are trained in raising seedlings and producing firewood, and are provided with help in marketing the wood to tourist establishments.
<http://www.unep.fr/scp/publications/details.asp?id=DTI/0592/PA>

Kaikoura (New Zealand):
Sustainability of a small community
A small rural town in a natural setting, Kaikoura receives a large volume of nature-based tourists. As a community it has taken a number of steps to reduce the impact of tourism on the environment and on the whole community. As a result, it has received recognition as a sustainable tourism destination, and achieved certification.
<http://www.unep.fr/scp/publications/details.asp?id=DTI/0592/PA>

Proven tools for tourism policymakers in the public and private sectors are available

- Policy level:** the enabling environment, national and sub-national development policies and strategies that consider poverty alleviation and biodiversity, economic and ecological zoning and land-use and development plans and projects that integrate tourism development, poverty alleviation and biodiversity, with appropriate financing mechanisms such as budgetary allocations and international cooperation projects.
- Legal and normative tools:** enabling governments and resource owners to exert control over certain aspects of development and operation, backed by legislation. Examples include laws, regulations, building and construction codes, requirements for impact assessment, licensing of operations, land-use zoning laws and requirements.
- Partnerships with the private sector:** Destination management and marketing organizations with a social and environmental focus, joint awareness campaigns, training.
- Monitoring and evaluation:** development of indicators and measurement systems to determine levels of tourism and impact, and to manage existing or potential changes.

- Financial and market control tools directing development:** concessions for operations in parks and public land, incentives, taxes, charges and fees, provision of appropriate infrastructure and professional and institutional capacity building. Special credit lines, marketing support (trade fairs, websites, awards for leading businesses) and business incubators for critical sustainable facilities and services.
- Capacity building:** inter-ministerial and inter-agency cooperation, partnerships that allow park agencies to partner with industry and retain parts of revenues for conservation and local development, training for professionals and communities.
- Communication:** brochures for tourists on how to help and make a difference and protect biodiversity, videos, information campaigns.
- Encouraging voluntary commitment of stakeholders:** sustainable tourism certification, awards, support to voluntary environmental reporting, guidelines and codes of conduct.
Source: Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers, UNEP/UNWTO, 2005.



Tools

Guidelines, Manuals and Reference Material

User's Manual on the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, CBD, 2007
<http://www.cbd.int/tourism/guidelines.shtml>
The Guidelines provide a framework addressing what the proponent of a new tourism investment or activity should do to seek approval, how the authorities should manage the approval process, and how to sustain the transition to sustainable tourism through education and capacity building.

Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers, UNEP/UNWTO, August 2005
<http://www.unep.fr/scp/publications/details.asp?id=DTI/0592/PA>
The Guide presents a comprehensive set of instruments for governments, ranging from planning regulations to economic instruments and the application of certification and indicators, and it sets out 12 aims for sustainable tourism and their implications for policy, and describes the collaborative structures and strategies that are needed at a national and local level.

Other relevant sources on sustainable tourism can be found at the UNWTO's publication catalogue
http://www.unwto.org/pub/doc/UNWTO_pub_cat_08_en.pdf

Sowing the Seeds of Change: An Environmental and Sustainable Tourism Teaching Pack for the Hospitality Industry, UNEP, June 2008
<http://www.unep.fr/scp/publications/details.asp?id=DTI/1043/PA>
Both comprehensive and user-friendly, this CD-ROM introduces sustainable tourism issues into the hospitality curricula. It is complemented by a range of tools and supporting material, exercises and case studies, and identifies industry best practices.

Biodiversity: My Hotel in Action, IUCN, 2008
http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn_hotel_guide_final.pdf

Forging Links Between Protected Areas and the Tourism Sector: How Tourism Can Benefit Conservation, UNEP, 2005
<http://www.unep.fr/scp/publications/details.asp?id=DTI/0591/PA>

Tourism and Local Agenda 21: The Role of Local Authorities in Sustainable Tourism, UNEP, 2003
<http://www.unep.fr/scp/publications/details.asp?id=3207>

Sustainable Tourism organizations and websites

CBD's Tourism and Biodiversity Website
<http://www.cbd.int/tourism>
Biodiversity and Tourism Network
<http://tourism.cbd.int>
UN World Tourism Organization
www.unwto.org
UNEP's Tourism and Environment Programme
<http://www.unep.fr/scp/tourism/>
Conservation International
<http://www.conservation.org/>
International Ecotourism Society
<http://www.ecotourism.org/>
International Institute for Peace Through Tourism
<http://www.iipt.org/>

Rainforest Alliance
<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/>
Tourism Concern
<http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk/>
Tour Operators Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development (TOI)
<http://www.toinitiative.org/>
Nature Conservancy
www.nature.org
United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development: Tourism
www.un.org/esa/sustdev/report99/csd7report_en.htm
World Tourism Forum for Peace and Sustainable Development
www.desti-nations.net/

More resources available at: http://tourism.cbd.int/additional_resources.shtml