



UNWTO RECOMMENDATIONS ON TOURISM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

A Guide to Making Tourism an Effective Tool for Rural Development



These Recommendations were developed by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) with the contribution of UNWTO's Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness (CTC), UNWTO Affiliate Members, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank Group, the International Trade Center (ITC), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Committee of the Regions of the European Union, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Network of European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism (NECSTOUR), the European Federation of Rural Tourism, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), the Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Escapadarural.com (Spain) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the fastest growing and most resilient socio-economic sectors of our times. It accounts for 7% of global trade and has outpaced economic growth for the last decade. A leading employer, it generates millions of jobs directly and indirectly.

However, in many places, the benefits of tourism, including enhanced employment and gender opportunities, have been concentrated in urban and coastal areas, contributing to an unequal territorial distribution of wealth and economic opportunities. Furthermore, pressure on the most visited locations comes with risks such as overcrowding, unsustainable demand for natural and cultural resources, and possible disruptions to social fabric and community life. Promoting tourism in rural areas spreads the benefits of the sector more widely across

regions and populations, while at the same time mitigating the risks associated with the concentration of tourism in specific locations. Tourism can be an effective means of providing socio-economic opportunities for rural communities. It can also help with increasing the attractiveness and vitality of rural areas, mitigating demographic challenges, reducing migration, and promoting a range of local resources and traditions while upholding the essence of rural life. It can also celebrate a territory's values, often the essence of the travel experience, in an active way so as to preserve both tangible and intangible heritage and complement the existing economic activities of these territories.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of tourism in rural development is more relevant than ever. Tourism in rural

areas offers important opportunities for recovery as tourists look for less populated destinations and open-air experiences and activities. At the same time, communities in rural areas are, in general, much less prepared to deal with the direct and indirect impacts of crisis. It is therefore of critical importance to support them in facing the economic and social effects of the pandemic. As the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed in his recent [Policy Brief 'COVID 19 and Transforming Tourism'](#), this crisis is also “an opportunity to rethink how tourism interacts with our societies, other economic sectors and our natural resources and ecosystems; to measure and manage it better; to ensure the fairer distribution of its benefits and to advance the transition towards a carbon-neutral and more resilient tourism economy.”

1. United Nations, Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism, UN, August 2020



Moreover, the growing, intrinsic and unavoidable connection between urban and rural development has been accelerated by the current crisis. The shift in the world's population towards urban areas creates new dynamics that offer opportunities for a fresh look and to re-think how to better enhance these urban-rural linkages.

2020 marks the 'Year of Tourism and Rural Development', a theme shared with this year's World Tourism Day. The sustainability of tourism in rural areas will only be successful if a comprehensive, inclusive planning strategy is adopted and implemented based on a multi-action and multi-stakeholder participatory approach. The **UNWTO Recommendations on Tourism and Rural Development** aim to support governments at various levels, as well as the private sector and the international community in developing

tourism in rural territories in a way that contributes to inclusive, sustainable and resilient development.

Such development will ensure the fair distribution of tourism's benefits, enhance job creation, protect natural resources and cultural heritage, promote social inclusion and empower local communities and traditionally disadvantaged groups, particularly women, youth and Indigenous peoples. Inclusive tourism will also contribute to making rural territories more accessible for both locals and visitors of different generations and different access needs, thus providing a better quality of life for all.

2020 also marks 75 years of the United Nations (UN). Harnessing the power of tourism to drive rural development will enhance the sector's contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) and the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

As the world faces one of the most challenging crises of all times, there is a collective opportunity to renew our efforts and develop innovative approaches that will foster tourism's potential for development, including its unique ability to drive development for rural communities as one of the socio-economic activities engaging across and throughout communities and leaving no one behind.





RATIONALE

Urbanization is a prevalent trend across the world. According to the UN, by 2050 68% of the world population will live in urban areas² and cities will produce 85% of global economic output, leaving behind a staggeringly high human and environmental impact and imposing a high cost on surrounding rural areas³. This trend contrasts with the fact that 80% of all people living in 'extreme poverty' live in rural communities⁴.

Rural areas face increasing demographic challenges, particularly depopulation, lower income levels, a digital divide, decline in traditional economic activities and lack of economic diversity as well as scarce

infrastructure, services and transport connectivity. Rural youth are one of the most vulnerable groups due to the lack of gainful employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture and related rural economic activities⁵. At the same time, they are also the most crucial when addressing rural development⁶. Nearly 1 billion of the world's 1.2 billion youth aged 15-24 reside in developing countries and 88% of youth in developing countries live in rural areas; 75 million of them are unemployed.

Traditional economic and cultural systems are under threat from climate change. This particularly affects Indigenous people who are

reliant on agriculture and local natural resources. In extreme cases, land abandoned due to migration can be affected by erosion, causing an altered cultural landscape and the potential loss of a sense of place. Such locations are also at higher risk from natural disasters.

Tourism has proven to be a tool for economic diversification and a major employment engine with a multiplier effect on other sectors that contribute to rural development. Tourism in rural areas can particularly benefit traditionally disadvantaged groups such as women - who make up 54% of the workforce in the tourism sector compared to 39% for the

2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

3. TWI2050 - The World in 2050 (2020). Innovations for Sustainability. Pathways to an efficient and post-pandemic future. Report prepared by The World in 2050 initiative. International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), Laxenburg, Austria. www.twi2050.org

4. De La O Campos, A.P., Villani, C., Davis, B., Takagi, M. 2018. Ending extreme poverty in rural areas – Sustaining livelihoods to leave no one behind. Rome, FAO. 84 pp. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

5. Food and Agriculture Organization, Addressing rural youth migration at its root causes: A conceptual framework (2016)

6. FAO. 2020. Rural youth and the COVID-19 pandemic. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9531en>



whole economy - youth and Indigenous people. Tourism is also an easy access sector for micro and small enterprises and for the self-employed, who make up a significant part of the tourism sector and community-level entrepreneurship in general.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered rising interest from tourists looking for new experiences based around natural and rural areas in the open air, far from congested settings. This, combined with the already rising demand for more authentic experiences that offer stronger engagement with local communities, their culture and products, as well as demand for a greener approach in all stages of the travel experience opens up immense opportunities for the economic, social and environmental revitalization of rural areas through tourism.

The current crisis has also emphasized the importance of building resilience among communities in those rural areas which rely on tourism. This implies better social protection and benefits-sharing among communities, as well as economic diversification and the broadening of tourism products and markets through added value experiences. To achieve this, investment, skills development, access to finance, infrastructure development, digital transformation, sustainable development, impact assessment, improved governance and women's empowerment should be placed at the heart of the recovery plans for tourism in rural communities. This will help support them as they navigate through the crisis and emerge stronger.

Finally, creating new opportunities for jobs and economic activities in rural areas through tourism requires a holistic approach that

engages all other sectors and activities in the tourism value chain and promotes Public-Private-Community (PPC) partnerships.

Harnessing the power of tourism to drive rural development will enhance the sector's contribution to achieving the SDGs, particularly Goals 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 15 (Life on Land), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), as well as the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

However, realizing these opportunities, requires an integrated and sequential strategic approach to tourism for rural development with a long-term vision towards 2030 and beyond.





RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Placing Tourism
as a strategic pillar
in policies for rural
development

II. Tourism for
the benefit and
wellbeing of rural
communities:
Building a fair,
inclusive, resilient
and sustainable
sector

III. New
opportunities for
tourism and rural
development:
Innovation,
technology and
digitalization

IV. Product
development
and value chain
integration for a
sustainable and
enhanced travel
experience

V. Fostering
sustainable
policies and
practices in rural
destinations



I. Placing Tourism as a strategic pillar in policies for rural development

1. **National, regional and local governments should place tourism as one of the strategic pillars of rural development policies** better recognising the role the sector can play as part of a diversified rural economy and putting in place active policies to promote it. This includes providing an enabling normative and regulatory framework, adequate investment, guidance and incentives to develop and manage tourism in rural areas more effectively and sustainably. This is particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 support measures as tourism in rural areas can make an important contribution to the recovery of the sector and increase the socio-economic resilience of rural communities. Even though governments have severely challenged budgets, it is essential to direct an effect proportion of national and regional resources, especially during the time of the COVID-19 crisis to promote investment and develop public infrastructure in rural areas, especially due to the current opportunity in customer trends of preference to travel in low concentration, easier social distancing areas.
2. **National, regional and local governments should fully integrate tourism into their development plans.** Factors to be considered include the territorial identity and specific features of rural destinations, as well as policies to distribute the benefits of tourism throughout their territories and make tourism an effective tool for inclusive, resilient and sustainable development for rural areas. Special emphasis should be placed on designing national and regional planning guidelines and/or legislation. These should enable the more productive usage of land (in its various uses) in tourism (and other) developments and allow faster, more efficient planning and execution of development programmes. This should also allow for the more efficient usage of land (and land allocation), including the continued preservation of natural reserves, and other natural, tangible, and non-tangible national, regional and local community resources that will attract visitors and tourists.
3. **Governments should promote a whole-of-government approach** through enhanced coordination between tourism and other relevant policy areas, particularly rural development, as well as across and between the various levels of government (national, regional and local) so as to maximize tourism's potential for rural development and achieving its objectives.



I. Placing Tourism as a strategic pillar in policies for rural development

4. **The governance of tourism for rural development should be based on Public-Private-Community (PPC) partnerships** and adopt a holistic and systemic approach by which all stakeholders – public sector at national, regional and local level, private sector, civil society and local communities – are fully engaged in the design, implementation, evaluation and coordination of tourism policies and strategies for the development of rural areas.
5. **Policies and governance in tourism for rural development should mainstream gender considerations** throughout the whole process to ensure equal outcomes and opportunities for both men and women.
6. **National, regional and local governments should create an enabling environment in rural areas to better realize tourism's potential to foster investments, innovation, entrepreneurship, decent and fair working conditions, digitalization and skills.** This can be achieved through the development of essential infrastructure and services, fiscal policies, monetary incentives and education and training, enhancements of the rule of law and a regulatory environment that supports the private sector. The role of and contributions by the private sector in tourism and all linked sectors are fundamental to ensuring the sustainability of rural tourism destinations.
7. **National, regional and local governments should promote the links between the urban and rural contexts** by promoting tourism in cities combined with travel to surrounding rural areas and promoting rural areas close to urban centres. Promoting tourism in rural areas not only spreads the benefits of the sector but also helps reduce pressure on more visited locations in cities.
8. **National, regional and local governments, the private sector and communities should increase investment as a condition for productivity, investment and new tourism developments in rural areas.** Public sector investment is especially important for attracting investments from the private sector, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and development partners. Infrastructure, particularly transport and digital infrastructure, is key for the competitiveness and sustainability of rural destinations. Governments should ensure adequate levels of investment in infrastructure in order to improve the wellbeing of rural communities and the visitor experience. This includes roads and train links to improve



I. Placing Tourism as a strategic pillar in policies for rural development

access and communication, public transport connections and facilities for cycling and walking, inter-island connectivity, reliable electricity, parking spaces, sanitary and educational infrastructure, cultural resources, as well as telephone services, internet/broadband connectivity, potable water provision, waste management and recycling, safety and security, banking facilities, health and childcare services among others.

9. **National, regional and local governments and multilateral organizations should promote cross boarder cooperation** and develop joint strategies and initiatives for rural tourism ensuring a more stable approach and greater impacts for the territories involved.
10. **Development institutions and partners should reinforce their support to tourism and step up the levels of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for tourism**, in line with the sector's contribution to jobs and economic growth as a means to promote poverty alleviation and inclusive development, particularly for vulnerable groups such as Indigenous peoples in rural areas.
11. **The international community should promote policies and initiatives that advance the close relationship between sustainable food systems and tourism.** These can be a pathway for the conservation and use of biodiversity, agrobiodiversity, cultural heritage and local gastronomy in rural areas, promoting local economies while preserving identities. Initiatives to make tourists more aware of their carbon footprint when travelling to rural areas and on their impact on the local food systems should be developed to encourage behaviours that help generate positive impacts for communities and ecosystems.
12. **The international community should promote effective planning and coordination of assistance and efforts among international organizations, donors, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)** to achieve concrete development targets, assure maximum impact, avoid duplication of efforts and ad hoc interventions. A value-chain approach to international assistance, based on strategies agreed with local and national governments is required.



I. Placing Tourism as a strategic pillar in policies for rural development

13. **The international community should improve access to development and project financing for higher income developing countries**, especially to support improved resilience and increased Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) development in rural areas. A number of the countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in this category that have graduated from ODA and IMF assistance rely on deficit spending for public sector capital projects and debt financing to address matters such as climate mitigation and building economic resilience. Considering that SIDS are disproportionately vulnerable to extreme weather events, and that these are aggravated by climate change, rural island communities often experience extreme hardship and high costs of living. Taken together, this makes it very difficult for locals to be able to invest in tourism.



II. Tourism for the benefit and wellbeing of rural communities: Building a fair, inclusive, resilient and sustainable sector

14. **National, regional and local policies for tourism and rural development should place the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of rural communities at their core**, paying special attention to Indigenous ways of relating to people and the environment. In view of this, local leadership and management should be strengthened to ensure the large and effective support from the community in rural areas. The sustainability of rural tourism should also respect the cultures of rural communities and promote the equal sharing of economic gains from tourism with rural communities. A comprehensive benefits-sharing mechanism should be established at the local level with the full engagement of community members who participate in the tourism value chain.
15. **Rural communities should be fully engaged in co-leading consultation processes and decision making for planning, developing and managing tourism in rural destinations**. This should enable them to take both ownership and leadership in destination planning and management. In this sense, it is essential to generate bottom-up debate processes where decision-making is consensual but endowing local managers (public and private) with enough autonomy to carry out concrete actions for which they will also have to be held accountable. Likewise, it is necessary to establish mechanisms for control, evaluation and proposals for improvement. Again, this should also be subject to broader consensus. Such decision-making structures should encourage the active and equal participation of women.
16. **National, regional and local governments should provide a conducive environment for MSMEs and entrepreneurship by ensuring an adequate regulatory framework**. They should also ensure easy and simplified access to financial assistance to empower rural communities and enhance the creation of tourism businesses in rural areas. This includes providing information on what funding is available from both the private and public sectors (credit lines, grant funds, subsidised interest rates, etc.), simplifying the processes to access financing, and developing products and market them, especially through digital platforms and more efficient sales channels. Support to local MSMEs through common facilities, business advisory services, technology support, marketing and investment attraction is critical to help them thrive, reduce entrepreneurial failure and accelerate their integration into the tourism value chain. Governments should encourage investment and risk taking by, amongst other things, deploying programmes of Incubators and/or Accelerators for small businesses, or even 'would be entrepreneurs' willing to take the risk of investing in and developing tourism businesses. This



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can come in the shape of government backed loans and credit (including partial guarantees, or better interest rates, etc.), for example.

17. **National, regional and local governments should continuously promote and facilitate the training and attraction of tourism professionals and entrepreneurs in rural areas.** Education and skills development for the local community are key. Without 'human capital', rural development would be impossible. The digital revolution is shaping skills development. Tourism related policies and capacity development programmes should build capacities in rural communities with a focus on the digital economy, as well as social and green skills that guide development in an ethical, greener and socially beneficial direction while respecting the diversity of development visions and cultural mindsets existing in rural areas. Part of the policy efforts in education and skills development should include the encouragement of higher skilled human capital and labour to move to rural areas, through government subsidies, lower taxation programmes, etc.
18. **Guided by the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, public and private sector should ensure that tourism activities in rural areas offer decent and fair jobs** and entrepreneurship opportunities for local communities, particularly for traditionally marginalized groups (women, youth, and Indigenous peoples) while promoting gender equality.
19. In line with the UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All, **public and private sector should advance accessibility across the entire tourism value chain in rural destinations**, empowering those with specific access requirements, including seniors, in order to make destinations more inclusive for local communities and visitors while opening new business opportunities. Accessibility should be promoted for local people at all levels. If this is achieved, in return visitors and tourists will also enjoy accessible rural destinations.
20. **Public and private sector should consider the UNWTO Recommendations on Sustainable Development of Indigenous Tourism**, and base tourism development in rural areas on the principles of mutual respect, consultation, empowerment and equitable partnerships in tourism, which can alleviate poverty and improve the indigenous communities' wellbeing and generate new business opportunities.



III. New opportunities for tourism and rural development: Innovation, technology and digitalization

21. **National, regional and local governments should promote policies that stimulate innovative solutions, technology and digitalization.** This can help accelerate access for local tourism businesses, many of which are family owned, to the marketplace and promote the inclusion and competitiveness of providers of all sizes in the tourism value chain. It can also help advance green mobility and products. Innovation and digital transformation should guide the development of tourism infrastructure, experiences and mobility, in particularly those that maximize visitors' quest for authenticity, while also fostering sustainability and promoting links with gastronomy, agriculture, manufacturing, wellness, sports, and nature.
22. **National, regional and local governments and the private sector should ensure rural destinations have the same connectivity and access to technology as urban areas** and are not 'left behind'. This is key to ensuring market access for tourism businesses and a positive experience for travellers in the context of a digital travel cycle accelerated by COVID-19. This includes the automation of processes at all stages of the travel experience (contactless check-in/check-out, cashless payments, access to fast, reliable wireless internet, e-purchasing local products and services, digital menus, etc.) without depersonalizing the service. This can also contribute to improvements in the quality and safety of the tourist experience (digital signs, access management, capacity control in common areas, interactive digital platforms, chatbots, etc.) Particular attention should be given to bridging the gender digital divide in rural destinations.
23. **National, regional and local governments should maximize the use of big data and technology to better plan, measure and manage tourism and promote evidence-based policies for tourism in rural areas in cooperation with the private sector and technology providers.** Such systems should consider the monitoring of indicators on infrastructure, carrying capacity, health and safety, housing, social impact, transport and mobility, management of natural and cultural resources and community engagement. Big data should be strategically used to better understand visitors to rural areas, their travel behaviours and patterns. This information can be used to craft marketable and personalized experiences, monitor impacts and boost rural areas competitiveness and sustainability. Technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and automation can also assist rural travellers with specific access requirements, whilst virtual and augmented reality can be used by rural destinations to help persons with limited mobility, hearing or vision impairments



III. New opportunities for tourism and rural development: Innovation, technology and digitalization

to travel around the world. In tandem, prior and informed consent to such data, public governance and open access to big data should be put in place to ensure that the technology and data will benefit both the communities and consumers. Local communities and individual stakeholders should receive adequate training that allows them to access, evaluate, and implement individual decisions using big data.



World Tourism Organization



IV. Product development and value chain integration for a sustainable and enhanced travel experience

24. **The development of tourism products and experiences in rural areas should be guided by a previous assessment of the strengths and opportunities of rural destinations** to define their potential and so create a proper enabling environment (i.e. infrastructure, resources management, investments, human capital) and a long-term development plan and strategy that can be sustainable and economically feasible. To this end, it is essential to implement market intelligence initiatives that provide relevant insights on trends and the needs of rural travellers to adapt products and marketing according to the targeted market while maintaining local identity.
25. **The development of tourism products and experiences in rural areas should follow a holistic and fully integrated perspective engaging all other sectors, stakeholders and socio-economic activities in the rural and tourism value chain.** Rural communities should be intrinsically involved in the co-creation of social and environmentally sustainable and economically viable tourism products. Collaboration within the community is essential and the stimulation or creation of networks of producers and cooperatives into working together to design and develop tourism products, agricultural produce and artisanship is highly recommended. The rural community must be proud of what they are, what they do and of their way of life. They should be able to feel ownership of their territory, their resources and lifestyle, and therefore also empowered to welcome visitors and create valuable experiences.
26. **National, regional and local governments as well as the private sector should promote thematic routes, road trips, island connections and national routes that link different rural destinations.** Collaboration between various rural destinations to develop joint tourism experiences and connectivity is encouraged for a more effective approach of tourism development and to provide added value for visitors.



IV. Product development and value chain integration for a sustainable and enhanced travel experience

27. **National, regional and local governments, private sector and communities should promote new and authentic experiences that are unique to rural areas**, promoting contact with nature and culture in uncrowded environments, in line with current consumer trends. The full variety of rural resources should be considered. This includes tourism activities related to culture, gastronomy and beverage, health and wellness, adventure and sports, agro-tourism and ecotourism, mountain, coastal, marine and natural protected areas, but also the promotion of post-visit follow-ups and access to rural produce. Focus on product development with an emphasis on interpretation which provides experiences for visitors, in terms of cultural learning and environmental conservation in rural areas, should be given priority.
28. **National, regional and local governments, private sector and communities should strengthen the marketing and promotion of tourism in rural areas**. There is an opportunity to attract and retain new travellers in view of the current COVID-19 context as many visitors look for open-air and less dense landscapes. In addition, marketing and promotion play an important role in growing communities' sense of place and pride and in educating visitors on the importance of their contribution for the benefit of local communities. Successful promotions should aim at growing both demand and spend, but also ensuring respect for the destination, visitor satisfaction and investment.
29. **National, regional and local governments, private sector and communities should raise awareness about the importance of rural communities and their contribution to the national economy and the preservation of cultural and natural resources** to promote the domestic market. This could include educational programmes that encourage children and youth to learn about their country's territory and cultures, actively engaging them in traditional customs and activities and raising awareness of the cultural and natural heritage transmitted by the rural communities, as well as their relationship with nature.
30. **Governments and the private sector should collect and make available, in accessible formats, accurate and regularly updated information concerning accessible products, services and facilities**, enabling visitors with specific access requirements for booking and purchasing of the whole itinerary and enhance their experience before, during and after.



IV. Product development and value chain integration for a sustainable and enhanced travel experience

31. **National, regional and local governments, private sector and communities should address seasonality** through campaigns in the domestic market. This can include special incentives to consumers and adequate product development considering the increasing interest in responsible, greener and ethical tourism experiences and business practices. Market diversification beyond the traditional domestic markets for rural tourism, and a specific focus on the demographics (both an ageing but healthy, travel-experienced and economically sound population that can travel off-season, as well as a younger population looking for nature and wellness) should also be considered.



V. Fostering sustainable policies and practices in rural destinations

32. **Tourism should be included as an effective means to attain rural development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs**, particularly Goals 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), 10 (Reduced Inequalities) 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 14 (Life Below Water), 15 (Life on Land), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) **and the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism** (Article 4 - Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and contributor to its enhancement and Article 5 - Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities). To this end, governments should raise awareness of all stakeholders in the public and private sectors as well as in communities to the SDGs and create a comprehensive process of participation in their implementation and monitoring that includes all relevant stakeholders.
33. **National, regional and local governments, in collaboration with the private sector and communities, should implement the concept of 'smart destinations'** in rural areas based on the five following pillars: 1) governance, 2) innovation, 3) technology, 4) accessibility and 5) sustainability.
34. **National, regional and local governments, private sector and communities should promote sustainable practices for a more efficient use of local resources and a reduction of emissions and waste** within the framework of the green economy. This includes the use of clean energy such as solar power, wind energy and biofuels in tourism activities, increased energy efficiency banning the use of single-use plastics and harmful substances, and the implementation of food waste management and recycling programmes. General waste management programmes should be included in zoning and planning and shading considerations and other anti-heat technologies should be encouraged and implemented as part of the development process.
35. **National, regional and local governments, private sector and communities should ensure the integration of natural and cultural resources**, such as nature reserves, World Heritage Sites, and natural and historical sites **into the development of rural areas** with a special emphasis on respecting local biodiversity and culture (religious sites, holidays, etc.).



V. Fostering sustainable policies and practices in rural destinations

36. **National, regional and local governments, private sector and communities should promote evidence-based tourism development through integrated trustworthy data and monitoring tools** that measure the economic, social, cultural and environmental impact of tourism in rural areas, track and optimize resources. Statistical information and data collection, processing and evaluation by the national/regional authorities should be made more efficient, preferably based on a higher level of digitalization in rural areas so as to enable a better ability to establish, plan, evaluate and manage development programmes.
37. **Governments should join the ‘Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism’ (MST) initiative** recognized by the UN Statistical Commission as the statistical framework with which to measure and monitor the environmental, economic and social impact of tourism at the national and subnational levels. Governments are invited to support the development process of the framework, and to take steps towards its implementation through pilot studies. In addition, the **UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories provides a framework for the systematic, timely and regular monitoring of resource-use and a better understanding of the impact of tourism at local level** in nine areas – seasonality; employment; economic benefits; governance; local satisfaction; energy management; water management; waste water (sewage) management; and solid waste management and accessibility. In this context, the regular monitoring of tourism’s impact on rural communities’ (i.e. quality of life and satisfaction) is of particular relevance.





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