

WWF's benchmarks for cooperation with the tourism industry in coastal and marine areas of outstanding ecological value

Tourism and the environment are intrinsically linked. Most tourists decide to travel to a particular destination because of sand, sun and sea or a foreign culture. The natural and cultural environment is part of the tourism product. Coastal areas in particular are especially attractive to tourism as they provide the ideal environment in which many tourists want to spend their holidays.

Tourism can be an important component in the responsible development of coastal areas. Tourism can enhance cultural and historical traditions which contribute to conservation and sustainable management of natural resources. However, despite its development potential, tourism rarely lives up to its sustainability expectations. Adverse impacts include excessive and inequitable resource use, habitat destruction and fragmentation, social and cultural homogenisation and commercialisation, and economic exclusion. Given that ecologically fragile regions, such as coastal areas and coral reefs, are often particularly attractive as tourist destinations, inappropriate or unplanned development can be disastrous in terms of habitat degradation and biodiversity loss, and can result in the misuse of natural resources such as freshwater, forests and coral reefs.

Obviously, these environmental impacts represent severe issues for the destinations themselves, but they also pose a problem because the 'damaged' environment is part of the tourism product that tourists come for. Therefore, if environmental damages get out of hand, this will lessen the attractiveness of the destination for tourists and eventually the destination's tourism industry might become damaged as well through its own activities.

This folder is meant as a framework for the future negotiations between WWF and the tourism industry, tour operators in particular. It provides examples of how to implement WWF's position on coastal tourism in the cooperation with the tourism industry in coastal and marine areas of outstanding ecological value. Together with possible partners, WWF intends to elaborate common strategies for tourism development and cooperation in the destinations guided by the benchmarks presented in this document.

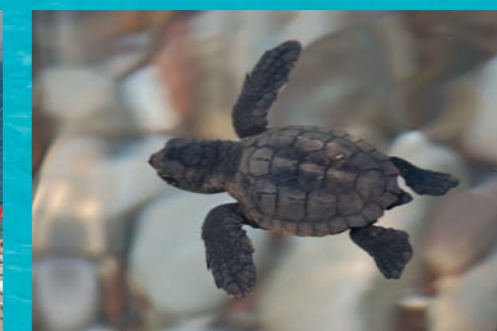
To further its conservation goals and to find practical solutions to the environmental problems that threaten nature, WWF believes it to be essential to work with business and industry to demonstrate corporate environmental leadership, develop best environmental practice, catalyze change at sectoral and political levels and provide financial support for joint conservation activities. The tourism industry is the largest industry in the world and therefore, its activities are of great concern to WWF.

WWF seeks a constructive and proactive relationship with the tourism industry in implementing responsible tourism. As is its mandate, WWF will continue to oppose any poor practices which result in environmental degradation, but will also seek to work with the industry to implement more sustainable solutions. We will seek to identify and cooperate with those elements of the tourism industry which make commitments and take concrete steps towards the implementation of tourism that respects the ecological, social and cultural assets of destinations. WWF will also work with the industry to develop and implement standards and principles which lead to more sustainable development of tourism in fragile destinations, particularly marine and coastal areas.



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Coastal Conservation and Tourism

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by

- conserving the world's biological diversity,
- ensuring that the use of renewable resources is sustainable and
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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Sustainable tourism planning and development

Inappropriate or unplanned tourism development can be disastrous in terms of habitat degradation and biodiversity loss and can result in the misuse of natural resources such as freshwater, forests and coral reefs. To avoid these negative impacts, sustainable tourism planning and development needs to consider the selection of suitable sites and the appropriate construction of tourist facilities on these sites. Additionally, the local population also needs to be taken into consideration and involved in sustainable tourism development in order to benefit from it.

Therefore, WWF requires tour operators to apply the following guidelines when involved in tourism planning and development or to oblige their subcontractors to do so:

- Site selection: e.g. no construction with a 100 to 300 metres strip from the shore line, special care has to be exercised when selecting a site near or in a protected area.
- Planning and developing tourism projects: an environmental assessment has to be carried out for each project (make use of the STING tool (Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism Investments) developed by WWF, for example).
- Planning and developing tourist infrastructure: issues that have to be considered during the planning and construction phase include eco-friendly design of facilities, waste management, energy conservation and use of alternative energy sources.
- Community based tourism development: tour operators have to respect the cultural values and intellectual property of the host populations. Any tourism development should be exercised in such a way that the host populations benefit as much as possible.



Construction site bordering protected area. Sal, Cape Verde.
© WWF Germany / Birgit WEERTS

Tourism in protected areas

The relationship between tourism and protected areas is especially difficult as the latter are easily damaged by tourist activity due to their sensitive nature. Hence, special measures are needed to protect these areas and tour operators as well as their suppliers have a special role to play in this regard as the mediator between tourists and the protected area. Therefore, WWF wants tour operators and their sub-contractors to take on responsibility for the protected area in which they operate.

This can be done in two ways:

- Raising finance for protected areas, e.g. through charging entrance fees, sponsoring a protected area, supporting other commercial activities in the protected area or encouraging donations from customers.
- Establishing a partnership with a protected area: WWF believes that tourism enterprises (including tour operators) should formally confirm their support and commitment to the conservation goals of the protected areas in or near a destination. Moreover, operators should also take part in the development and implementation of a tourism development strategy for the protected areas.



Community planning. Mafia Island, Tanzania.
© WWF-Canon / Jason RUBENS



Accommodation management

The possible environmental impacts of tourist accommodation on the environment are manifold. Often cited problems include high water consumption through showering, bathing and laundering, waste disposal or sewage treatment. WWF believes that, in order to reduce these problems, hotels and other tourist accommodation should be consistent with international standards which specify procedures that help to limit the negative environmental impacts.

Therefore, the WWF requests that all accommodation should be certified. Examples that could be used to do so include:

- VISIT Standards (Voluntary Initiative for Sustainability in Tourism)
- IHEI Standards (International Hotels Environment Initiative)
- ISO 14024 Standards for Ecolabels
- EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme)
- ISO 14001-EMS (Environmental Management Standards) Specification Standards

As the EMAS and ISO 14001 standards are open to any kind of organisation, i.e. not just the accommodation sector, tour operators are also asked to apply these standards to their own operations as a tour operator.

Water-based tourist activities

Water-based activities offered as part of the tourism product can influence marine life in various ways and can cause permanent damage to natural habitats. Snorkelling, scuba diving and wildlife viewing tours, for example, are becoming increasingly popular with tourists, but can cause severe damage to corals and marine animals. Further negative impacts can also stem from unsuitable boat operation, boat maintenance, boat sewage/garbage disposal, seafood consumption, souvenir purchasing and recreational fishing.

Hence, WWF requests that tour operators or their sub-contractors undertake all possible measures to minimise the negative impacts of water-based tourist activities. Activities that are of particular importance in this regard

due to their increasing popularity are snorkelling and scuba diving, wildlife viewing tours and cruise tourism. Any disturbance or damage to animals during these activities has to be avoided, both through boats and tourists. No discharge or pollution of the marine and natural environment is to be allowed.

Transparency and communication in tourism

As tour operators are the intermediaries between tourists and destinations, they are also ideally suited to communicate the impacts that tourism has on a destination to their customers. However, the difficulty with assessing these impacts is that a holiday consists of several parts such as transportation, accommodation and activities, for example. Furthermore, environmental impacts often only become visible after a relatively long time and therefore cannot be linked directly to one particular holiday.

Nevertheless, in order to reduce the negative environmental impacts of tourism, suppliers as well as tourists need to be aware of the impact of holidays on the environment and WWF believes that this impact should be measured and communicated together with the product in catalogues or other advertising media. Therefore, tour operators ought to assess and publish the impact of their products in a comparable way. A good example of how to do this is the 'Holiday Footprinting' method developed for WWF UK (for further information see www.wwf.org.uk).



Deck-chair. Cape Verde, Sal.
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Coastal Conservation and Tourism



This leaflet will provide guidelines and examples on how tour operators help to alleviate the negative impacts of tourism on the environment.

Leatherback turtle hatching (*Dermochelys coriacea*), French Guiana. © WWF-Canon / Roger LE GUEN

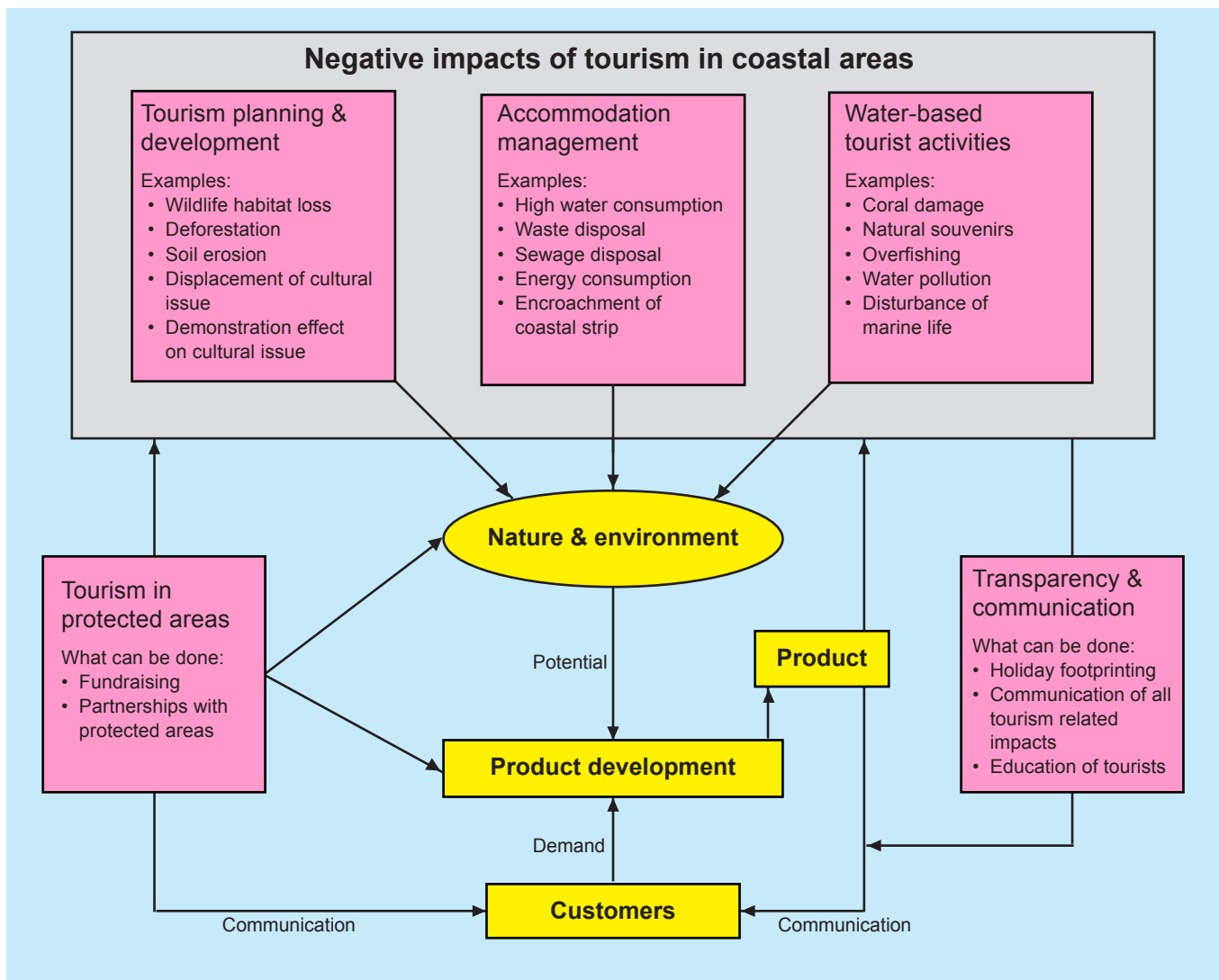
Introduction

There are many ways for tour operators to help reduce the negative impacts of tourism on the natural and cultural environment and to support sustainable tourism development. Where action is required at a destination, the tour operator may not always be directly involved and instead be represented through a sub-contractor. In such cases, WWF urges tour operators to ensure that their sub-contractors carry out the appropriate measures. Furthermore, as tour operators often have influence on local decision making, they are asked to use this influence to ensure sustainable tourism development.

In the diagram on the next page, examples of impacts of tourism in coastal areas are given. The illustration also explains the relationship between tourism, nature and environment, tour operators and customers which requires more sustainable tourism development.



WWF guide. Sal, Cape Verde © WWF Germany / Birgit WEERTS



WWF would like to see tour operators involved in five areas (purple fields in diagram):

- Sustainable tourism planning and development
- Accommodation management
- Water-based tourist activities
- Tourism in protected areas
- Transparency and communication in tourism

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Inappropriate or unplanned tourism development can result in habitat degradation and biodiversity loss and the misuse of natural resources such as freshwater, forests and coral reefs.

In the following, principles, guidelines and measures for sustainable tourism planning and development are described which WWF believes should be followed by responsible tour operators.



Construction site. Sal, Cape Verde © WWF Germany / Birgit WEERTS

Sustainable tourism planning and development

Sustainable tourism planning and development needs to consider the selection of suitable sites and the appropriate construction of tourism facilities.

Tour operators are frequently involved in planning and developing tourism facilities. WWF therefore urges tour operators to comply with the recommended guidelines and to require their sub-contractors to do so. Furthermore, tour operators can use their influence to convince any third party concerned with tourism planning and development to comply with these recommendations.

In order to benefit from sustainable tourism development, the local population needs to be involved and taken into consideration. In general, anyone planning a tourism project should ask environmental organisations for advice, too.

Site selection

When selecting a site, it needs to be considered whether this site is in or directly adjacent to a protected area. If so, the designation of the protected area, i.e. its IUCN category, must allow this tourism development. Any tourism activity should then be guided by an explicit management plan and all applicable assessment and review procedures. For development in or near areas that are likely to become protected in the future, the same procedures should be applied.

However, special guidelines for tourism development are not only needed for protected areas, but also for

fragile coastal areas that are attractive for tourism development. The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM, 1994) proposes the establishment of a generally protected coastal zone for the Baltic Sea. WWF recommends this is to be applied for coastal areas worldwide. The guidelines require the establishment of a protected strip outside urban areas and settlements with a width of 100 to 300 metres both landwards and seawards (any activities permanently changing the nature and landscape in this strip are not allowed). Furthermore, a coastal planning zone of at least three kilometres landwards needs to be established where major building development and other major permanent changes in nature and landscape should be preceded by an appropriate land use plan, including an environmental impact assessment.

Planning and developing tourism projects

Once an appropriate site is selected, an assessment of the impact of the proposed project on the environment has to be undertaken. This needs to take place in the preparation phase of a project, i.e. before development consent can be obtained. The EU prescribes in certain cases, including concern tourism projects, the undertaking of a strategic environmental analysis (SEA 2001/42/EC) and/or an environmental impact assessment (EIA 97/11/EC). In countries without such legal requirements, WWF expects that comparable assessments are undertaken on a voluntary basis.

An example for this could be STING (Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism Investments) which has been developed by WWF. The guidelines were originally developed for vulnerable ecological areas of the Mediterranean coast, but be applied anywhere.

Developers need to go through five steps to complete the STING process:

- Prepare an investment profile according to a screening checklist, which includes general features of the facility as well as environmental and socio-economic impacts.
- Consider the local context, i.e. whether the project and its planning, siting, design and construction meets local and regional legislation, policies and planning.
- Prepare an ecological risk map, i.e. assess the suitability of a site for the investment based on the ecological value and vulnerability of natural areas (this is similar to an EIA but less demanding and provides quick guidance on the sustainability of a project).
- Assess the tourism carrying capacity of the area (involves consideration of the environmental and territorial characteristics of the area, type and size of tourism attractions, relations between micro and macro tourism policies and preference of

local population, the motivations of tourists and operators).

- Once the project is established, operators should run the facilities in a sustainable manner, e.g. consider ecological criteria, invest in training of the local workforce, adopt certification systems, promote environmentally and socially responsible behaviour in clients and contribute to conservation of local resources.

Planning and developing tourism infrastructure

After the overall tourism project has been planned and assessed regarding its sustainability, the infrastructure needs to be built. Conservation techniques should be applied in this phase too, through measures such as an ecological design of the facilities, waste management and energy conservation. The United Nations Environment Programme and other organisations (see Ceballos-Lascurain, 2001) have provided guidelines on these issues and WWF consider these as best practice. Developers are expected to apply the following guidelines:

Ecodesign of tourism facilities:

- Harmonise tourism facilities with the surrounding environment (both natural and cultural).
- Use design with long-term environmental criteria.
- Ensure that tourism facilities minimise impacts on the natural and cultural environment and also act as a tool for biodiversity conservation and the enhancement of natural ecosystems.
- Use local building materials and local hand labour.
- Minimise negative environmental impact on site during the construction process.
- In the case of ecolodges and other tourism facilities located in natural areas:
 - Create the most appropriate access to the ecolodge, striking the right balance between access and minimisation of negative impacts on the natural environment.
 - Consider developing a landing field for light planes instead of building a paved highway for access.
 - Do not build roads of more than 5m width within a protected area as these present barriers for wildlife mobility and spoil the natural landscape.
 - Where possible use waterways and the most suitable type of boats to ensure minimum negative impact.
 - Minimise watertight surfaces when possible to reduce runoff and maximise groundwater recharge.
 - Not all protected areas allow for built facilities inside their boundaries; facilities could be placed in a nearby community or buffer zone.



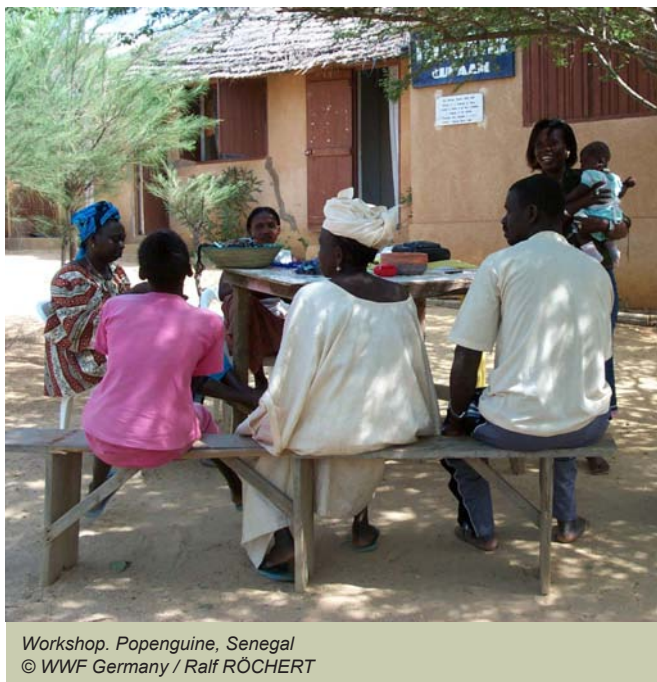
Infrastructure development. Sal, Cape Verde
© WWF Germany / Birgit WEERTS

Waste Management:

- Always consider recycling, reusing, refusing and reducing.
- Reuse wastewater as much as possible. Always avoid using drinking water for irrigation.
- Use products that minimise waste and are not toxic. Convert biodegradable waste to compost.
- To save water, use dry toilets (and pit latrines, in cases of extreme isolation and budget restrictions), always designed to minimise negative impacts on the environment.

Energy conservation, bio-climatic design and alternative energy sources:

- Apply bio-climatic design criteria, i.e. understand the physical setting of the facility, the local climate, including prevailing winds, solar radiation, appropriate local materials, biodegradation, surrounding vegetation, etc. and use these to the facilities' advantage.
- Consider the sun's position when choosing the orientation of the facility in order to maximise use



of natural light and to trap incoming solar radiation where necessary.

- Use solar energy for heating water and generating electricity as well as other environmentally-friendly energy sources.
- Use water catchment methods.
- Apply cross-ventilation, i.e. place openings in opposite and parallel walls to induce natural air flow from outside and cooling interior spaces to avoid the use of air conditioning.

Community-based tourism development

Anyone involved in sending tourists overseas should consider the impact of these tourists and their activities on the host population. The local community should have substantial control over, and involvement in, the development and management of tourism and a major proportion of the benefits should remain within the community. Community-based tourism should foster sustainable use and collective responsibility.

Therefore, WWF expects tour operators and their sub-contractors at the destination to pay particular attention to respecting the cultural values and intellectual property of local, especially indigenous, people in all aspects of the industry – including infrastructure siting, activities, accommodation, communication and contributions.

WWF has established guidelines for community-based ecotourism development (WWF International, 2001); these can be applied to other non-eco community based tourism developments as well. WWF therefore expects tour operators and sub-contractors to follow these when undertaking such projects.

Operators need to consider whether ecotourism is an appropriate option for the destination in question:

- Consider the potential conservation gain, i.e. whether tourism would have a positive or negative impact on the conservation of natural resources at the destination.
- Check the preconditions for ecotourism, i.e. undertake a feasibility check including an assessment of the conditions for undertaking tourism business and of the preconditions for community-based ecotourism.
- Adopt an integrated approach, i.e. with other sustainable development initiatives at regional and local level, with other sectors (e.g. agriculture) and with the national level, to support and promote sustainable tourism.

If this initial assessment is positive, the next step is to plan together with the communities and other stakeholders to enable ecotourism to work properly and for the benefit of local people and the environment.

- Find the best way to involve the community (i.e. identify potential leaders in the community, consider gender issues and encourage community-led initiatives as well as private).
- Work together on an agreed strategy (i.e. the strategy should be community-led and community-focused (although involvement of experts in developing the strategy is essential); input to the strategy should be obtained through community consultation).
- Ensure environmental and cultural integrity (i.e. minimise adverse impacts, do not compromise the culture of the host population, identify levels of acceptable change and acceptable use (for the natural environment and the community), the community should decide on what levels of tourism they want, apply visitor management techniques).

Once the overall ecotourism strategy is established, viable community-based ecotourism projects need to be developed. Operators must make sure that market realism and effective promotion are considered when designing projects and that only quality products are put forward.

After the project has been established, operators need to ensure that they strengthen the benefits to the community and the environment by adopting the following measures:

- Manage impacts (e.g. through sustainable use of resources, employment of local people).
- Provide technical support (e.g. training for local people, contact other projects, give financial assistance, establish networks between projects).
- Obtain the support of visitors and other tour operators.
- Monitor performance and ensure continuity (i.e. ensure that the project continues and becomes self-sufficient after any financial assistance ends).



Hotel development. West coast of Bonaire Marine Park, Netherlands Antilles © WWF-Canon / Susan WELLS

Further resources:

<p>Ceballos-Lascurain, H. (2001) EIA (1997) HELCOM (1994) IUCN (1994) SEA (2001) WWF International (2001) WWF International (2003) WWF Mediterranean Programme Office & AMBIENTEITALIA (2004) STING</p>	<p><i>Integrating Biodiversity into the Tourism Sector: Best Practice and Country Case Studies. Nairobi, Kenya. Study for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP /UNDP /GEF /BPSP) COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 97/11/EC. Brussels, Belgium Recommendation 15/1. Protection of the coastal strip. Helsinki, Finland Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories. CNPPA with the assistance of WCMC. Gland, Switzerland; Cambridge, UK SEA (2001) DIRECTIVE 2001/42/EC. Brussels, Belgium Guidelines for community-based ecotourism development. Gland, Switzerland Advisory Note on Indigenous and traditional Peoples and Protected Areas. Gland, Switzerland Guidelines for sustainable tourism investments in vulnerable ecological areas of the Mediterranean coasts, Italy</i></p>
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The relationship between tourism and protected areas is especially difficult. Protected areas, sensitive by nature, are easily damaged by tourism activities. WWF urges tour operators and their sub-contractors to take responsibility for the protected areas they operate in.



Natural bay. Lastovo, Croatia © WWF Germany / Birgit WEERTS

Tourism in protected areas

Special measures are needed to protect particularly valuable areas, and tour operators as well as their suppliers have a role as the middleman between tourists and the protected area. In general, anyone working in tourism in protected areas should ask environmental organisations for advice, too.

Financing of protected areas

Protected areas often have only little finance available to prevent and repair damage from usage, e.g. through tourist visits. Various measures to raise funds for protected areas have been proposed by Font, Cochrane and Trapper (2004) and Roerhorst (2000). Tour operators and subcontractors should use measures directly applicable to them and help to reinforce other measures.

Measures that tour operators and/or subcontractors are expected to apply:

- Charge entrance fees or betterment fees to customers for visiting protected areas.
- Charge user/permit fees to customers for undertaking specific activities or for use of specific facilities within protected areas (e.g. for parking, fishing, recreational programmes, etc.).
- Establish a contract between the protected area and the tour operator/subcontractor under which the latter are permitted to operate within the protected area, to use certain land or facilities for a specified period in exchange for making payments to the protected area.

- Sponsor a protected area.
- Become a member of a protected area (if such a membership organisation exists).
- Provide additional activities for customers in the protected area for which the revenues go towards the conservation of the protected area.

Measures that tour operators and subcontractors are asked to support:

- Support direct commercial activities in the protected area, e.g. the provision of commercial goods and services by the protected area as this creates additional revenue.
- Lobby for local or national governments to utilise taxes to support protected areas.
- Encourage donations from customers for the protected areas.
- Encourage customers to take up membership for a protected area (if such a membership organisation exists).
- Support the provision of additional activities within the protected area that create additional revenue for the protected area.
- Support the sale of merchandise from the protected area (if such merchandise exists).

Activities in protected areas must comply with protected area regulations and any revenues collected by third parties be given to the protected area for conservation purposes.

Partnerships with protected areas

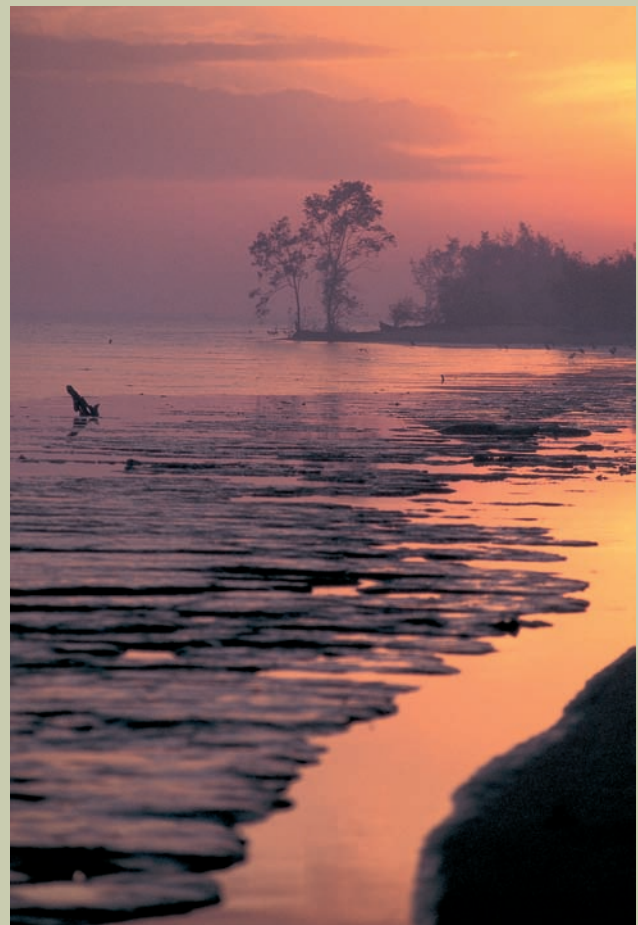
Another possibility for tour operators and subcontractors to support protected areas is a partnership. WWF believes that tourism enterprises should be asked to formally confirm their support and commitment to the conservation goals of the protected areas in or near a destination. Intention and aims of the partnership ought to be fixed in a common declaration supplemented with

an action plan defining next steps of the cooperation. Operators should be urged to take on responsibility and to take part in the development and implementation of a tourism development strategy for the protected areas. WWF expects tour operators and subcontractors to follow the subsequent principles and criteria, as proposed by the Europarc Federation (2002).

In order to establish a partnership with a protected area, tour operators and local tourism businesses are asked to:

1. Accept and respect the principles of sustainable development (as incorporated in the PAN Parks Verification Manual (PAN Parks, 2004), for example) while adapting them to their own activity.
2. Define a strategy (1 to 3 years) in close partnership with the protected area authority.
3. Present this strategy in the form of an action plan specifying actions which have been or will be taken to achieve the objectives set by the strategy. The strategy defines the company's commitment to the following key issues:
 - Protection and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage (concerning respect for capacity limits, enhancement of local heritage, conservation of natural resources, contribution to heritage conservation).
 - Improving the quality of the tourism experience (concerning market research, quality procedure, identification of new customers).
 - Raising public awareness (concerning education and interpretation, visitor information, appropriate marketing and promotion).
 - Development of tourism specific to the area, i.e. consideration of local conditions.
 - Training
 - Protection and support of the quality of life of the inhabitants of the protected area.
 - Social and economic development (concerning support for the local economy, development of new employment opportunities).

- Control of tourist numbers (concerning monitoring visitor flows, channelling of visitor flows, traffic control, management and integration of visitor facilities).
4. Implement of the travel company's commitment, evaluation, and renew commitment to sustainable development.



Coastal mangrove. Amana Nature Reserve, Brazil
© WWF-Canon / Roger LE GUEN

Further resources:

Europarc Federation (2002)	<i>The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. Grafenau, Germany</i>
Font, X., Cochrane, J., and Tapper, R. (2004)	<i>Pay per nature view - Understanding tourism revenues for effective management plans. Leeds, UK, WWF Report</i>
PAN Parks (2004) PAN Parks	<i>Verification Manual – PAN Parks Principles and Criteria, Principle 4 and 5</i>
Roerhorst, I. (2000) PAN Parks	<i>Potential financial instruments for PAN Parks</i>

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Coastal Conservation and Tourism

WWF believes that tour operators should promote environmental standards in accommodation; either through implementing these standards themselves in company-owned accommodation or through requiring implementation from their suppliers.



Copacabana Beach, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil © WWF-Canon / Mauri RAUTKARI

Accommodation management

Problems related to accommodation often include high water consumption through showering, bathing and laundering, waste disposal and sewage treatment. In order to reduce these problems, hotels and other tourist accommodation should be consistent with international standards which specify procedures that help limiting negative environmental impacts.

WWF requires hotels and other tourist accommodation to apply such standards to their operations. Examples include the general 'ISO 14024 standards for Ecolabels' or the standards for 'Tourism Ecolabels in Europe' as developed by VISIT (Voluntary Initiative for Sustainability in Tourism, www.yourvisit.info). For larger accommodation facilities with more than thirty beds, additional compliance with specified management standards such as EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme), ISO 14001 Environmental Management Standards or IHEI (International Hotels Environment Initiative) is advised.

VISIT (Voluntary Initiative for Sustainability in Tourism)

The VISIT initiative supports the development of tourism ecolabels in Europe and aims to demonstrate how these labels can promote sustainability to consumers and the tourism industry. The standards are based

on ISO 14024 for Type I Ecolabels and require the verification of key requirements and procedures on a third party basis.

In order to qualify for the VISIT ecolabel, accommodation operators have to make efforts regarding certain criteria.

Tour operators are requested to implement systems to achieve the following criteria in their own hotel operations and require their sub-contractors to follow their example:

- Protect nature and landscape.
- Purchase local, environmentally-friendly products and organic food supplies.
- Reduce and limit energy consumption and drinking water.
- Increase the use of renewable energy sources.
- Properly treat sewage.
- Reduce and recycle waste.
- Use public and environmentally-friendly means of transport.

EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme)

The EMAS standards have been developed by the European Union in order to evaluate and improve the environmental performance of organisations and to provide relevant information to the public and other interested parties. As the standards are not limited to the accommodation sector, any organisation wishing to improve its environmental performance can participate. Therefore, WWF urges tour operators not only to implement these standards in company-owned hotels and require their sub-contractors to do so, but also to apply these standards to their own operations.

Organisations applying to the scheme have to meet the following requirements:

- Conduct an environmental review of the company's activities, products and services and subsequently implement an environmental management scheme.
- Carry out an environmental audit.

- Prepare an environmental statement (this will be used to communicate the company's involvement and efforts regarding the scheme to the public).
- Submit these documents for validation (to ensure that the requirements are fulfilled).
- Forward the validated documents to the responsible body in the respective member state.
- To remain registered, a yearly re-validation of the environmental statement is required.

Once registration has been successful, the organisation must:

- Evaluate the performance of their environmental management system.
- Provide information on environmental performance and lead an open dialogue with the public and other interested parties.
- Actively involve and train the employees in the organisation.

ISO 14001 – Environmental Management Standards (EMS) Specification Standard

As the EMAS certification, the ISO 14001 standards define the required elements that must be met when seeking certification for an organisation's environmental management systems. The ISO 14001 standards are open to any organisation, not just accommodation establishments, and are internationally valid, in contrast to EMAS's EU focus. Therefore, WWF requests that tour operators operating outside the EU implement the ISO 14001 standards in their company-owned hotels and require their sub-contractors to do so.



Ecotourism hotel. Silves, Brazil
© WWF-Canon / Edward PARKER

Further resources:

EMAS (2001)	<i>Regulation (EC) No. 761/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2001. L 114/1 Official Journal of the European Communities</i> http://www.iso.org
International Organisation for Standardisation VISIT (2003)	<i>The VISIT Standards for Tourism Ecolabels in Europe. Saarbrücken.</i> http://www.yourvisit.info

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Water-based activities offered as part of the tourism product can have an impact on marine life and cause permanent damage to natural habitats.

WWF believes that tour operators have to apply appropriate guidelines to their operations and request their subcontractors at the destination to work towards avoiding these negative impacts.



Surfboards. Sal, Cape Verde © WWF Germany / Birgit WEERTS

Water-based tourist activities

Snorkelling, scuba diving wildlife viewing tours and cruise tourism are becoming increasingly popular with tourists, but can cause severe damage to habitat and harm marine life. Further negative impacts can also arise from unsuitable boat operation, boat maintenance, boat sewage/garbage disposal, seafood consumption, souvenir purchasing and recreational fishing.

Snorkelling and scuba diving

Snorkellers and divers, especially when inexperienced or irresponsible, often cause damage to corals and other reef dwelling organisms with fins, equipment and body parts. Both tour operators and subcontractors have a crucial role to play in avoiding and minimising these detrimental effects.

Therefore, WWF expects the following steps as proposed by CELB, CORAL and TOI (2004):

- Establish a no-contact policy, i.e. do not allow tourists to touch animals, corals etc.
- Conduct environmental awareness briefings for tourists.
- Conduct buoyancy refreshers i.e. inform customers about the importance of issues such as proper weighting and streamlining of gear.
- Discourage feeding and harassment of all marine wildlife.

- Support mooring buoy projects, i.e. the distribution of mooring boys to avoid anchoring on reefs.
- Support the establishment of marine protected areas.
- Address diver carrying capacity, i.e. carefully assess how many divers are acceptable without any damage to nature and do not send out too many divers at one particular site.

Wildlife viewing tourism

Disruption or damage to species and habitats through inappropriate practices e.g. by approaching too closely while whale watching, approaching breeding sites, reef walking or destructive anchoring are not acceptable.

WWF considers the guidelines set by CELB, CORAL and TOI (2004) as a good example that needs to be followed:

- Do not chase animals.
- Do not surround animals.
- Practice a no-contact policy, i.e. do not allow tourists to touch animals.
- Never import any captive animals illegally.
- Never feed wild animals.
- Do not litter.

Especially in relation to whale watching, WWF regards stringent rules as necessary and urges tour operators and subcontractors to follow the principles set by the International Whaling Commission (2002):

- Manage the development of whale watching to minimise the risk of adverse impacts.
- Design, maintain and operate platforms to minimise the risk of adverse effects on cetaceans.
- Allow the cetaceans to control the nature and duration of 'interactions'.

Tour operators are requested to consider if and how they can implement these guidelines in their work (e.g. through incorporating education and awareness of tourists in brochures) and are also asked to require their subcontractors to do so.

Cruise tourism

The potential impacts of cruise tourism on the environment are manifold and obviously include effects on water and marine animals, but also on air and even vegetation as well as land (e.g. through the landing of passengers). WWF urges tour operators to become more active in this issue as they often directly operate cruise ships. Furthermore, tour operators should also pull their weight in influencing authorities to put appropriate legislation in place or to provide incentives for operators to adhere to the rules, for example.

WWF (2004) expects operators of cruise ships to apply the following guidelines:

Water pollution:

- No discharge of oil, wastewater or garbage, especially not in or near marine protected areas and other sensitive areas.
- Prevent possible pollution through oil leakages by avoiding sailing in high risk areas as well as carrying and being able to use best available oil spill response equipment.
- Prioritise garbage reduction, separation and compression on board.
- Only use environmentally-friendly hull paint.
- Use best available technology and apply best practice for ballast water treatment.

Physical damage:

- Avoid vulnerable areas and refrain from anchoring in areas with rich sea bottom habitats.
- Ensure that guests and guides comply with regulations that prevent vegetation degradation and damage to historical sites from tourism.
- Ensure that guides and guests do not litter while on land.

Wildlife disturbances:

- Contribute to the development of wildlife viewing guidelines and implement these.
- Ensure everyone's compliance to these rules.



Giant clams. Fiji © WWF / Cat HOLLOWAY

Further resources:

CELB, CORAL and TOI (2004)

International Whaling Commission (2002)
WWF International Arctic Programme (2004)

Practical guide to good practice – managing environmental impacts in the marine recreation sector
IWC's general principles for whale watching, WWF Arctic Programme
Cruise tourism on Svalbard – a risky business?

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Coastal Conservation and Tourism

Tourism is not without impacts on the natural environment. WWF believes that this impact should be measured and communicated together with the product in catalogues or other advertising media.



Beach. Sal, Cape Verde © WWF Germany / Birgit WEERTS

Transparency and communication in tourism

Assessing the true overall impact of a holiday is difficult because a holiday consists of several elements, e.g. transportation, accommodation and activities. Furthermore, environmental impacts often only become visible after a relatively long time and therefore cannot be linked directly to one particular holiday. Nevertheless, in order to reduce the negative environmental impacts of tourism, suppliers as well as tourists need to be aware of the impact of holidays on the environment. A good example of how to do this is the 'Holiday Footprinting' method developed for WWF UK.

This tool provides the following benefits to tour operators:

- Calculation of the environmental impact that a holiday product has on the environment in terms of resources used.
- Estimate of the relative environmental sustainability of a product.
- Identification of opportunities for footprint reduction and cost savings.
- Useful communication tool to convey information about a range of environmental issues associated with tourism.

Alternatively, tour operators may also develop their own labelling system. It is crucial that customers are able to compare the environmental and social impacts of the product on offer. A starting point could be to publish the estimated CO₂ emissions of air travel, but other indicators must follow here.

Although there are various ways in which the ecological footprint of a holiday can be reduced, there are certain measures that are universally applicable. Examples are listed below. WWF expects tour operators to inform their customers about these issues in order to make their policy more transparent.

Waste:

- Waste production per traveller

Food:

- Percentage of the food tonnage in form of dairy, fruit and vegetables (as the footprint of meat production is several times that of the other food sources).
- Percentage of internationally sourced food
- Percentage of organically grown food

Energy use:

- Overall energy consumption
- Percentage of fossil-based electricity use
- Percentage of renewable sources used

As 'footprinting' only relates to the environmental impacts of tourism practice, operators should also use other accompanying approaches, such as benchmarking, supply chain management, sustainability reporting and certification. Implementing and communicating these measures to potential customers will distinguish responsible tour operators from the competition.

Furthermore, the sustainability of a tourism product also relates to such issues as codes of conducts for tourists, cultural sensitivities of host populations and other problems. These can be encountered through the education of tourists before and during the holiday and should be promoted as part of all tourism ventures by tour operators. By making the impacts of tourist activities more transparent and communicating these impacts, the sustainability of the tourism product can be substantially improved.



Tourists' pensions. Cirali, Turkey © WWF-Canon / Michel GUNTHER

Further resources:

WWF UK (2002) *Holiday Footprinting – A practical Tool for Responsible Tourism. UK*

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