



**Blue
Tourism
Initiative**

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE BLUE TOURISM: TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND POLICY PATHWAYS



Blue Tourism Initiative promotes a holistic vision of maritime and coastal management in line with worldwide efforts to deliver the 2030 Agenda around marine regions. This initiative aims to improve the governance of coastal and marine tourism to ensure sustainable, inclusive and resilient development, and address the associated environmental, health, socio-cultural and economic challenges.

It supports exchanges of knowledge, good practices, projects and experiences between three major marine regions sharing similar environmental and social challenges related to coastal and maritime tourism: the Mediterranean, the Western Indian Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.



IDDRI is an independent think tank based in Paris (France) at the interface of research and decision-making that investigates sustainable development issues requiring global coordination.



Eco-Union is an independent Think and Do Tank based in Barcelona (Spain), whose objective is to accelerate the ecological transition of the Euro-Mediterranean region.



CORDIO East Africa is a nonprofit research organization based in Kenya focus on the sustainable use and management of coastal and marine resources in the Western Indian Ocean.



IUCN Centre for Mediterranean, established in Malaga (Spain), works to bridge gaps between science, policy, management and action in order to conserve nature and accelerate the transition towards sustainable development in the Mediterranean.



CANARI (Caribbean Natural Resources Institute) is a non-profit institute headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago, facilitating stakeholder participation in the stewardship of renewable natural resources in the Caribbean.



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Towards Sustainable Blue Tourism: Trends, Challenges and Policy Pathways

AUTHORS:

Giulia Balestracci giulia.balestracci@ecounion.eu

Dr. Angelo Sciacca angelo.sciacca@iddri.org

COORDINATORS:

Jeremie Fosse jeremie.fosse@ecounion.eu

Dr. Julien Rochette julien.rochette@iddri.org

REVIEWERS:

Arnau Teixidor Costa arnau.teixidor@iucn.org

Samson Obiene sobiene@cordioea.net

Nicole Leotaud nicole@canari.org

The Blue Tourism Initiative

The [Blue Tourism Initiative](#)¹ is a global multi-stakeholder innovation program focused on the environmental management, governance and planning of coastal and maritime tourism in three marine regions: the Mediterranean, the Western Indian Ocean and the Caribbean. In these three regions, the project supports the participatory development of sustainable blue tourism initiatives through policy actions and a multi-stakeholder approach to inform the scalability of sustainable blue tourism in other regions .

The objectives of the Blue Tourism Initiative are to:

1. Assess the current global and regional situation of blue tourism with a particular focus on challenges and opportunities, and recommended directions for sustainable blue tourism development.
2. Support and monitor the implementation of sustainable blue tourism initiatives in the Mediterranean, West Indian Ocean and the Caribbean.
3. Integrate sustainable blue tourism management and governance at the regional policy level, share best practices and raise awareness among key local, national and regional stakeholders.

In line with the objectives of the Blue Tourism Initiative, this report proposes an overview of the blue tourism sector, presenting the sector's key stakeholders, the sectoral challenges and opportunities for greater resilience and proposing policy pathways for a more sustainable blue tourism future .

¹ Blue Tourism Initiative www.bluetourisminitiative.org

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACS: Association of Caribbean States

BE: Blue economy

BT: Blue tourism

CAGR: Compound annual growth rate

CARICOM: Caribbean Community

CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity

CMRs: Coastal and marine regions

CMT: Coastal and maritime tourism

CREST: Center for Responsible Travel

CSOs: Civil society organizations

DMO: Destination management organizations

GDP: Gross domestic product

GHG: Greenhouse gas

GMP: Gross marine product

GSTC: Global Sustainable Tourism Council

GVA: Gross value added

ICZM: Integrated coastal zone management

IDAs: International development agencies

IFC: International Finance Corporation

IGO: Intergovernmental organizations

IORA: Indian Ocean Rim Association

IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature

LBS: Land-based sources

LME: Large marine ecosystems

MEA: Multilateral Environmental Agreement

MDBs: Multilateral development banks

MPA: Marine protected area

NBT: Nature-based tourism

NBS: Nature-based solutions

NDCs: Nationally determined contributions

NEP: Note evaluation project (Project evaluation note)

NGO: Non-governmental organizations

OECMs: Other effective area-based conservation measures

OTAs: Online travel agencies

PA: Protected area

RSCAPs: Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans

SMEs: Small and medium-sized enterprises

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SIDS: Small Island Developing States

TOs: Tour operators

UfM: Union for the Mediterranean

UNEP: UN Environment Programme

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNWTO: United Nations World Tourism Organization

WIO: Western Indian Ocean

WSSD: World Summit on Sustainable Development

WTTC: World Travel and Tourism Council

WWF: World Wildlife Fund

Executive summary

This report reviews the current situation of coastal and maritime tourism and identifies the challenges and opportunities faced by stakeholders today towards the development of a more sustainable blue tourism sector. The report introduces blue tourism, the main factors characterizing this tourism sub-sector, its governance and the legal and institutional framework. Moreover, blue tourism's main market segments are examined, followed by a review of tourism impacts, and the current global issues that affect the sector. Drawing from a review of the key challenges and opportunities for a more sustainable blue tourism economy, policy pathways are recommended to reorient the sector towards a more sustainable and resilient future.

Tourism, a major source of incomes and jobs

Tourism is a main driver of socio-economic growth in many countries. In 2019 alone, the tourism sector contributed 10.3% to global GDP² (US\$9.6 trillion) and 10.3% of all jobs (333 million).³ In this context, coastal and maritime tourism, also referred to as blue tourism, involves beach and nautical leisure activities in coastal waters and represents at least 50% of the global tourism sector and supports millions of jobs. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the tourism sector hard, generating significant impacts through a drastic drop in international arrivals, a fall in tourism receipts of 50.4% in 2020, and the loss of 62 million jobs.⁴ Marine and coastal destinations were not immune to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic with the total disruption of reliable flows of tourists from air travel and cruise ships, producing cascading effects on businesses, governments, and communities. Nevertheless, while the pandemic has shown how the tourism sector is highly sensitive to economic, political and health crises, it has also opened a window for structural changes in the sector towards a more sustainable industry.

2 WTTC, (2021). [Economic Impact Reports](#).

3 WTTC, (2021). [Economic Impact Reports](#).

4 WTTC, (2021). [Economic Impact Reports](#).

An overview of coastal and maritime tourism

The blue economy⁵ (BE) and blue tourism (BT) are fundamental concepts of coastal and maritime tourism. The BE, which is defined as the “sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and job creation”, is expected to support and preserve the long-term capacity of ocean and coastal ecosystems to provide services and remain healthy and resilient. The BE refers to a range of economic sectors including coastal and maritime tourism (CMT) which account for the majority. It is expected to become the largest value-added segment in the ocean economy by 2030, at 26%.⁶

CMT is one of the oldest tourist industry⁷ segments, having evolved from leisure activities in the 19th century through to the mainstreaming of paid vacations, all-inclusive resorts and means of transportation. BT has developed rapidly in recent decades with the consolidation of large hotel corporations investing in coastal destinations and tour operators, leading to the homogenization and standardization of maritime and coastal destinations, with higher concentrations of retail areas, entertainment clusters and tour options. Also, other forms of tourism, e.g., ecotourism and nautical tourism are experiencing growth.⁸ The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis have led to price increases in tourism services, but also to a growing demand for environmentally-friendly services and diversified touristic products and experiences.

5 World Bank, (2021). [Riding the Blue Wave: Applying the Blue Economy Approach to World Bank Operations](#).

6 World Bank, (2017). [Sustainable tourism can drive the blue economy: Investing in ocean health is synonymous with generating ocean wealth](#).

7 Honey M. & Krantz D., (2007). [Global Trends in Coastal Tourism](#).

8 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) [Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions](#). Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

Focusing on the Mediterranean, Caribbean and West Indian Ocean

The Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and the West Indian Ocean are among the main marine regions for blue tourism. The Mediterranean region, which includes 22 countries with different economic and social conditions, is the most visited tourist region in the world. The region accounts for 30% of global tourism, and is also home to around 9% of the world's marine biodiversity, making it a biodiversity hotspot with around 30% of species being endemic and nearly 1,200 marine protected areas (MPAs).⁹ The Caribbean Sea, while covering less than 1% of the world's oceans, directly supports the economies of 37 territories. The Caribbean is the world's most tourism-dependent region and in 2017 alone the travel and tourism industry contributed to 20% of regional GDP and 19% of employment.¹⁰ The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) has a coastline of over 15,000 km and includes 10 countries marked by high levels of population density and growth.¹¹ Economic sectors that depend on the ecological functions of the sea amount to around US\$20.8 billion in the annual gross marine product (GMP), which largely comprises tourism-based activities (around 69%).¹² CMT is a major contributor to the WIO's economy, especially for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as the Seychelles and the Mauritius.¹³ Tourism is also an important source of foreign exchange.

The blue tourism stakeholder landscape

Numerous stakeholders are directly and indirectly involved in CMT. These stakeholders often have different interests, priorities and concerns related to the sector,¹⁴ and the effective management of tourism activities requires collaboration and cooperation among them to build a shared vision. The main blue tourism actors include: public authorities at the national, and local levels, with direct involvement in promoting and developing tourism (e.g., policy development, marketing strategies, infrastructure development, capacity-building); the private sector, which includes accommodation providers, online travel agencies (OTAs)¹⁵, hospitality, transportation as well as trade associations; and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the tourist industry, which make up the backbone of the sector with larger enterprises representing a smaller share of the private sector.

Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are also considered an essential actor to promote the development of the tourism industry in a sustainable and inclusive way. In addition,

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focus on accounting for the negative environmental effects of mass tourism by simultaneously promoting clear standards of sustainability through certification programmes as well as local community activities. International development agencies (IDAs)¹⁶ and multilateral development banks¹⁷ are also increasingly committed to fostering economic and social progress, especially in developing countries by financing projects and supporting investment in sustainable tourism. Furthermore, universities and research institutions are contributing to tourism-related research, developing training programmes, as well as developing guidelines and conducting policy analysis.

Governance framework

The institutional and legal frameworks that regulate (blue) tourism and its development in CMT are varied. This report reviews some of the main Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), including: the [Convention of Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#) and [Rio+20 \(2012\)](#) with "The Future We Want" declaration, which provide the basis for initiatives such as the UNWTO and [UNEP's 10-year Sustainable Tourism Programme](#);¹⁸ which directly relates to the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#); and the 2015 [Paris Agreement](#).¹⁹

In addition, recent initiatives have focused on developing and supporting industry codes and standards that promote tourism inclusivity and environmentally-sustainable practices that directly impact on future blue tourism developments. Examples include the [UN One Planet Initiative](#), [The Glasgow Declaration](#), the [Tourism Panel on Climate Change](#), and the [Future of Tourism](#). At the marine-region level, the main initiatives and programmes include the [Regional Seas Programme \(UNEP\)](#) that promotes the protection and sustainable use of the world's coastal and marine resources through interregional and regional ocean governance to deliver the [Global Oceans Agenda](#) and to respond to emerging issues.²⁰

9 MedPAN et. al., (2016). [The 2016 status of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean: Main findings](#). Brochure MedPAN & UN Environment/Map-SPA/RAC.

10 Caribbean Development Bank, (2017). [Caribbean Economic Review, 2018 Outlook](#). 22p.

11 UNEP, Secretariat for the Nairobi Convention, (2018). [Vision: A Prosperous Western Indians Ocean Region with Healthy Rivers, Coasts and Oceans](#).

12 WIOMSA and UN-Habita, (2022). [The Cities of the Western Indian Ocean \(WIO\) and Blue Economy. The Status Report](#).

13 UNWTO, Economic Development in Africa Report, (2017). [Tourism for Transformative and Inclusive Growth](#).

14 Byrd, E.T., (2007). [Stakeholders in sustainable tourism development and their roles: applying stakeholder theory to sustainable tourism development](#). *Tourism Review*, Vol. 62 No. 2, pp. 6-13.

15 Expedia, (2015). [What is an OTA?](#)

16 World Bank, (2021). [What's IDA?](#)

17 European Investment Bank (EIB), (2019). [Multilateral development banks](#).

18 UNWTO, (2014). [Harnessing Power: One billion tourists sustainable future](#). Press Release No. 14076.

19 UNCC, (2015). [Paris Agreement](#).

20 Akiwumi, P., & Melvasalo, T., (1998). [UNEP's Regional Seas Programme: approach, experience and future plans](#).

Main market segments of blue tourism

The main market segments for CMT are beach and coastal resorts, representing the most globalized and territorialized economic activity of the sector.²¹ Cruises and recreational boating are among the fastest-growing and most profitable segments of the blue tourism sector.²² While both segments generate benefits, they are notably responsible for negative environmental and social impacts on coastal and marine areas, particularly the cruise industry which is a major source of air, noise and marine pollution.²³

Marine and coastal-based sport tourism²⁴ includes travel and activities related to the observation, participation or engagement in marine-based sporting events, activities or facilities. Some of these sports have become highly popular tourist attractions in coastal areas, with a positive impact on the economy of coastal communities, promoting regional development and creating jobs.²⁵

Nature-based tourism is an emerging and fast-growing sector in the blue tourism industry that aims to redirect small numbers of travellers towards less mainstream locations and activities to alleviate their impact on ecosystems.²⁶ Finally, there is increasing interest in marine culture tourism, which involves the exploration of the cultural heritage and lifestyles of communities living in and around coastal and marine environments.²⁷ This type of tourism can bring benefits to local populations and to the sustainability of coastal regions, also representing an opportunity to overcome seasonality in tourism flows in coastal and maritime areas.²⁸

The impacts of multiple crises on tourism

The main impacts of tourism in coastal and marine regions can be categorized as environmental, economic and social. Environmental impacts are usually linked to the use and management of natural resources, the main ones include coastal artificialization, marine pollution, and biodiversity loss.²⁹ The economic impacts of tourism on coastal communities can be positive, such as job creation, community development (local businesses, infrastructure) among others, and negative, such as seasonality and unequal distribution of tourist income.³⁰ Regarding social impacts, positive effects include raising awareness of the preservation of local cultures and

traditions and the promotion of education, while negative impacts include changes to cultural authenticity (touristification) and gentrification. It is also important to consider the effect of global crises on the tourism sector, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions (e.g. the Russia-Ukraine conflict³¹) and climate change, which are having profound consequences on tourism activities especially in vulnerable areas such as coastal and island regions.³² The analysis of the relationship between tourism and sustainability highlights the link between blue tourism and the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), especially Goal 8, 12, and 14.

Challenges, opportunities and pathways to more sustainable blue tourism

Blue tourism stakeholders face challenges as well as opportunities for sustainable development. Some of the challenges are more strategic, such as those related to limited policy cohesion (e.g. tourism and environmental policies) and limited collaboration among actors in marine regions. Other challenges tend to be faced directly by tourism businesses, including access to information,³³ knowledge and innovation opportunities, high costs to initiate and/or join more sustainable initiatives and practices,³⁴ and an absence of technical support.³⁵ Key opportunities include growing knowledge among private actors of innovative business models,³⁶ a willingness to invest in sustainable solutions and emerging digital technologies, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic,³⁷ to foster more collaborative governance. In the light of these challenges and opportunities, a number of policy pathways are proposed and summarized in the following table.

21 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

22 The Guardian, (2016). *The world's largest cruise ship and its supersized pollution problem*.

23 Plan Bleu, (2011). *Cruises and Recreational Boating in the Mediterranean*.

24 Galatsopoulou, F., (2022). *Water Sports Tourism*.

25 Lagarene, B. E. S., & Walansendow, A., (2016). *Developing Marine and Coastal-based Sport Tourism on the Waterfront: The Case of Manado Waterfront, Indonesia*. *Journal of Indonesian Tourism and Development Studies*, 4(3), 107

26 World Bank, (2020). *Tools and Resources for Nature-Based Tourism*.

27 OECD, (2009). *The Impact of Culture on Tourism*. OECD, Paris

28 European Commission, (2017). *Challenges and Opportunities for Maritime and Coastal Tourism in the EU*.

29 Fosse J., Klarwein S., Kosmas I. & Gonzalez A., (2021). *Ecosystem Approach for a sustainable coastal and maritime Tourism in the Mediterranean*. Edited by Eco-union.

30 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

31 UNWTO, (2022). *Impact of the Russian offensive in Ukraine on international tourism*.

32 Peeters, P., Papp, B., (2023). *Envisioning Tourism in 2030 and Beyond*. The changing shape of tourism in a decarbonising world.

33 De la Campa, S. A., (2022). *The Role of the Internet in the Development of Island Communities*.

34 Martínez-Cabrera, J., & López-del-Pino, F., (2021). *The 10 most crucial circular economy challenge patterns in tourism and the effects of COVID-19*. *Sustainability*, 13(9), 4940.

35 Tapia, C., Bianchi, M., Pallaske, G., & Bassi, A. M., (2021). *Towards a territorial definition of a circular economy: exploring the role of territorial factors in closed-loop systems*. *European Planning Studies*, 29(8), 1438-1457.

36 Manniche, J., Larsen, K. T., & Broegaard, R. B., (2021). *The circular economy in tourism: transition perspectives for business and research*. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 21(3), 247-264.

37 Indar, L., Kissoondan, S., Daniel, K., Williams, R., & Mohammed, F., (2022). *Improving Resilience and Recovery to the Travel and Tourism Industry in the Caribbean*. *Open Journal of Applied Sciences*, 12(8), 1439-1467.

Policy pathways

POLICY PATHWAY	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Integrated policies and sound governance	1.1. Promote policy and strategic cohesion
	1.2. Develop a multi-level blue tourism strategy (regional/national/local levels)
	1.3. Strength multi-stakeholders collaboration in decision-making processes
	1.4. Foster community and stakeholder engagement in decision-making
	1.5. Encourage multi-stakeholder networks and partnerships
	1.6. Improve collaboration among marine regions
Sustainable industry practices	2.1. Support sustainable production and consumption
	2.2. Boost certification programmes
	2.3. Promote sustainable product diversification and marketing
	2.4. Support tourism businesses in overcoming barriers to change
Sustainable destination practices	3.1. Reinforce climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience in the tourism sector
	3.2. Promote destination stewardship
	3.3. Support transition communities for sustainable tourism
	3.4. Ensure appropriate visitor management in sensitive areas
	3.5. Endorse nature-based solutions (NBS) and regenerative practices
	3.6. Product diversification and marketing
Smart tourism development	4.1. Develop enabling policies for digital and smart tourism
	4.2. Ensure tools and infrastructure for smart tourism development
	4.3. Data collection and measurement
	4.4. Raise awareness on smart technologies
Research for sustainable blue tourism	5.1. Establish partnerships with universities and other research institutions
	5.2. Implement tools to support market studies
	5.3. Encourage climate change adaptation and mitigation research
	5.4. Boost capacity building activities
Finance for sustainable blue tourism	6.1. Establish and promote financial incentives
	6.2. Identify and create access to alternative financing options
	6.3. Adapt financing mechanisms for small and medium-sized enterprises
	6.4. Create partnerships with financial institutions

Source: Authors' own work, (2023).

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1. Introduction

In 2019, tourism represented about 10% of global GDP³⁸ and is today a symbol of an ever more globalized and interconnected world. However, as shown by the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector is also highly sensitive to economic, social and health crises along with being vulnerable to natural and political events. Consequently, the tourism sector should become more resilient and able to withstand and adapt to crises as well as build on emerging opportunities. Coastal and maritime tourism (CMT), also referred to as blue tourism (BT), involves beach and nautical leisure activities in coastal waters and represents at least 50% of the global tourism sector and supports millions of jobs and livelihoods worldwide.³⁹ The sustainability and resilience of the BT sector is crucial to ensure the sector's long-term contribution to coastal and island well-being.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the tourism sector hard, generating significant impacts through a drastic drop in international arrivals and tourism receipts.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the pandemic has also opened a window for structural changes in the sector. Domestic tourism has experienced a sharp increase worldwide and the level of sustainability in the tourism offer is now becoming a more relevant element in tourist choice due to greater public awareness of climate change and the benefits of more sustainable tourism. Accordingly, tourist destinations are increasingly seeking to offer more sustainable products and services to serve an evolving and more demanding tourism market. Therefore, while mass tourism still dominates the blue tourism market, alternatives are rapidly growing (e.g. ecotourism) attracting more responsible tourists and tourism entrepreneurs. These alternative activities seek to maximize tourism-related benefits and minimize the sector's negative effects on the natural environment.

The “Blue tourism initiative” builds on the opportunities emerging from the pandemic and the level of sectoral resilience required in the post-COVID-19 world, while recognizing the link between tourism, climate, and the natural environment, and the impacts of governance on the socio-economic and environmental elements of the sector. This report aims to review the current situation of CMT and to identify the challenges and opportunities faced by stakeholders today towards the development of a more sustainable blue tourism

sector. In line with these objectives, this report introduces BT and its key characteristics, reviews the sector's legal and institutional framework, and international and regional agreements. The report concludes by reviewing the key challenges and opportunities faced by the BT sector and suggests ways forward for the development of a more resilient and sustainable blue tourism model.

2. An overview of coastal and maritime tourism

This chapter introduces the blue economy (BE) and blue tourism (BT) as fundamental concepts of coastal and maritime tourism (CMT). An overview of the evolution of the CMT is then provided, where the global value chain and the opportunities offered by the digitalization of the sector are analysed, and finally the current trends in CMT are explained.

2.1. Blue economy

The BE is an increasingly influential concept in the ocean-based sustainable development narrative.⁴¹ The World Bank defines the BE as the “sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and job creation while preserving the health of ocean ecosystems.”⁴² Thus, the blue economy supports the long-term capacity of ocean and coastal ecosystems to provide services and remain resilient and healthy”.⁴³ The BE refers to the range of economic sectors that generate sustainable livelihoods for coastal communities based on ocean and coastal resources.⁴⁴ The BE includes various sectors—as shown in **Figure 1**—such as CMT, fisheries and aquaculture, maritime transport and port activities, shipbuilding and recycling, energy (offshore), bioprospecting and marine renewable energy. The economic value of the BE is based mainly on marine natural ecosystems and maritime resources.

38 WTTTC, (2021). *Economic Impact Reports*.

39 Ocean Panel, (2022). *Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy A Vision for Protection, Production and Prosperity*.

40 World Economic Forum, (2022). *This is the impact of COVID-19 on the travel sector*.

41 Voyera, M. & van Leeuwenb, J., (2020). *Social license to operate' in the Blue Economy*.

42 World Bank, (2021). *Riding the Blue Wave: Applying the Blue Economy Approach to World Bank Operations*.

43 UNESCO-IOC., (2021). *MSPglobal Policy Brief: Marine Spatial Planning and the Sustainable Blue Economy*. Paris.

44 Center for the Blue Economy, (2022)

Figure 1. Blue Economy's sectors



Source: UNESCO-IOC. 2021. MSPglobal Policy Brief: Marine Spatial Planning and the Sustainable Blue Economy.

Compared to other sectors, CMT, or BT as we have called it in this report, accounts for the main share of the BE, which is expected to become the largest value-added segment in the ocean economy by 2030, at 26%.⁴⁵

2.2. Blue tourism

Coastal and maritime tourism (CMT),⁴⁶ or blue tourism (BT)⁴⁷, is one of the largest segments of the BE^{48, 49} and of the tourism sector.⁵⁰ In addition, BT is also the most important and fastest growing economic activity occurring in the sea. Coastal tourism⁵¹ refers to beach-based tourism and recreation activities, including swimming, sunbathing, surfing, and recreational fishing alongside other land-based activities taking place

in the coastal area and for which the proximity of the sea is advantageous, such as coastal walks or marine and coastal wildlife watching.

Coastal and maritime tourism are among the oldest segments of the tourism industry⁵² and have evolved from leisure activities reserved for the wealthiest in the 19th century to more 'democratic' activities within reach of the middle and working classes, especially with the mainstreaming of paid vacations and all-inclusive resorts, as well as affordable means of transportation.⁵³ BT has evolved with the support of a rapidly growing hotel and resort sector in recent decades, due to the consolidation of large hotel corporations. Moreover, the development of tour operators has led to the homogenization and standardization of maritime and coastal destinations, with higher concentrations of retail areas, entertainment clusters and tour options.⁵⁴

45 World Bank, (2017). Sustainable tourism can drive the blue economy: Investing in ocean health is synonymous with generating ocean wealth.

46 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O. (2019) Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

47 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O. (2019) Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

48 World Bank, (2017). Sustainable tourism can drive the blue economy: Investing in ocean health is synonymous with generating ocean wealth.

49 European Commission, (2021). Press release - European Green Deal: Developing a sustainable blue economy in the European Union. Brussels.

50 World Bank, (2017). Sustainable tourism can drive the blue economy: Investing in ocean health is synonymous with generating ocean wealth.

51 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O. (2019) Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

52 Honey, M. & Krantz D., (2007): Global Trends in Coastal Tourism.

53 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

54 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

Maritime tourism⁵⁵ includes predominantly water-based activities, such as sailing, yachting, cruising, and other nautical sports. These activities also include the operation of landside facilities. A large segment of maritime tourism is the cruise sector which has expanded globally and introduced innovative services on-board with a wide range of facilities.⁵⁶ Global ocean cruising is a fast-growing industry and the biggest sector in tourism in terms of gross added value and employment.⁵⁷ Yachts and cruises represent the largest segment of marine tourism, and they are responsible for high levels of water pollution (due to waste disposal practices) as well as air pollution (due to gas emissions from cruise ships).⁵⁸

Therefore, BT is no exception when it comes to the need to integrate sustainable practices, and it must contribute to the building of a more sustainable future for tourism. The United Nations (2016) defines sustainable tourism⁵⁹ as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities.” Unsustainable tourism practices tend to be associated with mass tourism markets⁶⁰ and are the result of increasing visitor numbers, higher destination accessibility, and the intensive marketing of destinations. It is mass tourism in particular that has been blamed for the socio-economic and environmental impacts of the tourist industry.⁶¹ In response, sustainable tourism offers a framework to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity, to promote respect for the socio-cultural authenticity of local communities, to protect their cultural heritage and traditional values, and to contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance. Sustainable tourism should ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders.⁶² This applies to blue tourism as well.

2.3. The sustainable blue tourism sector

To develop a more sustainable tourism sector - as well as the BT sector - alternative forms of tourism are today being offered. Among these developments, there is a rapid growth in the number of ecotourism sites. Ecotourism⁶³ can be defined as responsible tourism that aims to support the conservation of natural or at-risk environments. According to the UNWTO's definition⁶⁴ ecotourism refers to all nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas. Ecotourism contains

educational and interpretation features and can contribute to minimizing the negative impacts of tourism activities on the natural and socio-cultural environment and preserve the natural areas which are used as ecotourism attractions. It can promote the generation of economic benefits for host communities, organizations, and local authorities.

Building upon forms of more sustainable tourism such as ecotourism, new tourism-related concepts have been enhanced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly, for coastal and island destinations, COVID-19 containment measures have disrupted supply chains and led to a drastic decline of tourist arrivals in often highly seasonal destinations. These impacts allowed coastal communities to reflect on their tourism management practices and how they could become more resilient and able to respond to future shocks. Consequently, the sector is increasingly adopting more sustainable practices for more resilient and regenerative destinations. In particular, efforts are underway to valorize marginalized landscapes, support communities, regenerate the local economy, minimize the pressures from economic activities linked to tourism, and to build resilience.⁶⁵ Today, CMT represent roughly 50% of all global tourism, which amounts to US\$4.6 trillion or 5.2 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP). It is an essential element of the economy of small island and coastal communities.⁶⁶

2.4. Evolution and trends in blue tourism

This section provides an overview of the evolution of the CMT sector since it began in its modern form at the beginning of the 1970s. It includes an overview of the recent digitalization of the industry and some insights on the future perspectives.

2.4.1. Coastal and maritime tourism evolution

CMT is one of the oldest and fastest growing sectors within the world's largest industry. Tourism development has been spatially focused on beaches and has involved a high degree of coastline artificialization, for example during the 1970s in the Mediterranean. For much of the past 50 years, mass tourism has grown in coastal areas and islands following the 3S's model of tourism (sun, sand, sea/surf), converting the coastal and marine environment into new frontiers and making them the fastest growing areas of the world's tourism industry.⁶⁷

Numerous countries have invested in tourism in and around coastal areas to mitigate trade imbalances, economic instability and often narrow economic specialization (e.g. small islands), recognizing marine tourism as a key economic development opportunity.⁶⁸ From the 1970s, tourism has stimulated entrepreneurship, employment, and economic growth in per capita income. The sector has also stimulated partnerships and trust building among governments, the

55 Honey, M. & Krantz D., (2007): *Global Trends in Coastal Tourism*.

56 CEST, (2007). *Global Trends in Coastal Tourism*

57 Business Research and Economic Advisors, (2020). *The Economic Contribution of the International Cruise Industry Globally in 2019*.

58 The International Council of Clean Transportation (ICCT), (2022). *What if I told you cruising is worse for climate than flying?*

59 UN, (2016). *General assembly resolution 70/193, 2017*

60 European Commission, Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, (2016). *Study in support of policy measures for maritime and coastal tourism at EU level. Final report*.

61 Butler, R. W., (2007). *Sustainable tourism: A state of the art review*.

62 UNEP & UNWTO, (2005). *Making Tourism More Sustainable - A Guide for Policy Makers*, p.11-12

63 Lawal M. Marafa, & Chau, K. C., (2014). *Framework for Sustainable Tourism Development on Coastal and Marine Zone Environment, Tourism, Leisure and Global Change*

64 UNWTO, (2002) *Ecotourism and protected areas*.

65 Duxbury, N., Bakas, F. E., Vinagre de Castro, T., & Silva, S., (2020). *Creative tourism development models towards sustainable and regenerative tourism*. *Sustainability*, 13(1), 2.

66 Ocean Panel - High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, (2020). *Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy: A Vision for Protection, Production and Prosperity*.

67 Miller, M.L., Auyong, J., (1991). *Coastal zone tourism: a potent force affecting environment and society*. *Marine Policy*;15(2):75-99.

68 Miller, M., (1986). *Travel, tourism and marine affairs*. *Coast. Zone Manag. J.*, 14, 1-19.

private sector, and regional organizations directly involved in the management of CMT. The private sector promotes tourism where financial gain can be expected, while the public sector supports industrial policies that are simultaneously economically efficient, politically expedient, and socially equitable. Countries like Mexico, France, Spain, Japan and the United States have been pioneers in terms of national tourism policies and national tourism marketing, and business has flourished in their coastal zones.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the elevated development of beach resorts and the increasing popularity of maritime tourism (e.g. fishing, scuba diving, and yachting) has increased pressure on coastlines, adding to the existing impacts from agriculture, factories and human settlements. These recreational pressures in the coastal zone are not uniformly distributed, but are often concentrated near urban agglomerations with strong local socio-economic and environmental consequences. During recent decades, as a result of tourism, the accessibility and infrastructure of coastal and island urban centres has been improved, which has encouraged an increase in the numbers of seasonal and full-time residents, along with the expansion of the property market.⁷⁰

Coastal resorts as well as airlines, cruise lines, global tour operators and multinational hotel and resort brands have become the main actors in the coastal and maritime tourism sector, shaping the trends through marketing campaigns. These companies are typically headquartered in developed countries, where the main tourism income is generated, often leading to significant economic leakages.⁷¹ In addition, the cruise ship industry has experienced rapid growth, becoming a significant part of the economy for many port cities, attracting higher tourist spending compared to other tourist categories.⁷²

Since the 1990s, the concept of a more sustainable tourism model spread around the world, especially after the publication of “Our Common Future”, also known as the Brundtland report in 1987,⁷³ and the Earth Summit in Rio (Brazil, 1992). Tourism was then re-interpreted as a tool for sustainable development and – alongside growth in the number of protected areas, parks and marine protected areas – ecotourism and other forms of more responsible tourism activities have helped to enhance the protection and conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity. Moreover, globalization trends have boosted international flows of goods and services, and in recent decades international tourism has become a popular global leisure activity.⁷⁴

According to the UNWTO, the magnitude of international tourist arrivals rose from 536 million in 1995 to 803 million in 2005⁷⁵ to 1.4 billion in 2018, a total greater than that forecasted

by UNWTO.⁷⁶ Likewise, the revenues of international tourism increased from US\$485.178 billion in 1995 to US \$1.649 trillion in 2018.⁷⁷ Today, the travel and tourism sector supports 1 in 10 jobs (319 million) worldwide and generates 10.4% of global GDP. In 2018, this industry experienced growth of 3.9%—above that of the global economy as a whole (3.2%)—and in the last five years one in every five new jobs has been created by the industry.⁷⁸

The coastal and maritime tourism global value chain (GVC) is complex and follows the tourist’s footprint, through multiple interactions with the industry from the moment tourists decide to travel to the completion of their journey, including transport, lodging and recreation activities.⁷⁹ **Figure 2** displays a simplified scheme of the global tourism value chain. Not all actors are represented, however, such as food and financial services.

In the international tourism value chain, transport plays a key supporting role, either plane or boat transport or, to a lesser extent, train or car transport. Moreover, while tourists engage in a number of activities in destination countries, the most profitable is the accommodation sector, which ranges from small-scale accommodation (the backbone of the sector) to luxury hotels and resorts. International companies such as airlines, cruise lines, global tour operators and multinational hotel and resort chains are the leading firms in CMT.⁸⁰ These firms play a key role in shaping the trends through strong marketing campaigns.⁸¹

In inbound countries, national tour operators and destination management organizations (DMO) play lead roles in CMT management, together with incoming travel agents, chosen by outbound tour operators for their ability to provide product offerings that meet the needs of tourists. Hotels and resorts in touristic countries usually work directly with operators in charge of recreational activities and tour guide suppliers. Regarding recreational activities such as excursions, snorkelling, surfing or sailing, they are sold by operators and usually carried out by locals. Tourists also engage in retail activities, which are considered essential for local traders as they boost local production and artisanal crafts.⁸²

2.4.2. Digitalization of the tourism sector

Recent decades have been marked by the digitalization of tourism operations. The disruptive emergence of digital tourism has changed the sector’s demand and supply sides, as well as its strategic management. The use of ICT in tourism includes location-based services, artificial intelligence and augmented reality, resulting in increased efficiency throughout the industry.⁸³ In particular, with the COVID-19 pandemic

69 Miller, M., (1986). *Travel, tourism and marine affairs*. Coast. Zone Manag. J., 14, 1–19.

70 Miller, M., (1986). *Travel, tourism and marine affairs*. Coast. Zone Manag. J., 14, 1–19.

71 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

72 Hall, C.M., (2001). *Trends in ocean and coastal tourism: The end of the last frontier?* Ocean & Coastal Management 44(9):601-618

73 United Nations, (1987). *The Brundtland Report*.

74 Keum K.(2010). *Tourism flows and trade theory: A panel data analysis with the gravity model*. The Annals of Regional Science. 44(3):541–557.

75 Keum K.(2010) *Tourism flows and trade theory: A panel data analysis with the gravity model*. The Annals of Regional Science. 44(3):541–557.

76 World Tourism Organization, (2019). *International tourism highlights, 2019 Edition*.

77 World Tourism Organization, (2020). *International tourism receipts (current US\$)*.

78 World Travel & Tourism Council, (2018). *Economic Impact Reports*.

79 Christian, M. K.; Fernandez-Stark, G.; Ahmed, & G.Gereffi, (2011). *The Tourism Global Value Chain: Economic Upgrading and Workforce Development*. Duke Center on Globalization, Governance & Competitiveness (Duke CGGC).

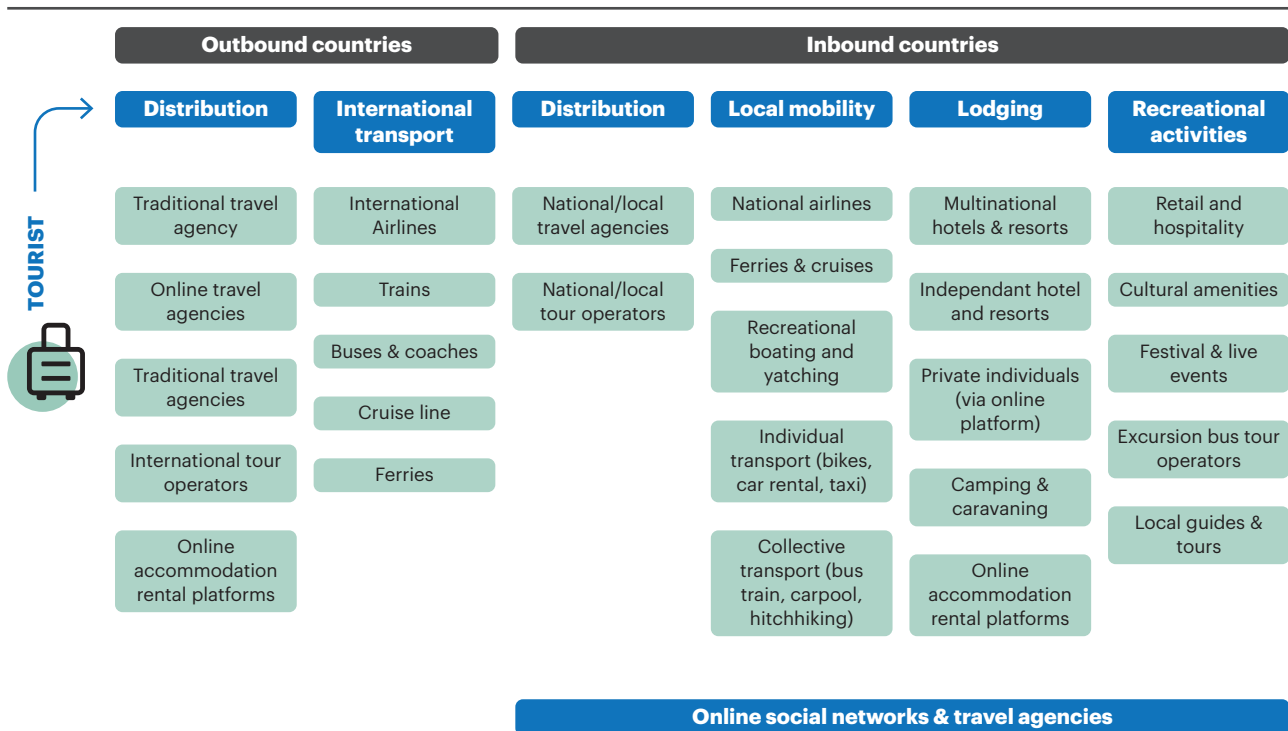
80 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

81 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

82 Ibid.

83 Smart Sentosa, (2016). *Integrated Operations (IOPs@Sentosa) Innovation*.

Figure 2. Global Tourism Value Chain



Source: Eco-union (2019) based on Christian, M. K.; et al. (2011). *The Tourism Global Value Chain: Economic Upgrading and Workforce Development*.

much of the world moved online, and it accelerated a digital transformation that has been underway for decades. Internet traffic in some countries increased by up to 60% after the outbreak, underscoring the digital acceleration that the pandemic sparked. Numerous firms adopted digital business models to maintain operations and preserve some revenue flows,⁸⁴ and many investments in digital upgrading led to increased competitiveness in the post-COVID-19 period⁸⁵, especially for tourism destinations.

This tourism value chain transformation has introduced new actors, products, and alternative marketing strategies. It has also encouraged innovation and the rethinking of mitigation strategies for long-standing challenges such as seasonality and overtourism in coastal destinations.⁸⁶ Smart technologies are increasingly being used to innovate more sustainably, and to promote better accessibility and inclusivity in the sector.⁸⁷ Smart technologies are also allowing more inclusive tourism governance and the use of critical data to inform decision-making (e.g., to enable greater efficiency and effectiveness in the prediction and management of tourist flows and destinations, waste management and circular economy practices). In addition, smart technologies are increasing the number of new job opportunities linked to technology-based skills.

Some major impacts from smart tourism include travel facilitation, e-visa and smart visa processes, and e-governance mechanisms. Remote sensors and big data management systems can help destination managers to analyse and contrast seasonality to promote sustainability, and also to develop exciting experiences for tourists while managing local resources efficiently. Smart tourism has also led to a boost in job opportunities linked to technology-based skills and advanced soft skills to effectively implement and manage smart initiatives. Intelligent automation is transforming the nature of some jobs, and eradicating others while generating new employment opportunities. Start-ups and small and medium-sized are increasingly important parts of the tourism value chain, boosting technology and skills-based education, training, and policies that stimulate innovation and decent employment. Moreover, digital technologies are increasingly enabling sustainable development.⁸⁸

2.4.3. Sustainable blue tourism perspectives

In recent decades, international agencies have increasingly argued that it is fundamental to find a balance between conservation and the generation of financial benefits from economic activities in marine areas. This trade-off is of particular importance to coastal regions, especially those in less developed countries and island states, for which marine tourism is an important, if not the major, component of the economy.⁸⁹

84 OECD, (2020). *Digital Transformation in the Age of COVID-19: Building Resilience and Bridging Divides*, Digital Economy Outlook 2020 Supplement. OECD, Paris.

85 European Foundation for the Improvement of Livign and Working Conditions. (2021). *COVID-19 and digitalisation*.

86 UNTWO, (2018). *Digital transformation of tourism*.

87 European Commission, (2023). *Leading examples of Smart Tourism Practices in Europe*.

88 OECD, (2022). *Digitalisation for the transition to a resource efficient and circular economy*.

89 Hall, C.M., (2001). *Trends in ocean and coastal tourism: The end of the last frontier?* Ocean & Coastal Management 44(9):601-618

In this scenario, the development of sustainable management strategies for CMT is key. While traditionally the focus of tourism planning has been on land-use zoning, coastline development, accommodation and building regulations, more recently it has adapted to include broader environmental and socio-cultural issues, and expanded to promote economic development strategies at local, regional and national scales.

In an increasingly globalized tourism environment, the intervention of public authorities - governments, agencies, international programmes - is critical. For example UNEP's Regional Seas Action Plans represent a basis to find the best practical solutions for the development of environmentally sound coastal tourism because they provide a transnational basis for environmental action.⁹⁰ While in many contexts CMT is prioritized for generating economic well-being, often there has been no systematic study of the environmental and social impacts of tourism over these regions. Data and information are highly fragmented.

In recent years, the increasing economic significance of tourism, the growth of nature-based tourism activities, and the perceived desire of many consumers to experience pristine environments has contributed to an increase in research on better governance solutions to ensure the viability and sustainability of the industry.

2.5. Economic and social trends

Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and economic and geopolitical events have been continuously changing the environment for tourists, businesses, and destinations. Travellers have become more demanding, regarding the health and hygiene conditions in destinations and are becoming more selective about how to travel. They are increasingly concerned with the positive impacts they can have on a destination and are, therefore, prioritizing more sustainable choices to support local communities and the environment. Consequently, tourist actors have had to reassess how they make investments, mitigate risks and cope with the volatility of demand, and how they respond to the changing expectations of travellers.⁹¹

The OECD predicts that CMT will be the largest sector of the global ocean-based economy by 2030 generating US\$777 billion in global revenue and employing 8.6 million people.⁹² CMT continues to grow, with a market size of 2.9 trillion in 2021 and is expected to expand at a compound growth rate (CAGR) of 5.7% from 2022 to 2030.⁹³ In the Mediterranean, tourism accounts for over 70% of production value and gross value added.⁹⁴ Pre-pandemic studies highlighted that tourism was expected to increase even more, reaching 12.5% of the region's GDP by 2026, and accounting for 2.8 million jobs by 2027.⁹⁵ Along with the traditional sun, sand and sea holiday,

other types of coast-related holiday destinations such as the Baltic Sea - where according to the UNWTO, tourist arrivals worldwide are expected to rise from the current 1.4 billion (2018) to 1.8 billion per year by 2030⁹⁶ - and the Atlantic Ocean have become more popular, with an increasing number of overnight stays between 2000-2014. For example, coastal areas of Norway and Iceland have experienced increases in overnight stays of 286% and 34%, respectively.⁹⁷

Other forms of tourism, e.g., ecotourism and nautical tourism, are also experiencing growth. In particular, the global ecotourism market size was valued at USD 185.87 billion in 2021 and is expected to expand at CAGR of 15.2% from 2022 to 2030.⁹⁸ Renting a boat or yacht has become more popular, as has the use of alternative types of accommodation, such as Airbnb.⁹⁹ In addition, some travel options, especially air travel, have become more expensive due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis, encouraging domestic tourism and slow travel. There is also an increased demand for environmentally-friendly services and facilities, and for a diversification of the touristic product in terms of activities and locations offered (e.g. more remote destinations). The Ocean Panel¹⁰⁰ describes six global trends that are affecting coastal and marine tourism, including: shifting demand and travel preferences; labour; population shifts; climate change; biodiversity loss and technological development.

In addition to the six global trends, the COVID-19 pandemic has raised awareness of the importance of local supply chains and the need to rethink how goods and services are produced and consumed.¹⁰¹ The stakeholders of CMT are increasingly considering the real economic, social and environmental tourism costs and risks of more traditional tourism models. These costs include increases in biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, community over-dependence on tourism, seasonality and economic leakages.¹⁰² These issues are particularly relevant for Small Islands and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and all coastal destinations. However, the benefits that can be obtained through more sustainable and regenerative forms of tourism are often underestimated.¹⁰³ For instance, integrating circular economy elements into local and regional tourism planning¹⁰⁴ can bring advances in terms of resource efficiency in the tourism value chain, which constitutes a priority and opportunity for the tourism sector in coastal destinations seeking to embrace a

90 Ibid.

91 World Economic Forum, (2021) *Travel & Tourism Development Index 2021: Rebuilding for a Sustainable and Resilient Future*.

92 OECD, (2016). *The ocean economy in 2030*.

93 GVR Report cover, (2017). *Coastal And Maritime Tourism Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report, By Product (Passenger Ticket Service), By Application, By Region, And Segment Forecasts, 2022 - 2030*.

94 UNEP/MAP, (2017). *Mediterranean 2017 Quality Status Report. Socioeconomic Characteristics*. Tourism.

95 Petrick, K.; Fosse, J.; Lammens, H.; Fiorucci, F.; Mancini, R. & Sens, A., (2017). *Blue Economy in the Mediterranean*. Union for the Mediterranean.

96 Joao A., (2021). *The Baltic Sea Region, an Economic Powerhouse*. University of Porto, Blue Europe 2021 Contest.

97 Pachernegg, P. (2020). *Recreation and Tourism in the Northeast Atlantic Ocean Assessment of the economic size and the environmental impacts of tourism and recreational activities in the OSPAR area*. RWS INFORMATION.

98 Grand View Research, (2022). *Ecotourism Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Activity Type (Land, Marine), By Group (Solo, Group), By Booking Mode, By Age Group, By Region, And Segment Forecasts, 2022 - 2030*.

99 Airbnb, (2021). *Travel Revolution in data*.

100 Ocean Panel, (2022). *Opportunities for Transforming Coastal and Marine Tourism: Towards Sustainability, Regeneration and Resilience*.

101 OECD, 2020. *COVID-19 and global value chains: Policy options to build more resilient production networks*.

102 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O. (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

103 Ocean Panel, (2022). *Opportunities for Transforming Coastal and Marine Tourism: Towards Sustainability, Regeneration and Resilience*.

104 Chan, Jin, Sciacca, Angelo, Coles, Anne-Marie, et al., (2022). *Circular tourism and support from local authorities: How local authorities can support small-medium size tourism enterprises in coastal destinations in six strategic steps*. Other. Interreg 2 Seas project FACET.

3. Blue tourism in selected coastal and maritime regions

sustainable and resilient growth pathway.¹⁰⁵ This has been shown recently by the Interreg Med INCIRCLE¹⁰⁶ and Interreg 2 Seas FACET¹⁰⁷ projects (which have also demonstrated that they can create tourism-related innovative job opportunities, minimize the overall impacts on already limited resources, and promote inclusivity and community resilience).

3. Blue tourism in selected coastal and maritime regions

The Mediterranean, the Antarctic, the South Pacific, the North-east Atlantic, the Caribbean, and the West Indian Ocean, are key marine regions for blue tourism. The specific characteristics of these marine regions are described in the following sections.

3.1. The Mediterranean

Touching three continents, the Mediterranean region brings together 22 countries with different economic and social conditions. The Mediterranean Sea, the largest of the semi-enclosed seas in Europe, covers nearly 2.6 million km² and 46,000 km of coastline.¹⁰⁸ The Mediterranean area is the world's leading tourist region, concentrating 30% of the world tourist flow. With a population of 500 million people, it welcomes more than 400 million international tourist arrivals (ITAs) annually, especially during summer. The tourism sector is therefore an important pillar of the regional economy. According to UNEP (2020), tourism represents up to 15% of the GDP and 11% of jobs in the Mediterranean.¹⁰⁹ Beyond providing jobs and incomes, the tourism industry also has negative impacts, such as causing price rises of goods, services and housing, among others. The North-West of the Mediterranean receives 64% of international tourist arrivals in the entire region, while the South-East receives 17%, the North-East 14% and the South-West 5%.¹¹⁰ As for other regions, international tourist arrivals were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 3. The Mediterranean Region



Source: Eco-Union, (2019). *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions.*

The Mediterranean is home to around 9% of the world's marine biodiversity and is a biodiversity hotspot.¹¹¹ Around 30% of species are endemic and it has nearly 1,200 marine protected areas (MPAs).¹¹² However, 51% of native marine fish species are in danger of extinction and 4% are listed as near threatened due to habitat loss from unsustainable resource exploitation, pollution, climate change, eutrophication and invasive marine species.¹¹³ Moreover, housing and tourist infrastructure are concentrated along the littoral areas,¹¹⁴ resulting in high levels of coastline artificialization, erosion, overconsumption of energy and water, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Mediterranean regional economies are highly dependent on the tourism industry, which is based on the attractiveness of the natural ecosystem.¹¹⁵ The benefits from Mediterranean ecosystem services are estimated at over €26 billion per year.¹¹⁶ A sustainable BT economy is crucial to ensure that tourism activities continue to generate economic sustenance for the Mediterranean coastal communities while ensuring the sustainability of natural resources.

105 One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme, (2020). *One Planet Vision for a Responsible Recovery of the Tourism Sector.*

106 INCIRCLE. Interreg Mediterranean, (2020). *Enhancing Sustainable Tourism in insular & low density areas.*

107 2 Seas Interreg project FACET.

108 EEA - UNEP/MAP, (2014). *Horizon 2020 Mediterranean report Toward shared environmental information systems.* EEA Technical report No 6, 142 pp. — European Environment Agency.

109 UNEP/MAP-Plan Bleu, (2020). *State of the environment and development in the Mediterranean* (SOED).

110 Petrick, K; Fosse, J.; Lammens, H. & Fiorucci, F. (2017). *Blue economy in the Mediterranean.* UfM.

111 Myers, N., Mittermeier, R., Mittermeier, C. et al., (2000). *Biodiversity hotspots for conservation priorities.* Nature 403, 853–858.

112 MedPAN et al., (2016). *The 2016 status of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean: Main findings.* Brochure MedPAN & UN Environment/MAP - SPA/RAC.

113 Coll, M. et al., (2010). *The Biodiversity of the Mediterranean Sea: Estimates, Patterns, and Threats.* PLoS ONE.

114 SOER, (2015). *The European environment state and outlook 2015.*

115 Drius et al., (2019). *Tackling challenges for Mediterranean sustainable coastal tourism: An ecosystem service perspective.*

116 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., Gonzalez, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions.* Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

3.2. The Caribbean

The Caribbean Sea covers less than 1% of the world’s oceans, but it is a key ecosystem for the countries of this region because it directly supports the economies of 37 territories.¹¹⁷ The region has 746 million inhabitants, 41 million of whom live within 10 km of the coast. The region is home to four Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs)¹¹⁸ and is considered a biodiversity hotspot with 285 MPAs identified in 2004. This biodiversity is crucial for the economy, and its value is estimated at US\$407 billion (2012), with tourism accounting for US\$47 billion. Tourism is a major contributor to Caribbean economies. In 2017, the travel and tourism industry represented 20% of GDP and 19% of employment.¹¹⁹

Figure 4. The Caribbean Region



Source: Eco-Union, (2019). *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions.*

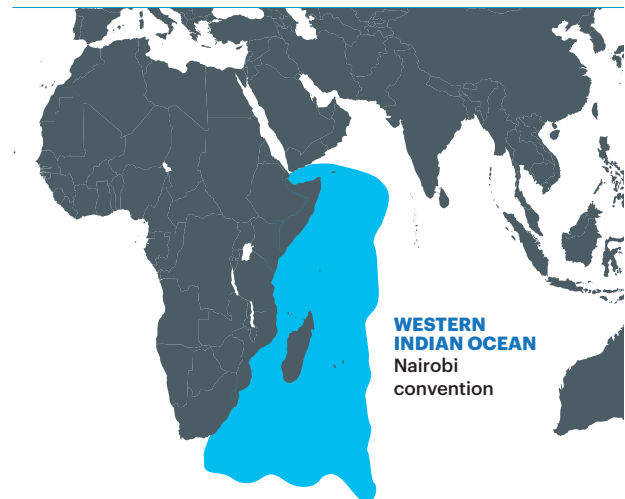
The region is the most dependent in the world on the tourism sector and the COVID-19 pandemic had significant impacts on the region’s economy. The main forms of tourism in the region are “sea-sand-sun” and cruise tourism, where cruise passengers account for more than half of international arrivals. The development of mass tourism, mainly linked to cruises, is having major environmental impacts. Overfishing, coastal erosion, water and land pollution are some of the major environmental impacts identified in the Caribbean Sea. Tourism also leads to the destruction of natural coastal habitats for the construction of tourist infrastructure, dredging of waterways for maritime transport, increase in water consumption and, consequently, to a reduction in the accessibility of drinking water.

117 World Bank, (2016). *Toward a blue economy: a promise for sustainable growth in the Caribbean : main report.*
 118 The continental shelf of Brazil, the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico and the continental shelf of the southeastern United States.
 119 Caribbean Development Bank, (2017). *Caribbean Economic Review, 2018 Outlook.* 22p.

3.3. The Western Indian Ocean

The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) extends over 15,000 km of coastline, covering 30 million km² (8.1% of the world’s ocean surface) and includes 10 countries. The region is marked by high population density and population growth.¹²⁰ The total population was over 230 million in 2017, of which 60 million live within 100 km of the coastline and depend on the food, employment, and recreation it provides.¹²¹ Also, the WIO is home to between 11,000 and 20,000 marine species, and more than 2,000 species of fish in its coral reefs. It is an important breeding and feeding area for sea turtles. The 155 MPAs cover 130,000 km².¹²² The WWF estimates the size of economic sectors depending on the ecological functions of the sea across the WIO to be US\$ 20.8 billion in the annual gross marine product (GMP), which largely comprises tourism-based activities (around 69%).¹²³ CMT is a major contributor to the WIO’s economy, especially for SIDS such as the Seychelles and Mauritius.¹²⁴ Tourism is also an important foreign exchange source.

Figure 5. Western Indian Ocean Region



Source: Eco-Union, (2019). *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions.*

The region offers various tourism products including traditional leisure destinations, whale and dolphin watching, diving, and nature-based tourism. In some countries, tourism is focused on inland attractions (safaris in Kenya, Mozambique, and Tanzania). There is also growth in the cruise sector and, more gradually, in some forms of sustainable tourism. The WIO is particularly vulnerable to marine ecosystem degradation: the region is one of the least developed in the world and the economy depends heavily on fishing and small-scale

120 UNEP, Secretariat for the Nairobi Convention, (2018). *Vision: A Prosperous Western Indians Ocean Region with Healthy Rivers, Coasts and Oceans.*
 121 Obura, D. et al. (2017). *Reviving the Western Indian Ocean Economy: Actions for a Sustainable Future.* WWF International, Gland, Switzerland. 64p.
 122 UNEP and WIOMSA. NEP-Nairobi Convention and WIOMSA. (2015). *The Regional State of the Coast Report: Western Indian Ocean.* 546p.
 123 WIOMSA and UN-Habita, (2022). *The Cities of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) and Blue Economy. The Status Report.*
 124 UNWTO, Economic Development in Africa Report, (2017). *Tourism for Transformative and Inclusive Growth.*

3. Blue tourism in selected coastal and maritime regions

fisheries. In addition, strategic habitats such as mangroves, salt marshes, seagrass beds and coral reefs, which represent a key support for local fisheries and tourism, have declined significantly over the past 40 years.¹²⁵ Tourism is developing, and the environmental impacts are significant. These impacts are linked to the construction of infrastructure, pollution, scarcity of natural resources, and nautical activities. There are also many social problems, such as those arising from resource scarcity.

3.4. The North-East Atlantic

The Northeast Atlantic regional sea stretches across 5 maritime areas: South and North-Western Europe, the Greater North Sea, the Celtic Seas, the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast, and the Wider Atlantic. It covers 20,585 km of coastline from very diverse countries resulting in a variable political and institutional framework. With more than a thousand recorded fish species, the Atlantic is rich in biodiversity, thanks to the variation in the seasonal cycle, the water depth and ecosystem specificities. Biodiversity conservation is supported by strong governance as well as the establishment of an MPA network that covers 285,000 km². The North-East Atlantic is a highly productive area that contains Europe's most valuable fishing areas and many unique habitats and ecosystems.

Figure 6. North-East Atlantic region



Source: Eco-Union, (2019). *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions.*

A wide range of recreational and tourist activities take place in the North-East Atlantic, particularly recreational boating, recreational fishing, marine wildlife watching, beach recreation, and cruise tourism. The region's tourism sector is experiencing renewed growth and increasingly acquiring economic relevance,¹²⁶ which in turn is exerting pressure on

125 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., Gonz lez, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions.* Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

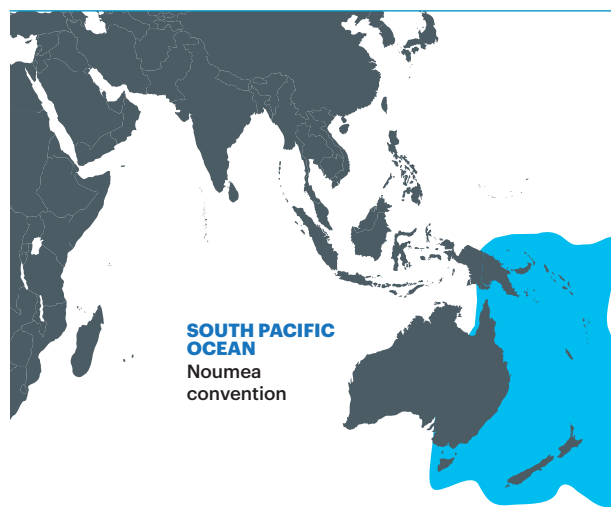
126 Pachernegg, P. (2020). *Recreation and Tourism in the Northeast Atlantic Ocean Assessment of the economic size and the environmental impacts of tourism and recreational activities in the OSPAR area.* RWS INFORMATION.

coastal and maritime areas, leading to physical disturbance, environmental damage and biodiversity loss.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the sector contributes to several types of pollution and biological disturbance through the introduction of invasive species.

3.5. The South Pacific

The South Pacific Ocean is the world's biggest ocean and its countries are home to 8 million people,¹²⁸ the majority of which live in conditions of poverty and unemployment.¹²⁹ The region is characterized by its demographic diversity, and in terms of its GDP per capita. Moreover, the region faces development constraints (small size, territorial isolation), restricting infrastructure development, management and trade. These factors contribute to the economic and political dependency of South Pacific countries on regional leaders, such as Australia and New Zealand.¹³⁰ The South Pacific area is a strategic space for marine biodiversity: it contains the largest proportion of global coral reefs (40%),¹³¹ which provide a basis for regional protein supply and economic health. Pacific countries have been proactive in reef conservation, marine litter management and SDG14 implementation. The South Pacific has 204 protected marine and terrestrial areas, and 346 MPAs (covering 2,161,088 km²)¹³²; only 20% of which are effectively enforced or managed.¹³³

Figure 7. South Pacific region



Source: Eco-Union, (2019). *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions.*

127 OSPAR Commission, (2003). *OSPAR Background Document on tourism.*

128 Moritz et al., (2018). *Status and Trends of Coral Reefs of the Pacific.* Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, 218 pp.

129 Pacific Island Forum, (2018). *First Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report, Executive Summary,* 15 pp.

130 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., Gonz lez, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions.* Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

131 French Development Agency, (2012). *AFD's Overseas Regional Cooperation Strategy. Declination on the South Pacific*

132 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., Gonz lez, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions.* Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

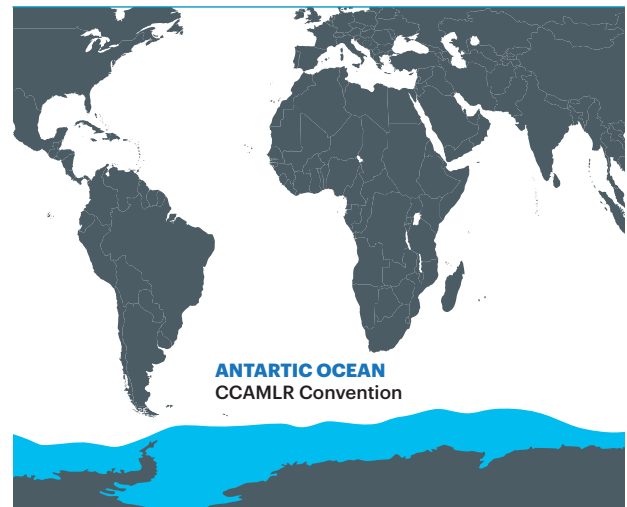
133 Kimura, T. Tun, K and Chou, L.M., (2018). *Status of coral reefs in East Asian Seas Region: 2018.* Ministry of the Environment of Japan.

Tourism in the South Pacific is an important part of the economy with an average GDP contribution of 12%, which varies across countries. The largest destination is Fiji (over 842,000 visitors in 2017), which attracts 40% of the Pacific's total visitor arrivals.¹³⁴ Economic, environmental and political cooperation is fundamental for the region, due to the diversity of countries. Tourism actors are typically very small and local enterprises are generally located on the smaller islands. Environmental quality is crucial because the main tourism products are based on the leisure facilities of guesthouses and luxury resorts, allowing tourists to discover pristine locations and participate in water activities. The region is highly vulnerable to sea level rise and natural disasters, a situation that is exacerbated by climate change. The main environmental issues are demographic pressure and imbalance, marine pollution, resource overexploitation, and vulnerability to natural disasters.¹³⁵ Tourism impacts are also linked to environmental degradation due to the establishment of hotels and resorts, changes in sediments and sediment runoffs, waste management and coastal development. These driving forces are aggravated by inadequate infrastructure, insufficient service provision, and a shortage of land availability¹³⁶.

3.6. The Antarctic Ocean

The Antarctic Ocean comprises the southernmost waters of the Southern hemisphere, stretching over 22 million km² (17,968 km of coastline), connecting the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Ocean basins. The region influences the climate of the entire planet through the Antarctic Circumpolar Current, the largest ocean current, which distributes heat and influences global rain patterns and temperatures.¹³⁷ Due to its milder climate, its shores host great animal and plant biodiversity. The Antarctic ice sheet contains about 68% of the globe's fresh water. The Antarctic Ocean is a vulnerable environment, due to low levels of artificialization and its unique marine and terrestrial ecosystems.¹³⁸ Tourism started in Antarctica in the 1960s. The Antarctic Treaty requires tourism companies to have a permit to bring visitors to Antarctica. The tourist industry in the region consists of three types of activity: shipborne; landborne; and airborne or overflights. There are limited sea cruises to the Ross Sea and East Antarctic regions of Antarctica. In recent times, tourist numbers have significantly increased. Land activities include camping, hiking and cross-country skiing.

Figure 8. Antarctic Region



Source: Eco-Union, (2019). *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions.*

The recent census of marine life of the Antarctic listed about 7,500 species of marine animals, accounting for 70% of the continent's endemic marine species. The relatively stable marine temperatures enable the establishment of rich benthic populations on the seabed. The continent does not have a permanent human population, and "inhabitants" live in research stations, with numbers ranging from 1,000 (winter) and 5,000 (summer). Since 2021, the number of tourists visiting the region is increasing once again, already reaching 40% of pre-pandemic arrivals. Environmental impacts are also growing, such as black carbon from cruise ship emissions. Certain microbes and other invasive species represent a problem that will only worsen as the ice melts and new patches of bare earth are created. While cruise ships are a source of significant emissions.

4. The blue tourism stakeholder landscape

Coastal and maritime tourism (CMT) stakeholders include a variety of groups and individuals who are involved in or affected by tourism activities in coastal and marine environments.¹³⁹ Examples of the main actors include public authorities, private sector business actors, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international development agencies (IDA), multilateral development banks, and academia. These stakeholders may have different interests, priorities and concerns regarding CMT, and the effective management of tourism requires collaboration and cooperation among these groups.

134 UNWTO, (2018). *Asia and the Pacific Newsletter*. Issue 46, 57 pp.

135 AFD, (2012). *Stratégie de coopération régionale ultramarine de l'AFD. Déclinaison sur le Pacifique Sud*, 11pp.

136 SPREP, (2018). *Environmental impact assessment : guidelines for coastal tourism development in Pacific island countries and territories*.

137 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., Gonz lez, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019). *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

138 Hall, C. M., (1992). *Tourism in Antarctica: Activities, Impacts, and Management*. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 30 n. 4, pp. 2-9

139 Byrd, E.T., (2007). *Stakeholders in sustainable tourism development and their roles: applying stakeholder theory to sustainable tourism development*. *Tourism Review*, Vol. 62 No. 2, pp. 6-13.

4.1. Public authorities

The role of public authorities in tourism is significant and multifaceted. Public authorities, at the national, regional, and local levels, play a crucial role in promoting and developing tourism as an economic, cultural, and social activity. Some of the key roles and responsibilities for public authorities in tourism are listed below:

- Policy development: Public authorities are responsible for developing policies and regulations that guide the development and management of tourism in their respective jurisdictions. These policies may address issues such as sustainability, safety, security, quality, and accessibility of tourism products and services.¹⁴⁰
- Destination marketing: Public authorities are often responsible for marketing and promoting their destinations to potential tourists, both domestically and internationally. This may involve creating marketing campaigns, organizing events, and developing partnerships with industry stakeholders.¹⁴¹
- Infrastructure development such as transportation systems, public facilities, and cultural and heritage sites that benefit both tourists and residents. They may also provide incentives to private investors to develop tourism infrastructure.
- Regulation and licensing for tourism businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, tour operators, and transportation companies, to ensure compliance with quality standards, safety regulations, and environmental requirements.
- Tourism planning and management: Public authorities are responsible for developing tourism plans and strategies that balance economic, social, and environmental objectives (such as spatial planning for sustainable tourism). They may also manage the tourism industry through monitoring and evaluation, research and data analysis, and policy review.
- Capacity building and training programmes for tourism stakeholders, such as small business owners, to improve their skills and knowledge in areas such as marketing, customer service, and sustainability.¹⁴²

4.2. Private sector

Private sector stakeholder for CMT encompass a range of businesses and organizations that are involved in or impacted by tourism activities in coastal areas, including:

- Hotel and accommodation providers in coastal areas such as beach resorts, hotels, and vacation rentals. Also, real estate and property development companies that build and manage tourism infrastructure in coastal areas. Internationally, the pool of coastal real estate developers is constantly increasing and changing due to the influence of speculators, who are common in this sector.¹⁴³

- International tour operators, travel agencies and tour guide services that offer coastal tourism products and services such as beach resorts, boat tours, and water sports.
- Restaurants, cafes, and other food and beverage providers that serve tourists in coastal areas.
- Transportation providers such as taxi, bus, and train services.
- Economic development organizations that promote coastal tourism and support local businesses.

While the main economic actors are listed above, other private sector stakeholders include: professional networks of coastal and marine private businesses (for example the [World Ocean Council](#)), global networks (such as the [World Association of Travel Agencies](#)), airline and aircraft industry associations ([International Air Transport Association](#) that works to promote safe, efficient, and sustainable air travel), many hospitality chains (for example the [Sustainable Hospitality Alliance](#), [Intercontinental IHG](#), [Hilton Hotels & Resorts](#), which globally represent the interests of hotels and restaurants in the tourism industry), and online travel agencies (OTAs)¹⁴⁴, such as [Travalyst](#). These economic stakeholders play a critical role in the coastal tourism industry and are often dependent on tourism for their livelihoods. They may also have a direct influence on the local economy by generating jobs and income, as well as an indirect influence by providing goods and services to tourists.¹⁴⁵ While the larger enterprises represent a smaller share of the private sector, a central role is played by SMEs that are the backbone of the sector for the sustainability of the destinations in which they operate, and also because they provide opportunities for local subsectors in the industry.¹⁴⁶ The contribution of SMEs to the local economy is multidimensional, consisting of output growth, employment generation, poverty alleviation, economic empowerment, and export growth, among others.¹⁴⁷

4.3. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)

Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) play a crucial role in the tourism sector by promoting and developing the industry at a global level. These organizations work to create a sustainable and inclusive environment for tourism growth, and they also serve as a platform for member countries to exchange knowledge and collaborate on tourism-related issues.

Some of the key roles of IGOs in tourism include¹⁴⁸:

- Promoting sustainable tourism: IGOs promote environmentally friendly and socially responsible tourism practices, which help to preserve natural and cultural resources for future generations.

140 Edgell, D. L., Allen, M. D., Smith, G., & Swanson, J., (2008). *Tourism policy and planning: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow*. Routledge.

141 Pike, S., (2007). *Destination marketing organisations*. Routledge.

142 Byrd, E.T., (2007). *Stakeholders in sustainable tourism development and their roles: applying stakeholder theory to sustainable tourism development*. *Tourism Review*, Vol. 62 No. 2, pp. 6-13.

143 Ecorys & European Commission, (2016). *Study on specific challenges for a sustainable development of coastal and maritime tourism in Europe*. Final Report, European Commission.

144 Expedia, (2015). *What is an OTA?*

145 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union.

146 Aslan, S., Dinçer, M.Z., (2019). *The effects of small and medium-sized tourism enterprises on destinations*. *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism Impacts*.

147 Deyshappriya, N. P. R. and Nawarathna, A. M. D. B., (2020). *Tourism and SME Development: Performance of Tourism SMEs in Coastal Tourist Destinations in Southern Sri Lanka*. ADBI Working Paper 1164. Tokyo: Asian Development Bank Institute.

148 Hall, C. M., & Coles, T., (2008). *Introduction: tourism and international business—tourism as international business*. *International business and tourism* (pp. 15-40). Routledge.

- Facilitating collaboration and knowledge-sharing: IGOs provide a platform for member countries to share best practices and collaborate on tourism-related issues. This can help to improve the overall quality and competitiveness of the industry.
- Representing the interests of the industry: International organizations serve as advocates for the tourism industry, working to promote the sector and its contributions to economic growth and development.
- Providing research and data: Many international organizations conduct research and collect data on the tourism industry, which can help to inform policy and decision-making.
- Developing standards and guidelines for the tourism industry, which can help to ensure safety and quality for the tourist's experience.
- Educating and training programmes for industry professionals to develop skills and knowledge.¹⁴⁹

By working together, international groups can help promote and develop the tourism industry in a sustainable and inclusive way, which can benefit both the industry and the communities that depend on it.¹⁵⁰ The role of IGOs is essential for ocean governance, sustainable development (SDGs) and coastal and maritime tourism management. It involves development agencies, such as the World Bank, bilateral donors, UN agencies (UNEP, FAO, UNWTO, etc.), as well as regional actors (European Commission, Union for the Mediterranean, etc.).

4.4. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

International non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as [The Future of Tourism Coalition](#), the [Center for Responsible Travel](#) (CREST), the Nature Conservancy, [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN) and WWF have developed tourism programmes that promote responsible tourism. Other examples are the [Global Sustainable Tourism Council](#), which promotes common standards for sustainable tourism (certifications) and [Green Destinations](#) that support (coastal) destinations to develop tourism projects for socio-economic development through certification and training programmes.

Most of their activities focus on taking into account the negative environmental effects of mass tourism by simultaneously promoting clear standards of sustainability through certification programmes and the local activities of host communities and indigenous tourism. Incorporating these values and practices within outbound tour operators through training, awareness raising, and advocacy fosters moderating mechanisms to the negative externalities of conventional tourism.

Also, regional, national and local non-profit organizations are becoming important stakeholders in blue tourism development thanks to their creative potential and flexibility.

149 Byrd, E.T., (2007). [Stakeholders in sustainable tourism development and their roles: applying stakeholder theory to sustainable tourism development](#). *Tourism Review*, Vol. 62 No. 2, pp. 6-13.

150 UNWTO, Network, W. E., University of Hawaii (Manoa), University of Calgary (Calgary, Canada), & James Cook University (Australia), (1997), [International tourism: A global perspective](#).

Tourism-focused NGOs are increasingly involved in sustainable activities, creating value for tourists and local residents.¹⁵¹ Also, NGOs in a destination can exert influence on local authorities to devise tourism policies aimed at conservation, in helping to abate poverty and encourage the development of ecological, historical and social features.¹⁵²

4.5. International development agencies (IDAs)

International aid and development agencies, such as public bodies like the International Finance Corporation (IFC), bilateral donors, UN agencies as well as regional banks, which manage public cooperation funds, also play a key role in the BT sector. Since the 1990s, these agencies have increased their lending for sustainable and ecotourism projects. In spite of this trend, most loans are usually awarded to large coastal developments.¹⁵³

IDAs have the common task of fostering economic and social progress in developing countries by financing projects, supporting investment and generating capital for the benefit of all global citizens. Therefore, the continuing role of international development agencies in CMT projects and infrastructure financing emphasises the need to promote best practices in CMT within agencies and companies.¹⁵⁴

4.6. Multilateral development banks

Multilateral development banks (MDBs) are supranational institutions set up by sovereign states, who serve as their shareholders. Their remits reflect the development aid and cooperation policies established by these states. MDBs also play a major role on international capital markets, where they raise large volume of funds required to finance their loans.¹⁵⁵

An example is the World Bank, one of the largest platforms for fighting extreme poverty in the world's lowest income countries. It works in 74 countries in Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁵⁶ It has recently launched [PROBLUE](#), a Multi-Donor Trust Fund, that supports the development of integrated, sustainable and healthy marine and coastal resources. With the Blue Economy Action Plan as its foundation, PROBLUE contributes to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) and fights against poverty by increasing incomes and welfare in poor areas.¹⁵⁷

151 Fruk, L. D., Djurkin, J. and Ribaric, H. M., (2022). [Non-profit organizations and tourism: can tourism drive non-profit sector development?](#) *Enlightening tourism a pathmaking journal* 12.

152 Gul Gunes (2010). [Tourism and the third sector](#). *Anatolia: an International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 21:2, 393-394.

153 Honey M. & Krantz D., (2007): "Global Trends in Coastal Tourism. [Center on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development](#)".

154 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) [Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions](#). Edited by eco-union.

155 European Investment Bank (EIB), (2019). [Multilateral development banks](#).

156 World Bank, (2021). [What's IDA?](#)

157 World Bank, (2021). [PROBLUE](#).

4.7. Academia

Academic actors, such as universities and research institutions, play a significant role in the study and development of coastal tourism. Some of the ways in which they contribute include:

- Research and data collection on various aspects of coastal tourism, including economic, social, and environmental impacts. This research can provide valuable insights into the industry and help inform policy and decision-making. For example, on the relationship between tourism and the SDGs.
- Education and training, mainly offered by universities and research institutions, which can help to develop the skills and knowledge needed to work in coastal tourism. It also pushes towards empowering youth to support the sector in its ability to drive progress.¹⁵⁸
- Developing best practices and guidelines to support the work of tourism operators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in promoting responsible (coastal) tourism practices for sustainable development.
- Community engagement, through surveys, research, workshops to engage with local communities to understand their perspectives and needs related to coastal tourism.
- Policy analysis and advocacy for policies that support sustainable coastal tourism development.
- Technology and innovation that can be used to improve coastal tourism, such as sustainable tourism management systems, monitoring and evaluation tools, and sustainable tourism products.

Overall, academic actors play a critical role in understanding and shaping the coastal tourism industry, through their research, education, and engagement with stakeholders.

5. Governance framework

To pursue the goal of sustainable blue tourism, it is fundamental to understand the institutional and legal frameworks that regulate (blue) tourism and its development in coastal and marine areas in recent decades. Examples of a Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) and other international environmental initiatives are described below, along with an overview of some governance examples in marine regions.

5.1. Selected Multilateral Environmental Agreements

This section includes a brief review of the main Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). These international agreements are intended to promote international cooperation to address the global environmental challenges that the world faces today, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and waste.

158 UNWTO, (2018). *Tourism for SDGs: How to engage*.

5.1.1. Convention on Biological Diversity (2000)

The 1992 Rio Conference established the [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#). Although this agreement does not mention tourism, in 2000 the Contracting Parties recognized the importance of developing sustainable tourism and ecotourism. Four years later, the CBD Secretariat published a [guideline on sustainable tourism](#),¹⁵⁹ and several programmes on this subject have since been developed.¹⁶⁰

5.1.2. Agenda 2030 and the SDGs

The [Rio+20](#) (2012) laid the foundations for a continuation of the discussion on tourism and sustainability, which was formalized in [The Future We Want](#)¹⁶¹ and which led to future initiatives,¹⁶² such as the [UNWTO and UNEP's 10-year Sustainable Tourism Programme](#)¹⁶³, and in particular the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

In 2015 the UNWTO General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda and the seventeen [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) it contained. Although all of them have an impact on the tourism sector, some SDGs explicitly include CMT:

- SDG 8 (Economic Growth): Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Target 8.9: By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.
- SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production): Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Target 12.b: Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.
- SDG 14 (Ocean Conservation)¹⁶⁴: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Target 14.7: By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island Developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable tourism.

5.1.3. Paris Agreement (UNFCCC)

In December 2015, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) released the Paris Agreement. This legally binding international treaty on climate change, is a landmark in the multilateral climate change process because it has for the first time united all nations in the common cause to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.

Within this framework, the goal goal is to limit global warming to well below 2°, preferably to 1.5°, compared to pre-industrial levels. To achieve this long-term temperature goal, countries will commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to achieve a climate neutral world by the middle of the century. Each country must present plans for climate action known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs).¹⁶⁵ This

159 CBD, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, (2004). *Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development*, 29 pp.

160 CBD, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, (2005). *Handbook of the Convention on Biological Diversity Including its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety*, 1258 pp

161 UNWTO, 2012. *Outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*, 72 pp.

162 JA Leggett, (2012): "Rio+20: The United Nations Conference on Sustainable"

163 UNWTO, (2014). *Harnessing Power: One billion tourists sustainable future*. Press Release No. 14076.

164 UNWTO, (2015). *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

165 UNFCCC, (2015). *Paris Agreement*.

commitment has been reinforced by the launch of the Glasgow Declaration¹⁶⁶ at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2021. The Glasgow Declaration is described in **Table 1**, along with a number of other recent initiatives that support the promotion of more sustainable tourism.

5.2. Recent blue tourism sustainable initiatives

During the last two decades, there has been a concerted effort by the tourism sector to launch tourism-focused initiatives that aim to foster sectoral improvements through better governance and the enhancement of destination and business practices. Initiatives have focused on developing and promoting codes for tourism inclusivity, environmentally-sustainable practices and pledges and declarations. Such collective efforts will have an impact on the future of blue tourism as destinations that comply with these proposals will benefit as well as contribute to the scaling up of these sustainable tourism initiatives.

In **Table 1**, recent relevant initiatives are listed. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list.

5.3. Examples of regional governance in marine regions

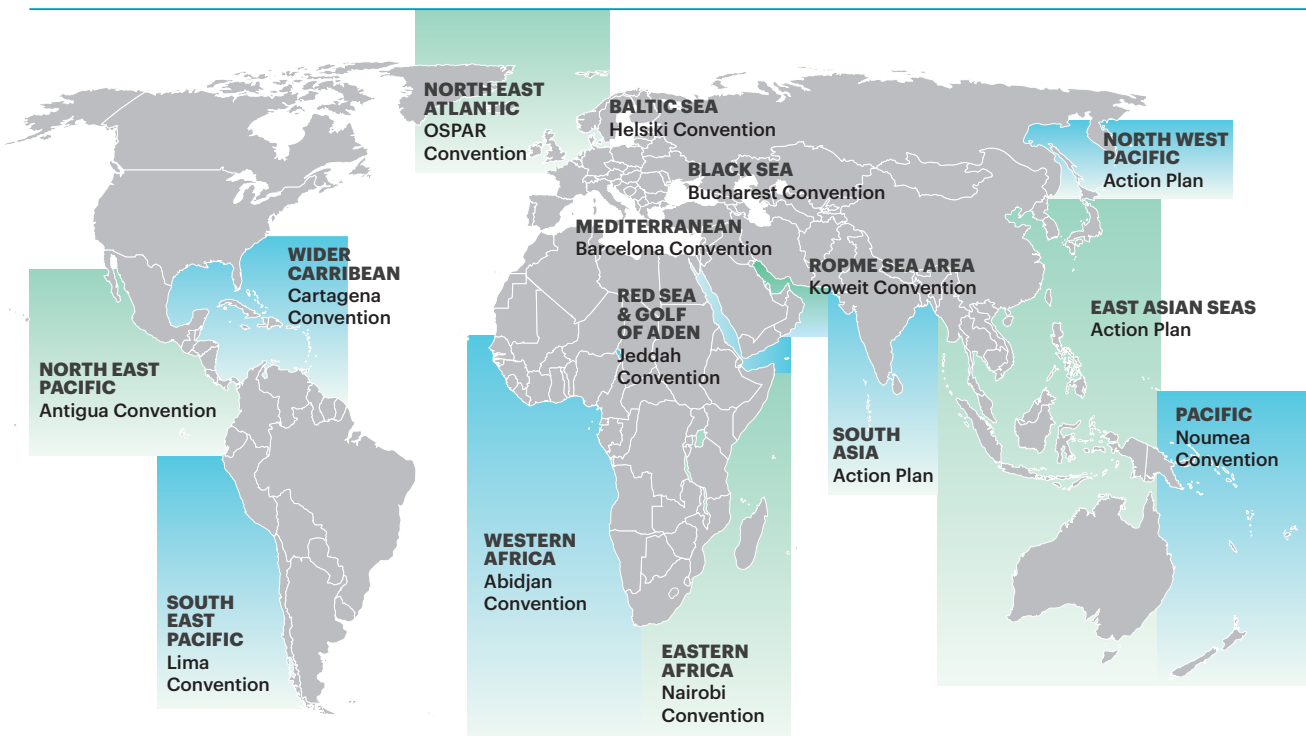
Marine governance refers to the management and regulation of activities that take place in the ocean, including conservation, development, and use of marine resources. There are different approaches to marine governance, including top-down, bottom-up, and co-management approaches. Effective governance in marine regions typically involves a range of actors, and it is important to ensure the sustainable use of marine resources, protect marine biodiversity, and address issues such as pollution and climate change.

5.3.1. Regional Seas Programme (UNEP)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) **Regional Seas Programme** is a global initiative, launched in 1974, that aims to promote the protection and sustainable use of the world's coastal and marine resources.¹⁶⁷ The programme focuses on the conservation and management of marine and coastal ecosystems, as well as the elimination of marine pollution and the protection of endangered species.

The Programme is implemented through **Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs)** such as the Mediterranean Action Plan, the Caribbean Environment Programme, the Nairobi Convention, the Convention for the protection of the marine environment and the coastal region of the Mediterranean, among others. Through RSCAPs, the programme provides inter-governmental frameworks to address the degradation of the oceans and seas at a regional level, initially focusing on pollution at sea, such as oil spills and the movement

Figure 9. UNEP Regional Seas Programme



Source: UNEP, 2019.

166 UNWTO, (2020). *The Glasgow Declaration*.

167 Akiwumi, P., & Melvasalo, T., (1998). *UNEP's Regional Seas Programme: approach, experience and future plans*.

Table 1. Global sustainable tourism initiatives

Name	Year	Objectives
UNWTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (CGET)	1999	The GCET is composed of ten articles, including Article 3, which recognises tourism's potential contribution to sustainable development along with the required policies to promote sustainable tourism.
Network of European Regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism (NECSTouR)	2007	It is an organisation that aims to promote sustainable tourism development in European regions and gathers European regions to build competitive regional governance for sustainable tourism, tackling the economic, environmental and socio-cultural dimensions of the industry. It shares knowledge, best practices, and experiences in the field of sustainable tourism. ¹ The NECSTouR 2019-2021 strategy ² sets out five key priorities - Smart destination, Socio cultural balance, Skills and talent, Safety and resilience, Statistics and measurability to address the challenges facing destinations and support regions to deliver sustainable tourism.
UN One Planet initiative	2015	It aims to promote sustainable development and ensure that economic growth is inclusive and equitable. The One Planet initiative is build on five main pillars: green growth and sustainable development, climate action to reduce greenhouse gas and build resilience to climate change, biodiversity and ecosystems to protect and restore natural ecosystems, water and oceans to sustainably manage water resources, and resilience and adaptive governance ³ .
The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism	2021	This declaration aims to lead and align climate action across tourism stakeholders: government, institutional agencies; donors, financial institutions; international organisations; civil society; the private sector; and academia. It aims to unify their shared commitment in transforming tourism to deliver effective climate action to support the goals to halve emissions by 2030 and reach Net Zero before 2050.
Tourism Panel on Climate Change	2022	It is a global platform established by UNWTO to raise awareness of the impacts of climate change on the tourism sector, and to promote the implementation of sustainable tourism practices that can help to mitigate these impacts. The panel was established in 2022 and is composed of experts from the tourism industry, governments, academia, and other organisations. ⁴
Future of Tourism Coalition	2020	An initiative promoted by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that represents a collaborative effort to chart a new, more sustainable direction for tourism and shift the status quo. The Coalition is composed of six non-governmental organisations, the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), Destination Stewardship Center, Green Destinations, Sustainable Travel International, Tourism Cares, and the Travel Foundation, with the guidance of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). ⁵ It was born as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, to move forward and recover, re-centering around a strong set of principles is vital for long term sustainable and equitable growth.

Source: Author elaboration, 2023.

1 Plan Bleu (2022). State of Play of Tourism in the Mediterranean, Interreg Med Sustainable Tourism Community project.

2 NECSTouR 2019-2021 strategy

3 One planet Network, www.oneplanetnetwork.org

4 Tourism Panel on Climate Change, <https://tpcc.info/executive-summary>

5 One planet, 2021. The Future Coalition

of hazardous waste, as well as land-based sources of pollution, for example plastics, wastewater and excess nutrients.

The programme also engages with a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and the private sector, to promote cooperation and coordination in addressing marine and coastal environmental issues. Many have embraced the ecosystems approach to managing marine resources and have protocols on protected areas, marine litter, combating oil spills, pollution from ships, transboundary movement of waste including their disposal, integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and land-based sources (LBS) through which disaster reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable consumption and production issues can be addressed. The focus of the programme is on promoting regional oceans governance to deliver the global oceans agenda and respond to emerging issues, new policies and initiatives, such as the blue economy.¹⁶⁸ **Figure 9.**

5.3.2. Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)

Launched in 2008, the **Union for the Mediterranean** (UfM) is an intergovernmental Euro-Mediterranean organization which brings together all countries of the European Union and 16 countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (see map below). In 2015, UfM promoted the Ministerial Declaration on the Sustainable Blue Economy¹⁶⁹ for the entire Mediterranean region. The declaration sets out to promote jobs,

innovation and knowledge-based business opportunities through the development of key maritime sectors. It is a collaborative, regional approach led by 42 Ministers from UfM countries. **Figure 10.**

As a way of facing multiple crises (COVID-19, climate change and biodiversity loss), in 2021 Members agreed to strengthen their commitment to the sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean. The **Mediterranean Blue Economy Stakeholders platform**¹⁷⁰ was relaunched as an online web portal designed for sharing knowledge of general, technical and sectoral information related to marine and maritime affairs.

5.3.3. WestMED

The **WestMED initiative**¹⁷¹ has been created to help public institutions, academia, local communities, SMEs and entrepreneurs from 10 countries in the western Mediterranean region involved in the '5+5 Dialogue': five EU Member States (France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Malta), and five Southern partner countries (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia). **Figure 11.**

These countries are working together on a common roadmap for the development of a sustainable blue economy in the sub-basin: to increase maritime safety and security, promote sustainable blue growth and jobs, preserve ecosystems and biodiversity, and to provide a better living environment

Figure 10. Union for the Mediterranean, Member States



Source: UfM website

168 UNEP Regional Seas Programme

169 UfM Secretariat, (2021). UfM Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy.

170 UfM Working Group on Blue Economy, <https://medblueeconomyplatform.org/>

171 WestMed blue economy initiative. <https://westmed-initiative.ec.europa.eu/westmed-initiative/>

Figure 11. WestMed area, 5+5 Dialogue



Source: WestMed website, 2022

for Mediterranean populations, while preserving the services performed by the Mediterranean ecosystem.¹⁷² The WestMED initiative was recognized as a successful example of cooperation and a catalyst for the development of a sustainable blue economy.¹⁷³ The priorities of the initiative are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. WestMED priorities for the roadmap

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maritime safety and the fight against marine pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable consumption and production
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maritime cluster development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity and marine habitat conservation and restoration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and circulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of coastal communities and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture

Source: WestMed.

5.3.4. Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) represents the Greater Caribbean region and currently has 25 Member States, 10 Associate Members, 28 Observer Countries as well as Observer Organizations, Founding Observers, Social Actors and other Collaborative Organizations (Figure 12). Since its establishment in 1994, the ACS enhances cooperation

within the region, providing a framework for the dialogue and activity necessary to further advance economic integration and intra-regional trade and investment, thereby improving the economic competitiveness of the Greater Caribbean region. Indeed, its primary purpose is to be an organization for “consultation, cooperation and concerted action” for its member countries.¹⁷⁴ Figure 12.

In particular, the ACS members have identified has identified five areas of concern for the attention of the Association:

- The preservation and conservation of the Caribbean Sea, and of this natural heritage, which has an essential role for Caribbean citizens.
- Sustainable Tourism, also considering the importance that the tourism industry, especially the blue tourism sector, plays in the socio-economic development of all ACS members.
- Trade and Economic External Relations. The ACS provides a framework for the dialogue and activity necessary to further advance economic integration and intra-regional trade and investment, thereby improving the economic competitiveness of the Greater Caribbean region.
- Natural Disasters, considering the continued vulnerability of all Caribbean countries and territories of the Greater Caribbean region to the physical ravages and economically crippling consequences of natural disasters.
- Transport: as the proper functioning of efficient and viable intraregional air and maritime routes not only facilitates closer intraregional relations, but represents a fundamental base in the achievement of cooperation and for tourism development.¹⁷⁵

5.3.5. Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1997. The Association aims at strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean region through its 23 Member States and 10 Dialogue Partners (Figure 13).

The IORA facilitates and promotes economic co-operation, bringing together representatives of governments, businesses and academia from the Member States. It aims to build and expand understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation through a consensus-based, evolutionary and non-intrusive approach.¹⁷⁶

The main objectives of the Indian Ocean Rim Association are:

1. To promote sustainable growth and balanced development of the region and member states;
2. To focus on those areas of economic cooperation which provide maximum opportunities for development, shared interest and mutual benefits;
3. To promote liberalization, remove impediments and lower barriers towards a freer and enhanced flow of goods, services, investment, and technology within the Indian Ocean rim.

In addition, IORA has a number of priority areas of cooperation, which are displayed in Figure 14.

172 WestMed

173 Plan Bleu, (2022). *State of Play of Tourism in the Mediterranean*, Interreg Med Sustainable Tourism Community project.

174 Eird, (2017). *About the Association of Caribbean States (ACS)*.

175 CARICOM. *Association of Caribbean States (ACS)*.

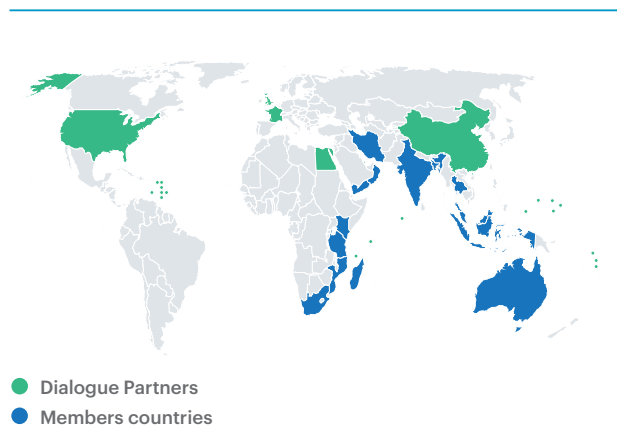
176 IORA, <https://www.iora.int/en/structures-mechanisms/structures/overview>

Figure 12. Members and Associate members of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS)



Source: C. Andrea Clayton & al. (2020). *Policy responses to reduce single-use plastic marine pollution in the Caribbean.*

Figure 13. IORA's Members and Dialogue Partners



Source: CG Competition Point, 2019. *Bilateral and Regional Groups: Indian-Ocean Rim Association (IORA).*

Figure 14. IORA's Priority Areas of cooperation

<p>Maritime Safety & Security</p>	<p>Fischeries Management</p>	<p>Trade & Investment Facilitation</p>	<p>Disaster Risk Management</p>
<p>Tourism & Cultural Exchange</p>	<p>Academic Science & Technologie</p>	<p>Blue Economy</p>	<p>Women's Economic Empowerment</p>

Source: CG Competition Point, 2019. *Bilateral and Regional Groups: Indian-Ocean Rim Association (IORA).*

6. Main market segments of blue tourism

This chapter examines the current situation of coastal and maritime tourism with a focus on the main market segments: beach and coastal resorts, cruises and recreational boating, sport tourism, nature-based tourism, and marine culture tourism. We analyse some key characteristics of each segment including the socio-economic context, market structure, critical issues, and good practices.

6.1. Beach hotels and coastal resorts

The hotel and resort sector is the most globalized and territorialized business in the international tourism system, at the same level as tour operators (TOs) and the airline industry. Hotels account for 47% of all beds available worldwide, including all types of hotel accommodation (1 to 5 stars, unclassified, motels, beach hotels, etc.), while tourist resorts represent only around 2%.¹⁷⁷ The global hotel industry has grown rapidly in the last quarter of the century, due to the implementation of a global space distribution strategy for large hospitality corporations, which has allowed them to expand worldwide. Due to a strong competitive segmentation strategy, large hotel chains have been able to differentiate the product and the clientele, and to boost their profits.¹⁷⁸

Emerging markets record faster tourism growth than consolidated destinations, making them popular for leading hotel corporations with expansion strategies, and for foreign investors, pushed by the continuing need for new tourism infrastructure and investment. Furthermore, the invested capital in tourism does not only imply real estate investments (urbanization) and the construction of hotel and resort complexes, but it also involves electricity production, and commercial areas, by generating economic activity apart from tourism itself in the city or country.

The size of the global hotel industry and its distribution in coastal/maritime destinations are not easy to quantify. The hospitality sector ranges from small family businesses to large international groups (with over 600,000 rooms). The hotel industry can be divided into two segments: independent hotels (85% of all hotels) and hotel chains composed of large hotel groups (15%).¹⁷⁹ In addition, the hotel industry is characterized by a high fragmentation of the supply: it varies from luxury products to mass tourism, or ecotourism to fair tourism.

Globally, the demand for accommodation is modelled and controlled almost exclusively by companies based in the US, Europe, or China, which are the same countries that generate most tourists, who have greater knowledge of the market and the latest technological innovations for bookings and

marketing.¹⁸⁰ Due to the geographic phenomenon of globalization, large multinational hotel and resort companies have extended widely around the world as a result of the increasing benefits, lower financial risks, and lower commitment to risk capital.¹⁸¹ Many international chains operate by integrating global distribution systems into their functioning and using a variety of standardized marketing strategies.

6.2. Cruise ships and recreational boating

Cruise tourism is one of the most popular and profitable segments of the industry. It has today expanded to include increasingly diverse ports, introducing innovative on-board services with a wide range of facilities.¹⁸² Global ocean cruising is a fast-growing industry and the biggest sector in the tourism economy in terms of gross added value and employment. Moreover, cruise tourism has become increasingly affordable, and the number of passengers has risen considerably at global and regional levels.¹⁸³ For example, the Mediterranean is one of the world's biggest cruise areas: reaching 27 million passengers in 2013, with a sustained increase of around 5% per year. The increasing size of cruise ships has enabled cruising to become the fastest-growing sector of the mass tourism industry.¹⁸⁴ The cruise sector is now a major industry in the Pacific Islands, the Caribbean and the world's polar regions.

Figure 15 shows the growth of worldwide cruise passenger numbers for the period 2000-2020 and the steep decline during the COVID-19 pandemic. The year 2020 saw declines of 52.9% in income and 49.4% in passenger numbers, but in March 2021 worldwide passengers carried was already estimated at 50% capacity, reaching 90% capacity by the end of the year (pre COVID-19 sailings were at 105%-109% capacity). In 2021, the worldwide ocean cruise industry was estimated at US\$23.8 billion, an increase of 81.8% compared to 2020, with 13.9 million passengers carried annually, an estimated 96.2% increase compared to 2020.¹⁸⁵ **Figure 15**

A characteristic of the cruise industry is that it is highly concentrated in the hands of a few multinational companies that can afford the massive investments needed to finance and operate modern cruise ships. Although modern facilities and ships have significantly reduced their environmental impacts, they remain a major source of air, noise and marine pollution due to the greater capacity of new ships that can accommodate up to 8,000 passengers. The arrival of such large visitor numbers creates severe conflicts in terms of overcrowding and negatively impacts the travel experience of visitors.

177 Gössling, S., (2002). *Global environmental consequences of tourism*. Global Environmental Change, volume 12, Issue 4, pp. 283-302

178 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

179 Niewiadomski, P., (2014). *Towards an economic-geographical approach to the globalization of the hotel industry*. Journal Tourism Geographies, Vol. 16 Issue 1, pp. 48-67

180 Pérez-Calderón et al., (2011). *Sensitivity of listed European hotels with sustainable tourism*. International Journal of Environment Research, Vol.5 Issue 1, pp. 57-66

181 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

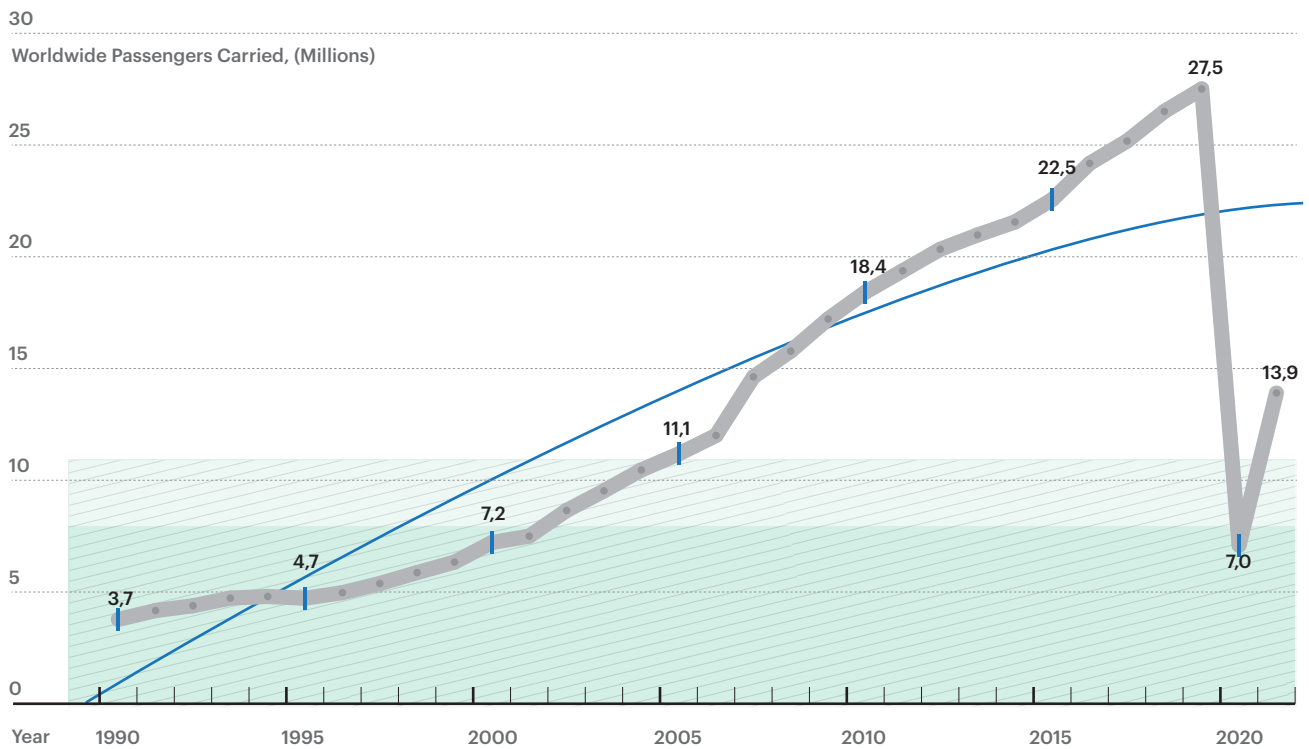
182 CEST, (2007). *Global Trends in Coastal Tourism*

183 Caric, H., Jakl, Z., Laurent, C., Mackelworth, P., Noon, V., Petit, S., Piante, C., Randone, M., (2019). *Safeguarding Marine Protected Areas in the growing Mediterranean Blue Economy. Recommendations for the cruise sector*. PHAROS4MPAs project. 48 pages

184 The Guardian, (2016). *The world's largest cruise ship and its oversized pollution problem*.

185 Cruise Market Watch, 2021

Figure 15. Worldwide Cruise Passengers (1990-2021)



Source: *Cruise Market Watch*, 2021.

In particular, the following issues have been identified with cruise tourism¹⁸⁶ :

- Waste production, marine littering, and significant air pollution;
- Water pollution caused by cruise sewage systems and untreated wastewater;
- Dependency on large international companies;
- Poor visitor experience and unbalanced interaction with local communities;
- Conflict over use of space and the overcrowding of urban areas;
- Unbalanced distribution of tourism-generated revenues;
- High seasonality and associated effects;
- Lack of monitoring systems on tourism flows and impacts.

6.3. Water sports tourism

Reviewing the definition of coastal tourism,¹⁸⁷ which refers to beach-based tourism and recreation activities, it also includes some key sporting activities such as swimming, surfing and coastal walks. While maritime tourism¹⁸⁸ includes predominantly water-based activities, such as sailing, yachting and other nautical sports. Tourism plays a role in the use of waterfront

areas with new uses such as marine sport tourism. Marine and coastal-based sports tourism refers to the travel and activities related to the observation, participation or engagement of marine-based sporting events, activities or facilities. It includes activities such as scuba diving, snorkelling, water skiing, windsurfing, sailing, surfing and many others,¹⁸⁹ which are often dependent on certain types of coastal environments or conditions. Each of these activities has millions of regular participants.

Figure 16 shows the different types of water sports tourism activities,¹⁹⁰ divided into motorized activities, wind-based, non-wind-based, active and passive. Some have become universally popular as tourist attractions on waterfronts. Tourism communities are realizing the benefits that marine sports bring and marine sports events continue to grow in size and number. In this sense, marine sports tourism can have a positive impact on the economy of coastal communities, promoting regional development, creating jobs and income through the provision of services such as equipment rental, training and guiding, accommodation, and transportation.

Coastal and marine water sports tourism is expected to continue to grow in popularity as people are increasingly looking for new and exciting ways to enjoy the ocean and to stay fit. The development of new technologies and equipment, such as electric boats, will make marine sports more accessible and affordable, further increasing the popularity

186 Plan Bleu, (2011). *Cruises and Recreational Boating in the Mediterranean*

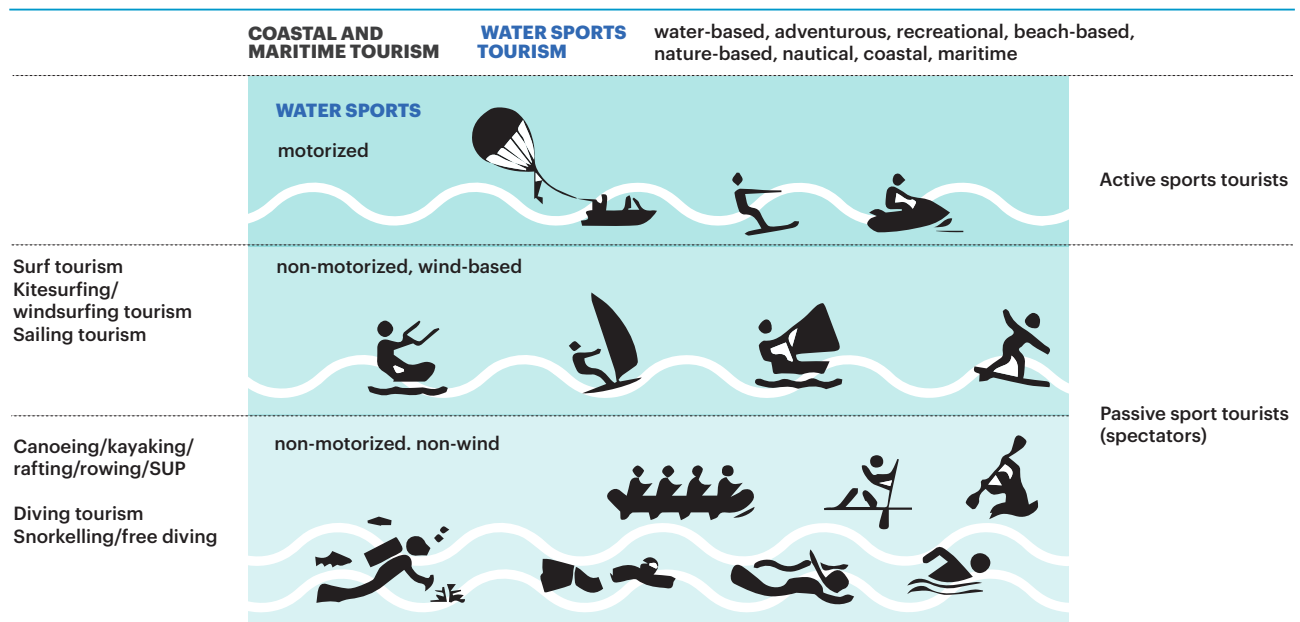
187 Ecorys, (2013). *Study in support of policy measures for maritime and coastal tourism at EU level.*

188 Honey, M. & Krantz, D., (2007). *Global Trends in Coastal Tourism.*

189 Lagarene, B. E. S., & Walansendow, A., (2016). *Developing Marine and Coastal-based Sport Tourism on the Waterfront: The Case of Manado Waterfront, Indonesia.* *Journal of Indonesian Tourism and Development Studies*, 4(3), 107

190 Galatsopoulou, F., (2022). *Water Sports Tourism,*

Figure 16. Water Sports tourism



Source: *Water Sports Tourism*, Galanopoulou, F. (2022)

of marine sports tourism.¹⁹¹ It is essential that marine sports tourism is planned and managed in a sustainable way, taking into account the potential impacts on the marine environment and local communities to avoid the generation of negative socio-economic and environmental impacts. Indeed, if not managed properly, marine sports tourism can also have negative consequences on the marine environment, such as pollution and the degradation of coral reefs.

Marine sports tourism also has the potential to contribute to the protection of marine environments through the promotion of sustainable practices. This can include measures such as the implementation of regulations and guidelines, training and education of operators and tourists, and the development of MPAs to conserve marine biodiversity.

6.4. Nature-based tourism and ecotourism

Nature-based tourism (NBT) is an emerging option for the industry that aims at redirecting small numbers of travellers to less mainstream locations and activities to alleviate their impact on ecosystems. Table 3. explains the terms and definitions associated with nature-based tourism, including ecotourism and wildlife tourism.

Nature-based tourism (NBT) describes all forms of tourism that use natural resources in an undeveloped form (Figure 17). NBT is motivated by the enjoyment of wildlife or undeveloped natural areas and may incorporate natural attractions including scenery, topography, waterways, vegetation, wildlife, and cultural heritage, and activities such as hunting or bird watching along the coastlines of MPAs. **Figure 17**

191 Lagarese, B. E. S., & Walansendow, A., (2016). *Developing Marine and Coastal-based Sport Tourism on the Waterfront: The Case of Manado Waterfront, Indonesia*. *Journal of Indonesian Tourism and Development Studies*, 4(3), 107

Table 3. Definitions and terms for nature-based tourism

Term	Definition
Nature-based tourism	Forms of tourism that use natural resources in a wild or undeveloped form. Nature-based tourism is travel for the purpose of enjoying undeveloped natural areas or wildlife.
Ecotourism	Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment socially and economically sustains the well-being of the local people, and creates knowledge and understanding through interpretation and education.
Wildlife tourism	A form of nature-based tourism that includes the consumptive and non-consumptive use of wild animals in natural areas Wildlife tourism is centered around the observation and interaction with local and as with safari tourism.
Geotourism	Tourism that sustains or enhances the distinctive geographical character of a place: Its environment heritage, aesthetics, culture, and the well-being of its residents.

Source: World Bank, 2020. *Tools and Resources for Nature-Based Tourism*

Successful NBT requires the ability to develop and market tourism products based on the assets offered by the protected area (PA), and the ability to maintain the quality of these assets for ongoing future use, while minimizing the impacts and pressures generated by tourism and promoting good

Figure 17. Type of nature-based tourism, tools and resources



Source: World Bank, 2020. *Tools and Resources for Nature-Based Tourism*

practices. However, NBT activities, although controlled and monitored, can still generate direct impacts on protected ecosystems, such as environmental degradation, that need to be contained and limited using the resources generated. The presence of humans can disturb these ecosystems, scaring off prey and disrupting hunting patterns for predators, causing soil erosion and habitat loss if the number of travellers increase rapidly. Uncontrolled recreational activities also threaten wildlife.

During both pre and post-COVID-19 pandemic periods, NBT was one of the fastest growing tourism sectors and plays an important role in sustainable development. It can support poverty alleviation, economic growth, and biodiversity conservation. NBT can represent an important source of income for local communities and rural households, who often live in poverty in marginalized areas. Good practices show that where local communities benefit from NBT, they are more likely to conserve wildlife and nature, even though they are sometimes negatively affected by the management of protected areas through restricted access to land.

6.5. Marine cultural tourism

Cultural tourism is a new emerging trend in maritime tourism where coastal locations celebrate their ancient histories of maritime trade and exploration.¹⁹² This trend is evident in the rise in the volume of tourists who seek adventure, culture,

history, archaeology and interaction with local people,¹⁹³ focusing on the exploration and appreciation of the cultural heritage, traditions, and lifestyles of communities living in and around coastal and marine environments.

Some key aspects of cultural tourism in coastal and marine areas:

- **Marine cultural heritage:** Coastal and marine areas often have a rich cultural heritage influenced by the historical interactions of communities with the sea. This includes indigenous cultures, fishing traditions, local craftsmanship, and historical remains such as settlements, fortresses, harbours and lighthouses, as well as all of the geographical, archaeological and ethnological implications.¹⁹⁴ Cultural tourism allows visitors to engage with and learn about these cultural elements through various activities such as visiting museums and historical sites, and participating in traditional ceremonies or festivals.
- **Indigenous communities:** Many coastal and marine areas are home to indigenous communities that have deep connections to their environment and unique cultural practices. Cultural tourism provides an opportunity to interact with these communities, learn about their traditional knowledge, and understand their way of life.¹⁹⁵ This can involve staying in indigenous-owned accommodation, participating in cultural workshops, and engaging in cultural exchange programmes.
- **Gastronomy:** Coastal and marine areas often boast a diverse range of culinary traditions based on local seafood and coastal produce. Cultural tourism provides insights into the connection between food, culture, and the marine environment, and offers the chance to explore and savour these traditional cuisines through food tours, cooking classes, and visits to local markets or restaurants.
- **Conservation activities in coastal and marine areas:** By highlighting the cultural significance of the environment, tourists can develop a deeper appreciation for the need to protect marine ecosystems and biodiversity. This can include activities such as guided nature walks, snorkelling or diving trips, and volunteering for conservation projects.
- **Arts and crafts:** Cultural tourism can involve exploring traditional arts and crafts such as pottery, weaving, boat building, or jewellery making. Visitors can engage in workshops, observe artisans at work, and even purchase unique handmade souvenirs that support local economies.

Given this potential, it is perhaps not surprising that cultural tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the pre and post-COVID 19 environment. It has played a vital role in promoting the sustainability of the volatile tourism sector by providing more options to reach a wider tourism clientele. Since the majority of cultural sites lie within local coastal villages, these venues provide opportunities for enhancing the financial resilience of local marine ecosystem management.

193 Andriotis, K., (2005). Seasonality in Crete: Problem or a way of life? *Tourism Economics*, 11(2), 207–224.

194 Vladimirova, M., (2016). *Maritime Cultural Landscape – Cultural Tourism – Sustainable Development*. *International Journal of Cultural and Digital Tourism* Volume 3, Number 1.

195 BarOn, R. R., (1975). *Seasonality in tourism: A guide to the analysis of seasonality and trends for policy making*. London: Economics Intelligence Unit.

192 OECD, (2009). *The Impact of Culture on Tourism*. OECD, Paris

If effectively conserved, actively managed and attentively socialized, maritime cultural landscapes bring benefits to local populations and to the sustainability of the coastal regions.¹⁹⁶ It also represents an opportunity to address seasonality issues in terms of tourism flows in coastal and maritime areas¹⁹⁷, which are often affected by the “3S” mass tourism model. It is important to note that cultural tourism in coastal and marine areas should be conducted responsibly and sustainably to minimize any negative impacts on the environment and local cultures. Collaborating with local communities, respecting their traditions and practices, and adhering to sustainable tourism practices are essential for the long-term preservation and enjoyment of these destinations.

7. Tourism impacts in a polycrisis world

This chapter reviews the main impacts generated by tourism in coastal and marine regions considering the three dimensions: environmental, economic, and social. This is followed by an analysis of global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, along with an examination of their effect on the tourism sector. A sub-section focuses on the relationship between tourism and sustainability and the the SDGs. Other chapters cover the links between climate change and tourism and its consequences on tourism activities in vulnerable areas, such as coastal and island regions.

7.1. The impacts of blue tourism

Tourism activities can have major impacts on destinations, where tourists interact with the environment, economy, culture and society (see figure 18).¹⁹⁸

These impacts are usually multi-faceted, and often combine economic, social and environmental factors with inter-related dimensions. The impacts of tourism can be positive or negative, depending on the value position and judgement of the observer.¹⁹⁹

196 Vladimirova, M. (2016). *Maritime Cultural Landscape – Cultural Tourism – Sustainable Development*. International Journal of Cultural and Digital Tourism Volume 3, Number 1.

197 European Commission (2017). *Challenges and Opportunities for Maritime and Coastal Tourism in the EU*.

198 Fosse J., Klarwein S., Kosmas I. & Gonzalez A., (2021). *Ecosystem Approach for a sustainable coastal and maritime Tourism in the Mediterranean*. Edited by eco-union.

199 Martín Martín, J.M.; Guaita Martínez, J.M.; Salinas Fernández, J.A., (2018). *An Analysis of the Factors behind the Citizen’s Attitude of Rejection towards Tourism in a Context of Overtourism and Economic Dependence on This Activity*. Sustainability, 10, 2851.

7.1.1. Environmental impacts

The environmental impacts of tourism on coastal and maritime areas are usually linked to the use and management of natural resources. The main impacts originate from construction and infrastructure use which lead to land change and artificialization of the coast, pollution, and biodiversity loss.²⁰⁰ As Table 4 shows, coastal tourism impacts on ecosystems, for example through marine plastic litter and air pollution from maritime transport.

Table 4. Blue tourism's environmental impacts

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing awareness of the importance of protecting and conserving natural resources • Enhancing natural resource values • Creation of MPAs and PAs • Sensibilization towards more sustainable practices • Promotion of financial resilience of ecosystem management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artificialization • Damage to marine landscapes • Erosion • Air pollution • Marine plastic pollution • Degradation of ecosystems • Biodiversity loss • Excessive water and energy consumption* • Disturbance of native species and impacts on their reproductive cycles** • Decline of marine species • Noise pollution***

Source: Authors' own work, based on *Blue Tourism report*. eco-union (2019).

Other examples include cruise ships travelling from port to port, which cause air pollution, public health impacts and degradation of natural ecosystems. Also, cruise ships and recreational boats often travel within close proximity to the coastline, where biodiversity is most vulnerable to pollution. Indeed, these activities, along with shipping, are contributing to the decline of marine species, for example, marine mammals are affected by ship strike.²⁰¹

The coastal and marine natural environment is also threatened by sea uses and infrastructure that damages seascapes and landscapes. Marine spatial planning (MSP) and land-use planning are two promising approaches to tackling ocean and sea management issues for coastal and marine tourism. For example, MSP can help mitigate conflicts and create synergies between blue tourism and other sectors, ensuring good resource management and preventing environmental impacts.²⁰²

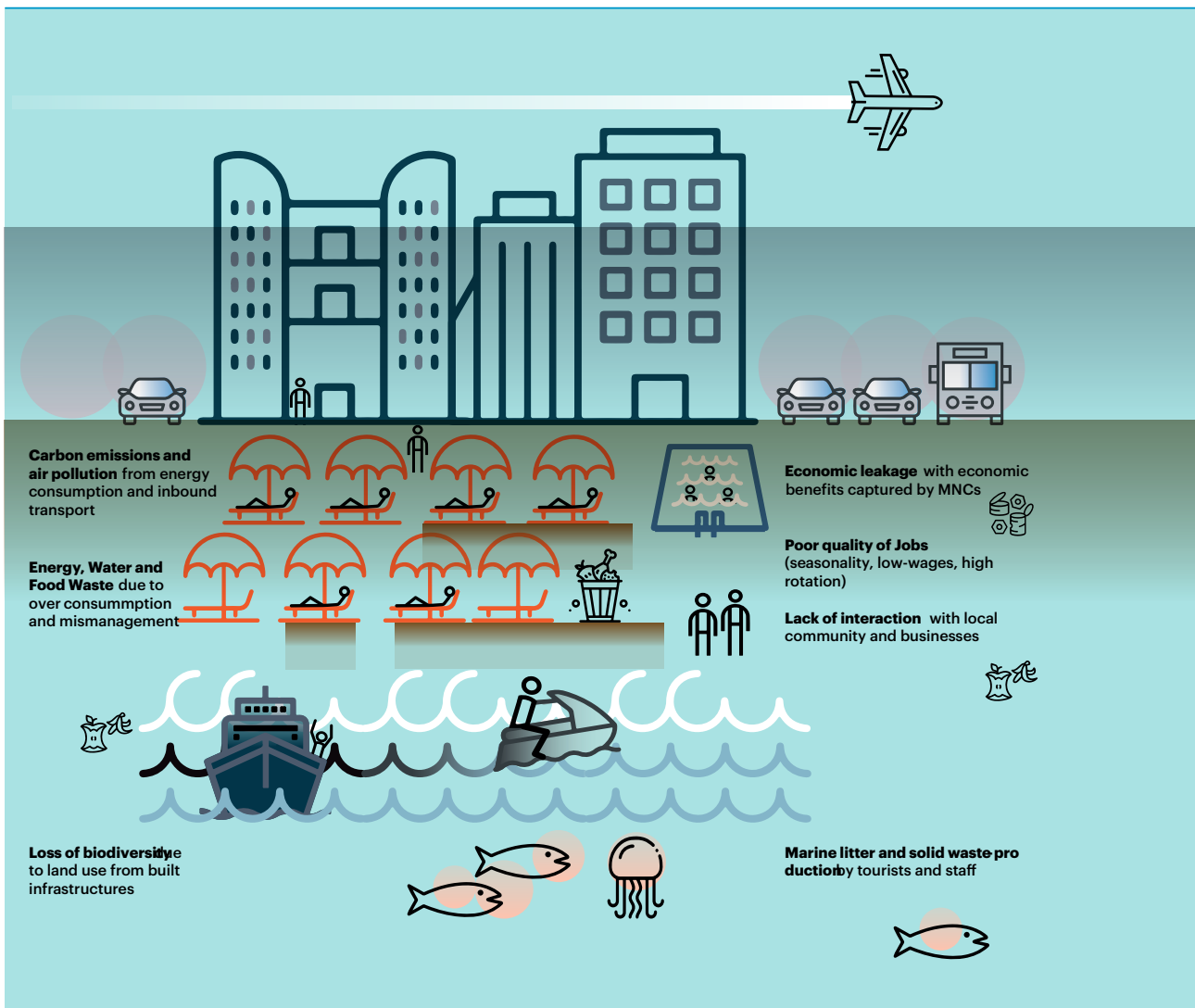
An important negative impact is marine pollution, which affects different sectors of the blue economy such as fishing, tourism, and recreation. It also harms marine life, making the area less attractive to visitors, and damages the local economy. Marine pollution refers to the human introduction of substances into the marine environment (sewage, industrial and chemical

200 Fosse J., Klarwein S., Kosmas I. & Gonzalez A., (2021). *Ecosystem Approach for a sustainable coastal and maritime Tourism in the Mediterranean*. Edited by Eco-union.

201 Fosse J., Kosmas I., & Gonzalez A., (2021). *Regional Governance, Environmental Management and Sustainable Recovery of Mediterranean Coastal and Maritime Tourism*. eco-union.

202 Papageorgiou, M. (2016). *Coastal and marine tourism: A challenging factor in Marine Spatial Planning*. Ocean & Coastal Management. Volume 129, September 2016, Pages 44-48 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2016.05.006>

Figure 18. Environmental and social impacts from coastal hotels and resorts



Source: Eco-Union (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*.

waste, and radioactive materials), resulting in harmful impacts to living resources, hazards to human health, limitations on marine activities including fishing, impairment of seawater quality and the reduction of facilities.^{203 204}

Some of the most common forms of marine pollution include:

- Plastic pollution: Plastic can take hundreds of years to degrade and can also break down into microplastics, which are small plastic particles that can be ingested by marine life. At least 14 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean every year, and plastic makes up 80% of all marine debris found from surface waters to deep-sea sediments. Plastic pollution threatens food safety and quality, human health, blue tourism, and contributes to climate change.²⁰⁵

- Oil spills: Oil spills can have devastating effects on marine life and habitats. They can harm or kill birds, fish, and other marine animals, and can also damage coastal ecosystems.
- Chemical pollution: Chemicals from industrial processes and agricultural activities can pollute the ocean and harm marine life. These chemicals can include pesticides, fertilizers, and heavy metals.
- Noise pollution from shipping traffic and offshore drilling can disrupt the communication and navigation of marine animals, and can also cause physical harm.

There is an urgent need to reduce marine pollution by implementing effective regulations and policies, increasing public awareness, and promoting sustainable practices. Some initiatives are already in place, such as [Plastic Bluster206](#), among others.

203 P. Senthil Kumar, G. Prasannamedha, (2021). *Modern Treatment Strategies for Marine Pollution*.

204 Senthil Kumar, P. and Prasannamedha,G., (2021). *Modern Treatment Strategies for Marine Pollution*.

205 IUCN, (2021). Issues brief. [Marine plastic pollution](#).

206 [Plastic Bluster](#)

7.1.2. Economic impacts

Marine tourism can have significant economic impacts on coastal communities and the broader economy. [Table 5](#) shows some of the main positive and negative economic impacts of marine tourism on coastal regions.²⁰⁷

Table 5. The economic impacts of blue tourism

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job creation, employment: marine tourism can create jobs in a variety of industries, including accommodation, food and drink, transportation and recreation. • Community development: marine tourism can also contribute to community development by providing new economic opportunities and supporting local businesses. • Revenue generation and income growth for local businesses and governments through spending by tourists on goods and services. • Foreign exchange earnings for countries through expenditure by international tourists. • Infrastructure development such as transport networks, or other types of indirect services (electricity frameworks, hospitality, water and waste management systems) especially supported by foreign exchange earnings, and local government investment to attract tourists. • Branding and promotion: marine tourism can also contribute to branding and the promotion of a destination, which can attract other types of investment and tourism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonality and seasonal employment are the main limitations of tourism employment. Its seasonal character is concentrated in the peak tourist season, especially in coastal regions where tourism is highly dependent on climate conditions. • Tourist job characteristics. The tourism industry comprises different types and levels of work at a variety of organizational levels, but unfortunately there is a predominance of low salaries, as well as unso- ciable working hours, such as during holidays, nights, and weekends, which complicates work-family balance.* • Inequity of distribution of tourist income. • Underuse of facilities, which can be costly to maintain or, where tourism flows become low, can be neglected. • High cost of living for local residents • Rapid population growth, destabilizing local economies

Source: Authors' own work, based on [Blue Tourism report](#). eco-union (2019) *Obadić, A., Pehar, L., (2016). [Employment, Capital and Seasonality in Selected Mediterranean Countries](#) University of Zagreb.

7.1.3. Social impacts

Coastal and marine regions are often fragile environments that depend on tourism income, an industry that can generate multiple social-cultural impacts. See [Table 6](#).²⁰⁸

Table 6. Social impacts of blue tourism

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the preservation of local culture and traditions • Promote formal education towards the development of a skilled and competent workforce • Encourage cultural exchange • Overcome barriers of language, race, politics and class, towards greater social inclusion • Urban regeneration and livelihood improvement • Increasing interest in (marine) cultural heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alteration of local cultural authenticity • Overcrowding of public spaces (e.g. beaches and parks) • Gentrification and competition for land • Change in social norms – alteration of social behaviours, gambling, alcohol consumption, prostitution, etc. • The touristification and loss of identity of destinations • Cultural erosion • Tourism phobia, the aversion or social rejection that local citizens can feel towards tourists

Source: Authors' own work based on [Blue Tourism report](#). eco-union (2019)

A particular issue is the way that tourism revenue is largely syphoned off by large corporations and foreign companies. For example, it is estimated that 95% of tourism revenue generated in the Maldives and Caribbean leaves the host countries. Growth in coastal tourism is increasing property prices and living costs in these areas, which cannot be met by local populations. In addition, the sector is largely staffed by marginalized communities (including low-wage workers, women, children, and migrant workers), who have little agency and are highly vulnerable to shocks and stressors.²⁰⁹

7.2. The impacts of multiple crisis on tourism

This sub-section provides an overview of the impacts caused by the COVID-19 crisis on the sector globally. It also analyses the new perspectives for tourism in the context of global crises, such as at the geopolitical level and the climate change crisis. Given the limited data specifically relating to blue tourism, this section draws upon more general tourism-related data.

7.2.1. COVID-19 and its impacts on tourism

The various containment measures linked to the Covid crisis - such as full lockdowns, airport closures, travel restrictions and complete border shutdowns - have had profound impacts on the tourism industry, making it one of the most heavily affected sectors. The international recovery of the tourism sector has been possible in many countries due to vaccines that have enabled travel restrictions to be lifted, and also due to the resilience of businesses in the sector and changes in consumer behaviour. UNWTO data on international tourist arrivals (2019-2021)²¹⁰ shows a comparison in terms of tourism impacts between the SARS epidemic crisis of 2003, when

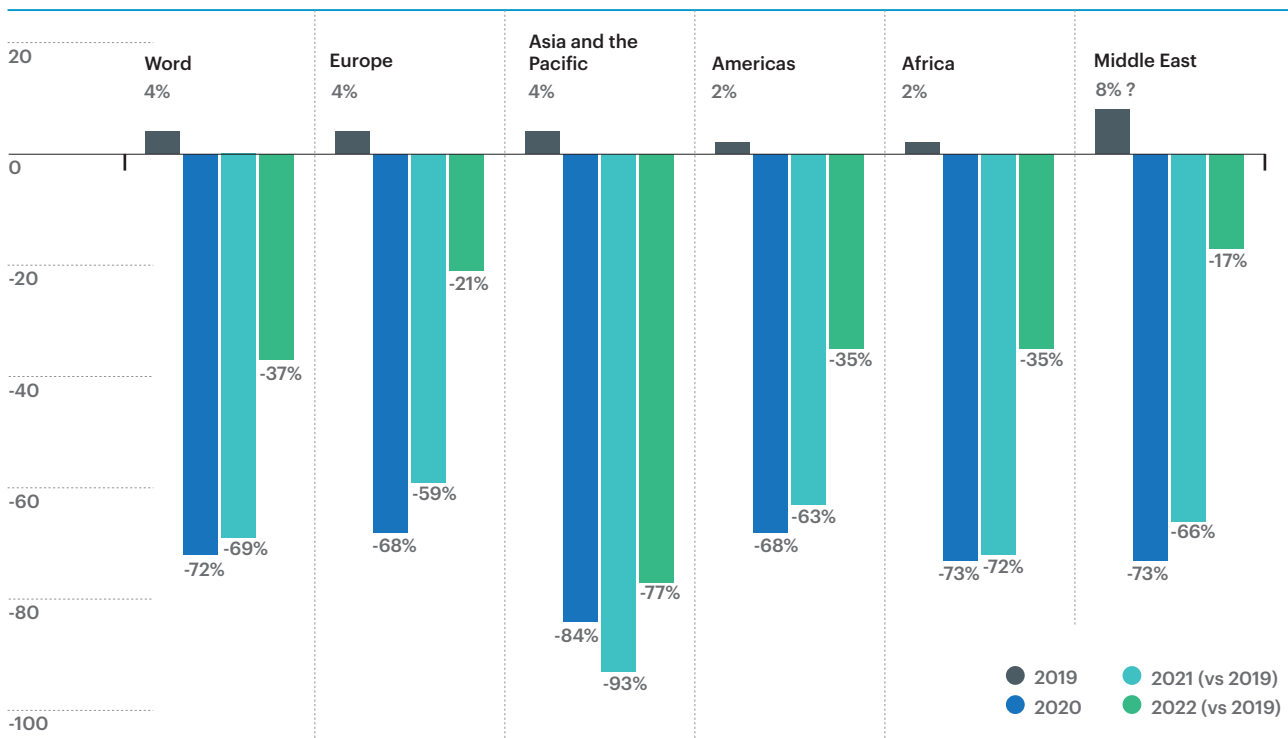
207 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) [Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions](#). Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

208 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O., (2019) [Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions](#). Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

209 Northrop, E., et al, (2022). [Opportunities for Transforming Coastal and Marine Tourism: Towards Sustainability, Regeneration and Resilience](#), High Level Panel for A Sustainable Ocean Economy. Report, commissioned by the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (Ocean Panel).

210 Source: UNWTO Data on international tourist arrivals (ITAs) 2019-2021, published: 01/08/2022

Figure 19. Evolution of international Tourist arrivals and tourist receipts between 2021 and 2022



Source: UNWTO, 2023

tourism flows fell slightly (0.2% drop in arrivals), and the 2009 economic crisis that saw a 4% fall in both tourist arrivals and tourism receipts. It also shows the dramatic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, where arrivals and tourism receipts fell by 73% and 64% respectively.

In 2019, the travel and tourism sector contributed 10.3% to global GDP (US\$9.6 trillion) and 10.3% of all jobs (333 million), and also created 1 in 4 of all new jobs worldwide. Meanwhile, international visitor spending amounted to US\$1.8 trillion in 2019 (6.8% of total exports). Before the pandemic, the tourism sector in 2019 generated 7% of global trade, indicating its potential in fostering development and its major share of trade in services.²¹¹

In financial terms, coastal and marine tourism accounts for approximately 50% of global tourism (US\$ 4.6 trillion per year, or 5.2% of global GDP). For most small island nations and many coastal regions, tourism is the single largest economic sector; in some small island nations, tourism accounts for up to 90% of total exports. The 2020 tourism shutdown underlined the fragility of the industry.²¹²

The COVID-19 pandemic affected marine and coastal destinations with reliable flows of tourists from air travel and cruise ships coming to a total stop. It also created great

uncertainty regarding how and when these flows would return.²¹³ Since the start of the pandemic, many coastal tourism destinations have suffered from policy decisions that tried to balance the need for lockdowns and border closures for the sake of public health, with the need to partially or temporarily open up for the sake of the economy and local livelihoods.

According to UNWTO,²¹⁴ the pandemic had huge economic and social impacts, especially on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which account for 80% of the sector, and on women who represent 54% of the total tourism workforce. In many countries, especially developing ones, coastal areas and islands are mainly dependent on SMEs and international tourism, and the consequences of the global shutdown and pandemic have underlined the fragility of the industry in such destinations.

The management of leisure and business activities on beaches and in ports often involves the need to deal with limited direct and indirect contamination from plastics, hydrocarbon spillages, microbiological loads, and noise level. This has led to temporarily improved environmental conditions and has brought beaches closer to the conditions found in Marine Protected Areas.²¹⁵ Meanwhile, many coastal ecosystems and protected areas experienced increased visitor pressure during

211 UNWTO, (2020). *From Crisis to Transformation*.

212 Northrop, E., et al, (2022). *Opportunities for Transforming Coastal and Marine Tourism: Towards Sustainability, Regeneration and Resilience*, High Level Panel for A Sustainable Ocean Economy.

213 Gössling, S., D. Scott, and C.M. Hall. 2020. *Pandemics, tourism and global change: A rapid assessment of COVID-19*. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 1-20.

214 UNWTO, (2020), *Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism*.

215 Ormaza-González, F. I, Castro-Rodas, D., Statham, P.J., (2021). *COVID-19 Impacts on Beaches and Coastal Water Pollution at Selected Sites in Ecuador, and Management Proposals Post-pandemic*.

the pandemic, with the growing interest in nature-based destinations.²¹⁶ Also, international travel fell sharply by 72% in 2020, the worst year on record for tourism, resulting in 1.1 billion fewer international tourists in comparison with 2019.²¹⁷

According to the WTTC (2021), after a drop of almost US\$4.9 trillion in 2020 (50.4% decline), the contribution of travel and tourism to GDP increased by US\$1 trillion (21.7% increase) in 2021. While in 2020 tourism's contribution to GDP decreased to 5.3% due to ongoing restrictions on mobility, then rising back to 6.1% in 2021.

In 2020, 62 million jobs were lost, representing a drop of 18.6%, equating to just 271 million people being employed in the tourism sector globally, compared to 333 million in 2019. In 2021, jobs increased by 18.2 million, representing an increase of 6.7% year-on-year. Following a decrease of 47.4% in 2020, domestic visitor spending increased by 31.4% in 2021. Regarding international visitor spending, there was a decrease of 69.7% in 2020, and then a rise of 3.8% in 2021.²¹⁸ COVID-19 clearly demonstrates that the range of global shocks and stressors impacting coastal and marine tourism destinations is broader than the well-known rapid onset phenomena associated with climate change, political conflict and economic crises.²¹⁹

In the post COVID-19 period, international tourism arrivals began to recover in January-March 2022. All destinations, especially Europe, received almost three times as many international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) as for the same period in 2021 (Figure 19). International arrivals increased by 182% year-on-year between 2021 and 2022: from 41 million in the first quarter of 2021 to an estimated 117 million in the first quarter of 2022. Of the extra 76 million international arrivals, about 47 million were recorded in March. However, international tourism remained 61% below 2019 levels. Compared to 2019 levels, international arrivals improved from -66% in January 2022 to -60% in February and -56% in March, as many countries lifted travel restrictions and Omicron-related disruptions decreased. **Figure 19**

According to regional data, as shown in Figure 19, after a strong decrease in 2020 and 2021, some regions have recovered since 2021. The Middle East and Europe have shown the strongest recovery - starting with the Mediterranean region, followed by the Americas and Africa (-35%).

According to the UNWTO,²²⁰ the main factors that may influence the recovery of international tourism, as shown in Figure 20, include the economic environment, travel restrictions, higher transport and accommodation costs, uncertainty due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic and low consumer confidence. **Figure 20.**

The impact of the pandemic on the sector has been unprecedented, obliging governments around the world to implement confinement and social distancing measures. It is critical that efforts are made to ensure the sector recovers sustainably and builds resilience to overcome future challenges. According to the OECD,²²¹ the post-crisis period is

characterized by a structural change in the tourist offer. COVID-19 showed the dynamic nature of tourism's vulnerability in coastal and marine settings, from a perspective that has been voiced and operationalized before.²²² The global pandemic has brought new challenges to reshape the sector and execute changes, since it has shown that traditional forms of coastal and marine tourism are no longer sustainable or viable.²²³

7.2.2. Geopolitical tensions and tourism

Geopolitical tensions tend to affect tourism. For example, despite the geographical distance of many regions from Ukraine, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is having global consequences on tourism and many other sectors. It has increased fuel prices resulting in a hike in transport prices and consequently led to a travel reduction. Also, the anxiety resulting from the conflict is another factor that has reduced tourist activity.²²⁴ Figure 21 shows how the conflict has decreased travel confidence, impacting on tourism related jobs and weakening economic growth. **Figure 21.**

The Russian and Ukrainian markets have also shrunk because of the conflict. The Russian Federation and Ukraine accounted for a combined 3% of global international tourism spending in 2020 and the conflict has resulted in the possible loss of US\$14 billion in global tourism receipts.²²⁵ In the Western Indian Ocean, Russian tourists represented 17% of international tourists in the Seychelles in 2021, and 1% of tourists in Mauritius in 2021, which were concentrated in the lucrative sectors of yachting and long stays.²²⁶ In the Mediterranean, while the number of Russian and Ukrainian tourists here remains relatively limited, tourist receipts are nevertheless likely to fall, mainly due to the loss of Russian tourists. In the Caribbean, tensions that are not conducive to tourism are also being felt. Indeed, Russia maintains privileged relations with Cuba and Venezuela, while another part of the region is under the direct influence of the United States.

7.2.3. Blue tourism and climate change

Human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels. Global warming is likely to reach +1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if the increase continues at the current rate.²²⁷ This increase in temperature causes wide-ranging consequences for tourism destinations. Climate change risk is a current key concern globally. The urgency of climate action is evident.

Catastrophic flooding events such as those experienced in 2022 in Pakistan, or in Germany and Belgium, or recent wildfires that threatened tourists and locals in Australia, France, Greece, Portugal, and the United States, are pertinent

216 Parks (2021). *Special Issue on COVID-19 and Protected and Conserved Areas.*

217 UNWTO, (2020). *2020, the worst year in tourism history with 1 billion fewer international arrivals.*

218 WTTC, (2021). *Economic Impact Reports.*

219 Lamers, M., Student, J., (2021). *Learning from COVID-19? An environmental mobilities and flows perspective on dynamic vulnerabilities in coastal tourism settings.* *Maritime Studies* 20, 475–486.

220 UNWTO, (2022). *Data collection on international tourist arrivals 2019-2021.*

221 OECD, (2020). *Tourism Policy Responses to Coronavirus (Covid-19)*

222 Calgaro, E., Lloyd, K. and Dominey-Howes, D., (2014). *From vulnerability to transformation: A framework for assessing the vulnerability and resilience of tourism destinations.* *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 22 (3): 341–360.

223 Ocean Panel - High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, (2020). *Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy: A Vision for Protection, Production and Prosperity.*

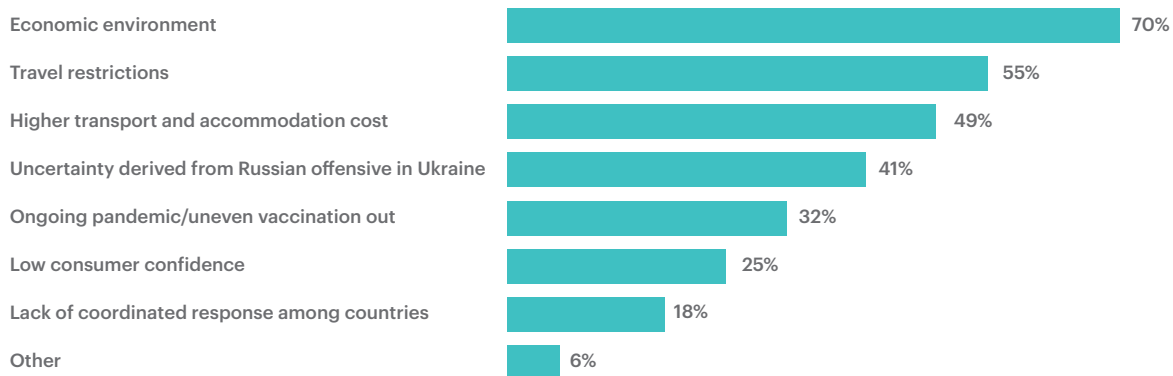
224 UNWTO, (2022). *Impact of the Russian offensive in Ukraine on international tourism.*

225 UNWTO, 2022. *International Tourism Consolidates Strong Recovery Amidst Growing Challenges*

226 SER of Nairobi and SE of AEOI, 2022. *AEOI Economic Letter - Tourism in AEOI*

227 IPCC, (2018): *Summary for Policymakers.* In: *Global warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty.*

Figure 20. Main factors weighing on the COVID-19 recovery of international tourism



Source: UNWTO, 01/08/2022

Figure 21. Overall Assessment of the impacts on tourism of the Russian offensive



Source: UNWTO, 2022. *Impact of the Russian offensive in Ukraine on international tourism.*

examples that highlight the high vulnerability of tourism to climate change.

Tourism is one of the most vulnerable economic sectors to climate variability as it is extremely dependent and sensitive to climate and weather factors. Tourism is particularly sensitive to socio-economic and environmental impacts caused by climate change,²²⁸ while also being one of the sectors that most contributes to climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.²²⁹

The impact of climate change varies according to the territorial elements and climatic requirements. All tourist destinations will be affected, but coastal and island destinations are the most vulnerable to risks as these fragile ecosystems are highly exposed to both tourism impacts and to severe climate change impacts.

Coastal erosion, for example, is already evident on many coastlines, such as in the south Mediterranean.²³⁰ Lack of water, coastal erosion, and rising sea levels are just some of the challenges that climate change poses to tourism operators and other stakeholders on sea and ocean coasts.

The most worrying impacts of climate change on the tourism sector in the medium (2030) and long term (2050) are:

- Direct impacts: decline in visitors and increase in direct costs due to high climate instability that discourages visitors, particularly international ones.
- Indirect impacts: decrease of destination attractiveness due to local biodiversity loss, as well as the deterioration of essential local infrastructure (transport, hospitality, etc.) due to flood pressure.²³¹

228 Scott, D., Gössling, S., & Hall, C. M. (2012). *International tourism and climate change*. WIREs Climate Change, 3(3), 213–232.

229 Peeters, P., Papp, B., (2023). *Envisioning Tourism in 2030 and Beyond*. The changing shape of tourism in a decarbonising world.

230 UfM, (2018). *Climate change impact on the tourism sector in the southern Mediterranean*. Foreseen developments and policy measures.

231 Fosse J., & all., (2021). *Ecosystem Approach for a sustainable coastal and maritime Tourism in the Mediterranean*. Edited by Eco-union.

Climate-induced changes are expected to alter the geographical and seasonal distribution of global tourism demand,²³² thereby significantly impacting destination competitiveness and economic growth possibilities, putting the livelihoods of many at risk. Figure 22 shows the risks, exposure, sensitivity, and impacts of climate change on coastal tourism. **Figure 22**

Tourism demand is sensitive to negative economic, environmental, and social impacts, which means that tourism-dependent businesses, communities, and livelihoods are increasingly vulnerable to the threat of climate change. In this context, the travel and tourism sector must intensify its efforts to fight climate change by exploring all possible pathways towards net zero, with strong and tangible commitments and actions that accelerate change both within and beyond the sector's boundaries.²³³ The map in Figure 23 exposes the Global climate change risk for tourism, which is particularly high in developing countries. **Figure 23.**

There needs to be stronger integration of policies for tourism and climate change. Tourism policies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (mitigation) and to prepare for climate change (adaptation) are still limited, especially regarding transportation, which contributes significantly to CO₂ emissions. To avoid the devastating consequences of climate change, global emissions must be halved by 2030 and net zero must be attained by 2050.²³⁴ Current joint efforts in travel and tourism include the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative and the **Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism** (2020).²³⁵

According to UNWTO, CO₂ emissions from tourism grew by at least 60% during the period 2005-16, with transport-related emissions from tourism representing 5% of global emissions in 2016, while CO₂ emissions could rise by a further 25% or more by 2030.²³⁶ Some countries have recently launched decarbonization policies, but they are insufficient to reach sustainable transportation.

There is a growing recognition in the tourism sector of the urgency of climate risks and the need to accelerate action. **Signatories to the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism** commit to taking action to reduce emissions by 50% by 2030, and to reach net zero as soon as possible before 2050. In 2021, the WTTC together with the UNEP put forward a net zero roadmap for travel and tourism businesses,²³⁷ while the World Economic Forum's **Clean Skies for Tomorrow coalition**²³⁸ aims to ensure that sustainable aviation fuel will account for 10% of global aviation fuel by 2030.

Programmes like the UN **One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme** within the **10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns**²³⁹ are also helping to drive action on this important agenda. Linked with the EU Green Deal, the European Commission's *Transition*

Pathway for Tourism includes a focus on the transition to greener business models, including sustainable mobility and integrated circularity for tourism services.²⁴⁰

Climate resilience needs to consider the whole value chain, with the links between tourism and primary industries such as agriculture and forestry being particularly important. Fostering links between tourism and other (direct/indirect) sectors can build resilience. Building resilience in destinations is a fundamental strategy, especially for coastal and marine regions that are particularly exposed to risks, being highly dependent on a healthy tourism sector.

7.3. Blue tourism and biodiversity

Blue tourism relies on the biodiversity and ecosystems services of the ocean and coastal areas. Biodiversity refers to the variety of life in a particular ecosystem, and the ocean is home to a wide variety of plant and animal species. In a context where biodiversity and ecosystem services²⁴¹ are undergoing rapid decline, and considering the interdependence between the climate and biodiversity crisis²⁴², a healthy relationship between nature and tourism is needed.

Blue tourism can have both positive and negative impacts on biodiversity. Tourism benefits coastal communities economically as well as by raising awareness about protecting marine life and habitats. Meanwhile, tourism can also degrade natural resources, pollute the ocean, and disturb marine life due to overuse and degradation.

A variety of negative impacts can be caused by unsuitable and poorly managed tourism, such as mass tourism, inappropriate infrastructure development, and overtourism, including biodiversity loss, landscape destruction, and resource degradation.²⁴³ For example, in the absence of proper management, activities such as snorkelling, diving, and boating can disturb coral reefs and other sensitive marine habitats, resulting in harm to marine life; while waste, and pollution can degrade ocean quality. To minimize the negative impacts of blue tourism and to enhance the positive impacts, it is important to implement sustainable tourism practices and management strategies that take into account the conservation of marine life and habitats. This includes measures such as limiting the number of visitors to sensitive areas, promoting responsible behaviour among tourists, and properly managing waste and pollution.

To conserve biodiversity and enhance community resilience, it is essential to strengthen the role of sustainable tourism. It is important to implement nature-based tourism strategies and benefit-sharing programmes effectively as part of community recovery projects in order to build a more sustainable future for people and wildlife, while strengthening

232 Scott, D., & Gössling, S., (2022b). *A review of research into tourism and climate change— Launching the annals of tourism research curated collection on tourism and climate change*. Annals of Tourism Research, 95.

233 WTTC, (2021). *Economic Impact Reports*.

234 Peeters, P., Papp, B., (2023). *Envisioning Tourism in 2030 and Beyond*. The changing shape of tourism in a decarbonising world. The Travel Foundation.

235 WTTC, (2021). *Economic Impact Reports*.

236 UNWTO, (2019). *Transforming Tourism for Climate Action*.

237 WTTC, (2021). *Economic Impact Reports*.

238 *Clean Skies for Tomorrow coalition*

239 UNDESA, Division for Sustainable Development, (2014). *The 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns* (10YFP).







240 European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, (2022). *Transition Pathway for Tourism*.

241 IPBES, (2019). *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* (Version 1). Zenodo.

242 Pörtner, H.O., et al., (2021). *IPBES-IPCC co-sponsored workshop report on biodiversity and climate change*; IPBES and IPCC.

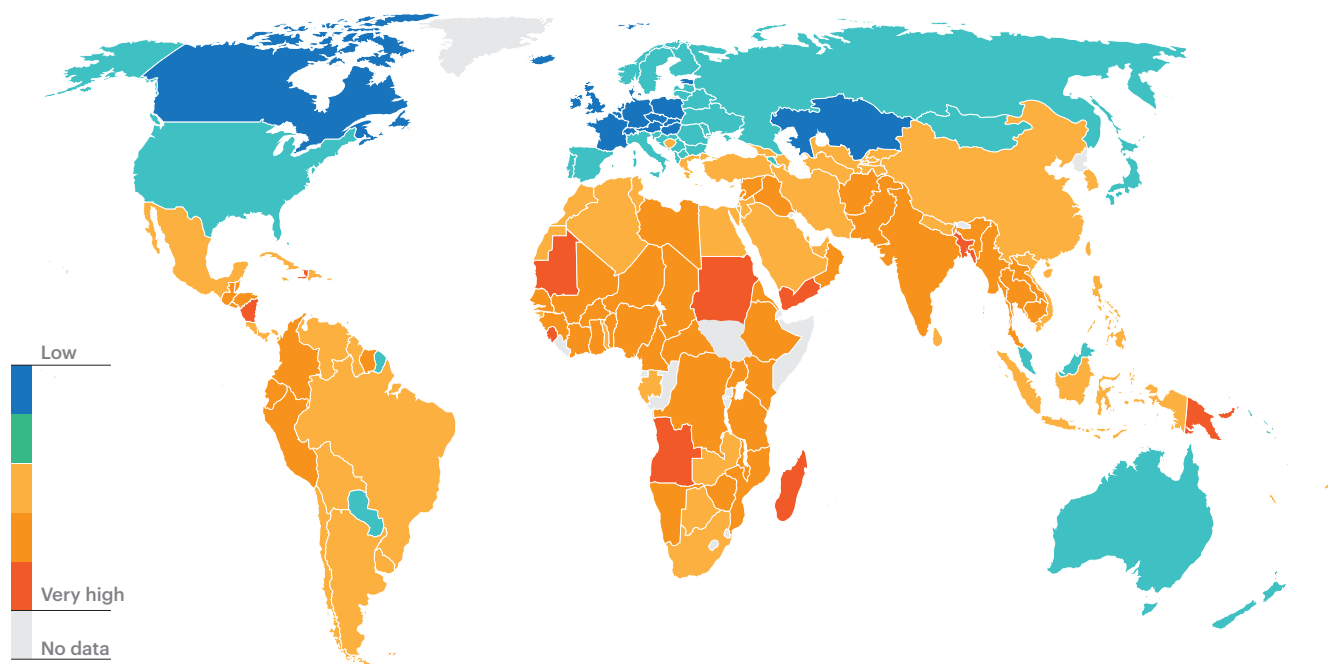
243 Leung, Y., Spenceley, A., Hvenegaard, G. and Buckley, R., (2018). *Tourism and visitor management in protected areas: Guidelines for sustainability*. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 27, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xii + 120 pp.

Figure 22. Risks, exposures, Sensivity and impacts of Climate Change on caostal tourism

Climate factor	Exposure	Sensivity	Impact
High temperature			
 <p>Increase and frequency of heat events</p>	High temperatures	Sun and beach tourism requires “comfortable” weather	Increase in deaths and hospitalizations decline in summer tourism reduction; increase in energy and water consumption
Droughts			
 <p>Increase and prolongation of droughts during the summer</p>	Water scarcity	Many coastal destinations have a high water footprint due to their tourism model (residential, hotel sector, golf)	The reduction of rainfall and increase in temperature limits the amount of available water in water reserves, increase generation cost and water use conflicts
Rising sea levels			
 <p>The sea level rise is estimated between 18 and 70 centimeters on the Mediterranean coast</p>	Reduction of beach width, water pollution, public security, and tourism infra-structure disruption	High sun and beach tourism specialization	Increase erosion and the disappearance of coastal ecosystems, leading to the lost and modification of tourist resources. Damage to tourism infrastructure
Flooding			
 <p>Increase frequency of heavy rain increases the number of floods</p>	Public security and tourism infrastructure disruption	Coastal destinations are vulnerable to flooding, due to land use change and soil artificialization	The increase in floods exposes the population and tourism to health impacts
Forest fires			
 <p>Warm weather conditions, reduced rainfall and extreme wind episodes increase the risk of forest fires</p>	Public security: landscape degradation and biodiversity loss	High risk of fires in coastal destinations, especially in the Mediterranean, with a high density of tourist urbanisation scattered throughout the territory.	Forest fires cause deaths and hospitalisations; generate high public healthcare costs. Land degradation and biodiversity loss lead to a loss of attractiveness, a limitation in recreational use and a high cost of environmental recovery.
Biodiversity disruption			
 <p>The increase in temperatures, sea level, changes in ocean circulation and decrease in salinity are causes of ecological imbalance</p>	Invasives species, tropical diseases; degradation of natural heritage	Strong tourism seasonality (more pronounced in summer) and high “sun-and beach” tourism specialisation	Loss of biodiversity and the introduction of invasive species; new risks of contracting tropical deseases and decrease in the attractiveness of beaches (jellyfish)

Source: Eco-union, 2019. (2019) Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions

Figure 23. Global climate risk for tourism



Source: European Travel Commission, 2018. *Climate change risk*.

resilience to future adverse events.²⁴⁴ It is indeed important to consider the role that protected areas play within tourism and biodiversity conservation. National parks, nature reserves and marine protected areas often attract visitors for their natural beauty and wildlife, and at the same time support conservation efforts.

Many protected areas rely on tourism revenue to fund their operations and conservation programmes. Tourism in protected areas can generate a source of income for local communities, while also having negative impacts if this tourism is not managed sustainably. Some of these negative impacts, which have also been mentioned above, include overcrowding, pollution, and damage to sensitive habitats and wildlife, all of which can result from uncontrolled tourism. For this reason, it is important to balance the economic benefits of tourism with the need to protect the environment and wildlife. For example, to promote sustainable tourism in protected areas, it is important to develop tourism policies and management plans that take into account the needs of local communities, visitors, and the environment. This may involve limiting visitor numbers²⁴⁵, establishing designated trails and campsites, and educating visitors about responsible behaviour. In this vein, the IUCN is categorizing inland protected areas and land use to protect ecosystems and promote the sustainable use of the natural resources.²⁴⁶

7.3.1. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

The IUCN defines Protected Areas (PAs) as, “a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”.²⁴⁷ Also, IUCN defines Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as “areas of the ocean set aside for long-term conservation aims.” MPAs are the only mainstream conservation-focused, area-based measure to increase the quality and extent of ocean protection. MPAs and their network offer nature-based solution to support global efforts towards climate change adaptation and mitigation, while providing other ecosystem services. Currently 6.35% of the ocean is protected, but only just over 1.89% is covered by exclusively no-take MPAs.²⁴⁸ They are universally recognized as key tools for the conservation and management of marine species, habitats and ecosystems.²⁴⁹

The Convention on Biological Diversity (1998) is a work programme for marine and coastal biodiversity, an important component of which is the establishment and maintenance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Its mandate was reinforced in 2002 when the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) set the target of establishing a global network of MCPAs by 2012. The CBD’s goal is the establishment and maintenance of MPAs that are effectively managed, ecologically based, and part of a global MPA network. The CBD defines MPAs as any defined area within or adjacent to the

244 IUCN WCPA (2021). *PARKS*. The International Journal of Protected Areas and Conservation, Volume 27 (Special Issue), Gland, Switzerland.

245 Liabastre, T., Leung, L. and Rieder, L. (2022). *Carrying Capacity Assessment for Tourism in Coron and El Nido: A Step toward Sustainable Management of Marine Ecosystems*.

246 IUCN, *Protected areas and land use*.

247 OECD, (2017). *Marine Protected Areas: Economics, Management and Effective Policy Mixes*.

248 IUCN (2017). *Marine Protected Areas and Climate Change*. Issues Brief, November 2017.

249 UNTWO, (2013). *Marine and coastal protected areas*.

marine environment, together with its overlying waters and associated flora, fauna and historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by legislation or other effective means, including custom, with the effect that its marine and/or coastal biodiversity enjoys a higher level of protection than its surroundings.²⁵⁰ They are delineated into zones to preserve resources, biodiversity or specific species. Some activities are prohibited and MPAs usually use surveillance and monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are distinguished by different levels of protection:

- Multiple use: Allows extractive uses (like fishing) with some restrictions.
- No-take or marine reserves: that allow people to use the area but prohibit extraction or any destruction to it.
- No impact: MPAs that allow people to use the area but where extraction, disposal of possible pollutants, the installation of materials, and disruption to the environment of any kind is not permitted. These types of MPAs are rare; sometimes only occurring in research zones.
- No access: MPAs that restrict all access to the area. Also very rare and may only be used for research purposes.²⁵¹

Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are a new conservation approach, separate from protected areas, where conservation is achieved mainly as a by-product of other management. The IUCN defines an OECM as a “geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values”.²⁵² The identification of OECMs is important to increase recognition and support for effective long-term conservation that is taking place outside currently designated PAs under a range of governance and management regimes, implemented by different actors, including indigenous peoples and local communities, the private sector and government agencies.²⁵³

According to the CDB, in 2017 MPAs covered about 4.12% of the total marine environment.²⁵⁴ In this context, the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the 23 action-oriented global targets were established for urgent action over the decade to 2030. The actions will ensure that by 2030 at least 30% of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration, and at least the 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas, are effectively conserved and managed. This is to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity and connectivity, while ensuring that any sustainable use.²⁵⁵

250 OECD, (2017). *Marine Protected Areas: Economics, Management and Effective Policy Mixes*.

251 Ocean Tracks, *Types and design of marine protected areas*.

252 IUCN, (2018). *What is an OECM?*

253 IUCN, (2018). *What is an OECM?*

254 OECD, (2017). *Marine Protected Areas: Economics, Management and Effective Policy Mixes*.

255 UNEP, (2022). *CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY*. Fifteenth meeting – Part II Montreal, Canada.

7.3.2. Tourism management in Marine Protected Areas

Marine protected areas (MPAs) can also play an important role in tourism by providing opportunities for visitors to experience and appreciate marine biodiversity in a sustainable manner. MPAs also contribute to:

- Ecotourism: Many MPAs are popular tourist destinations because of their unique marine ecosystems and the opportunities they offer to observe marine wildlife. By promoting responsible ecotourism activities, MPAs can provide visitors with a memorable experience while also supporting local communities.
- Education and interpretation: MPAs can provide opportunities for visitors to learn about marine conservation and the importance of protecting marine ecosystems. Interpretive centres, signage, and guided tours can help visitors understand the ecological and cultural significance of the area.
- Research and monitoring: MPAs can serve as research sites for scientists and students to study marine ecosystems, providing opportunities for science-based tourism.
- Economic benefits to local communities through tourism-related businesses such as lodging, food service, and transportation.²⁵⁶

A key aspect of MPAs is the restrictions imposed on tourist numbers, which minimizes visitor pressure.²⁵⁷ A fundamental aim is to reduce negative environmental externalities without harming local economies. The three complementary scientific frameworks social-ecological systems, impact evaluation, and common-pool resource governance are applied to estimate the environmental and socio-economic impacts of several conservation interventions such as MPAs. This impact evaluation of governance shows that MPAs have a positive impact on ecological dynamics and on ecosystems in general.²⁵⁸ MPAs also influence, directly and indirectly, the well-being of human populations through multiple channels. For example, introducing new systems of marine resource governance into MPAs can enhanced or reshape marine ecosystem services such as provisioning services (fisheries), infrastructure, and cultural services (tourism) as well as supporting services.²⁵⁹

The effective planning and management of tourism in and around marine, protected and conserved areas is central to ensuring best-practice governance, and conservation outcomes for the natural world. Sustainable and nature-based tourism can provide important conservation benefits but also economic benefits through revenue generation and the creation of employment opportunities that involve local communities.²⁶⁰ Moreover, MPAs allow an improved distribution

256 Thanh Pham, T.T. (2020). *Tourism in marine protected areas: Can it be considered as an alternative livelihood for local communities?* Marine Policy. Volume 115, May 2020, 103891

257 Fosse J., Klarwein S., Kosmas I. & Gonzalez A. (2021). *Ecosystem Approach for a sustainable coastal and maritime Tourism in the Mediterranean*. eco-union.

258 Mascia, M.B., Fox, H.E., Glew, L., et al. (2017). *A novel framework for analyzing conservation impacts: evaluation, theory, and marine protected areas*. Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci., 1399: 93-115.

259 Mascia, M.B., Fox, H.E., Glew, L., Ahmadi, G.N., Agrawal, A., Barnes, M., Basurto, X., Craigie, I., Darling, E., Geldmann, J., Gill, D., Holst Rice, S., Jensen, O.P., Lester, S.E., McConney, P., Mumby, P.J., Nenadovic, M., Parks, J.E., Pomeroy, R.S. and White, A.T. (2017). *A novel framework for analyzing conservation impacts: evaluation, theory, and marine protected areas*. Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci., 1399: 93-115.

260 Leung Y, Spenceley A, Hvenegaard G and Buckley R (eds.) (2018). *Tourism and visitor management in protected areas: Guidelines for sustainability*. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 27, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xii + 120 pp.

of resources within local communities while reallocating the benefits of ecosystem services. To understand the spillover effects of tourism in MPAs from the ecological perspective, it is important to study the shift in the behaviour of tourists in MPAs and also in the peripheral areas, where recreational activities such as fishing or swimming are permitted.²⁶¹

The social impacts of MPAs can be measured using different frameworks and indicators such as the UN Human Development Index or SDGs. MPAs have ripple effects in space, time, and in terms of outcomes. The MPA concept implies the protection of particular areas, leaving surrounding areas exposed to the negative impacts of tourism.²⁶² Therefore, the establishment of MPAs increases the potential environmental impacts in these adjacent areas. By making certain activities illegal within MPAs and other tourist destinations, cruise ships and their passengers tend to refrain from these activities only when they reach these destinations, while continuing to contaminate and pollute nearby regions.²⁶³

7.4. Blue tourism and sustainable development

In 2019, the tourism sector was one of the most dynamic economic sectors. According to the WTTC (2021), the sector accounted for 10.3% of global GDP in 2019, supporting 330 million people, and grew to outpace the global economy for the ninth year consecutively. Tourism creates jobs: one in four jobs created worldwide during the past five years has been in the tourism sector. It also generates career opportunities for women, young people, and minorities. Women represent 54% of the industry's workforce, compared to 39% in the world economy, and the sector employs almost twice as many young people as other economic sectors.²⁶⁴

The UNWTO defines "Sustainable tourism²⁶⁵ as tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities." It can be a tool to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity, promote respect towards the socio-cultural authenticity of local communities, conserve the cultural heritage and traditional values of those communities, and contribute to intercultural understanding and tolerance. It should ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders.²⁶⁶ Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process, and it requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, together with constant monitoring of impacts. It should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction

and ensure a meaningful experience for the tourists, raising their awareness and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

According to the 2030 Agenda, the relationship between sustainable development and tourism can play a key role in a more sustainable future. Tourism is a significant source of GHG emissions (aviation, cruises, accommodation), and its governance has substantial implications for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. It is critical to assess how tourism governance can contribute to reaching both the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement. As highlighted by the UNWTO,²⁶⁷ tourism has a great potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to all of the SDGs (Figure 24). In particular, tourism has been incorporated as a target in:

Goal 8. Promote sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. Target 8.9: By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Target 12.b: Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture.

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development. Target 14.7: By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing states and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism.

Figure 24. Contribution of Tourism to SDGs



Source: Agenda 2030. UNWTO, (2015). *Tourism in the 2030 Agenda*.

Figure 24. presents the indirect contributions that tourism also offers to the other SDGs. For example, the tourism economy can bring many benefits such as improving health and well-being through infrastructure construction to provide clean water or to promote clean energy usage.

The Ocean Panel (Figure 25) shows the contribution of sustainable coastal and marine tourism to the SDGs, and towards the "Opportunities for transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy: A Vision for Protection, Production and Prosperity" action plan.

261 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O. (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

262 Mascia, M.B., Fox, H.E., Glew, L., Ahmadi, G.N., Agrawal, A., Barnes, M., Basurto, X., Craigie, I., Darling, E., Geldmann, J., Gill, D., Holst Rice, S., Jensen, O.P., Lester, S.E., McConney, P., Mumby, P.J., Nenadovic, M., Parks, J.E., Pomeroy, R.S. and White, A.T. (2017), *A novel framework for analyzing conservation impacts: evaluation, theory, and marine protected areas*. *Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci.*, 1399: 93-115.

263 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O. (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

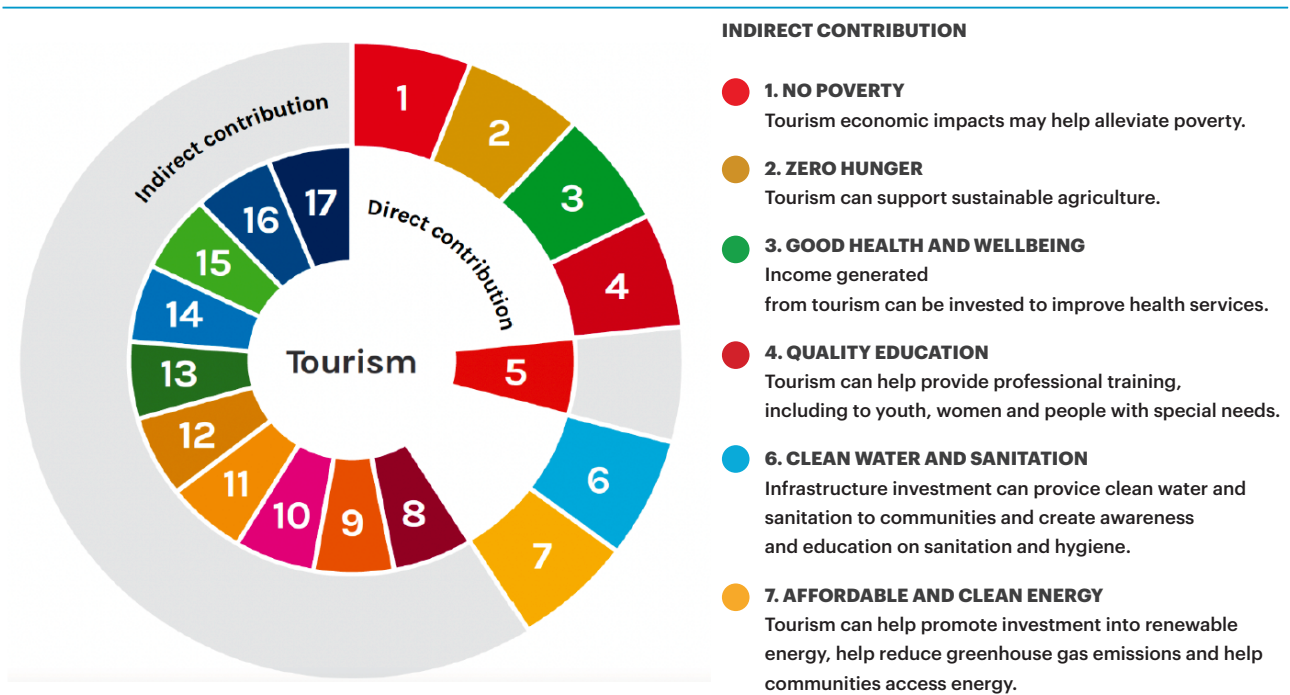
264 WTTC, (2021). *Travel & Tourism: Economic Impact Report*.

265 UN, (2016). *General assembly resolution 70/193, 2017*

266 UNEP & UNWTO, (2005) *Making Tourism More Sustainable - A Guide for Policy Makers*, p.11-12

267 UNWTO, (2015). *Tourism in the 2030 Agenda*.

Figure 25. Direct and indirect tourism’s contribution to the SDG



Source: Ocean Panel, (2020). *High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy*.

8. Challenges, opportunities and pathways to more sustainable blue tourism

This chapter examines the challenges and opportunities for fostering greater sustainability in the blue tourism sector. Finally it offers an overview on the suggested pathways emerging from this report.

8.1. Challenges

Coastal and marine regions face a number of similar challenges to fostering a more sustainable blue tourism model. Many of these challenges have become more pronounced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In broader terms, coastal areas are increasingly seeking higher ability to cope with the potential future shocks, but the tourism sector in these areas is often finding it difficult to adapt to the biodiversity and climate crises due to limitations in terms of infrastructure and resources, and also due to high seasonality which leads to unmanageable tourist peaks.²⁶⁸ Also, climate change is having a major impact on coastal areas - particularly small islands – as

are socio-economic shocks such as those triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, often due to an over-reliance on main-land-derived resources and global supply chains.

Thus, a key challenge for coastal and maritime destinations relates to their often limited capacity to adapt to climate change and socio-economic events. From a strategic perspective, some examples of the challenges faced by coastal and marine regions as they attempt to become more sustainable, include:

- Lack of cohesion and integration in tourism policies at the different levels (international, national, regional and destination levels). This can have several negative impacts on the sustainable development of tourism, leading to conflicting policies and strategies, which can create uncertainties among tourism sector stakeholders.²⁶⁹ In blue tourism, this can be an issue when environmental conservation and tourism policies are not aligned, sending contradictory messages and promoting fragmented interventions in coastal and marine destinations.²⁷⁰
- Lack of medium and long-term vision and commitment from stakeholders, especially in terms of their engagement in joint efforts to develop sustainable coastal and marine tourism.²⁷¹ This can have significant impacts on the development of sustainable blue tourism. Without a long-term vi-

269 Dodds, R. Butler, R., (2010).

270 Nitivattananon, V., & Srinonil, S., (2019). *Enhancing coastal areas governance for sustainable tourism in the context of urbanization and climate change in eastern Thailand*. *Advances in Climate Change Research*, 10(1), 47-58.

271 Dodds, R. Butler, R., (2010). *Barriers to implementing Sustainable Tourism Policy in Mass Tourism Destinations*

268 Guden, N., Unal Girgen, M., Saner, T., & Yesilpinar, E., (2021). *Barriers to sustainable tourism for small hotels in small island developing states and some suggested remedies*. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 13(4), 510-521.

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sion, stakeholders may prioritize short-term gains over long term sustainability. In blue tourism, this could potentially lead to the overexploitation of marine resources, to impacts on local coastal communities, and to a decrease in the quality of the tourism experience.

- Inefficient resource use, especially when resources are primarily allocated to marketing rather than sustainable product development and management. This can lead to a lack of investment in measures that promote environmental sustainability and responsible tourism practices in coastal and marine destinations.
- Lack of structures to enable collaboration between businesses, governments and other stakeholders. Such collaboration is necessary to conceive, adopt and manage sustainable tourism practices. An insufficiency of these structures, both multilevel and multisectoral, reduces the opportunities for knowledge sharing and innovation for a more sustainable tourism economy. In blue tourism destinations, the formation and management of these collaborative structures may be challenged by fragmented geographies and multiple jurisdictions.^{272 273}
- A governance gap challenges the development of a more sustainable blue economy. While national and local governments are usually the main actors of coastal and maritime tourism management, new actors are becoming increasingly relevant with the scaling up of recreational activities, residential tourism and the rise of the sharing economy (e.g. renting of private homes). This complicates and limits governance mechanisms and requires a shift in governance frameworks towards the increased inclusion of these new actors²⁷⁴.

Blue tourism businesses often face direct challenges to the adoption of more sustainable practices. Some examples of these challenges include:

- A limited awareness and understanding among tourism stakeholders of sustainable practices and their benefits. Improvements in this area could increase the motivation of entrepreneurs to adopt sustainable initiatives.²⁷⁵
- The high costs faced by tourism businesses seeking to implement sustainable practices.²⁷⁶ For example, installing renewable energy sources or upgrading facilities to be more environmentally friendly can often be expensive, and many small businesses may not have the resources for such investments. These costs, or even accessibility to loans to fund the sustainability transition, may be even more challenging in coastal and marine destinations characterized by high seasonality. Moreover, islands, which play a major role in blue tourism, often have limited access to economies of

scale and to relevant expertise.²⁷⁷

- The limited financial incentives and options available for accessing funding that could encourage and support tourism businesses to adopt sustainable practices and also to mitigate the potential negative effects of seasonality on their financial capabilities. Without such incentives, many businesses will not realize the value of investing in changes to their operations, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic has already raised the financial concerns of tourism businesses. In coastal and marine regions, financial mechanisms should be adapted to seasonality and the needs of SMEs.
- The limited access of tourism entrepreneurs to information, resources and technical expertise on sustainable solutions tailored to their context, leading to their reluctance to adopt sustainable practices. Without access to information and resources, entrepreneurs may not understand which solutions can be adopted, how they should be implemented and the short and long-term benefits that would be generated by these solutions.²⁷⁸ In some of the more peripheral blue tourism destinations, access to innovation and expertise may be challenged by their geographies,²⁷⁹ for example there may be an absence or lack of digital technologies.²⁸⁰

8.2. Opportunities

The strategic recovery plans that have followed the COVID-19 pandemic have provided an opportunity to integrate elements of sustainability for the future of the tourism sector in line with climate change, such as reducing carbon emissions and pollution, enhancing energy and resource efficiency, and preserving biodiversity and ecosystems. By promoting more sustainable business models - with the support of tourism policies and recovery measures²⁸¹ - tourism-derived benefits to local economies and communities could be enhanced. This is particularly relevant for CMT which represents at least 50% of all global tourism and supports millions of jobs and livelihoods worldwide.²⁸² Several opportunities are available for coastal and marine tourism to foster a more sustainable blue tourism sector. Examples include:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity to redesign policy approaches and develop tourism-specific programmes aiming to build resilience and sustainability, providing new high-quality economic opportunities for local communities, promoting their cultural heritage and protecting the natural environment;²⁸³

272 Mauthoor, S., (2017). *Uncovering industrial symbiosis potentials in a small island developing state: The case study of Mauritius*. Journal of Cleaner Production, 147, 506-513.

273 Tapia, C., Bianchi, M., Pallaske, G., & Bassi, A. M., (2021). *Towards a territorial definition of a circular economy: exploring the role of territorial factors in closed-loop systems*. European Planning Studies, 29(8), 1438-1457.

274 Tonazzini, D., Fosse, J., Morales, E., González, A., Klarwein, S., Moukaddem, K., Louveau, O. (2019) *Blue Tourism. Towards a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in world marine regions*. Edited by eco-union. Barcelona.

275 Font, X., Garay, L., & Jones, S., (2016). *Sustainability motivations and practices in small tourism enterprises in European protected areas*. Journal of Cleaner production, 137, 1439-1448.

276 Martínez-Cabrera, J., & López-del-Pino, F., (2021). *The 10 most crucial circular economy challenge patterns in tourism and the effects of COVID-19*. Sustainability, 13(9), 4940.

277 Epsom (2022). *Islands and Insularity*.

278 Sardanou, E., Kostakis, I., Mitoula, R., Gkaragkani, V., Lalioti, E., & Theodoropoulou, E., (2016). *Understanding the entrepreneurs' behavioural intentions towards sustainable tourism: A case study from Greece*. Environment, Development and Sustainability, 18, 857-879.

279 Tapia, C., Bianchi, M., Pallaske, G., & Bassi, A. M., (2021). *Towards a territorial definition of a circular economy: exploring the role of territorial factors in closed-loop systems*. European Planning Studies, 29(8), 1438-1457.

280 De la Campa, S. A., (2022). *The Role of the Internet in the Development of Island Communities*.

281 OECD, (2022). *Tourism Trends and Policies, Executive Summary*

282 Ocean Panel - High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, (2020). *Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy: A Vision for Protection, Production and Prosperity*.

283 Indar, L., Kissoondan, S., Daniel, K., Williams, R., & Mohammed, F., (2022). *Improving Resilience and Recovery to the Travel and Tourism Industry in the Caribbean*. Open Journal of Applied Sciences, 12(8), 1439-1467.

- Tourists are increasingly becoming agents of change in the locations they visit, due to their desire for more sustainable local products and destinations. Such changes in tourist preferences have also been shown in blue tourism destinations and should increasingly inform policy making;²⁸⁴
- Greater government and private sector cooperation can foster cross-sectoral interactions and integration, together with governance innovations to address future policy challenges, all of which can be promoted, facilitated and monitored with emerging digital tools;²⁸⁵
- Growing recognition of the necessity of incorporating environmental sustainability and climate action into economic development, across sectors (including tourism) both by government policymakers and technocrats as well as in the private sector. This phenomenon is demonstrated by recent international and national initiatives, such as [UN One Planet Initiative](#), and [The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism](#).
- Longer-stay visitors, including the growing digital nomad market,²⁸⁶ with the appropriate regulatory framework, can be an opportunity to generate more stable economic benefits for coastal and marine communities;²⁸⁷
- A better understanding of tourist volumes²⁸⁸ and preferences²⁸⁹ in coastal and marine areas and how their distribution is changing due to climate change - with an extension of season length²⁹⁰ - would generate more opportunities to invest in the required infrastructure and in mechanisms to manage destinations sustainably;²⁹¹
- The rapid growth of specific blue tourism markets, in terms of demands for sustainability (market demand driving change), such as coastal cultural tourism,^{292,293} heritage-based tourism, gastronomic events, and yachting, boating and cruising, together with ecotourism²⁹⁴ and marine nature-based tourism, can help diversify and reduce seasonality in coastal and marine destinations,²⁹⁵ and create more stable tourist flows that exert less pressure. “Pescaturism”²⁹⁶ is another growing form of marine tourism, which has the potential to reduce more extractive fishing activities;
- Growing knowledge of innovative green and social business models and the application of the circular economy²⁹⁷ are relevant to tourism and may enable the reshaping of the sector’s policies and practices to enhance capacity building, and to develop a more digital, sustainable, resilient and inclusive sector.
- Digitalization of the sector driven by an increasing availability of more affordable technology can and is already supporting sustainable business practices and a more sustainable tourism management model.²⁹⁸
- Increasing collaboration among different stakeholders in small island countries, which is driven by the smallness of their communities and often by their peripherality, tends to stimulate collective actions to sustainable development. Good examples of strong collaboration for the development of common strategies, policies and plans can be found in the Caribbean (e.g. the OECS region)²⁹⁹, and also from small island destinations located in the Western Indian Ocean.
- New governance models focused on co-management by for-profit and non-profit entities are increasing in number, for example for the management of MPAs and to ensure ecosystem stewardship.³⁰⁰ The co-management of protected areas addresses biological, cultural, economic, and political concerns and empowers communities through collaboration and integration in conservation efforts. It provides flexibility for adaptive practices to address underlying socioeconomic factors affecting conservation efforts and may compensate for limited or missing scientific data.³⁰¹ Other examples of innovative governance from civil society organization are exemplified by the Chumbe Island Coral Park (CHICOP), the first fully functioning MPA in Tanzania, which illustrates sustainable management in a privately created and managed marine park in a developing country.³⁰²
- Nature-based solutions may provide an approach to deal with societal challenges while also improving biodiversity, which offer opportunities for destinations and industry to address climate mitigation and adaptation. This concept is gaining policy attention and can provide a framework for action.
- Spatial planning tools and approaches, such as Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), can help tackle management issues related to the use of oceans and seas, allowing a better allocation of coastal zones economic and leisure activities to avoid conflicts and create synergies among sectors. MSP is increasingly being used to organize and plan coastal and marine tourism activities through spatial regulations to ensure good environmental conditions that can enable

284 Grilli, G., Tyllianakis, E., Luisetti, T., Ferrini, S., & Turner, R. K., (2021).

[Prospective tourist preferences for sustainable tourism development in Small Island Developing States](#). *Tourism Management*, 82, 104178.

285 Kalbaska, N., Janowski, T., Estevez, E., & Cantoni, L., (2017). [When digital government matters for tourism: a stakeholder analysis](#). *Information Technology & Tourism*, 17, 315-333.

286 Wigert, N., (2022). [The Future of Hybrid Work: 5 Key Questions Answered With Data](#)

287 Tagliaferri, C., (2021). [One Year Barbados: Digital Nomads Are A Golden Goose For The Tourism Industry](#)

288 Sridhar, R., Yuvaraj, E., Sachithanandam, V., Mageswaran, T., Purvaja, R., & Ramesh, R., (2016). [Tourism carrying capacity for beaches of South Andaman Island, India](#). *Tourism-From Empirical Research Towards Practical Application*, 61-81.

289 Zhang, Y., Song, J., Sciaccia, A., Chan, J., & Qi, X., (2022). [Novel sentiment lexica derived from user generating content by Chinese tourists in Pacific islands](#). *Sustainability*, 14(23), 15833.

290 Gongmei Yu, et al., (2009). [Effects of Climate Change on the Seasonality of Weather for Tourism in Alaska](#). *Arctic*. Vol. 62, N. 4, P. 443-457.3

291 Bas Amelung, et al., (2007). [Implications of Global Climate Change for Tourism Flows and Seasonality](#). *Journal of Travel Research* 45(3):285-296.

292 Cuccia, T., & Rizzo, I., (2011). [Tourism seasonality in cultural destinations: Empirical evidence from Sicily](#). *Tourism Management*, 32.

293 Cisneros-Martínez, J. D., & Fernández-Morales, A., (2015). [Cultural tourism as tourist segment for reducing seasonality in a coastal area: the case study of Andalusia](#). *Current Issues in Tourism*, 18(8), 765-784.

294 Himanshu, V. & Roshan, D., (2021). [Ecotourism Market by Traveler Types](#).

295 European Commission, (2017). [Challenges and Opportunities for Maritime and Coastal Tourism in the EU](#).

296 WWF, (2023). [Sustainable Fishing Tourism](#).

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299 CANARI, (2021). [Stakeholder Engagement Strategy for Civil Society and Private Sectors](#).

300 Chantal E., (2020). [Enabling conditions for community-based comanagement of marine protected areas in the United States](#).

301 Granek, E. F., Brown, M. A. (2005). [Co-Management Approach to Marine Conservation in Moh li, Comoros Islands](#). *Conservation Biology* 19(6):1724 - 1732

302 Riedmille, S., (2016). [Chumbe Island Coral Park - A Private Marine Park in Zanzibar \(Tanzania\)](#).

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the tourism industry to prosper in a more sustainable way, protecting seascapes and coastal ecosystems. These tools take climate change mitigation and adaptation plans into account.³⁰³

- Increased international multilateral cooperation among nations, and global and regional development commitments, such as the global 2030 Agenda³⁰⁴ and the Agenda 2063 African development blueprint,³⁰⁵ can provide a framework for a common vision for sustainable blue tourism development.

8.3. Pathways towards sustainable blue tourism

The blue economy is considered to be an engine for economic development, to be managed in line with Sustainable Development Goal 14 which targets the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources.³⁰⁶ As the blue tourism sector is expected to grow,³⁰⁷ destinations must consider the current sustainability challenges, and how they will be affected by and will affect the tourism sector (e.g., climate change, biodiversity loss). Proactive cooperation and collaboration across all tourism stakeholders and beyond is needed to create business models that deliver sustainable tourism experiences enabling the prevention of negative impacts such as resource overconsumption, degradation of natural ecosystems and excessive coastline touristification. Tourism policies must foster these sustainable business models and should be strengthened to protect fragile ecosystems such as those in coastal and marine areas, and prevent pollution and biodiversity loss caused by tourism activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also led to a greater awareness of these issues among tourists, industry and policymakers,³⁰⁸ and therefore an opportunity to reimagine the tourism sector, to fast track more sustainable tourism models through innovative policies, and to ensure recovery plans are aligned with the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.³⁰⁹ Destination stewardship councils and citizen science endeavours can be effective in fostering greater participation of local communities in decision-making and in taking ownership of tourism operations, which can ultimately close the equity gap. To incentivize the transition to a more sustainable blue tourism sector, while regional co-operation and public-private partnerships should be part of the solution, issues around access to information and knowledge must be on the agendas of these partnerships. Moreover, the main challenges to more sustainable models faced by destinations and tourism entrepreneurs should be identified and prioritized, with proposals for the appropriate supporting frameworks.³¹⁰

In an effort to support the development of a more sustainable blue tourism sector, six policy pathways have been suggested. The policy pathways could help catalyse destination-wide systemic change, embracing the importance of governance, cohesion in policies and strategies, a rethinking of production and consumption patterns in tourism, the advancement of smart technologies and digitalization for the sustainability of blue tourism, and enhancing accessibility to finance. These pathways are not exhaustive and reflect the literature reviewed and the input of the partners of the Blue Tourism Initiative projects. They are summarized in Table 7 and then subsequently explained in more detail.

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304 United Nations, (2023). *Transforming our world: the 20230 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

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Policy pathways

POLICY PATHWAY	SUGGESTED ACTIONS
Integrated policies and sound governance	1.1. Promote policy and strategic cohesion
	1.2. Develop a multi-level blue tourism strategy (regional/national/local levels)
	1.3. Strength multi-stakeholders collaboration in decision-making processes
	1.4. Foster community and stakeholder engagement in decision-making
	1.5. Encourage multi-stakeholder networks and partnerships
	1.6. Improve collaboration among marine regions
Sustainable industry practices	2.1. Support sustainable production and consumption
	2.2. Boost certification programmes
	2.3. Promote sustainable product diversification and marketing
	2.4. Support tourism businesses in overcoming barriers to change
Sustainable destination practices	3.1. Reinforce climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience in the tourism sector
	3.2. Promote destination stewardship
	3.3. Support transition communities for sustainable tourism
	3.4. Ensure appropriate visitor management in sensitive areas
	3.5. Endorse nature-based solutions (NBS) and regenerative practices
	3.6. Product diversification and marketing
Smart tourism development	4.1. Develop enabling policies for digital and smart tourism
	4.2. Ensure tools and infrastructure for smart tourism development
	4.3. Data collection and measurement
	4.4. Raise awareness on smart technologies
Research for sustainable blue tourism	5.1. Establish partnerships with universities and other research institutions
	5.2. Implement tools to support market studies
	5.3. Encourage climate change adaptation and mitigation research
	5.4. Boost capacity building activities
Finance for sustainable blue tourism	6.1. Establish and promote financial incentives
	6.2. Identify and create access to alternative financing options
	6.3. Adapt financing mechanisms for small and medium-sized enterprises
	6.4. Create partnerships with financial institutions

Source: Authors' own work, (2023).

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Policy pathway 1 - Integrated policies and sound governance

1.1. Promote policy and strategic cohesion

Policy and strategic cohesion is essential to reduce fragmentation in blue tourism policy frameworks and to ultimately foster a sustainable blue tourism economy.³¹¹ Cohesion should occur at different political, geographical and sectoral levels and with a common vision to contribute to global environmental commitments such as the 2030 Agenda's SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production)³¹², SDG 13 (climate change)³¹³ and SDG 14 (ocean conservation)³¹⁴, and also the Paris Agreement.³¹⁵ The public sector can enhance policy cohesion through stakeholder engagement in decision-making and by facilitating stakeholder communication.³¹⁶

1.2. Strength a multi-level blue tourism strategy (regional/national/local levels)

A blue tourism strategy or a national tourism strategy and/or a strategy for the sea and coast with a blue tourism component, would define and consolidate the strategic and participatory framework for a sustainable blue tourism economy for the region, country and/or destination. Such a strategy would promote a cohesive vision and sustainability targets and objectives, and would require synergies between policies and between tourism and environmental conservation strategies (e.g. marine spatial planning).³¹⁷ The strategy should be regularly revised and updated to respond to new opportunities and challenges.

1.3. Foster multi-agency collaboration in decision-making processes

Fostering collaboration among relevant government agencies would enable more synergies for sustainable blue tourism. Given the interlinked nature of tourism, collaboration among public sector agencies, including those responsible for the environment, economic development, culture, and transportation, is beneficial for more aligned governance and for identifying government priorities and establishing shared pathways.³¹⁸ An example is the NECSTouR initiative that aims to build competitive regional governance for sustainable tourism by involving different public sector regional agencies—among other stakeholders—tackling the economic, environmental and socio-cultural dimensions of the industry, sharing knowledge, best practices, and experiences in the field of sustainable tourism.³¹⁹

1.4. Foster community and stakeholder engagement in decision-making

Community and stakeholder engagement should be fostered in coastal communities in all blue tourism planning and management processes.³²⁰ The government should consider enhancing community engagement through the development of participatory tools (e.g. by using emerging digital tools). These tools could create a feedback loop from policies to communities and from communities to policies and could build awareness of policies and regulatory frameworks, as well as give space for feedback and policy adaptation.

1.5. Encourage multi-stakeholder networks and partnerships

Governments can consider supporting the efforts of businesses in the creation of networks and partnerships to enhance the participatory approach to sustainable blue tourism development. It is essential that these networks are multisectoral and multilevel. Resilient networks can be achieved through better risk management strategies at the level of firms, putting the emphasis on risk awareness, greater transparency in the value chain and promoting flexibility. Governments can support the building of more resilient GVCs by collecting and sharing information on potential concentration and bottlenecks upstream, by developing stress tests for essential supply chains and by creating a conducive regulatory environment.³²¹ The involvement of local civil society, trade associations and local authorities is equally important to give voice to different perspectives, interests and experiences. Tourists and residents should be part of these participatory processes.

1.6. Improve collaboration among marine regions

Fostering policy dialogue and technical cooperation among marine regions could strengthen the sharing of knowledge and expertise as well as other resources. This can be achieved through transnational and inter-regional partnerships and networks such as regional seas conventions which, through Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs), can engage a wide range of stakeholders to promote cooperation and coordination in addressing marine and coastal environmental issues at inter-regional level.³²²

Policy pathway 2 - Sustainable industry practices

2.1. Support sustainable production and consumption

Existing and new policies and regulations can focus on supporting the sustainable consumption of resources throughout the tourism value chain. The principles of the circular economy³²³ should be increasingly integrated into tourism policies and practices.³²⁴ This is particularly relevant for coastal and

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island destinations that are often subject to resource scarcity and require context-aware solutions for their sustainable development.³²⁵

2.2. Boost certification programmes

Sustainability certifications can be supported by the public sector while ensuring that these certifications are accessible to smaller tourism operators. Technical and financial support may be provided by the public sector for smaller tourism enterprises seeking to re-design their business model. Certification labels could influence the financial and nonfinancial performance of businesses, for example by enabling cost savings and by lowering resource use levels.³²⁶

2.3. Promote sustainable product diversification and marketing

The public sector can consider supporting the diversification of the tourism offer through incentives and marketing support. Diversifying the tourism market has the potential to minimize social and environmental pressures on the destination,³²⁷ while the whole blue tourism value chain (hotels, activity providers, transport, guides, DMCs, nautical...) must be innovative in the design of tourism products that support the priorities and needs of destinations, and that have a positive impact on people and nature. However, strong marketing support is needed for new and alternative forms of tourism products that may be targeted to a niche market segment. The public sector can consider supporting linkages between businesses and tour operators, as well as by creating an online space where sustainable tourism businesses and experiences are promoted.

2.4. Support tourism businesses in overcoming barriers to change

Tourism businesses, especially SMEs, tend to face technical and financial challenges to the adoption of sustainable practices.³²⁸ The public sector should consider enhancing technical assistance programmes and the establishment of one-stop centres. Moreover, increasing accessibility to innovation and training for businesses, especially SMEs located in more peripheral blue tourism destinations, is essential to equally mitigate challenges faced by tourism stakeholders.³²⁹

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Policy pathway 3 - Sustainable destination practices

3.1. Reinforce climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience

The public sector can consider enhancing mitigation, adaptation and resilience in blue tourism destinations by strengthening a combination of actions including targeted and tailored capacity building, financial actions at the destination level and communication for awareness raising. These actions should be aimed at decarbonizing the tourism sector. For example, the consolidation of observatories and the organization of forums and committees composed of local stakeholders can address the needs of destinations in the face of climate change.³³⁰

3.2. Promote destination stewardship

Ensuring a balance between the needs of the destination with those of tourists and the environment is crucial for a sustainable blue tourism sector. Through a variety of actions, the public sector should consider partnering with the private sector and communities to bring together all stakeholders in an effort to preserve local heritage.³³¹

3.3. Support transition communities for sustainable tourism

The public sector can support the creation of innovative transition communities through funding and technical resources. Transition communities can bring together stakeholders to facilitate the development of sustainable tourism solutions.³³² Examples include the Quadruple Helix frameworks³³³ and joint purchasing frameworks.³³⁴ Supporting innovation in communities can drive sustainability and collaboration in the tourism sector.³³⁵

3.4. Ensure appropriate visitor management in sensitive areas

Establishing visitor monitoring and management systems, especially in sensitive sites such as MPAs or cultural heritage sites is becoming increasingly necessary to minimize the impacts of tourism activities.³³⁶ This could include studies on

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8. Challenges, opportunities and pathways to more sustainable blue tourism

carrying capacity, LCA approaches³³⁷ and PAVIM³³⁸, in both terrestrial and marine sites.

3.5. Endorse nature-based solutions (NbS) and regenerative practices

NbS and regenerative approaches can support destinations and businesses to ensure they generate a positive impact on nature and local communities, while addressing societal challenges such as climate change. This must be carried out according to sound operational frameworks and standards,³³⁹ and linked with the wider tourism value chain, for example with regenerative agriculture.³⁴⁰ The following five principles illustrate how regenerative and nature based solutions can be developed for the tourism sector: 1. meeting the community needs a priority; 2. improving ecosystem integrity and biodiversity; 3. embracing diverse and inclusive business models; 4. developing transparent governance structures accountable to all stakeholders; and 5. enhancing regenerative partnerships.³⁴¹

3.6. Product diversification and marketing

With the involvement of specialized NGOs and the willingness of enterprises, and motivated by public funds and policies, coastal and maritime destinations should work towards the diversification of blue tourism products, through new market specialization such as cultural marine tourism, ecotourism and pescaturism. These segments represent an opportunity for a positive impact on the livelihoods of coastal communities, while also addressing the seasonality of tourism flows in coastal and maritime areas.³⁴² Collaborating with local communities, respecting their traditions and practices, and adhering to sustainable tourism practices are essential for their long-term preservation, and also as a renewed marketing strategy.³⁴³ DMOs have the mandate to manage destinations and not only to market them, while such marketing should not only be about their promotion, but also for the strategic management of the destination and creation of visitor awareness.

Policy pathway 4 - Smart tourism development

4.1. Develop enabling policies for digital and smart tourism

Tourism and/or digitalization policies can support investments for the development and management of smart/digital tools and infrastructure in tourism by fostering an enabling

ecosystem.³⁴⁴ For blue tourism destinations located in more peripheral areas, these investments should target, where needed, the foundations of digital infrastructure such as improvements to internet coverage and speed. Reducing or avoiding digital inequalities should be a priority in digital/smart tourism development agendas.³⁴⁵

4.2. Ensure tools and infrastructure for smart tourism development

Smart tourism destinations can only be developed with the establishment of key infrastructure, such as connectivity, cyber security systems and data centres, while host communities and tourists must also possess digital skills.³⁴⁶ It is crucial that destinations are fully prepared in advance so that they can take advantage of digitalization.³⁴⁷ For more peripheral destinations, connectivity can be the main development challenge.

4.3. Data collection and measurement

The public sector should consider supporting the development of spin-off methodologies to generate an indicator system to analyse tourism impacts at environmental, social, and economic levels, and the impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector. Such indicators will be necessary to fine-tune action plans. Also, the development of comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and statistics should be advanced, particularly for the measurement and monitoring of blue tourism impacts on natural ecosystems, promoting quantitative instruments and assessment tools to evaluate the carrying capacities of destinations and territories.³⁴⁸

4.4. Raise awareness on smart technologies

Smart technologies can often be costly, both for businesses and destinations, making stakeholders potentially reluctant to invest in smart initiatives.³⁴⁹ Increasing awareness of the long-term benefits of smart technologies may motivate new investments that may lack short-term returns.

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Policy pathway 5 - Research for sustainable blue tourism

5.1. Establish partnerships with universities and other research institutions

Research should be supported on an ongoing basis by the government and partnerships with universities and other established research centres. This could boost innovation through the informed development of technologies and sustainable blue tourism practices.³⁵⁰ More funds would allow the interdisciplinary studies of blue economy and blue tourism, and also enable further development of strategic tools such as MPAs and land-based management strategies.

5.2. Implement tools to support market studies

Sustainable tourism needs research to identify innovative development opportunities and strategic management strategies. Emerging tools such as remote sensors and big data management systems can enable the study of the effect of seasonality and tourist flows and their behaviour.^{351 352} The use of this data can make impact prevention processes more effective as strategies will be informed, monitored and adapted to changes over time. Moreover, research can inform solutions that enhance the tourist experience, and create a more viable and long-lasting tourism sector.

5.3. Encourage climate adaptation and mitigation research

Policy formulation must be based on the careful monitoring of the impacts of climate change on coastal communities. The public sector should consider supporting research that not only monitors the environmental impacts of climate change, but also the socio-economic ones. Moreover, research should question the extent to which blue tourism activities are helping coastal communities adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change.

5.4. Boost capacity building activities

Collaborations with educational institutions can also be key in terms of capacity-building for local (blue tourism) projects supporting innovation in the sector and the development of soft and technological skills for community members.

Policy pathway 6 - Finance for sustainable blue tourism

6.1. Establish and promote financial incentives

Financial incentives can take various forms, including grants and subsidies, tax incentives and voucher schemes,³⁵³ as

well as support for marketing and promotion for businesses that adopt sustainable solutions. In blue tourism destinations these financial incentives can help mitigate the often low economies of scale that exist in coastal and island regions.³⁵⁴

6.2. Identify and create access to alternative financing options

The public sector can support alternative forms of financing for sustainable blue tourism. For example the idea of destination-based crowdfunding platforms has been recently proposed to support tourism entrepreneurs in adopting circular economy solutions.³⁵⁵ Other alternative financing options can be piloted at the destination level, such as user fees and environmental taxes to establish a trust fund which can be resilient to downturns in visitor numbers. These options have been proven effective in the financing of community-led and conservation initiatives.³⁵⁶

6.3. Adapt financing mechanisms for SMEs

Current funding mechanisms should be adapted to suit the requirements of the blue tourism economy, and the application processes for these mechanisms should be simplified for tourism entrepreneurs. Funding applications can be particularly complex for SMEs, with high barriers to eligibility. Their simplification is crucial for major financial accessibility to scale up sustainable blue tourism solutions.³⁵⁷

6.4. Create partnerships with financial institutions

Partnerships with financial institutions could facilitate the development of new financing mechanisms for blue tourism entrepreneurs and investments in sustainable tourism initiatives. Moreover, the involvement of different funder types for the financing of sustainable blue tourism initiatives would guarantee the alignment of development aid and cooperation schemes.

The six policy pathways are proposed to open up new and/or strengthen current policy, regulatory and collaborative avenues for a more sustainable blue tourism economy in coastal and marine regions, in line with the expected contribution of the tourism sector to the SDGs. However, cohesion and integration of tourism policies and governance at every political and administrative scale is fundamental, as is supporting frameworks for destinations, communities and the private sector. Through a more cross-cutting approach and through the implementation of innovative business models, it is possible to reshape the sector by increasing skills and by introducing new technologies to bring about a more digital, sustainable, resilient and inclusive industry. Cooperation between public and private actors, and between local and global ones, is still a key challenge, but ensuring such collaboration is essential for a harmonious and coherent transition to more sustainable blue tourism.

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