

Destination Stewardship: Creating Value for All

WTTC's Seven Principles for Thriving Destinations





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Introduction

Embracing opportunity, unlocking potential for all

Travel & Tourism is one of the world's greatest drivers of economic opportunity, employment and cultural exchange. The sector supports one in ten jobs worldwide, generates 10% of global GDP, and is on track to create one in three new jobs over the next decade. Managed well, this growth supports livelihoods, builds cultural understanding, protects the environment, and makes destinations better places to live in and visit.

1 in 10

jobs worldwide supported
by Travel & Tourism

10%

of global GDP generated
by the sector

1 in 3

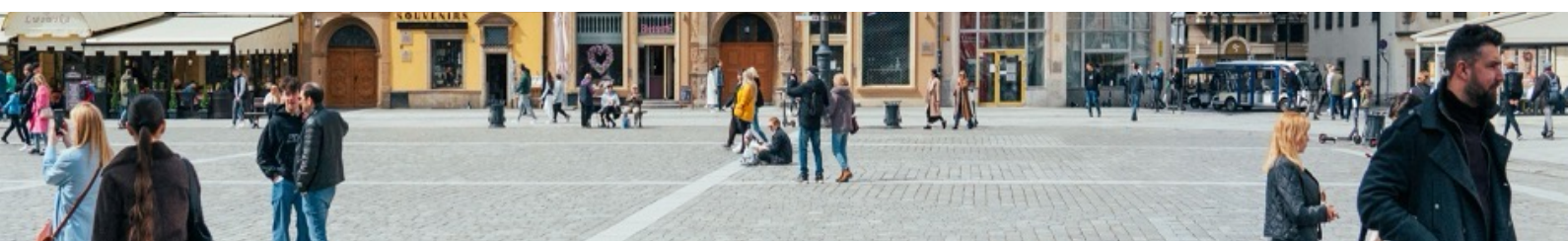
new jobs over the next decade
set to come from the sector

This summer is shaping up to be one of the busiest on record. After a landmark 2025, international arrivals are set to climb higher still - a testament to the sector's strength and appeal. For destinations, businesses and communities, this represents a significant opportunity to deliver lasting value through deliberate and proactive management.

Destination stewardship is how we make the most of this opportunity. With the right planning, infrastructure investment, and collaboration with residents and businesses, destinations can ensure this value is shared. As Dubrovnik's Mayor put it, "The problem [is] not the numbers but the flow".

Good stewardship helps protect the character that makes a place special — the very reason people want to visit — while supporting local communities to thrive. As this record summer gets underway, the moment to act is now. And while advance, holistic planning is our main recommendation, there are measures destinations can already put in place this summer.

These seven principles offer a shared roadmap for making tourism a lasting force for good, for residents, visitors and future generations.





Seven Strategic Principles: overview

A shared roadmap

Seven principles for making tourism a lasting force for good - for residents, visitors and future generations.

1 Plan together, grow together

2 Make resident satisfaction the measure of success

3 Plan ahead

4 Understand the issue

5 More places, more seasons, more value

6 Turn tourism into shared prosperity

7 Be ready to respond

Plan proactively and collaboratively for a sustainable tourism growth model that aligns with residents' needs and maximises overall benefits for the destination. Tourism touches almost every part of city life - housing, transport, utilities, and public spaces. It's a transversal sector, not a stand-alone industry, so it can't be planned by a tourism board alone. It needs integrated governance bringing together private companies, communities and all relevant public bodies, with a clear mandate, defined roles and transparent accountability, all woven into the destination's long-term planning.

IN PRACTICE

HAWAII · USA

Hawaii's [upcoming 2026-2030 Strategic Plan](#) was built on input from businesses, state agencies and community participants from six islands, resulting in a shared vision for Hawaii tourism and paths for development and improvement.

MADRID · SPAIN

[Madrid's tourism strategy](#) is notable for managing growth proactively and strategically. It has focused on deseasonalisation and decentralisation, building a value-over-volume model with well-differentiated products, and investing in multi-stakeholder governance structures without waiting for pressure to develop.

SINGAPORE

The Singapore Tourism Board developed its [Tourism 2040 roadmap](#) through a formal consultation process engaging over 700 stakeholders, from the industry, the public, and educational institutions. The roadmap is aligned with Singapore's wider urban and infrastructure planning. The vision is framed around three goals: a world-class destination for visitors; a vibrant home for residents; and a global hub for innovative tourism enterprises. Four out of every five residents agreed that tourism is a vital pillar of the economy and enhances Singapore's appeal.



HIGHLIGHT · POLICY BEST PRACTICE

The EU's Sustainable Tourism Strategy

The European Union's upcoming Sustainable Tourism Strategy provides an excellent example of the holistic and consultative tourism policymaking that our seven principles recommend. With a final text to be published around November 2026, draft versions focus on "balanced" tourism – avoiding both overcrowding and missed opportunities from undertourism in less-well known destinations.

It highlights the importance of integrating tourism into urban planning and increasing community involvement in decision-making, investing in diversified offerings to spread demand in time and space, using data tools, and protecting natural and cultural heritage sites.

Creating shared value from tourism is less about visitor numbers and more about whether residents feel that their quality of life is benefitting. Destinations should track resident sentiment as closely as they track arrivals, and build the destination's vision together with residents and other stakeholders, covering liveability, real benefits like jobs and public amenities, and clarity on what kind of tourism the destination wants. Success should be measured along all these dimensions. In parallel, destinations can also actively encourage responsible visitor behaviour and engage with their residents on the benefits tourism brings.

2.1 Monitor resident sentiment

Resident satisfaction is one of the clearest indicators of well-balanced destination management.

IN PRACTICE

BARCELONA · SPAIN

Barcelona's [Tourism Observatory](#) closely monitors both resident and visitor satisfaction to ensure tourism is bringing value, and perceived as such, for all important stakeholders.

SWITZERLAND

Switzerland Tourism's ['Travel Better' strategy](#) includes new metrics that replace the focus on overnight stays with a combination of indicators including "tourism acceptance" – the percentage of the Swiss population with a positive perception of tourism.



2.2 Encourage visitors to appreciate and respect local communities

This includes keeping public spaces clean, respecting privacy and quiet hours in residential areas, being mindful of local customs, or helping protect local nature.

IN PRACTICE

COPENHAGEN · DENMARK

Copenhagen's "[CopenPay](#)" initiative lets tourists "pay" for experiences through sustainable actions like collecting litter while kayaking in the city's canals.

JEJU ISLAND · SOUTH KOREA

South Korea's Jeju Island has introduced a [multilingual tourist behaviour guide](#) that encourages civic behaviour, aiming to support smooth relations between residents and visitors.

SWITZERLAND

Switzerland's "[Travel with care, leave with memories](#)" campaign encourages visitors to respect and protect the people and places they visit.

2.3 Communicate the benefits from tourism

For example, this could involve communicating tourism's contribution to financing preservation of cultural and natural heritage.

IN PRACTICE

LJUBLJANA · SLOVENIA

Ljubljana's "[Tourism makes Ljubljana more...](#)", a yearly awareness campaign, highlights how tourism makes the city greener, more creative, connected and active while creating opportunities for residents. In 2024, 23% of respondents said the campaign had improved their perception of tourism.

SCOTLAND

VisitScotland ran the [Visitor Economy](#) campaign to build awareness on how communities benefit from tourism, with case studies featuring various locations and events.

Early-warning systems help destinations adapt before issues take hold. Governments and businesses working together early – gathering data, keeping an eye on shared resources, talking to communities, and addressing issues before they build up – is the smartest investment a destination can make.

IN PRACTICE

COLORADO · USA

Colorado's [Destination Stewardship Plan](#) looks ahead to identify and manage challenges before they grow, including the effect of visitor influx on residents' quality of life and the effects on climate change on its ski season and natural assets. Built with over 1,000 stakeholders, including state officials, community groups, tribes, landowners and businesses, it reflects a broad, long-term and sustainable vision, partnering with residents to pre-empt imbalances and build shared value.

EUROPEAN UNION

Reliable data is the foundation for planning and prevention. The [EU's new short-term rental data framework](#) is a case in point: standardised registration and data-sharing gives authorities a consistent picture of visitor accommodation for the first time - providing transparency that supports smarter planning without restricting how people choose to stay.

BOGOTÁ

Bogotá began building its tourism governance and data infrastructure in 2021, investing in an annual visitor behaviour survey, and monthly data updates. This evidence base feeds directly into investment decisions, including a 67 billion peso commitment in 2025 to distribute tourism improvements across all 20 city districts. In 2026, Bogotá became the first city with over 8 million residents to be recertified as a [Smart Tourist Destination](#), meeting more than 80% of an international standard covering governance, sustainability, accessibility, innovation and technology.



Destinations that identify signs of pressure should start by carefully diagnosing what's actually driving both the issue and locals' perceptions of it. Often it's not the whole city that needs attention, just a few streets or neighbourhoods. Identify the real cause and target the response, rather than relying on broad policy measures that may impose unnecessary costs without solving the issue.

IN PRACTICE

BENIDORM · SPAIN

Benidorm's limited water supply seemed insufficient to meet increasing demand from tourism. However, further research proved that efficiency gains in its water management system would allow it to meet demand while protecting its tourism sector, critical for the livelihoods of the city's residents. The city achieved an [efficiency rate of 95% for its water network](#), making it a European leader in this field.

JAPAN

Japan [conducts location-specific diagnostics for targeted solutions](#): 26 pioneer regions each pursue context-specific measures to best tackle their unique issues, including Kyoto redirecting tourists to subway systems, Hakone using digital maps for crowd dispersal, Iriomote Island managing entries to protect the natural environment, Aso promoting EVs and bicycles, and Sado Island improving local transit.

TOURIST TAXES · A COMMON SOLUTION MISMATCH

A common solution mismatch regards tourist fees and taxes, introduced in multiple destinations with the explicit purpose of reducing visitor numbers. However, evidence does not bear this out. In most destinations, [tourist taxes have little to no impact on visitor numbers](#). [Charges can raise money, but they are rarely the right tool for managing inflows](#).



Spreading visitors across places and seasons – with new products and routes, flexible pricing, off-peak deals and smarter infrastructure – benefits residents, businesses and tourists alike, easing pressure on popular spots and creating opportunities elsewhere. Product diversification is a key tool to turn the challenge of volume into an opportunity, by developing alternative locations that attract and spread out visitor interest. Finally, a further enabler is technology. Destinations using live data can respond to changing conditions with agility and redirect visitors before they concentrate in one spot.

IN PRACTICE

DUBROVNIK · CROATIA

[Dubrovnik](#) shows the significant benefits of spreading visitors in time. In partnership with the cruise industry, the city staggered ship arrivals, lengthened calls and introduced bookable slots for tour coaches – and pressure on the historic core eased measurably within two seasons without turning visitors away. Instead, hotel occupancy and length of stay increased, suggesting a shift toward slower, higher-value tourism.

IRELAND

Fáilte Ireland built [four distinct regional tourism brands](#) to distribute visitors from Dublin and a few busy coastal hotspots. It focused on product development in less-visited locations, spreading economic benefits across rural communities. One of them, the Wild Atlantic Way, has become one of Europe's most recognised touring routes, drawing visitors into regions that previously saw almost no tourism. Fáilte Ireland monitors the spread of overnight stays and tourism spending across all regions, providing an evidence base for ongoing adjustment.

ITALY

Italy's "[Luminous destinations](#)" campaign exemplifies the use of product development for visitor redistribution, directing tourists to authentic experiences at locations with extraordinary but little-known cultural heritage.

KYOTO · JAPAN

Kyoto uses [its Congestion Forecast](#) tool to predict the best days to visit major sites and [Smart Navi](#) to provide real-time updates on congestion levels, while recommending alternative "[Hidden Gems](#)" destinations in the city.

NEW YORK CITY · USA

New York City launched a visitor dispersal programme in 2022, the "[Get Local NYC](#)" campaign, encouraging visitors to explore all five boroughs. Its explicit goal was "focusing our efforts on getting people out to attractions in every borough, making sure New Yorkers, in all communities, benefit from the jobs and economic investment that tourism brings."

SOUTH KOREA

South Korea has developed a [comprehensive national strategy](#) to diversify its product and disperse visitors beyond Seoul and Jeju Island. It has provided funding to various cities to develop distinctive tourism identities, leveraging its high-speed rail network to support [country-wide dispersion](#). This is complemented by [distribution initiatives within Seoul](#), redirecting visitors away from busier neighbourhoods and providing special funding to all districts to develop alternative attractions.

VENICE · ITALY

IC Bellagio and WTTC's "[Community Conscious Travel](#)" campaign, with Venice as the backdrop, shows the benefits that slow-season tourism brings for visitors and residents alike – supporting residents' livelihoods all year-round and allowing visitors to more authentically experience local culture and communities.

MADRID · SPAIN

Madrid's "[Te faltan calles](#)" ("You're missing streets") campaign, launched in 2025, is a visitor dispersal programme that aims to spread the positive impact of tourism across the city, consolidate Madrid as a year-round destination, and strengthen coexistence between residents and visitors. It provides each zone with a distinct visual identity, narrative and monthly promotional calendar. Alongside geographic dispersal, the strategy uses a year-round events calendar — Formula 1, Easter Week — to smooth seasonal peaks.



Turn tourism into shared prosperity

Reinvest tourism's economic contribution back into the destination. Travel & Tourism is one of the biggest contributors to public finances worldwide. The opportunity is to use that money well, reinvesting it transparently in public services, spaces and infrastructure that support local life and wellbeing and visibly distribute the benefits from tourism across communities.

\$11.6tn

total GDP
contribution in 2025

9.6%

of the
global economy

366mn

workers supported,
one in nine jobs

The Travel & Tourism sector generated \$11.6 trillion in total GDP in 2025, accounting for 9.8% of the global economy. It is a vital source of employment, supporting 366 million workers, or one in nine jobs. It fuels social progress and economic empowerment, particularly for women, young people, and rural communities. Travel companies also fund essential public services through business, labour and consumption taxes – paying \$1.9 trillion in direct tax contributions in 2024, and a further \$1.6 trillion in indirect and induced taxes, thereby supporting vital infrastructure, education, and healthcare.

\$1.9tn

direct tax contributions in 2024

\$1.6tn

further indirect and induced taxes

IN PRACTICE

BARCELONA · SPAIN

The Barcelona City Council is transparent [in publicly listing activities and projects funded by tourism revenue](#). Proceeds have been used to organise cultural events, expand public transport services, and improve daily life for Barcelona residents, such as by investing in air conditioning for primary schools, demonstrating the direct benefits of tourism to the community.

BALEARIC ISLANDS · SPAIN

Similarly, Spain's Balearic Islands provide an [up-to-date list of the projects financed by tourism revenue](#). These prioritise improvements that directly benefit residents' welfare, and also invest in the quality and sustainability of the islands' tourism model including by protecting its cultural and natural assets.

Have a response protocol in place: even the best-managed destination can be hit by a sudden crisis. What distinguishes destinations that recover quickly is having a plan before it's needed. Work with government, businesses and communities to agree in advance how to respond calmly and proportionately: act on evidence, not on headlines, and be ready to reframe the narrative.

7.1 Know what counts as a crisis

Agree evidence-based triggers in advance: quantitative thresholds such as visitor-to-resident ratios or falling resident sentiment scores, and qualitative ones such as protest activity or media headlines.

7.2 Have a response team ready to convene

Set up a response body in advance, drawing together government, businesses, communities and relevant experts, so no time is lost assembling it in the moment.

7.3 Diagnose fast, and buy time with reversible measures

A rapid assessment using existing monitoring data, resident surveys and on-the-ground intelligence should come before any major policy intervention. While diagnosis is underway, targeted and reversible flow measures - such as the [timed-entry system](#) Athens introduced at the Acropolis in 2023 - can ease pressure immediately without locking in structural change.





7.4 Communicate early, especially to residents

Have communication channels ready in advance, and reach out to residents, visitors and major industry partners from day one. Silence or perceived inaction can fuel negative sentiment among residents.

7.5 Review, reform, and come back stronger

Close every crisis with a formal review and a reform agenda that supports long-term value and resilience, not just a return to business as usual.

IN PRACTICE

ICELAND

Handled well, a crisis is also a chance to reset the story: Iceland's "[Inspired by Iceland](#)" campaign, launched jointly by government and industry within weeks of the 2010 volcanic eruption, turned a global travel shutdown into one of tourism's most successful reframings.

This summer: quick actions

Holistic advance planning is the best approach to destination stewardship - but the season is already here, and there are quick measures that can make this summer more successful. Below are eight actions destinations can put in place soon.

MEASURE & MONITOR

- **Launch a resident sentiment pulse.** A short, repeated resident survey (e.g. monthly, online) can be a useful early-warning indicator. Monitor sentiment closely.
- **Map the actual pressure points.** Identify the specific streets, sites and time windows where visitors concentrate - many "overcrowded cities" are really three or four busy locations. This diagnosis alone allows for small-scale, targeted preventative measures and can avoid blunt, costly interventions later.

ENGAGE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

- **Run a visitor behaviour campaign.** Switzerland's "Travel with care" shows the format: respectful-visitor messaging via arrival channels, hotels and social media, deployable within weeks. Where needed, consider enforcing civic behaviour so locals know they are prioritised and looked after.
- **Communicate tourism's benefits locally.** A lightweight version of Ljubljana's awareness campaign - what tourism funds in the destination, in concrete terms – can help provide a more balanced picture.

SPREAD VISITORS OUT

- **Identify and highlight existing "hidden gems".** Catalogue attractions, neighbourhoods and experiences already in place that are easily accessible from popular areas, and then promote them through official channels, itineraries and partnerships with OTAs and guides. Product development takes years; highlighting what exists takes weeks.
- **Publish best-time-to-visit guidance.** This could be as simple as a webpage indicating quieter days and hours for the top three sites.

GOVERNANCE & RESILIENCE

- **Assemble the response team now.** Agree membership, roles and communication protocols in advance, so no time is lost if rising pressures are identified.
- **Agree on triggers for graduated response action.** Act on evidence, not headlines. Set evidence-based triggers in advance (such as sentiment thresholds or protest activity) and take proportionate steps if they are met. Responding early to resident dissatisfaction can prevent tensions later in the season.

Destination stewardship: at the core of WTTC's priorities

Destination stewardship sits at the heart of [WTTC's strategic agenda](#). It is not only a priority in its own right, but a foundation for achieving our other priorities — and one that will be strengthened by progress across them.



Strengthening destination stewardship and addressing overcrowding (unmanaged travel)



Enabling safe and seamless journeys through digital standards and biometrics
Preserving visitors' experience; avoiding congestion and disruptions.



Advancing climate and environmental sustainability initiatives
Managing resources and protecting natural assets for residents and visitors alike.



Harnessing emerging technologies, including AI and robotics
Using data and AI to monitor and improve visitor flows, enhancing visitor and resident experience.



Enhancing crisis preparedness, management and recovery
Pre-empting tensions and preserving harmony between visitors and residents.



Expanding global connectivity and developing new travel corridors
Encouraging travel to less well-known destinations for more distributed benefits from tourism.



Supporting workforce development, talent retention, and mobility
Ensuring tourism provides attractive, highly-valued employment opportunities for residents.



Promoting policies that drive investment and new growth opportunities
Investing in community wellbeing and value diversification in well-known destinations and driving investment to less developed destinations for more distributed flows.

Acknowledgements

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