



FACTSHEET

Tourism

In a nutshell

The cultural ecosystem service 'Tourism' is defined here as the nature-based opportunities which attract travellers to a place to enjoy nature. This includes the benefits that accrue to visitors and the income opportunities that accrue to service providers of nature-related tourism.

1. Role for human well-being

Ecosystems and biodiversity play an important role in many kinds of tourism such as hiking, camping, bird watching, wildlife tourism, and visiting famous natural sites like Table Mountain in South Africa, the Nile in Egypt, or the Iguazu Falls on the border between Brazil and Argentina.

To give an example: About 3,000 tourists visit the coral reefs of [Hanauma Bay, Hawai'i](#) every day. Since the 1990s, restrictions on daily visitor numbers and the ongoing activities of a local educational centre have ensured that coral reef damage is kept within limits. This serves to safeguard the long term attractiveness of Hanauma Bay to visitors. In addition to the spectacular characteristics of such a coral reef itself, the presence of hotels and the Bay's connection to a tourism market are equally important factors that explain the income generating potential of nature tourism.

If managed well, nature-based tourism can provide valuable experiences for visitors while at the same time generating significant income in the region. The sub-segment of (community-based) ecotourism can be a major source of income for rural populations, contributing to local conservation efforts while also providing sustainable livelihoods.

2. Typical threats

Land use changes reduce the attractiveness of a natural area for tourism when scenic beauty or environmental conditions are compromised. Cultural landscapes such as terraced hill slopes become degraded when traditional land use practices change. In some cases, too many tourists can reduce the overall attractiveness of a site and endanger the sustainability of the tourism destination (e.g. by leaving waste behind). Unregulated access for tourists can also harm ecosystems (e.g. the impacts of unmanaged diving on coral reefs in Hawai'i), disturb wild animals, or conflict with traditional lifestyles of local communities. Equally, a very rigid protection status may thwart opportunities to generate nature-based tourism income by restricting broad access. Appropriate rules can be established if local conditions are duly considered and if stakeholders participate in the process, as occurred in the [Mohéli Marine Park](#) in Comoros.

3. Example indicators

It is difficult to measure and quantify cultural services, as they provide non-material benefits and are often based on subjective perceptions. For further information regarding the lack of measures and insufficient data availability on cultural services see, see [TEEB Ecological & Economic Foundation Ch. 3 p. 24 & 32](#) (p. 131 & 137 in book version). Nevertheless, the following indicators may be useful in assessing the ecosystem service 'tourism':





- Gross profit from nature-based tourism [\$/area/year] and factor income from nature-based tourism [\$/year/person] are two typical indicators.
- To assess the economic importance of [tourism as an ecosystem service in the Maldives](#), the indicator 'total employment in the tourism sector' was used – 58% of the country's total workforce is employed in this sector.
- In [Cape Town](#) the economic importance of the city's natural areas and biodiversity for tourism were assessed using the average of total travel costs plus entrance fees paid by tourists to access key natural areas.
- For information on how to measure the number of visitors to a site over time (no. of visitors/area/year) see [CBS TCS No. 58 p. 113](#).
- Indicators for monitoring the natural features particularly appreciated by visitors help prevent their degradation, e.g. water quality at beaches, condition of hiking trails, proportion of area in an attractive condition, or sightings of charismatic species. To understand what aspects visitors value in their nature-based tourism experience, [questionnaires and interviews](#) are useful.

4. Example methods

For **assessing the value** of this ecosystem service:

- [Travel cost method](#)
- [Direct market price method](#)
- [Contingent valuation method](#)
- For other methods and further information on assessing nature-based tourism/recreation, see: [Tessa Toolkit p. 98 ff. & p. 275 ff.](#)

For **assessing the condition** of this ecosystem service:

- See [CBD Good Practice Guide: Tourism for Nature & Development](#) p. 29 & [CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development](#) for information on how to gather necessary baseline information (Ch. 1) and on monitoring & reporting (Ch. 9).
- See the concept of [tourism carrying capacity](#).
- For a review of methodologies and recommendations for developing ecotourism impact monitoring programs in Latin America, see the: [Ecotourism Technical Report No 1](#).
- For information on monitoring tourism in protected areas, see WCPA: [Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Planning and Management](#) p.151ff.
- The [Vitek - Vitality Index of Traditional Environmental Knowledge](#) methodology has been developed to gather and analyse traditional environmental knowledge (TEK) data and to create a locally appropriate indicator of trends in retention or loss of TEK over time.





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5. Managing this service

Typical instruments for managing this service include:

Sustainable tourism certification standards

- Sustainable tourism certificates such as the [CST: Certification for Sustainable Tourism in Costa Rica](#) aim to ensure that 'eco' or 'green' tourism service providers avoid negative impacts on ecosystems.
- The [Blue Flag certificate for coastal areas in South Africa](#) improves controls on water pollution, monitors water quality and also enhances the safety of tourists on beaches.

Zoning instruments and tourism development planning in and around protected areas

- The many resources for tourism development and visitor management in conservation areas include:
- [Practical, profitable, protected: A starter guide to developing sustainable tourism in protected areas](#)
- [Ecotourism Development - A Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers.](#)
- [CBD Good Practice Guide: Tourism for Nature & Development](#)
- [Tourism publications](#): here documents e.g. on nature-based tourism or poverty reduction and tourism as well as training material by Dr Anna Spenceley can be downloaded for free.

On behalf of:



of the Federal Republic of Germany



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[ValuES](#) is coordinated by the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit ([GIZ](#)) and implemented in partnership with the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research ([UFZ](#)) and the Conservation Strategy Fund ([CSF](#)). ValuES is a project with a global focus. We work in close collaboration with partner countries on the integration of ecosystem services into policy, planning and practice. ValuES is funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety ([BMUB](#)) through its International Climate Initiative ([IKI](#)).

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