



# BEST TOURISM VILLAGES INITIATIVE

VERSION 4.0  
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# Our Vision

Make tourism a driver of rural  
development and wellbeing



# Our Mission

Advance the role of tourism in valuing and safeguarding rural villages along with their associated landscapes, knowledge systems, biological and cultural diversity, local values and activities.

Promote innovative and transformative approaches to the development of tourism in rural destinations that contribute to the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental – in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



# Our Objectives

1. Reduce regional inequalities in income and development
2. Fight depopulation
3. Progress gender equality and women's and youth empowerment
4. Promote rural transformation and strengthen traction capacity
5. Strengthen multi-level-governance, partnerships and the active involvement of communities
6. Improve connectivity, infrastructure, access to finance and investment
7. Advance innovation and digitalization
8. Innovate in product development and value chain integration
9. Promote the relationship between sustainable, equitable and resilient food systems and tourism
10. Advance the conservation of natural and cultural resources
11. Promote sustainable practices for a more efficient use of resources & a reduction of emissions and waste
12. Enhance education and skills



# The Best Tourism Villages initiative

1. Best Tourism Villages
2. Upgrade Programme
3. Best Tourism Villages Network



# Best Tourism Villages

The **Best Tourism Villages** aims to recognize a village which is an outstanding example of a rural tourism destination with recognized cultural and natural assets, that preserves and promotes community-based values, products and lifestyle and has a clear commitment to sustainability in all its aspects – economic, social and environmental with the fundamental aim of making tourism one of the drivers of positive transformation, rural development and community well-being.



# Upgrade Programme

The **Upgrade Programme** will benefit a number of selected villages among those that do not fully meet the initiative criteria. These villages will be receiving support from UNWTO and Partners in improving elements of the areas identified as gaps in the evaluation process.



# Best Tourism Villages Network

The **Network** aims to provide a space for exchanging experiences and good practices, learnings, and opportunities. It will include representatives of the villages awarded the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO, the villages participating in the Upgrade Programme as well as experts, public and private sector partners engaged in the promotion of tourism for rural development. The Network will support the work of UNWTO in identifying good practices, developing guidelines and policy recommendations as well as insights and knowledge.



# Requisites for application

In line with the UNWTO definition of Rural Tourism, a village must present the following features to be eligible for application:

- Have a low population density and a maximum of 15.000 inhabitants.
- Be located in a landscape with an important presence of traditional activities such as agriculture, forestry, livestock or fishing.
- Share community values and lifestyle.

UNWTO Member States are invited to submit up to a maximum of three applications (villages)



# Areas of evaluation



Cultural and Natural Resources



Promotion and Conservation of Cultural Resources



Economic Sustainability



Social Sustainability



Environmental Sustainability



Tourism Development and Value Chain Integration



Governance and Prioritization of Tourism



Infrastructure and Connectivity



Health, Safety and Security



# Areas of evaluation (I)



## Cultural and Natural Resources

The village has natural and cultural (tangible and intangible) resources recognized at national, regional or international level.



## Promotion and Conservation of Cultural Resources

The village is committed to the promotion and conservation of its cultural resources which make it unique and authentic.



## Economic Sustainability

The village is committed to promote economic sustainability supporting business development, entrepreneurship and investment.



# Areas of evaluation (II)



## Social Sustainability

The village is committed to promote social inclusion and equality.



## Environmental Sustainability

The village is committed to environmental sustainability through the promotion and/or dissemination of policies, measures and initiatives that advance the preservation and conservation of its natural resources and minimize the impact of tourism on the environment.



## Tourism Development and Value Chain Integration

The tourism in the village is significantly marketed and developed. The village further promotes the enhancement of the tourism value chain and the competitiveness of the destination in areas related to market access, marketing and promotion, innovation, product development and quality.



# Areas of evaluation (III)



## Governance and Prioritization of Tourism

The village is committed to make tourism a strategic pillar for rural development. It promotes a governance model based on public-private partnerships, cooperation with other government levels and the engagement of the community.



## Infrastructure and Connectivity

The village has infrastructure to facilitate access and communications that improve the wellbeing of rural communities, business development as well as visitors' experience.



## Health, Safety and Security

The village has/is close to health, safety and security systems to safeguard residents and tourists.



# PROCESS



# UNWTO Best Tourism Villages Selection Process





# WHAT IS A BEST TOURISM VILLAGE BY UNWTO?






A photograph of three people hiking through a field of tall grass under a bright sky. On the left, a woman with curly hair and a backpack smiles. In the center, a woman wearing a beanie and a plaid shirt also smiles. On the right, a man with a beard and a backpack is walking. The scene is bright and sunny, with a blue sky and some clouds.

*A village committed to a vision  
of tourism as a tool for positive  
transformation, inclusive and  
sustainable development*





*A village that  
promotes and  
protects its nature  
and its culture*





*A village that  
values its  
gastronomy, its crafts  
and its people*




*A village  
that fosters  
innovation &  
entrepreneurship*





*A village  
that  
empowers its  
community*



A scenic landscape photograph of a paved hiking trail winding through a lush green valley. Two hikers, seen from behind, are walking away from the camera. The hiker on the left wears a red jacket and a black backpack, while the hiker on the right wears a dark jacket and a grey backpack. The trail is bordered by a wooden railing on the left and a steep, grassy slope on the right. In the background, rolling hills and mountains are covered in dense green forests under a clear sky. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and inviting.

*A village that works  
for the wellbeing  
of residents and  
visitors*





# BEST TOURISM VILLAGES INITIATIVE

<https://www.unwto.org/tourism-villages>