



UNWTO
World Tourism Organization



**BEST
TOURISM
VILLAGES**
by UNWTO

Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO

Terms and Conditions

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.
- 1.2 As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.
- 1.3 Tourism is a lifeline for many rural communities¹ and has a unique capacity to provide new opportunities to generate jobs, promote and protect natural and cultural resources as well as empower women and youth.
- 1.4 The major impact that COVID-19 is having on tourism (in 2020 international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) plunged by 73% in 2020 over the previous year due to widespread travel restrictions and a massive drop in demand), represents both a challenge and an opportunity to advance the role of the sector in rural communities. Though true that less favoured communities are less prepared to manage the decline of tourism demand, travellers' demand for new experiences around nature, local culture and products, as well as community engagement in the post COVID-19 context, offer immense opportunities for supporting rural communities, both in the short-term as they recover from the impact of COVID-19, and in the long-term to promote sustainable and inclusive growth.
- 1.5 UNWTO designated 2020 the Year of Tourism and Rural Development and, on the occasion of the 2020 World Tourism Day on this same theme it launched the 'Recommendations on Tourism and Rural Development – A Guide to Making Tourism an Effective Tool for Rural Development'². These aim to assist governments as well as the private sector and international community and outline the key steps necessary to fully harness the potential and resilience of tourism to drive inclusive and sustainable social and economic development in rural areas.
- 1.6 Also in 2020, under the Saudi Presidency of the G20, UNWTO and the G20 Tourism Working Group developed the 'AIUIa Framework for Inclusive

¹ World Tourism Day 2020 – UNWTO Tourism and Rural Development Technical Note: <https://www.unwto.org/world-tourism-day-2020/tourism-and-rural-development-technical-note>

² World Tourism Organization (2020), UNWTO *Recommendations on Tourism and Rural Development – A Guide to Making Tourism an Effective Tool for Rural Development*, UNWTO, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422173>

Community Development Through Tourism'³ aimed at promoting tourism as an effective tool of communities' empowerment and sustainable future.

1.7 Following the 2020 UNWTO Year of Tourism for Rural Development, the 'Recommendations on Tourism and Rural Development' and the AIUla Framework, UNWTO is launching a new pilot project – the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Initiative. The Initiative is aimed at maximizing the role of tourism in:

1. Reducing regional inequalities in income and development
2. Fighting rural depopulation
3. Progressing gender equality and women's and youth empowerment
4. Promoting rural transformation and strengthen traction capacity
5. Strengthening multi-level-governance, partnerships and the active involvement of communities (public-private-community collaboration)
6. Improving connectivity, infrastructure & access to finance and investment
7. Advancing innovation and digitalization
8. Innovating in product development and value chain integration
9. Promoting the relationship between sustainable, equitable and resilient food systems and tourism to preserve biodiversity, agrobiodiversity, cultural heritage and local gastronomy
10. Advancing the conservation of natural and cultural resources
11. Promoting sustainable practices for a more efficient use of resources and a reduction of emissions and waste
12. Enhancing education and skills development

³ Presentation of the Alula Framework of Inclusive Community Development through Tourism at the 113th UNWTO Executive Council (https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-01/Alula_EC.pdf?UEASxUHJPgi.pVPFidsEIVVzSCE6wHMF)

2. What is the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Pilot Initiative⁴

- 2.1 With the vision of making tourism a positive force for transformation, rural development and community wellbeing, the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO pilot Initiative seeks to 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 (agriculture, forestry, livestock and/or fisheries), including their gastronomy.
- 2.2 The initiative has three main components:
- The **Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Label**, which 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 rural and 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 rural development and community well-being.
 - The **Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Upgrade Programme**, which will benefit a number of villages selected among those that do not fully meet the label criteria. These villages will receive support from UNWTO and Partners to improve elements of the areas identified as gaps in the evaluation process.
 - The **Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Network**, a space for exchanging experiences and good practices, learnings, and opportunities. The Network will also support the work of UNWTO in identifying good practices, developing guidelines and policy recommendations as well as insights and knowledge.
- 2.3 The Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Pilot Initiative aims to award those villages which are an outstanding example of rural destination and showcase good practices in line with nine evaluation areas – see point 4. (Category 1). It also aims to support villages to enhance their rural tourism potential through training and access to opportunities for improvement (Category 2).
- 2.4 Villages selected to be included in both Categories will be part of the Network.

⁴ The Initiative will be launched in 2021 as a pilot project and its continuation is subject to the approval by the 24th session of the UNWTO General Assembly

3. Eligibility

- 3.1 The Call for Applications is open to all UNWTO Member States⁵ (herewith referred as Member(s)).⁶ Applications are not open for individual application by villages and must always be presented by a Member.
- 3.2 In line with the UNWTO definition of Rural Tourism⁷ approved by the 22nd General Assembly in 2017 (A/RES/684 (XXII)), Members can present candidacies of villages with the following characteristics:
- Low population and a maximum of 15.000 inhabitants (for the purpose of this requisite, the village will need to submit the population census for the latest year available)
 - Be located in an landscape with an important presence of traditional activities such as agriculture, forestry, livestock or fishing; and
 - Share community values and lifestyle.
- 3.3 In order to streamline the evaluation process, a limitation on the total number of candidate villages per country has been set up. Therefore, each Member can submit a maximum of **three** applications.
- 3.4 Members wishing available to submit their applications must dully fill in and submit the Online Application Form (available in <http://www.unwto.org/tourism-villages>) providing all mandatory information and documents before 31 July 2021 (23:59 Central European Time). No other form of applications will be considered. Applications that are incomplete or received after the deadline will not be considered.
- 3.5 Whenever a Member needs to be contacted in connection with the evaluation process, the contact information provided by the Member in the application form will be used. UNWTO is not responsible for incomplete or incorrect contact information provided.
- 3.6 The information included in the candidacy is the full responsibility of the Members and must be true. UNWTO shall not be liable for any false, inaccurate, obsolete, incomplete or erroneous data submitted by the candidates. In such a case, the participant shall be automatically excluded from the evaluation process, and also lose the right to the enjoyment of the award and benefits, and shall not be entitled to make any claims against UNWTO.
- 3.7 UNWTO reserves the right not to accept or to remove from the programme,

⁵ Applications related to villages located in a territory that is the subject of a dispute, of sovereignty or other, before the United Nations will not be considered.

⁶ Please refer to the complete list of UNWTO's Member States at <https://www.unwto.org/member-states>

⁷ World Tourism Organization (2019), *UNWTO Tourism Definitions*, UNWTO, Madrid. P. 34
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420858>

without prior notice, any candidates who, act fraudulently, in an abusive manner, or in a manner contrary to the spirit of the programme, the principles of the UNWTO or the United Nations or the law, third-party rights and/or good faith. Likewise, any participant or related person whose action may be contrary to the reputation or good name of the UNWTO or the United Nations will be removed.

- 3.8 Each application shall include the contact details of the person responsible for the application at the UNWTO Member State for the purposes of all communications with UNWTO regarding the application(s). This person must be a natural person, of legal age and with legal capacity to enter into a contract, not having been convicted by a final judgment, for intentional crimes, with a penalty of six months or more, insofar as the criminal responsibility has not expired.
- 3.9 The person responsible for the application who, initially or at any point during the programme, fails to meet any of these requirements, may be excluded from the pilot project, losing any option to receive any service and without the right to claim anything from the UNWTO.
- 3.10 The participating Members shall also commit to actively engage with UNWTO and the Network in the activities pertaining to this initiative (e.g. attending relevant meetings and events, sharing good practices and joining training, capacity building and other related activities for the Villages in Category 2).
- 3.11 None of the above actions shall entitle any candidate or potential candidate to any right or claim whatsoever for damages, expenses incurred, etc.

4. Areas of evaluation

- 4.1 The applications will be assessed based on the following nine evaluation areas linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the presentation of an Application Rationale:

Areas of evaluation

- **Cultural and Natural Resources** (SDGs 8, 11, 12, 15)
The village has natural and cultural (tangible and intangible) resources recognized at national/regional or international level.
- **Promotion and Preservation of Cultural Resources** (SDGs 8, 11, 12)
The village is committed to the promotion and conservation of its cultural resources which make it unique and authentic.
- **Economic Sustainability** (SDGs 5, 8, 9, 17)

The village is committed to promote economic sustainability supporting business development, entrepreneurship, value chain integration, investment and the positive impact of tourism in the local economy.

- **Social Sustainability** (SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 17)
The village is committed to promote social inclusion and equality by catalyzing and spreading the benefits of tourism.
- **Environmental Sustainability** (SDGs 7, 12, 13, 15, 17)
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 development on the environment.
- **Tourism Potential and Development and Value Chain Integration** (SDGs 8, 9, 10, 12)
The village has a significant market potential and tourism resources. It 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.
- **Governance and prioritization of tourism** (SDGs 9, 17)
The village is committed to make tourism a strategic pillar for rural development. It further promotes a governance model based on public-private partnerships, cooperation with other government levels and the engagement of the community in tourism planning and development.
- **Infrastructure and connectivity** (SDGs 9, 17)
The village has infrastructure to facilitate access and communications that improve the wellbeing of rural communities, business development as well as the visitor experience.
- **Health, Safety and Security** (SDG 3)
The village has health, safety and security systems to safeguard residents and tourists.

In addition to the evaluation areas abovementioned, applications must include an Application Rationale in which they must provide:

1. Motivation Statement: candidates must explain in what ways the village fills in the objectives of the initiative: to promote tourism as a driver of sustainable tourism in all its aspects (economic, social and environmental).

2. Commitment and Future Actions: candidates are requested to present the following elements:

- Identify and analyse threats and challenges to the sustainability of tourism development in the village.

- What are the policies, strategies and actions that will be taken in the next five years and how will they respond to the threats identified?
- How these will contribute to the conservation of the cultural and natural assets and to the three dimensions – economic, social and environmental - of sustainable tourism.
- How are multi-stakeholders, including local communities, involved to support the Action Plan.
- What actions will they be seeking for funding and/or to mobilize resources at the local, national and/or international level and how.
- How will the village monitor the progress of these actions.

4.2 The candidates will need to submit supporting documents for the information provided in the areas of evaluation to prove compliance (such as, but not limited to, supporting documents, links to websites, images, etc.). As much as possible relevant links are preferred to documents.

5. Evaluation and Selection Process

- 5.1 Applications will be reviewed by the UNWTO Secretariat to verify compliance with eligibility criteria and adequate application process.
- 5.2 Eligible applications will be evaluated by an independent Advisory Board based which will assess i) the information provided for each of the evaluation areas and ii) the Application Rationale where a motivation statement for joining the initiative is expressed as well as the future commitments and actions that the village would adopt in case of being awarded the Label Best Tourism Villages).
- 5.3 The Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO's Advisory Board is a multidisciplinary external body integrated by recognized experts of different areas relevant for tourism and rural development and appointed by the UNWTO Secretary-General for a period of two years. The Board will contribute to ensure the technical standards, impartiality, and transparency of the evaluation process.
- 5.4 The Advisory Board will evaluate all eligible applications and advice the UNWTO Secretary-General on the list of villages to be included in the category of Best Tourism Village by UNWTO Label (Category 1) as well as those proposed to be included in the Upgrade Programme (Category 2).
- 5.5 The final decision on whether the assessed applications are awarded the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO's Label (Category 1) or are included in Upgrade Programme (Category 2) will lie with the UNWTO Secretary-General, following consultation with the Advisory Board.
- 5.6 To protect the independence of the evaluators, no information on the identity of the members of the Advisory Board is provided until the end of their mandate. Candidate villages and Members are required not to exert any

influence or lobby during the evaluation and selection process. Any contact or attempt to contact the members of the Advisory Board will result in immediate dismissal from the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO pilot initiative.

6. Language

- 6.1 English is the working language of the Advisory Board of the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO pilot initiative.
- 6.2 The online application form, the presentation and the Application Rationale must be submitted in **English only**. Information in any other language will not be considered.
- 6.3 All supporting documents shall also be submitted in English. If documents are only available in another language, please provide a short summary in English (not exceeding 300 words) and an audio-visual supporting document (link to a website, photo or video). As much as possible relevant links are preferred to documents.
- 6.4. Relevant information on the initiative such as the Guidelines for application and the website of the initiative will be available in the following working languages: English, French and Spanish.

7. Awards and Benefits

- 7.1 Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Label (Category 1)
 - Villages awarded with the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Label will receive a diploma and/or plate signed by the UNWTO Secretary-General as recognition.
 - The validity of this label is three years with possibility of renewal.
 - Within the period of validity UNWTO reserves the right to request any document and/or perform any activity deemed relevant to ensure the village complies with the area of evaluation.
 - No financial compensation will be given in connection with the label.
 - The Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO will be allowed to use the label logo and communicate the label in all its communication materials and activities in line with the Guidelines on the conditions of use of the logo.
 - Awarded villages will benefit from the visibility and international recognition as an outstanding example of a rural tourism destination that promotes and conserves its associated landscapes, knowledge systems, biological and cultural diversity, local values and activities (agriculture, forestry, livestock and/or fisheries), including their gastronomy 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 rural development and community well-being.

7.2 Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Upgrade Programme (Category 2)

- Villages included in this category will receive support from UNWTO and Partners to improve elements of the areas identified as gaps in the evaluation process.

7.3 Benefits for both categories - villages in both categories are entitled to:

- Be part of the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Network
- Benefit from global visibility through the UNWTO outreach and communications

8. Timeline

8.1 The launch of the pilot initiative is foreseen to take place in 2021 as per the following calendar:



8.2 The Calendar of the following years will be announced by UNWTO at the beginning of each year.

9. Announcement of Awardees

9.1 The announcement of the villages awarded in 2021 with the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Label (Category 1) and those villages included in the

Upgrade Programme (Category 2) will be done on the occasion of the 24th session of the UNWTO General Assembly from 12th to 15th of October 2021 in Marrakesh, Morocco.

- 9.2 The villages in Category 1 and in Category 2 will also be published on the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO website and through all other UNWTO communication and outreach channels.
- 9.3 If awarded with the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Label (Category 1) or included in the Upgrade Programme (Category 2), the Member may participate physically or online in the corresponding event. The Member shall be responsible for covering any travel and subsistence costs incurred.

10. **Renewal**

- 10.1 Once the validity (three years) of the label has expired, Members will be allowed to apply for the renewal of the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Label.
- 10.2 To this extent, Members will be required to undergo the evaluation process. Only those candidatures which prove to continue complying with the areas of evaluation of the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Label will be renewed for a period of another three years.

11. **Intellectual Property Rights on the Best Tourism by UNWTO Signs (Name and Emblem/Logo) and Use of the UNWTO signs**

- 11.1 UNWTO owns all intellectual property rights, including title, copyright, trademarks and patent rights in relation to or resulting from the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO initiative.
- 11.2 Villages awarded the Best Tourism Village by UNWTO Label (Category 1) will be allowed to use its signs in accordance with the Guidelines on the Conditions of Use of the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO logo.
- 11.3 The use of the UNWTO signs (name, emblem, flag or abbreviation) shall be subject to prior written authorization from the Secretary-General and to the terms and conditions established by UNWTO, as adopted by Resolution 601

(XIX).⁸

12. Monitoring and Removal of the Label

- 12.1 If awarded with the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Label (Category 1) or included in the Upgrade Programme (Category 2), the village shall provide every year, a Monitoring Report (format to be defined by UNWTO), providing information on the effective implementation of activities described in the Application Rationale and on their impact.
- 12.2 UNWTO Secretariat may conduct – directly or through third parties - monitoring actions such as ‘mystery guest’ techniques or other relevant assessment tools, i.e. social media listening, surveys, interviews, etc. to verify the ongoing compliance with the area of evaluation and with the Application Rationale during the period expanding between the award and the expiration of its validity.
- 12.3 In the event that a village awarded with the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Label fails to comply with the area of evaluation of this initiative (see 4. above) at any time during the validity of the label, UNWTO reserves the right to remove the label and exclude the village from the Network.

13. Engagement with UNWTO and the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Network

- 13.1 If awarded with the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Label (Category 1) or included in the Upgrade Programme (Category 2), the Member State shall provide regularly and in time relevant and up-to-date information related to the village’s commitment and implementation of future actions, any change in the contact details as well as information on good practices that can enhance the initiative and ensure its active participation in the Network.

14. Industrial and Intellectual Property and Personal Data Protection

- 14.1 By submitting their application, candidates expressly grant their consent to

⁸ A/RES/601(XIX) available at <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/unwtogad.2011.1.q143011gl1856q48>

the use of their name and initiatives in connection with the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Pilot Initiative and the recording and maintenance of related files. Candidates may exercise their rights to access, modify, cancel and oppose the processing of their personal details by sending an email to besttourismvillages@unwto.org indicating which right they wish to exercise and attaching a copy of their passport, national ID card or equivalent documentation.

- 14.2 By submitting their application, candidates acknowledge that referenced projects are their own originals and/or they own the necessary right to ownership or property rights thereover. Candidates agree to hold harmless UNWTO from any and all losses, claims, damages, expenses or liabilities which could arise in relation to intellectual property rights or personal data of third parties in relation to the applications submitted.
- 14.3 UNWTO shall not claim any property on the initiatives submitted or any other industrial or intellectual property contained in their application. Candidates do not cede UNWTO industrial or intellectual property rights arising as a result of their applications.
- 14.4 Villages awarded with the Best Tourism Village by UNWTO Label authorize UNWTO to upload the project summary to their respective official websites, and accept that visitors to the web pages have access to said information in accordance with the conditions of use of said website.
- 14.5 Villages awarded with the Best Tourism Village by UNWTO Label (Category 1) and those villages included in the Upgrade Programme (Category 2) authorize the use by UNWTO of all data and graphic materials provided in the application without time limit, for the purpose of being mentioned on the website or any other media owned by UNWTO for any actions or events related in any way with UNWTO, as well as for its recording in the historical archives and storage media of diverse nature of UNWTO and linked to the programme.

15. Limitation of Liability and Indemnity

- 15.1 Under no circumstances shall UNWTO be responsible to candidates for any loss, direct, indirect, incidental, special or consequential damage, liability or expense incurred or suffered that is claimed to have resulted from or in connection with the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO pilot initiative. Candidates agree to indemnify and hold harmless UNWTO from and against any and all legal liability, claims, losses, actions, damages and expenses that may occur, directly or indirectly, from or in relation to this initiative, including, without limitation, any infringement of the intellectual property rights or other rights of any third party with respect to the projects they submit.

16. Acceptance of the Terms and Conditions

- 16.1 By submitting their application, candidates acknowledge their acceptance of the entire content of these Terms and Conditions. Failure to accept any of the provisions contained in the present Terms and Conditions shall constitute the non-participation of the candidate in the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO pilot initiative and rejection of the awarded village, if applicable.

17. Applicable Law

- 17.1 The present Terms and Conditions shall be interpreted in accordance with the General Principles of International Law to the exclusion of any national law.
- 17.2 Nothing in these Terms and Conditions or in relation to them shall be construed as a waiver of the privileges and immunities enjoyed by the UNWTO under national or international law, and/or as submitting UNWTO to any national court jurisdiction.

18. Miscellaneous

- 18.1 The timeline above provides the tentative dates relevant to the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO pilot initiative. UNWTO, at its sole discretion, may adjust these Terms and Conditions as well as this timeline at any time and in any way deemed necessary in order to carry out the procedures herein established.
- 18.2 The Initiative will be launched in 2021 as a pilot project and its continuation is subject to the approval by the 24th session of the UNWTO General Assembly.

19. Final Considerations

- 19.1 This initiative may be modified, interrupted and/or cancelled if there are justified circumstances that so warrant. Likewise, UNWTO reserves the right not to award the label to any village in the event that no submitted application meets the necessary criteria.

26 May 2021



With the vision of making tourism a positive force for transformation, rural development and community wellbeing, the **Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO** pilot initiative seeks to 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.

The **World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**, a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism knowhow. Its membership includes 159 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 500 Affiliate Members.