



HIGH LEVEL PANEL for
**A SUSTAINABLE
OCEAN ECONOMY**

The High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (Ocean Panel) has commissioned the largest body of knowledge dedicated to understanding how to shift coastal and marine tourism to a more sustainable, regenerative and resilient model. This timely collection of information, brought together by a wide range of stakeholders from a broad range of geographies, represents a comprehensive understanding of marine and coastal tourism across the world. It showcases the global scale and impact of the opportunities presented by transforming the coastal and marine tourism industry.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSFORMING COASTAL AND MARINE TOURISM TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY, REGENERATION AND RESILIENCE.

A new report commissioned by the Ocean Panel, *'Opportunities for Transforming Coastal and Marine Tourism: Towards Sustainability, Regeneration and Resilience'* examines the economic importance of the coastal and marine tourism sector, key future trends that will affect it, and presents a set of priorities to secure the long-term sustainability and viability of the sector as part of recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coastal and marine tourism represents approximately 50 percent of total global tourism which includes tourism infrastructure, impact, visitation, and spending. It constitutes the largest economic sector for most Small Island Developing States and many coastal states. Current projections estimate **by 2030, coastal and marine tourism will represent the largest ocean economy sector, employing approximately 8.5 million people.**



Coastal and marine tourism is highly dependent on the quality of coastal and marine ecosystems to attract visitors as well as extremely vulnerable to threats such as climate change and biodiversity loss. A healthy ocean is therefore the foundation upon which this sector is able to thrive. **Ensuring the long-term health of the ocean is critical to support the local communities and economies which rely on the tourism industry.**

Coastal and marine tourism has the potential to be the foundation for a sustainable ocean economy – delivering on the vision for protection, production and prosperity – by stimulating new high quality economic opportunities for local communities, restoring the natural environment and revitalising culture and heritage.

The current model of coastal and marine tourism is however inherently unsustainable, characterised by high levels of economic leakage, seasonality, and vulnerability to natural and economic shocks. Sustainability must start with reducing these negative impacts and minimising tourism's footprint.

The major disruption to the tourism industry caused by the COVID-19 pandemic offers an unprecedented opportunity to reconfigure the future of tourism away from models that are no longer sustainable. With government investment and engagement in recovery from the pandemic at an all-time, there are unprecedented conditions for change within the marine and coastal tourism industry on a global scale.

BUILDING A MORE REGENERATIVE AND RESILIENT INDUSTRY

To ensure that tourism as an industry can act as a driver for positive change, the report proposes a framework that encourages action across 3 pillars:

- Reducing the negative impacts of tourism on the local environment, economy and community;
- Regenerating ecosystems, local markets and communities;
- Building resilience to threats and future shocks and crises.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

The report proposes five foundational opportunities for government action to initiate systemic change in coastal and marine tourism as a critical part of the recovery efforts:

- 1. Focus tourism policies, plans, product development and marketing on attracting visitors who wish to engage genuinely with the communities and destinations they visit and support in the regeneration of the local environment, economy and community.**
- 2. Develop strategies to increase sustainable and resilient financing for conservation and restoration activities,** including MPA management and enforcement, leveraging user fees and environmental taxes and also building long-term solvency through the establishment and endowment of conservation trust funds to ensure conservation funding is resilient to downturns in visitation.
- 3. Collect, integrate and maintain data on sustainability indicators,** including through national ocean and tourism accounts, to inform local authorities on how to manage operational externalities, target appropriate investment for sustainability requirements and move beyond an over-reliance on GDP.
- 4. Undertake value chain analysis to align strategies and interventions to eliminate leakage and boost local economic prosperity.**
- 5. Utilise co-operation and collaborative management arrangements,** such as destination management structures, to promote engagement of all stakeholders in decision-making and implementation of tourism policies and plans, share expertise and resources and promote a common set of objectives.

Examples of innovation and leadership exist in all regions and across the spectrum of stakeholders engaged in coastal and marine tourism, but these are not yet happening and an industry-wide scale.

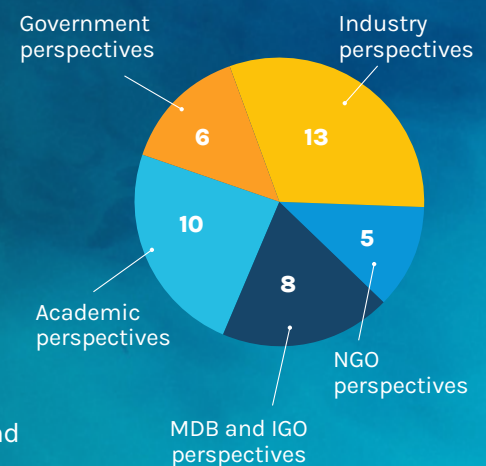
National governments have an opportunity to create an environment that recognises the true economic value of culture, heritage and natural systems, focuses on quality rather than quantity; and allows for genuine partnerships and collaboration with local communities.

To finance a positive transformation of tourism, existing financial and incentive structures will need to be revised and many destinations will require new innovative financial mechanisms to ensure a just transition.

EXPERT PERSPECTIVES

THE COMMISSIONED REPORT IS ACCOMPANIED BY A TIMELY COLLECTION OF EXPERT PERSPECTIVES AND INSIGHTS FROM 40 LEADERS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY AS WELL AS FROM GOVERNMENT, ACADEMIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ON THE FUTURE OF COASTAL AND MARINE TOURISM.

The Expert Perspectives discuss the importance of a move towards a holistic and integrated approach to marine and coastal tourism in enacting the shift to a sustainable and equitable sector. As exemplified by the wide range of diverse experts showcased in these perspectives, the tourism industry needs to be approached as a cross-cutting sector that incorporates the views of all groups across the value chain especially the local communities who deliver the experiences. The perspectives present key opportunities to begin making the necessary changes to ensure the sustainability, resilience and inclusivity of the sector as it emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic.



To read the full report and expert perspectives as well as find out more about the wider work of the Ocean Panel, please contact the Ocean Panel Secretariat: info@oceanpanel.org