

REGENERATIVE TOURISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SET OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Regenerative tourism in the Mediterranean represents a shift in both the purpose and the practice of tourism. It goes beyond reducing harm, aiming to contribute to healthier ecosystems, stronger communities, and fairer local economies. The need for regenerative tourism becomes clearer when we look at the realities facing Mediterranean territories today. The Mediterranean is a living system comprising a cradle of civilizations, cultures, biodiversity, and knowledge systems. At the same time, it is continuously shaped by migration and exchange with other regions. Today, however, it stands at a crossroads, facing the combined pressures of climate change, ecological degradation, social inequality, and fragile economic systems. In this context, certain forms of tourism can intensify pressures on already vulnerable communities and ecosystems. This makes it necessary to rethink what healthy and socially just tourism looks like, and how it can become a driver of meaningful positive change.

The starting point: Awareness

Tourism systems reflect the worldviews and values that shape them, including the power relations embedded within them. While some tourism models have contributed to wealth extraction, precarious labour, and short-term growth at the expense of local communities and ecosystems, others demonstrate that tourism can generate positive social, cultural, environmental, and economic value when it is carefully planned and responsibly managed. A regenerative future therefore requires strengthening approaches based on stewardship, reciprocity, long-term resilience, and holistic thinking. Building awareness of both the risks and the transformative potential of tourism, and imagining alternative pathways, is an important first step for territories seeking to regenerate and thrive.

Those working in Regenerative Tourism in the Mediterranean should commit to:

1. Apply Systems Thinking

Tourism is embedded in complex socio-ecological systems. It both influences and is influenced by climate, agriculture, mobility, housing, territories, water, energy, culture, politics, and many other interconnected dimensions. From this perspective, solutions should be designed to enhance the resilience and health of the system, rather than addressing challenges in isolation. A regenerative approach addresses a wider network of relationships on which the place depends on.

2. Be Place-based and Context-Specific

Each Mediterranean territory has its own ecological thresholds, culture, and aspirations. Regeneration must emerge from within place, including its knowledge, people, landscapes, and seascapes. Regeneration begins with honoring the uniqueness of place and recognizing it as a living subject. External solutions that mismatch the internal needs of the territory will not work.



3. Promote Collaborative Governance and Community Empowerment

Regeneration requires a shared but equitable responsibility among stakeholders, with roles and contributions reflecting their capabilities, influence, and relationship to place. It relies on collaboration across public authorities, businesses, academia, civil society, environmental groups, cultural institutions, financial stakeholders, citizens, and visitors. As a result, governance must be participatory, transparent, and adaptive, being able to respond to changing conditions, learn from experience, and evolve over time. Within this collaborative framework, local communities play a central role. They should guide the future of their territories.

4. Strive for Net-positive Impact

Through ecosystem restoration, cultural revival, circular economy, and stronger local economies, regenerative tourism asks: how can places become better and more *liveable*?

Climate Change and Biodiversity

The Mediterranean is among the regions where the climate crisis is most intensely felt. Rising temperatures, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, and more frequent extreme weather events are already affecting the region. In this context, regenerative tourism should contribute to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This includes protecting terrestrial and marine ecosystems, enhancing biodiversity, reducing environmental pressures, and strengthening resilience to climate shocks.

Culture as Living Heritage

While some tourism models transform territories into commodities for consumption, Mediterranean culture is a living expression of memory, identity, and belonging. Regenerative tourism should help sustain this living heritage by supporting local traditions, gastronomy, craftsmanship, languages, and cultural expressions. This perspective aligns with diversity, dignity, and open channels for participation.

From Linear to Circular

The prevailing tourism model follows a linear model of extraction, consumption, and disposal. Resources such as water, food, and clean air are not fully regenerated, while much of the economic value generated leaves the destination or is concentrated in the hands of some few. A regenerative approach seeks to keep resources circulating for longer and to increase the value retained locally. This can involve sourcing food from local producers, reusing materials, improving water and energy efficiency, and encouraging less energy-intensive ways of travel.

Local Benefits and Socially Redistributive

Regenerative tourism must contribute to the social redistribution of wealth. Economic value should be distributed more broadly across society. Equally important, it must support decent working conditions, strengthen local businesses, create opportunities for residents, and ensure that tourism



contributes to public and community assets. Another horizon for regenerative tourism is improving accessibility, both economically and socially. The opportunities, experiences, and benefits created through tourism should not be reserved for a privileged few but should be available to diverse groups within society.

Enhance Responsibility in Visitors

Through their choices and behavior, visitors influence local economies, communities, cultures, and environments. Regenerative tourism encourages visitors to engage with places in ways that are respectful, informed, and mutually beneficial. An example is being responsible for the use of resources. Travel therefore becomes an act of responsibility and reciprocity.

Foster Learning and Adaptation

Regenerative tourism requires new metrics that move beyond traditional growth indicators such as visitor numbers and total revenue. Instead, evaluation should include ecosystem health (biodiversity, water quality, land use pressure), social justice (job quality, housing affordability), and governance quality (participation, transparency, accountability). These metrics should help territories understand how tourism affects local systems over time. Consequently, the focus shifts from expansion to balance and long-term capacity. Used well, these indicators become tools for learning and adjustment, helping places adapt tourism to their ecological and social limits while improving overall wellbeing.

These principles align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with the common objective of attaining social and environmental sustainability for the present and the future. They also align with the planetary boundaries framework, which holds consideration of the biophysical limits of the Earth system for safe and healthy human development.

Towards Regeneration

Regeneration means changing how we think and work. It asks us to question old ideas of growth, share power more fairly, work together, and accept complexity. Inspired by the Mediterranean's long history of exchange, adaptation, and transformation. Building on this legacy, regeneration invites a transition:

**From competition to collaborative relationships.
From extraction to restoration and flourishing.**

This is an open invitation to rethink and redesign tourism together. We stand for tourism transformation: a collective shift towards a more collaborative, responsible, inclusive, and regenerative model. We call on destinations, businesses, communities, and travelers to adopt regenerative practices and actively support the wellbeing of people, places, and the living systems we depend on. Whether you are just beginning or already exploring regenerative approaches, the following Regenera4MED resources can help deepen your understanding and support practical action: Reflect on your perspective with the [Regenerative Tourism Journey self-assessment tool](#). Deepen your understanding with free [Regenera4MED Blueprint & Training Programme](#) online course. Access additional tools and learn more at [Regenera4MED website](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

