

**Q: What can tourism industry players do, when local community members do not wish to engage in the promotion of their tangible and intangible culture, because they don't see value in tourism and the attention it brings?**

A: As highlighted in our session, we must recognise that not all forms of culture and traditions are there to be shared with tourists. And it is the community members themselves who should decide not just HOW but also WHETHER any parts of their culture may be used for tourism. Such a refusal is often a form of resistance, protecting what the community sees as invaluable or sacred from being transformed into a product. As such, policies should prioritise their autonomy and needs, not visibility or profit, offering help only when invited and on their terms.

On the other hand, it's also important to realise that communities that do want to engage with cultural tourism may not have all the relevant information about the potential negative impacts of sharing their cultural heritage through tourism. It is the responsibility of the tourism industry decision makers such as the DMOs to ensure local community stakeholders are well informed and have received fair and balanced information regarding the possible impacts of tourism.

**Q: For destinations in emerging economies, for example, rural areas facing depopulation, how can we maintain the element of authenticity while being “presentable” to visitors who may be used to different standards and may find average rural regions in such countries “underdeveloped”?**

A: What seems underdeveloped for some might be interesting to other people. For example, King Charles is a loyal visitor of Transylvanian villages from Romania. Just after his coronation in 2023, he spent his holiday in time-forgotten villages from Transylvania, where he bought old restored houses and appreciates local culture and food.

**Q: Could you share some examples of best practises in making cultural heritage more accessible for people with disabilities?**

A: For example, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. (USA) provides tactile exhibits and detailed audio tours for people with disabilities. The Colosseum in Rome has improved accessibility with ramps and elevators for wheelchair users.

Here is a good example from Romania: [Caiac SMile - Promoting social inclusion through adaptive sports](#).

**Q: Mass tourism often does not bring economic benefits to local communities, except for entrance fees, transport costs, etc. How can we influence policies so more benefits stay locally?**

A: Stakeholders can advocate for policies that ensure tourism revenue stays within the local economies, for example, by supporting and promoting community-run services, implementing tax reforms that channel more benefits to local stakeholders, and prioritising small locally-owned businesses.

Here are some examples of destinations actively working to maximise local benefits:

- Visit South Greenland in their official DMO website [promotes](#) only local businesses, and works hard to highlight local players through media coverage, press trips, etc.
- Tribal Parks (Tofino, British Columbia, Canada) supports and strengthens local Indigenous stewardship of the land. Tourism organisations such as the local DMO Tourism Tofino DMO become “[Tribal Park Allies](#)” and contribute 1% of their revenue to the First Nation’s people.
- Visit Tallinn, the DMO for the Estonian city of Tallinn, plays a key role in promoting and preserving Estonian handicraft and its local production, through a partnership with the [Estonian Folk Art and Craft Union](#), which authenticates verified local products.

**Q: Tourism stakeholders, especially in emerging economies, often prioritise economic advantages over socio-cultural sustainability. How can we educate local entrepreneurs about the need for sustainable visitor management?**

A: We can teach local entrepreneurs practical tools like setting visitor limits, creating community-run tours, and diversifying income sources, and help them understand that managing visitors well is about protecting their resources, so that their businesses can thrive over time.

The recent report by OECD on “[Building strong and resilient tourism destinations](#)” highlights this point. *“Diversified economies are better prepared to deal with external shocks and can foster more resilient and stable economic development. This highlights the importance of developing tourism as part of a diverse local economy, considering also wider policy objectives. A diversified tourism economy is also needed to avoid an over-reliance on a narrow range of markets, products, or seasons.”*

**Q: What can be done if visitor management tactics do not help enough to reduce overtourism, for example, even when a fee to visit a destination doesn’t deter people from coming?**

A: When visitor management tactics aren’t enough, destinations need to combine measures, like stricter caps on daily visitors, and dispersing tourism to lesser-known areas, along with reinvesting tourism revenue into protecting local life and infrastructure.

The most important aspect of such visitor management solutions, though, is actually dealing with the root causes of “overtourism” issues, rather than just addressing the symptoms. The

destination must actually define its tourism success with local wellbeing in mind. No individual measures will help actually solve the problem if the model of tourism that the destination pursues at the core is unsustainable.

**Q: What can destinations with seasonal tourist sites, such as World Heritage cultural sites, do to effectively manage visitor flows and impacts?**

A: For sites that face significant pressures during peak periods, it will be important for the destination organisations to implement clear visitor volume and flow management measures such as setting a maximum number of visitors to the site per day, or mandating groups to be accompanied by licensed local tour guides. These are especially important in the busy period during which high visitor numbers are expected, in order to protect the site from overuse and misuse.

In addition, destinations that have significant seasonal fluctuations (“over tourism” in peak seasons, “under tourism” in low seasons), it is also important to consider measures to spread visitor volume across different times of the year by extending tourism seasons and spreading tourism opportunities. [This guide](#) by the Interreg EXPERIENCE project provides useful insights on designing and marketing low-season experiences.

**Q: How can we, as tourists, critically assess whether the involvement of communities in tourism initiatives is genuinely participatory and aligned with their own values and agency? And what can we look for, in practice, to choose tourism experiences that are truly respectful and community-driven?**

A: The most important step that each tourist can take is to ask. Before reserving a tour, purchasing a service, or booking a hotel room, ask the business or service provider you are considering questions about their local engagement. If the company just gives vague descriptions of their ambitions about being responsible, that may be a sign that they have not taken concrete steps in truly engaging with local communities.

If, on the other hand, the company is able to show tangible examples of what they are actually doing to ensure genuine community participation and responsible engagement of local culture, you can support such efforts not only by booking with them, but also by sharing your experiences with others. [Here](#) are additional ideas and suggestions shared by a journalist and leading advocate of sustainable tourism, Lebewit Lily Girma.

**Q: One of the reasons fauna like big carnivores is returning to the mountains is the abandonment of the mountain areas. So, are there sustainable ways to allow the development and conservation of traditional Almen management while also improving the development of the natural mountain biodiversity? Is sustainable tourism compatible with nature conservation?**

A: Yes, abandonment is one element of the return of carnivores. However, it is more important the dramatic decrease of personnel on the “Almen” has led to a decreasing maintenance; due to better infrastructure (mountain roads) most “Almen” are managed from the home farms and personnel do not stay on the “Almen” any more. Furthermore, very strict protection regimes allowed the carnivores to come back. And yes, sustainable tourism can be one element for the future maintenance of “Almen” that is also sustainable in economic terms. But we lack convincing concepts.