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UN Tourism

Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism

Regional Focus on Asia and the Pacific

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Foreword

by Zurab Pololikashvili
Secretary-General,
World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism)

There is currently an undeniable trend within the international travellers' community toward responsible travel. Many travellers seek an authentic experience of indigenous culture and interaction with indigenous communities in Asia and the Pacific. That interest, heightened by a "craving-for-adventure" feel, needs to be tempered by criteria for responsible tourism policies, strategies and tourist behaviour. Greater equity between indigenous and non-indigenous worlds is needed, and tourism is well placed to contribute to that goal. Equity generates trust, opening the way for new partnerships. As highlighted in the first UN Tourism/WINTA *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism – Regional Focus on the Americas,* our sector can gain much from the great diversity of indigenous knowledge, as a source of authentic experiences. However, indigenous tourism cannot be undertaken unilaterally – without creating alliances engaging indigenous communities, tourism administrations and destinations, the private sector and civil society.

Academic institutions must also get on board through research, training and the supply of relevant data. Since more than a decade UN Tourism and WINTA have been advocating together for governments, destinations and tourism businesses to ensure that tourism planning is properly aligned with the needs of the Indigenous Peoples. Only through such alliances, structured around the indigenous communities, a proper distribution of the benefits derived from tourism can be ensured in Asia and the Pacific. Only through such partnerships, indigenous cultures can be safeguarded and consensus reached on adopting policies to accomplish these goals.

Foreword

by Chief Frank Antoine
Board Chair,
World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (WINTA)

Since its establishment in 2012, the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (WINTA) has been promoting Indigenous Rights with a strong emphasis on self-determination and self-governance for indigenous communities. WINTA aims to strengthen its organizational structures to support these goals, continuing the enduring legacy of foundational figures such as the late Ben Sherman and Johnny Edmonds. Their unwavering commitment to indigenous rights has been instrumental in shaping WINTA's mission and serves as a robust foundation for future initiatives. Today, the challenges facing indigenous rights are increasingly complex and demanding. Collaborative efforts between international bodies such as UN Tourism and WINTA are essential to effectively address these issues. Our bilateral partnership, established in 2012, has fostered the development of key publications that offer insights to various stakeholders – indigenous communities, government agencies and the tourism sector – to foster a deeper understanding of indigenous tourism.

This Compendium of Good Practices is the fourth publication resulting from our ongoing partnership with UN Tourism, and the second of its kind. The document presents compelling examples of successful indigenous tourism practices within the Asia and Pacific regions, showcasing both the diversity and success of these initiatives. In addition to offering inspirational examples, this compendium provides essential recommendations for government organizations, aiming to enhance tourism experiences and advance indigenous rights through informed and respectful engagement. Together, we invite you to explore and learn from these remarkable cases, and to join us in fostering a tourism landscape where indigenous communities thrive, and their rights are upheld and respected.

Executive summary

From the start of their bilateral collaboration, UN Tourism and WINTA have promoted good practices in indigenous tourism, analysing different approaches to development and applying human rights principles. Following the success of the joint *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism – Regional Focus on the Americas,*[1] published in 2023, UN Tourism and WINTA invited indigenous and non-indigenous organizations, communities, as well as public and private entities to share good practices from Asia and the Pacific, with the view to:

- Analyse the role of **intercultural dialogue** in designing indigenous tourism policies in Asia and the Pacific that boasts the highest percentage of indigenous population;

- Explore how Indigenous Peoples leverage tourism for **cultural transmission;**

- Feature good practices in **indigenous community leadership,** as well as the Indigenous Peoples' empowerment through entrepreneurship in tourism;

- Showcase **authentic tourism experiences** in areas of high cultural or environmental significance for Indigenous Peoples and humankind; and

- Include a set of **recommendations for public administrations** and **destinations** in Asia and the Pacific.

The methodology has included the development of a questionnaire, in-depth be-to-be interviews with indigenous leaders and consultations with indigenous communities. This approach reflects the authentic voices of indigenous communities and perspectives, illustrating their challenges, success stories and strategies in developing tourism experiences, while preserving their heritage and traditional knowledge. Some examples provide more in-depth information while other cases feature projects on the right track, though still in progress.

A total of 14 case studies have been selected, reflecting a wide range of realities faced by indigenous communities, ranging from **India** and **Nepal** in South Asia, spanning over **China, Indonesia, Japan,** the **Philippines** and **Viet Nam** in East Asia, and further south towards **Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Palau** and **Vanuatu** in the Pacific.[2]

Following an introduction to the main concepts, the benefits and the challenges of indigenous tourism and an overview of the Asia and the Pacific region, 14 case studies are presented and featured under six headings in chapter three:

1. **Enabling intercultural dialogue for the benefit of more effective indigenous tourism policies;**

2. **Leveraging indigenous cultural revitalization and culture-based capacity building for income generation;**

3. **Harnessing indigenous associations and community organizations for tourism development;**

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1   World Tourism Organization and World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (2023), *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism – Regional Focus on the Americas,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284424184.

2   Consult the annex for UN Tourism regional country classifications.

4. **Supporting indigenous empowerment through training, entrepreneurship and market-ready experiences;**

5. **Promoting traditional knowledge, farming practices and biodiversity preservation;** and

6. **Understanding indigenous and non-indigenous alliances in tourism.**

Asia and the Pacific countries and their Indigenous Peoples refer to themselves in relation to non-indigenous populations, in very diverse ways. The terms vary from "aboriginal" and "native peoples" and "first nations" to "tribes", "original dwellers" or "ethnic minorities". While the term "minority" is not aligned with the UN Tourism and WINTA principles of indigenous development, the partners have accepted inputs applying diverse terminology, opening doors to dialogue and facilitating connections between different peoples of the region.

Aboriginal culture show in Queensland, Australia. © Rafael Ben Ari | Dreamstime.com

01.
Indigenous tourism: concepts and global background

Abstract: This chapter sets a conceptual basis for understanding Indigenous Peoples and indigenous tourism in Asia and the Pacific. It approaches indigenous tourism from the lens of cultural diversity and universal values while distinguishing "indigenous" from "community-based tourism" (CBT). The chapter also takes a deep dive into the international framework and analyses principal opportunities and challenges of indigenous tourism.

Key words: cultural diversity | universal values | indigenous tourism | community-based tourism | CBT

Key findings:
- Indigenous tourism represents a unique empowering model that centres on the **active involvement and cultural stewardship** of Indigenous Peoples.
- By integrating elements of **ecotourism, adventure tourism,** cultural tourism, gastronomy and other elements, it provides a versatile framework extending beyond traditional concepts.
- Unlike other tourism forms that receive support due to their geographical and activity-based focus, indigenous tourism prioritizes **indigenous cultural rights** and autonomy.
- Indigenous tourism not only enhances the sector's role in **enabling cultural expression and rights activation but** also highlights its adaptability to rural and urban settings alike.

Tra Su indigo forest, Viet Nam. © Hoxuanhuong | Dreamstime.com

1.1
Cultural diversity, universal values and indigenous tourism

Indigenous Peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained distinctive social, cultural and economic characteristics and have transmitted their cultural capital over centuries.

Despite their regional differences, Indigenous Peoples share common issues related to their rights and the lack of recognition of leadership in decision-making, affecting their livelihoods. The indigenous organizations composing WINTA champion the universal **values that define humankind**. These include the generosity and trust shown by indigenous communities in welcoming visitors. Guests must receive the same care, protection and comfort as a community's own families, as a matter of reciprocal respect between fellow human beings. The indigenous values of hospitality, respect for nature and reverence towards their ancestral forebears and traditional lands, serve as **guiding principles** and a hallmark of their communities for the planet. In that spirit, Indigenous Peoples can work in partnership with the tourism sector to create enterprises committed to protecting their culture and their natural resources, regarded as **sacred.**

The world's indigenous and tribal populations, totalling more than **476 million, comprise some 5000 distinct peoples in 90 countries,** speaking more than 4000 languages.[3]

Nearly three-quarters (260 million) of Indigenous Peoples live in Asia and the Pacific.[4]

UNESCO recognizes that Indigenous Peoples play a key role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and recreation of intangible heritage, enriching human creativity. Its 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions enacts measures to promote cultural expressions, paying special attention to Indigenous Peoples.[5]

Asia and the Pacific is the most culturally diverse region in the world, and its economies rely on indigenous and traditional knowledge.[6] China boasts the biggest population with 125 million Indigenous People (8.9% of the total population)[7] including Tibetans, Uyghurs, Zhuang and 52 other recognized groups. India has 104 million Indigenous People (8.6% of the population), the Philippines has 15 million and Viet Nam has 14 million (each representing 15% of the population)[8].

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3   The United Nations International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is celebrated on 9 August. Consult for more information:
     United Nations – Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1994), 'International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples', UNDESA, New York, available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/international-day-of-the-worlds-indigenous-peoples.html [11-02-2025].

4   International Labour Organization (2021), 'Indigenous and tribal peoples', ILO, Geneva, available at: https://www.ilo.org [25-11-2024].

5   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), 'Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage', UNESCO, Paris, available at: https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention [25-11-2024].

6   Consult for more information:
     United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2024), 'Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS)', 'Asia and the Pacific', UNESCO, Paris, available at: https://www.unesco.org/en/links/asia-pacific [11-02-2025].

7   China Statistics Press (2021), *China Statistical Yearbook 2021,* available at: https://www.stats.gov.cn/sj/ndsj/2021/indexeh.htm [19/02/2025].

8   Buchholz, K. (2022), 'Where the World's Indigenous People Live', published 9 August 2022, Statista, available at: https://www.statista.com [25-11-2024].

1.2
Understanding indigenous tourism, community-based tourism and other related concepts

Indigenous tourism **is the tourism activity in which Indigenous Peoples are directly involved through control and/or by having their culture serving as the essence of the attraction.**[9]

While indigenous tourism focusses on indigenous communities, indigenous tourism features overlapping models that combine ecotourism, mountain tourism, adventure tourism, rural tourism and cultural tourism.[10] The latter have historically garnered more support from governments and destinations in product development and marketing than indigenous tourism. The highlight of these types of tourism is the geographical setting, type of activity, or the attractions. For example, cultural tourism promotes visiting ancient sites, museums or admiring architecture or a cultural event. However, it does not focus on Indigenous Peoples and their culture. Tourism within indigenous territories is often referred to as *ethnic tourism*[11] or *community-based tourism*[12] (CBT). CBT refers to a model of tourism that places the community at the centre of tourism planning, development and management. CBT aims to improve the communities' quality of life by optimizing local economic benefits, protecting the natural and cultural environments and providing high quality visitor experiences.[13] The CBT is a model accessible to any community to develop tourism, either indigenous or non-indigenous, rural or urban. Conversely, some countries adopt the concept of rural tourism, which encompasses the rural environment as a whole.[14] However, it is essential to recognize that tourism initiatives developed by Indigenous Peoples can also thrive in urban contexts, demonstrating the adaptability of indigenous tourism practices.

Most indigenous communities in Asia and the Pacific who do not declare themselves *indigenous* due to a series

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9   Butler, R. and Hinch, T. (2007), *Tourism and Indigenous Peoples,* 1st edition, Routledge, London, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080553962.

10   World Tourism Organization (2019), *UNWTO Tourism Definitions,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420858.
     See therein among others:
     "Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination.
     These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions."
     "Rural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle / culture, angling and sightseeing. Rural tourism activities take place in non-urban (rural) areas with the following characteristics: low population density; landscape and land-use dominated by agriculture and forestry; and traditional social structure and lifestyle."

11   Defined as tourism marketed to the public, highlighting the 'quaint' customs of indigenous and often 'exotic' peoples by: Smith, V.L. (ed., 1989), *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism,* 2nd edition, University of Pennsylvania Press, available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fhc8w [25-11-2024].

12   According to UN Tourism, *community-based tourism* (CBT) refers to tourism activities and services which have been developed by local community members, working together in a CBT club or group, sometimes in partnership with the private sector. Consult for more information:
     World Tourism Organization (2021), 'Community based tourism training workshop I World Tourism Day (27)', UN Tourism, Madrid, available online at: https://www.unwto.org/es/node/12238 [25-11-2024].

13   Consult for more information:
     World Tourism Organization (2020), *AlUla Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422159.

14   In some regions, "rural-community tourism" is used to refer to initiatives developed by Indigenous Peoples.
     Zielinski, S.; Kim, S.-I.; Botero, C. M., and Yanes, A. (2020), 'Why community-based tourism and rural tourism in developing and developed nations are treated differently? A review', *Sustainability,* 12(15), 5938, DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/su12155938.

of geopolitical and historical reasons, and who would partially fit into the United Nations or WINTA principles defining *Indigenous Peoples,* refer to their projects as CBT. The latter is undertaken by communities of diverse cultural and ethnic origins.

There is no internationally agreed definition of what constitute Indigenous Peoples or ethnic minorities. An ethnic group generally shares a common sense of identity and common characteristics such as language, religion, tribe, nationality, race or a combination thereof. The term *ethnic minority* generally refers to ethnic or racial groups in a given country in which they are in a non-dominant position vis-à-vis the dominant ethnic population.[15]

Indigenous Peoples tend to belong to cultural groups linked by ethnic characteristics, language, beliefs, kinship or nationality.[16] One major characteristic distinguishing *Indigenous* from *ethnic Peoples* lies in previous colonization processes by prevailing ethnic groups, forcible displacement and denied access to resources sustaining their livelihoods.[17] This publication adopts the term *indigenous tourism* to encompass a range of definitions related to tourism in indigenous territories. Indigenous tourism extends beyond traditional concepts by connecting with indigenous rights, arising from the inseparable link between tourism development and the international framework on indigenous rights.[18] Empowered Indigenous Peoples harness tourism development to exercise their rights, implying that indigenous tourism can only be developed by Indigenous Peoples, who maintain control over planning and delivering tourism experiences. This allows them to decide which aspects of their culture to share and how to promote them, among other critical considerations.

Since 2000, UN Tourism has conducted CBT projects throughout Asia and the Pacific by formulating tourism development plans and carrying out institutional strengthening. The projects revealed the magnitude of the influence of tourism on the local communities and the incapability of existing theories in accommodating its rapid growth.[19] However, these projects did not focus on the region's vast indigenous sphere.

Bajau Laut women in Semporna, Malaysia.
© Noracarol | Dreamstime.com

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15   United Nations – Human Rights (1992), 'Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities', United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 47/135, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-rights-persons-belonging-national-or-ethnic [12-06-2025].

16   Stone, J. (2003), 'Max Weber on Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism', in: J. Stone, J. and Dennis, R. (eds.), *Race and Ethnicity: Comparative and Theoretical Approaches,* Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Hoboken, pp. 28–42.

17   Carr, A.; Ruhanen, L. and Whitford, M. (2016), 'Indigenous peoples and tourism: the challenges and opportunities for sustainable tourism', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism,* 24(8–9), pp. 1067–1079, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2016.1206112.

18   United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that is linked to tourism through the six principles defined in the Larrakia Declaration. Consult for more information:
United Nations (2007), '61/295. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007 as resolution A/RES/61/295', UN, New York, available online at: https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/61 [11-02-2025].

19   World Tourism Organization (2008), *Tourism and Community Development: Asian Practices,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284411948.

1.3
The international political framework for indigenous tourism development

Following the adoption of the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** in 2007,[20] tourism was one of the pioneers to recognize its importance, with **WINTA's Larrakia Declaration.**[21] The Declaration establishes six principles to guide indigenous tourism development towards establishing strong equitable alliances with the tourism sector, for the benefit of indigenous communities.

In 2017, based on the consultations with indigenous associations, and after being endorsed by the World Committee on Tourism Ethics,[22] UN Tourism produced

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The six principles of the Larrakia Declaration

1. **Respect:** Respect for customary law and lore, land and water, traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions, and cultural heritage that will underpin all tourism decisions.
2. **Protection:** Indigenous culture and the land and waters on which it is based, will be protected and promoted through well-managed tourism practices and appropriate interpretation.
3. **Empowerment:** Indigenous Peoples will determine the extent and nature, and organizational arrangements for their participation in tourism and governments and multilateral agencies will support the empowerment of Indigenous People.
4. **Consultation:** Governments have a duty to consult and accommodate Indigenous Peoples before undertaking decisions on public policy and programs designed to foster the development of indigenous tourism.
5. **Business:** The tourism industry will respect indigenous intellectual property rights, cultures and traditional practices, the need for sustainable and equitable business partnerships and the proper care of the environment and communities that support them.
6. **Community:** Equitable partnerships between the tourism industry and Indigenous People will include the sharing of cultural awareness and skills development which support the well-being of communities and enable enhancement of individual livelihoods.

Note: Different to WINTA referring to the *tourism industry* in singular, UN Tourism defines that the *tourism sector* is composed by various *tourism industries.* Consult the UN Tourism Glossary of terms at: www.unwto.org.

Source: Larrakia Declaration, available at: https://winta.org/wp-content/uploads/2012-Larrakia-Declaration-ENG.pdf

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20   United Nations (2007), '61/295. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007 as resolution A/RES/61/295', UN, New York, available online at: https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/61 [11-02-2025].

21   Adopted in Darwin, Australia, in 2012. Consult for more information:
World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (2012), *Larrakia Declaration on the Development of Indigenous Tourism,* UN Tourism Executive Council, CE/94/5(a) Add.1, UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: https://winta.org/wp-content/uploads/2012-Larrakia-Declaration-ENG.pdf [12-06-2025].

22   World Tourism Organization (n.d.), 'World Committee on Tourism Ethics', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: https://www.unwto.org/world-committee-tourism-ethics [12-02-2025].

Recommendations on Sustainable Development of Indigenous Tourism,[23] adopted by the UN Tourism General Assembly as a policy reference. The Recommendations are calling for tourism businesses to conduct their operations responsibly, by engaging in consultation which permits indigenous communities to take a full grasp of such opportunities and fully exercise their rights in doing so. The Recommendations also target the tourists visiting indigenous communities. In 2020, UN Tourism and WINTA issued a new set of recommendations, the *UNWTO Inclusive Recovery Guide – Sociocultural Impacts of COVID-19, Issue 4: Indigenous Communities*[24] including input from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). These guidelines urge countries to transition from the *assistance* model to one of *facilitating* indigenous tourism, especially through strengthened digital and entrepreneurial capacities. They also demand for recognition of indigenous cultural assets by public administrations and businesses. This reference document had also put in the spotlight the development of governance mechanisms gathering indigenous communities, policymakers and private sector key players to facilitate new collaboration platforms, establish benefits-sharing thresholds and fair business agreements. UN Tourism and WINTA issued in 2023 a joint *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism – Regional Focus on the Americas*[25] including case studies provided by indigenous leaders, showcasing a wide range of solutions championed by indigenous organizations at national and local community levels, in ten different countries of the Americas. The report also set forward tips targeting public administrations and tourists engaging with indigenous communities. A table below provides only a selection of key documents which represent a foundational framework for the indigenous tourism development, worldwide.

Table 1.1: **International and technical documents addressing indigenous and indigenous tourism matters**

International documents	Year
United Nations: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights[26]	1948
International Labour Organization: Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in independent countries[27]	1989
United Nations: United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples[28]	2007
World Indigenous Tourism Alliance: Larrakia Declaration on the Development of Indigenous Tourism[29]	2012
Organization of American States: American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples[30]	2016

23   World Tourism Organization (2019), *Recommendations on Sustainable Development of Indigenous Tourism,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284421299.

24   World Tourism Organization (2021), *UNWTO Inclusive Recovery Guide – Sociocultural Impacts of Covid-19, Issue 2: Cultural Tourism,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422579.

25   World Tourism Organization and World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (2023), *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism – Regional Focus on the Americas,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284424184.

26   United Nations (1948), *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* UN, New York, available at: https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights [19-02-2025].]

27   International Labour Organization (1989), 'C169 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)', NormLex, ILO, Geneva, available at: https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:12000 [11-02-2025].

28   United Nations (2007), '61/295. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007 as resolution A/RES/61/295', UN, New York, available online at: https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/61 [11-02-2025].

29   World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (2012), Larrakia Declaration on the Development of Indigenous Tourism, UN Tourism Executive Council, CE/94/5(a) Add.1, UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: https://winta.org/wp-content/uploads/2012-Larrakia-Declaration-ENG.pdf [12-06-2025].

30   Organization of American States (2016), 'American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples', OAS, Santo Domingo, available at: https://www.oas.org/en/sare/documents/DecAmIND.pdf [11-02-2025].

Technical documents	Year
Pacific Asia Travel Association: *Indigenous Tourism & Human Rights In Asia & the Pacific. Region. Review, Analysis & Checklists*[31]	2015
GAdventures and Planeterra *Indigenous peoples and the travel industry. Global good practice guidelines*[32]	2017
World Intellectual Property Organization: *Protect and Promote Your Culture: A Practical Guide to Intellectual Property for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities*[33]	2017
Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada: *National Guidelines: Developing Authentic Indigenous Experiences in Canada*[34]	2018
World Tourism Organization (World Committee on Tourism Ethics) and World Indigenous Tourism Alliance: *Recommendations of the Ethics on Sustainable Development of Indigenous Tourism*[35]	2019
World Tourism Organization and World Indigenous Tourism Alliance: *UNWTO Inclusive Recovery Guide – Sociocultural Impacts of Covid-19, Issue 4: Indigenous Communities*[36]	2021
World Tourism Organization and World Indigenous Tourism Alliance: *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism – Regional Focus on the Americas*[37]	2023
World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC): *Supporting Global Indigenous Tourism*[38]	2024

Source:　Le Moigne, J.-P. (2024), 'Indigenous Tourism International Framework, Rights, and Empowerment of Grassroots Organizations. Latin America and the Chilean Case', in: Butler, R. and Carr, A. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism and Indigenous Peoples* (1st ed.), Routledge, London, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003230335, updated in 2025 by the author.

In addition to being the custodial organization of the Larrakia Declaration and working closely with UN Tourism, WINTA was the main actor of the Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism Conference,[39] and the creator of the World Indigenous Tourism Summit.[40]

31　Pacific Asia Travel Association (2015), Indigenous Tourism & Human Rights In Asia & the Pacific. Region. Review, Analysis & Checklists, PATA, Bangkok, available at: https://www.pata.org/catalog [11-02-2025].

32　GAdventures and Planeterra (2017), Indigenous peoples and the travel industry. Global good practice guidelines, available at: https://media.gadventures.com/media-server/dynamic/admin/flatpages/Indigenous_Tourism_Guidelines_2017.pdf [11-02-2025].

33　World Intellectual Property Organization (2017), *Protect and Promote Your Culture: A Practical Guide to Intellectual Property for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities,* WIPO, Geneva, DOI: https://doi.org/10.34667/tind.28997.

34　Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (2018), *National Guidelines: Developing Authentic Indigenous Experiences in Canada,* ITAC, Vancouver, available at: https://indigenoustourism.ca/tools-resources/ [11-02-2025].

35　World Tourism Organization (2019), *Recommendations on Sustainable Development of Indigenous Tourism,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284421299.

36　World Tourism Organization (2021), *UNWTO Inclusive Recovery Guide – Sociocultural Impacts of Covid-19, Issue 4: Indigenous Communities,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422852.

37　World Tourism Organization and World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (2023), *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism – Regional Focus on the Americas,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284424184.

38　World Travel & Tourism Council (2024), *Supporting Global Indigenous Tourism,* WTTC, London, available at: https://researchhub.wttc.org [12-05-2025].

39　The Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism conference has been held three times: 2012 in Darwin, Australia; 2015 in Vancouver, Canada; and virtually in 2021 in Chile. Consult more information at: https://live.eventtia.com/en/paitc2021 [12-02-2025].

40　The World Indigenous Tourism Summit has been held three times: 2017 in Aotearoa, New Zealand; 2023 in Perth, Australia; and in 2024 in Taipei, Taiwan Province of China. Consult more information at: https://www.wits2024.com.tw/en/ [12-02-2025].

1.4
The opportunities and challenges posed by indigenous tourism

Tourism led by indigenous communities can be structured to incentivize improvements in indigenous living standards and especially to:

- **Encourage cultural interaction and revitalization;**

- **Create jobs and reduce poverty;**

- **Stimulate and strengthen local economies and value chains;**

- **Curb the exodus from rural areas;**

- **Empower women and young people;**

- **Promote diversification in product development of destinations;** and

- **Instil a sense of pride, belonging and self-actualization.**

However, **indigenous tourism also raises ethical and socioeconomic questions.** For centuries, Indigenous Peoples have faced discrimination, displacement, cultural absorption and decimation of their life-sustaining resources. Against that background, approaches to tourism development that disregard basic questions of human rights and inequality can do more harm than good. This occurs when most of the income generated from indigenous tourism is flowing back to travel agencies and other intermediaries. Similarly, the negative trend occurs when visitors fail to pursue genuine cultural interaction with their indigenous hosts, or balk at paying fair prices for local arts and crafts or accommodation, given the lack of **awareness or information.** Some communities may wish to confine tourism to large or small group visits, or for displays of traditional dress for special occasions. Others may stick to their traditional lives but feel pressured to receive tourists seeking *exotic* experiences. Tourism promotes intercultural dialogue and can therefore provide for **reconciliation** between the indigenous and non-indigenous worlds after centuries of misunderstanding; and tourism has been increasingly serving that purpose.

The halt of tourism due to COVID-19 has underscored the need for communities to diversify their economies and revive traditional and – often – abandoned activities. Since 2020, many communities have acquired new skills and received support geared towards increasing their resilience and genuine cultural interaction between with visitors, based on respect for their cultural values and their rights. COVID-19 has shed light on the many structural problems affecting Indigenous Peoples. In the case of women and youth, there are some added factors of inequality, barriers to engage in entrepreneurship, land ownership and limited direct access to consumers – all undermining their socioeconomic empowerment.

The cultural diversity and indigenous knowledge can bring innovative experiences and create opportunities for destinations and communities. Involving communities in meaningful ways and showcasing their leadership, is essential; yet indigenous economies often remain informal or reluctant to apply established governance mechanisms, making them vulnerable to external shocks. These include health-related alerts, social unrest or disasters caused by climatic elements or extreme geological events, frequent in Asia and the Pacific.

02.
The great potential of indigenous tourism for community development in Asia and the Pacific

Abstract: While Indigenous Peoples have been consolidating their associations and have increasingly embraced tourism, most of them still need to strengthen indigenous tourism products so they would be more competitive in the international market. This chapter explores just a selection of strategic approaches corresponding to some of the key challenges that are particularly characteristic of the Asia and the Pacific region.

Key words: indigenous rights | leadership | cultural expressions | intellectual property rights

Key findings:
- Governments and private sector key players from Asia and the Pacific now acknowledge more readily the diversity of **indigenous cultural capital, cultural expressions** and **intellectual property.**
- Destinations nowadays value indigenous cultural capital for its positioning in the tourism market.
- **Public administrations** are more aware of the **rights** and increasing autonomy Indigenous Peoples assert, with some communities regaining management over their ancestral territories and their culture.
- **Women** are often the principal bearers of indigenous culture, while running the bulk of hospitality enterprises in many communities.

Lantern festival at Luang Prabang, Lao People's Democratic Republic.
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2.1
Key strategies and tools to strengthen indigenous tourism products and experiences

Some of the key strategies and tools aimed at strengthening indigenous tourism products and experiences relate to managing leadership, data collection, intellectual property, networking opportunities, indigenous migration in relation to rural development, as well as advancing the role of women in designing indigenous tourism experiences.

2.1.1 Indigenous leadership

There are some critical conditions required to afford indigenous communities a better quality of life and consolidate the role of indigenous tourism leaders. These prerequisites include access to services, education, business skills, healthcare and economic stability – all essential to retaining especially the younger generations on indigenous territories.[41]

In Asia and the Pacific, Indigenous Peoples are underrepresented in the overall economy, including the tourism sector; they are often the vulnerable demographic, as their **poverty rate is three times higher than average.**[42] The indigenous traditional knowledge and livelihoods depend directly on sustained access to their land, natural resources and territories. Indigenous Peoples also depend on customary collective and individual rights applicable to communal lands and

natural resources.[43] All these circumstances have either direct or indirect impact on tourism development in communities. Therefore, empowering indigenous leaders in tourism development is crucial, as demonstrated by leading countries in this sphere, such as Australia and New Zealand in Asia and the Pacific, or Canada and the United States of America. These nations showcase how strengthening indigenous tourism governance and entrepreneurial skills has significantly advanced both relationships with government agencies and the support that grassroot organizations provide to their members. This support includes creating authentic, and high-quality experiences that are successfully connected with the market, and that, therefore, are competitive and have higher prospects of further growth.

Formal associations of indigenous entrepreneurs in tourism first appeared in the 1990s in North America with the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA)[44] at national level in the United States of America, and at the provincial level in Canada with the Tourisme Autochtone Québec (TAQ).[45] These grassroot organizations were guided by a vision of self-determination and the tourism models that communities wanted to strengthen. Driven by a need to combat cultural misrepresentation and over-exploitation through mainstream tourism with an unequal share of benefits, Indigenous Peoples began creating their own

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41   World Tourism Organization and World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (2023), *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism – Regional Focus on the Americas*, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284424184.

42   West, J. (2014), 'Asia's Indigenous people', Asian Century Institute Asian Century Institute Asian Century Institute, available at: https://www.asiancenturyinstitute.com [25-11-2024].

43   United Nations – Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2018), 'Indigenous peoples' rights to lands, territories and resources at the centre of UN annual forum', *News,* UNDESA, New York, available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/social/unpfii17.html [17-03-2025].

44   American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association, available at: https://www.aianta.org [05-06-2025].

45   Tourisme Autochtone Québec, available at: https://tourismeautochtone.com [05-06-2025].

tourism ventures. This empowered them to protect their traditions, share their narratives and gain economic independence through tourism. Similar associations have been established in Asia and the Pacific, with the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC) in Australia and New Zealand Māori Tourism, both recognized internationally. The Aboriginal and Māori groups began actively developing tourism to reclaim cultural narratives, generate income, and educate visitors. They started setting up their own businesses, designing experiences that authentically reflected their worldviews, traditions, and stories; not just as performers for visitors, but as hosts and narrators of their heritage, as well as champions in the protection of nature areas.

Specifically in the Asia Pacific region, the PATA/WINTA publication on *Iindigenous Tourism & Human Rights in Asia & the Pacific Region. Review, Analysis & Checklists*[46] from 2015 was essential, as it set forward a **checklist based on the Larrakia Declaration**.[47] Tailored to be used by indigenous communities, governments and the tourism industries – this checklist offers indicators for each of the six principles (see chapter 1.3). Furthermore, the list connects the Larrakia principles to relevant articles laid out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).[48] Central to the report are themes such as the protection of human rights to prevent displacement, ensuring collaborative tourism development with Indigenous communities, preserving cultural heritage, fostering economic benefits and empowering Indigenous Peoples as key decision-makers and leaders in tourism development.

In most indigenous communities, traditional leadership roles have been conferred to senior members of the communities, frequently men, often called the *indigenous elders*. However, leadership roles evolve as indigenous communities are more connected to external social and economic trends that they wish to adapt to improve their collective well-being. This is why promoting human capital development through tailor-made programmes with a special focus on women, youth and other commonly marginalized community members can forge new leaders in tourism planning, management, marketing and communication. While the wisdom and traditional knowledge of the elders had top priority for communities' survival during severe hardships, the intricate value chain of the tourism sector may require more specific skills, making the tourism development feasible on the long run. The required capacities involve identifying, enhancing and strengthening the stewardship, resource mobilization, mentoring, accountability, project management and team working skills of influential community members **who desire to play a visible role** in improving the lives of community members.[49]

A growing number of success stories (e.g. from the first UN Tourism/WINTA compendium[50] and the present one), have involved **indigenous leadership, management and co-management of areas, boasting unique environmental and cultural features in particular.** These models are frequently based on concessions given to indigenous enterprises, or the recovery and due recognition of ownership over indigenous territories in Asia and the Pacific and elsewhere. Governments have also launched programmes making indigenous tourism a pillar of their strategies for social inclusion, entrepreneurship and regional development. **Such policies have resulted from extensive dialogue to reach mutual understandings** and the realization that investments in essential services do not only provide the basis for the tourism sector, but also for the whole community and national economies to thrive.

46   Pacific Asia Travel Association (2015), *Indigenous Tourism & Human Rights In Asia & the Pacific. Region. Review, Analysis & Checklists,* PATA, Bangkok, available at: https://www.pata.org/catalog [11-02-2025].

47   World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (2012), *Larrakia Declaration on the Development of Indigenous Tourism,* UN Tourism Executive Council, CE/94/5(a) Add.1, UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: https://winta.org/wp-content/uploads/2012-Larrakia-Declaration-ENG.pdf [12-06-2025].

48   United Nations (2007), '61/295. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007 as resolution A/RES/61/295', UN, New York, available online at: https://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/61 [11-02-2025].

49   World Tourism Organization (2020), *AlUla Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422159.

50   World Tourism Organization and World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (2023), *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism – Regional Focus on the Americas,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284424184.

2.1.2 Data collection and analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data needed for indigenous tourism planning are still scarce in Asia and the Pacific – and globally. For the collection and analysis of data, existing alliances with universities, research institutes and others must be strengthened and new networks established to undertake more research in this sphere.

Quantitative data, including visitor numbers, spending and employment figures, illustrate the economic impact of Indigenous tourism perceived by central and regional governments, investors and local communities. These metrics make the sector's value tangible for decision-makers, supporting strategic funding, infrastructure development and policy creation aimed at maximizing economic benefits. **In contrast, qualitative data** such as community perspectives, visitor experiences and cultural impacts capture the human stories, cultural values and sensitive issues that numbers alone cannot express. This type of data ensures that tourism development honours Indigenous rights and cultural patterns – guiding initiatives that are rooted in community priorities rather than solely economic goals. Together, both data types support more informed decision-making, enhance marketing strategies and deepen understanding for the expectations of travellers and communities, fostering a responsible approach to tourism that respects and preserves indigenous culture and heritage. However, quantitative and qualitative data related specifically to indigenous tourism is still insufficient.

From the perspective of grassroot indigenous organizations and government agencies, data analysis plays an essential role in promoting sustainable tourism development, based on **self-determination principles.** It provides a solid foundation for understanding current conditions, predicting trends and making strategic decisions to align tourism initiatives with community

goals. By measuring economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts, communities can identify opportunities such as emerging markets and address infrastructure challenges. **Data also supports cultural safeguarding** by documenting assets and mitigating potential negative impacts, ensuring tourism aligns with indigenous values. For governments, robust data analysis informs effective policy development, resource allocation and infrastructure planning, supporting sustainable growth on the long run. It enables monitoring of key performance indicators and facilitates collaboration with indigenous stakeholders by uncovering partnership opportunities and managing risks.

The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC)[51] is a powerful example of the transformative potential of data. Founded in 2015 as a follow-up to an associative movement established in the early 2000s, ITAC has experienced rapid growth fuelled by data-driven insights.[52] By demonstrating the positive impact of Indigenous tourism on the Canadian economy and projecting future growth, ITAC secured significant support by the Canadian Government and international recognition.

In Chile, an academic collaboration with grassroot indigenous organizations has resulted in PREATI,[53] a data collection platform for indigenous tourism. This platform, even in its early stages, has garnered the interest of the Government by generating previously unavailable data, highlighting the critical need for such initiatives in informing policies and driving sustainable growth.

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51   Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (n.d.), available at: https://indigenoustourism.ca/.

52   Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (2015), *National Aboriginal Tourism Research Project – Economic Impact of Aboriginal Tourism in Canada,* ITAC, Vancouver, available at: https://indigenoustourism.ca [12-06-2025].

53   Plataforma de la Recopilación y Análisis para la Actividad Turística Indígena (n.d.), 'Turismo Indígena en Chile', PREATI, available at: https://preati.cl/ [12-06-2025].

2.1.3 Intellectual property and copyrights

Intellectual property (IP) is key in indigenous tourism in Asia and the Pacific and worldwide. Securing ownership helps protect Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, traditions and cultural expressions from exploitation – while also empowering communities to benefit economically from their heritage.

There has been an increasing debate over the ownership of cultural expressions harnessed for the purpose of tourism marketing and the intellectual property rights Indigenous Peoples nowadays claim. Indigenous tourism provides unique cultural experiences but faces significant intellectual property (IP) challenges. **Indigenous Peoples hold traditional knowledge (TK) and traditional cultural expressions (TCEs), such as stories, dances, songs, designs, crafts and ceremonies, which are essential to their tourism offerings.** Protecting these assets is vital for ensuring economic benefits and cultural preservation. Key issues include the misappropriation of TK and TCEs by businesses without consent or fair compensation, leading to unauthorized use of indigenous designs and stories. Many indigenous communities lack awareness of IP and copyrights and effective application methods, compounded by financial barriers to accessing legal resources. Balancing economic development with the protection of cultural heritage also requires careful consideration of community values.[54]

Intellectual property rights can indeed apply to tourism experiences based on the tangible and/or intangible heritage of Indigenous Peoples. They can contribute to a regulatory environment conducive to creativity, innovation and fair remuneration for the work of indigenous creators, both individually and collectively.

IP rights prevent wrongful appropriation of cultural practices or traditional knowledge. Cultural expressions created, cultivated and transmitted by indigenous communities can otherwise provide financial rewards for unconnected third parties. While clearly not the cause of such abuses, the tourism sector must cooperate in reporting this trend within the value chain. The **cut-rate sale of industrial products** as "original" indigenous crafts undermines fair and direct remuneration for the hours of work artisans invest, disrupting the value chains and promoting mass produced alternatives.

National bodies and other entities with a purview to protect cultural IP and copyrights have started to protect indigenous textile designs and patterns, so to ensure due credit is given to the communities in which these cultural expressions originated. The same stakeholders ensure that individual creators or their cooperatives get a fair and equitable share of the profit made through sales.[55] The institutional commitment and policies set by public administrations need to reach the ground and train communities to learn about the strategic and practical use of intellectual property which includes also the protection of the development and implementation of indigenous tourism products.[56] The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) organizes workshops on trademark development, intellectual property strategies and business models for community- and Indigenous Peoples-led enterprises, as well as the management, market access, e-commerce and financial education. The acquired skills are a win-win for all stakeholders as experiences become more diverse and produce more commercial exchange.[57] Other regional challenges include dispelling **stereotypes** of indigenous cultures and encouraging ethical purchases of arts and crafts.[58]

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54 World Intellectual Property Organization (2017), *Protect and Promote Your Culture: A Practical Guide to Intellectual Property for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities,* WIPO, Geneva, DOI: https://doi.org/10.34667/tind.28997.

55 See, for instance, the role of the Mexican Government in this, as reported in:
Noris, A. and Cantoni, L. (2024), '"The Good Italian": Fashion Films as Lifestyle Manifestos. A Study Based on Thematic Analysis and Digital Analytics', *Fashion Theory,* 28(2), pp. 151–173, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2024.2323363.

56 World Intellectual Property Organization and World Tourism Organization (2021), *Boosting Tourism Development through Intellectual Property,* WIPO, Geneva, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422395.

57 World Intellectual Property Organization (n.d.), 'Indigenous and Local Community Entrepreneurship', WIPO, Geneva, available at: https://www.wipo.int/portal/en/ [01-07-2025].

58 World Intellectual Property Organization and World Tourism Organization (2021), *Boosting Tourism Development through Intellectual Property,* WIPO, Geneva, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422395.

2.1.4 Networking opportunities

In Asia and the Pacific, the exchange of information between countries, grassroot organizations and indigenous representatives can be challenging given the language diversity and vast territories. However, networking enables indigenous communities to learn from their peers how to develop and manage their tourism experiences while ensuring that tourism reflects authentic culture, instead of external stereotypes.

Indigenous networking in tourism is key in enhancing leadership, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing among Indigenous groups, who often feature different extents of tourism development and market exposure, which can also be impacted by different historical and social conditions. Solid regional networks gathering indigenous tourism community organizations and entrepreneurs in Asia and the Pacific are still inexistent. The establishment of such associations would be crucial to forge partnerships to gain more exposure of indigenous experiences and community needs in the region's tourism market. With the best established indigenous tourism grassroot organizations operating in Canada (ITAC), the United States of America (AIANTA), New Zealand (Māori Tourism) and Western Australia (WAITOC), it is obvious that indigenous tourism should **benefit more from north-south, as well as south-south cooperation, to analyse a wider range of solutions** to the challenges still hindering the development of indigenous tourism in Asia and the Pacific and worldwide.

Asia and the Pacific is home to more than **two-thirds of the world's indigenous population and over 4,000 of the world's 7,000 languages.**[59] In Papua New Guinea over 800 languages are spoken, in Indonesia this figure reaches 700, while India registers 450–500 languages and hundreds of dialects.[60] Indigenous Peoples of Asia and the Pacific are also separated by different historical and geo-political contexts, vast distances and insularity. In comparison, due to a relatively common colonial history, the language barrier is less present in the Americas, where most of the Indigenous Peoples speak – in addition to their mother tongue – their country's *lingua franca,* often Spanish or English, used for regional communication.

Considering that indigenous tourism proponents often share challenges, indigenous leaders have traditionally advocated for exchanging experiences to reap the benefits of cooperation, as opposed to competition.[61] These challenges include **different economic development models** and **subregional disparities** in terms of GDP indicators, microeconomic and entrepreneurial realities, that sometimes **prompt entire communities to migrate.**

Local people from Raja Ampat, Papua, Indonesia.
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59   Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact – AIPP (2022), *The situation of indigenous languages in Asia,* AIPP, Chiang Mai, pp. 18–19, https://aippnet.org [13-06-2025].

60   Eberhard, D.M.; Simons, G.F and Fennig, C.D. (eds. 2025), 'What countries have the most languages?', *Ethnologue: Languages of the World,* twenty-eighth edition, SIL International, Dallas, available at: https://www.ethnologue.com [19-06-2025].

61   World Tourism Organization and World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (2023), *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism – Regional Focus on the Americas,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284424184.

2.1.5 Indigenous migration and rural development

Indigenous migration in Asia and the Pacific arises from a complex interplay of factors, including economic hardship in remote and rural areas, environmental degradation, conflicts, discriminatory practices and limited access to essential services.[62]

These push factors are frequently countered by the pull of economic opportunities elsewhere. However, some countries[63] have implemented collaborative tourism models that prioritize decent living standards, creating economic opportunities and improving living conditions of Indigenous population, **out of whom 73.4 actually live in rural areas**[64]. These models address the root causes of indigenous migration, helping to reduce pressures to leave the ancestral, mostly rural, lands, people and culture. Tourism, therefore, presents a potential solution – though not universally applicable – to the issue of indigenous displacement.

On the other hand, the peculiarities of rural and urban indigenous communities engaged in tourism, have created a varied cultural landscape posing a wide range of opportunities and challenges. The geographic concentration of Indigenous Peoples in rural and remote settings with scarce infrastructure and informal economic models which features very few opportunities for non-agricultural income, has its advantages and disadvantages:[65] The great majority of indigenous tourism good practices in Asia and the Pacific and worldwide, would still be recorded in rural regions. However, despite the assumption that Indigenous Peoples live in rural territories, they are increasingly migrating to urban areas.[66] Urban areas offer better infrastructure and access to services for indigenous communities who migrate. However, these people are more prone to adapt their culture and lifestyle to dominant urban ways of living and get detached from many cultural traditions and traditional values. Moreover, it appears that they often "live in poor human settlements outside the support of traditional community and culture"[67] from which they originated. Very few countries have focussed thus far on involving indigenous urban populations in tourism development. Further in this report some examples of incipient initiatives will be shown, such as that from the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC)[68] in section 3.4.

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62   International Organization for Migration (2008), *Indigenous Routes: A Framework for Understanding Indigenous Migration,* IOM, Geneva, available at: https://publications.iom.int [17-03-2025].

63   Consult the countries showcased in the previous report focussed on indigenous tourism in the Americas:
World Tourism Organization and World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (2023), *Compendium of Good Practices in Indigenous Tourism – Regional Focus on the Americas,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284424184.

64   Dhir, R.K. et al.(2019), *Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169: Towards an Inclusive, Sustainable and Just Future,* ILO, Geneva, available at: https://www.ilo.org/research-and-publications [01-07-2025].

65   Featherstone, D. (2020), *Remote Indigenous Communications Review: Telecommunications Programs and Current Needs for Remote Indigenous Communities,* Australian Communication Consumer Action Network, Sydney, available at: https://accan.org.au/index.php [17-03-2025].

66   United Nations Human Settlements Programme (n.d.), 'Indigenous people', *Urban Agenda Platform,* UN Habitat, Nairobi, available at: https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/indigenous-people [17-03-2025].

67   Cariño, J. (2005), 'Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Poverty', *Indigenous Perspectives,* 7(1), pp. 28–46, Tebtebba Foundation, Bagulo City, available at: https://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/resources-menu/publications-menu [17-03-2025].

68   WAITOC has already recognized the need to implement tourism initiatives in urban settings. With most visitors to Western Australia arriving through Perth and only 2 indigenous businesses operating in the city, WAITOC brought that number to 40 experiences within and around the city. However, low land ownership among urban aboriginal people challenges developing tourism experiences. Despite this, WAITOC expanded indigenous tourism businesses across regions from the mid-west down to the south, including Perth, to better capture the international market, which had previously been overseen.

2.1.6 Indigenous women

Women play a crucial role in indigenous tourism, particularly in fostering cultural safeguarding and production, local economic growth and overall community well-being. However, they often face significant hampering factors, including financial barriers, limited access to training and mentorship and systemic discrimination, spanning across private, public and professional spheres.

Many female entrepreneurs struggle with balancing business responsibilities alongside caregiving duties, while also lacking the necessary resources such as reliable Internet, affordable shipping and financial literacy. These challenges are further compounded for women in remote areas, where infrastructure limitations and economic disparities make it harder to sustain and grow tourism-related businesses.[69]

For indigenous tourism in Asia and the Pacific, the essential role played by women is unmistakable, although their contribution is not reflected in the entrepreneurial data.[70] Traditionally, women in this region have been working in the fields to produce food for their families' nutrition and well-being, and have usually been responsible for seed selection, weeding the fields, identifying medicinal plants, gathering crops, food preparation, processing and selling surplus products, as well as many cultural practices.[71] The cases in this publication from India, Nepal and Palau, highlight the efforts made to achieve women's financial independence and overcome stereotypes, through community-based and women-led tourism enterprises.[72] These cases show women's role as guardians of cultural heritage, rituals and crafts, and managers of homestays, guided tours or cultural workshops. This report features initiatives that do not only empower women economically but also revert benefits directly to indigenous communities, far beyond the individual gain.

Hmong Woman, Viet Nam.
© Rafał Cichawa | Dreamstime.com

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69   Rasmussen, Y.; Graci, S.; Cukier, W. and Genevieve Huneault, G. (2024), *Indigenous entrepreneurship and social innovation in Indigenous tourism development in Northern Canada,* Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, Diversity Institute and Future Skills Centre, WELH, available at: https://wekh.ca [17-03-2025].

70   For more information on women in tourism in Asia and the Pacific, consult:
World Tourism Organization (2022), *Regional Report on Women in Tourism in Asia and the Pacific,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284423569.

71   Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Work Group For Indigenous Affairs; and Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (2015), *Shifting Cultivation Livelihood and Food Security,* FAO/IWGIA/AIPP, published in Bangkok, available at: https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/i4580e [17-03-2025].

72   For more information on women in tourism in Asia and the Pacific, consult:
World Tourism Organization (2022), *Regional Report on Women in Tourism in Asia and the Pacific,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284423569.

2.2
Governments providing an enabling environment for indigenous tourism

Public authorities managing destinations where Indigenous Peoples are present, have the mandate to facilitate policies and strategies enabling indigenous tourism development. Governments can lead or support processes such as the legal recognition of indigenous rights, inclusive policy frameworks, capacity building, access to finance and better infrastructure, cultural and environmental protection, as well as the promotion of indigenous tourism experiences.

Considering that this compendium is focussed on Asia and the Pacific, the positive development in **Australia** related to government support may be underlined first. Positive examples include Queensland, where the government designated 2020–2021 as the Year of Indigenous Tourism to bolster its development.[73] The Federal Government supports indigenous tourism through the Federal Indigenous Tourism Fund and the Indigenous Business Australia agency,[74] alongside Tourism and Events Queensland. The creation of the Queensland First Nations Tourism Council (QFNTC)[75] led to the development of the *Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan 2020–2025,* in co-creation with the government. In the case of Western Australia, the

support received from the Ministry of Tourism to WAITOC as indigenous tourism grassroots organization has included funding and planning through the release of the *Jina: Western Australian Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2021–2025*[76]. The Government of Australia offers grants for indigenous tourism operators to develop and extend place-based and tailored services while co-investing with states and territories in large-scale first nations tourism projects to strengthen the indigenous participation in the visitor economy.

Another case of a government-supported organization is **New Zealand** Māori Tourism,[77] which creates cultural experiences for visitors, allowing them to engage with both New Zealand and the Māori culture, while contributing to the growth of the nation's economy.[78] The central government supports Māori Tourism through partnerships and funding, ensuring that Māori Tourism aligns with national tourism strategies and safeguards Māori cultural values. During COVID-19, Māori Tourism received financial backing from the government through the Tourism Recovery Fund. Public administrations promote policies that recognize and safeguard the cultural and intellectual property rights of the Māori. The *Tourism Industry Transformation Plan*[79] was crafted between the

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73   Queensland Government – Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (n.d.), 'Year of Indigenous Tourism 2020–2021', Queensland Government, Brisbane, available at: https://www.qld.gov.au [17-02-2025].

74   Whitford, M.; Appo, R.; Costello, C. and Ruhanen, L. (2024), 'Development of the Inaugural Queensland First Nations Tourism Action Plan 2020–2025 and the Queensland First Nations Tourism Council', in: Butler, R. and Carr, A. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism and Indigenous Peoples* (1st ed.), Routledge, London, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003230335.

75   Queensland First Nations Tourism Council (n.d.), 'Queensland First Nations Tourism Plan', QFNTC, Brisbane, https://www.qfntc.com.au/qfntcplan [17-02-2025].

76   Government of Western Australia – Tourism Western Australia (n.d.), *Jina – Western Australian Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2021–2025,* Tourism WA, Perth, available at: https://www.tourism.wa.gov.au/tourism-in-western-australia [17-02-2025].

77   For more information on NZ Māori Tourism consult: https://maoritourism.co.nz/ [17-02-2025].

78   United Nations – Human Rights (2023), Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples – Tourism and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, A/78/162, distributed on 12 July 2023, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), New York, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a78162-tourism-and-rights-indigenous-peoples-report-special-rapporteur [26-11-2024].

79   Consult more information at: https://www.mbie.govt.nz/immigration-and-tourism/tourism/tourism-recovery/tourism-industry-transformation-plan [17-02-2025].

tourism sector key players, the Māori, unions, workers and the government, to guide Aotearoa's[80] tourism sector towards a more regenerative model.

Nepal, the Philippines and Cambodia have been gradually pursuing approaches of a contemporary understanding of Indigenous Peoples – based on respect for cultural integrity, recognition of their collective identity and attachment to a territory. **India** has put in place an extensive legal and policy framework targeting its scheduled tribes,[81] while **Bangladesh** has also put in place legal measures to improve the rights of the groups concerned. In other countries, the courts and human rights commissions play a proactive role in recognizing and protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, as is the case in Indonesia.

In **Japan,** passing the 2019 Act on Promoting Measures to Achieve a Society in which the Pride of Ainu People is Respected (also known as Ainu Policy Promotion Act – APPA), by the House of Representatives, marked a milestone in identifying the Ainu as the country's Indigenous People.[82] APPA created opportunities for subsidies for community and tourism development initiatives centered on Ainu culture, enabling a long-sought Ainu economic foundation for the future, and paving the way for Upopoy (see case study 1). The advocates of the legislation had two goals: i) to use APPA as a vehicle for the Ainu to consolidate the economic means, including tourism, to practice their culture independently; and ii) to assert more substantial rights, such as special Ainu seats in Parliament.[83] In the **Philippines,** The Department

of Tourism (DOT) and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples forged a formal agreement in 2023 to carry out a nation-wide Katutubo-KAPWA project for the support of Indigenous Peoples and indigenous cultural communities in tourism development. With the DOT's Office of Special Concerns (under the Office of the Secretary as lead) that project also addresses the gaps of each destination in infrastructure, skills and competencies among Indigenous Peoples involved in tourism, among others.[84]

In other regions, notable examples of state-backed indigenous tourism initiatives include **Panama's** enactment of Indigenous Tourism Law 290 in 2022 and its associated regulations in 2025[85] and **Colombia's** public policy for indigenous tourism, supported by grassroot organizations. In **Canada,** the central government made strategic investments to enable indigenous tourism undertakings thrive: In 2022, a new Indigenous Tourism Fund (ITF) of CAD 20 million was launched by the Ministry of Tourism to support minor and large-scale "signature" indigenous tourism projects. It favours initiatives that can anchor larger tourism destinations and attract additional financing.[86]

While many countries of the Asia and the Pacific region are starting to promote indigenous tourism, it is important for public authorities to recognize the governance models of Indigenous Peoples and **obtain their free, prior and informed consent for any tourism-related process affecting communities and their lives.**[87]

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80   *Aotearoa* is the Māori name for New Zealand.

81   Government of India – Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner (2013), *List of notified Scheduled Tribes,* available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20131107225208/http:/censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/ST%20Lists.pdf [13-06-2025].

82   Tsunemoto, T. (2019), *Overview of the Ainu Policy Pormotion Act of 2019,* Foreign Press Center Japan, available at: https://fpcj.jp/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/b8102b519c7b7c4a4e129763f23ed690.pdf [17-02-2025].
      The original act can be consulted at:
      Government of Japan – Ministry of Justice (2019), 'Act on Promoting Measures to Achieve a Society in which the Pride of Ainu People is Respected', Japanese Law Translation, available at: https://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/en [17-02-2025].

83   Gayman, J. (2024), 'The Ainu Policy Promotion Act and Culture-Centered Indigenous Policies in Japan', published 21 May 2024, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs,* available at: https://gjia.georgetown.edu [17-02-2025].

84   Government of the Philippines – Department of Tourism (2023), 'DOT NCIP ink partnership to empower indigenous peoples project and promote cultural heritage through tourism', news and updates, published 16 August 2023, available at: https://beta.tourism.gov.ph [17-02-2025].

85   Republic of Panama (2022), Ley N° 290 que declara prioridad nacional el fomento y desarrollo del turismo indígena sostenible y dicta otras disposiciones, *Gaceta Oficial Digital No. 29502-A,* 24 de marzo de 2022, available at: https://leap.unep.org/en/countries/pa/national-legislation/ley-n-290-que-declara-prioridad-nacional-el-fomento-y-desarrollo [17-02-2025].

86   Government of Canada – Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (2024), 'Indigenous Tourism Fund', website available at: https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/ised/en [17-02-2025].

87   Consult for further information on community-based tourism:
      World Tourism Organization (2020), *AlUla Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism,* UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422159.

03.
Good practices in indigenous tourism in Asia and the Pacific

Abstract: The following chapter forms the core of the compendium of good practices by showcasing a selection of success stories from 12 countries (Australia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, New Zealand, Palau, the Philippines, Vanuatu and Viet Nam), relating them to a wide range of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The case studies are organized around six key thematic areas, namely: i) intercultural dialogue; ii) cultural revitalization; iii) indigenous associations; iv) community empowerment through training and entrepreneurship; v) traditional knowledge and biodiversity preservation; and vi) indigenous and non-indigenous partnerships. The success stories below result from the direct collaboration of UN Tourism and WINTA with indigenous leaders, communities and companies involved in tourism business and their allies.

Key words: dialogue | cultural revitalization | associations | training | entrepreneurship | traditional knowledge | biodiversity

Key findings:
- **Intercultural dialogue** leads to more effective indigenous tourism policies.
- Indigenous cultural revitalization and **culture-based capacity building generate income.**
- **Indigenous community organizations** are key in driving tourism development.
- **Market-ready experiences** cannot be created without training on entrepreneurial skills.
- **Traditional knowledge** recovers farming practices and preserves biodiversity.
- Indigenous and non-indigenous partnerships need to be **based on respect and equal share of benefits.**

Boomerangs, Australia. © Mitchellphotographic | Dreamstime.com

3.1
Enabling intercultural dialogue for the benefit of more effective indigenous tourism policies

Intercultural dialogue is a vital tool in developing indigenous tourism, while honouring and safeguarding the indigenous cultural heritage. Dialogue fosters respect between indigenous communities and the broader society, allowing for collaborative initiatives.

The integration of indigenous perspectives into public policies and cultural tourism strategies can create sustainable practices that safeguard traditional knowledge and enhance cultural appreciation among visitors. Lasting contributions indigenous tourism can make to host-community economies – and to their living standards, infrastructure and basic services – start with specific steps to safeguard their ancestral knowledge and heritage, by:

- **Carrying out an inventory** of indigenous cultural expressions;
- **Assessing the results** that can indicate if the inventory provides an effective basis (or not) for the development of cultural tourism experiences;
- Ensuring there is sufficient **community awareness** of its own cultural heritage for its transmission to younger generations;
- Analysing how to **avoid high rates of Indigenous Peoples' migration** to urban areas, leaving their traditional cultures, languages and elders behind;
- Planning **cultural revitalization** activities prior to creating tourism experiences; and
- Recognizing land ownership, thereby affirming indigenous cultural identity.

Indigenous cultures represent an intergenerational legacy that is predominantly intangible and undocumented. The tourism and culture sectors, working with qualified institutions and experts, can serve as valuable allies in its transmission and for creating jobs in the process (e.g., for local guides to explain a community's cultural traditions, worldview and values to visiting tourists). Tourists wishing to engage with indigenous communities want more than souvenirs; they wish to get acquainted with indigenous history and cultural expressions. For visitors, the direct contact with the culture and the acquisition of knowledge of Indigenous Peoples generally takes place within communities with grassroot initiatives, artisanal workshops and cooperatives or at local markets, rather than in an institutional or staged setting. The latter is often arranged for entertainment or commercial exchange. It is, therefore, the first-hand engagement what makes visits and cultural exchanges so rewarding for both tourism stakeholders and visitors, and that leads to recognizing the value of indigenous cultures.

Initiatives like the Upopoy National Ainu Museum & Park in Japan and Kapiti Island Nature Tours in New Zealand, exemplify how intercultural dialogue leads to innovative partnerships and engagement in indigenous tourism. Through such initiatives, Indigenous Peoples can promote their unique cultural narratives and advance their socioeconomic development.

Case study 1:
Upopoy National Ainu
Museum and Park – Japan[88]

Hokkaido is home to a significant Ainu population and a major destination in Japan. However, the awareness of the Ainu culture remains limited both in Japan and abroad. To address this issue, the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park was established, as a prominent educational and cultural destination that attracts approximately 300,000 visitors annually.

The Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park[89] is a national government entity established in 2020, in Hokkaido, Japan, to showcase and safeguard the heritage of the indigenous Ainu people of Japan,[90] through three main bodies:

1. The National Ainu Museum, focussing on the people's culture and history;

2. The National Ainu Park, promoting Ainu's traditional arts, crafts and food culture; and

3. The Memorial Site, preserving Ainu remains.

While the central Japanese Government provides funding and has established Upopoy's facilities, the Foundation for Ainu Culture[91] manages and operates the site, which is financially supported by both the Japanese Government and revenues from admission fees to Upopoy. Upopoy raises awareness about the Ainu culture, including the Ainu's worldview, language, spirituality and respect for nature. This institution also supports Japan's tourism through novel indigenous experiences and the enhancement of the local economy.

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88   Information provided by Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park – The Foundation for Ainu Culture.

89   Website available at: https://ainu-upopoy.jp/en/

90   Official estimates place the total Ainu population in Japan at 25,000. Unofficial estimates place the total population at 200,000 or higher, as the near-total assimilation of the Ainu into Japanese society has resulted in many individuals of Ainu descent having no knowledge of their indigenous ancestry.
     Consult more information:
     Poisson, B.A. (2002), *The Ainu of Japan,* Times Edition, Singapore, available at: https://archive.org/details/ainuofjapan00pois [25-11-2024].

91   Website of the Foundation for Ainu Culture available at: https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/index.html [10-02-2025].
     See also:
     The Foundation for Ainu Culture (n.d.), 'Our Projects', available at: https://www.ff-ainu.or.jp/web/english/project.html [20-10-2024].

The development of the Ainu people through tourism is particularly notable in Biratori Town and Akan, in Kushiro City, whose communities have developed a partnership with Upopoy, featuring some of the following activities and impacts:

- **Teaching Upopoy employees** about the traditional performing arts, food, and arts and crafts, while holding events to showcase culture of each region;
- **Assuming the role of culture programme monitors,** providing regular feedback that helps in reviewing the existing and developing new initiatives;
- **Ensuring full participation** and control of the Ainu people in preserving their cultural legacy, thereby advancing SDG 11.4[92];
- **Fostering pride** in indigenous heritage and strengthening Ainu identity for both present and future generations; and
- **Undertaking research** on the Ainu culture, advancing academic knowledge, and deepening its understanding.

This partnership is creating jobs for the Ainu and improving their quality of life. Upopoy stands as a symbol of a forward-looking, vibrant society that celebrates a rich and diverse culture, where Indigenous People are treated with equality, respect and dignity, free from any discrimination, in line with SDG 10[93]. The Japanese Government wishes to attract more visitors through a multi-stakeholder Upopoy Visitor Promotion Strategy 2024. It is often challenging to balance tourism promotion with the safeguarding and revitalization of the indigenous cultures. Furthermore, except for Biratori Town and Akan in Kushiro City, Ainu populations in Hokkaido are dispersed. While indigenous tourism drives development in these areas, other regions see Ainu development as part of a broader regional revitalization, creating regional disparities between the Ainu people. Finally, the Ainu language, arts and crafts faced the problem of a decreasing number of successors able to pass the Ainu culture on to future generations in the 21st century. Due to support under the Ainu Culture Promotion Act of 1997 and the Ainu Policy Promotion Act of 2019, there has been a gradual increase trend.

Ainu traditional dance © The Foundation for Ainu Culture

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92   SDG 11.4: Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. Consult for more information: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/ [13-02-2025].

93   SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries. Consult for more information: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal10 [13-02-2025].

Case study 2:
Kapiti Island Nature Tours
– New Zealand[94]

Kapiti Island Nature Tours[95] is an indigenous business led by a Māori family, providing natural and cultural experiences, while preserving the environment and Māori cultural life.[96] The business operates on traditional Māori lands in partnership with the New Zealand Government, managing the Kapiti Island Nature Reserve.

Key actor of the Kapiti Island Nature Tours is the *whānau* (family): 20 indigenous family members are employed in the organization, giving them the opportunity to reconnect with Māori's traditional values and culture, and engage more deeply with traditional lands, culture, customs and language. The main partners of the project also include:

- Māori tribal and Māori tourism organizations;
- The New Zealand Government through the environmental agencies; and
- The municipal and regional economic development agencies.

Kapiti Island Nature Tours brings multiple benefits to the indigenous community by enabling participation in significant tourism business ventures, trade shows and social media, promoting cultural and environmental tourism services to both domestic and international markets. The regional community also reaps benefits from the commercial activity generated by the tourism business, while the Department of Conservation[97] delegates some environmental management responsibilities to the business and the wider tribal group:

- Empowering the *whānau* and tribal group to preserve and **rediscover their values**, while promoting the revitalization of tribal culture and language;
- Providing opportunities for tribal and family members to become active participants and **leaders** within the community; and
- Supporting the local economy through **increased commercial activity** and sustainable management of natural resources.

The business currently faces significant challenges, including the need to balance traditional practices, cultural priorities and tribal values while ensuring its profitability. Moreover, the costs of maintaining the cultural restoration programme are steadily rising, often requiring significant cutbacks. Additional support is therefore essential to ensure the organization's efficiency.

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94   Information provided by Kapiti Island Nature Tours.

95   Website available at: https://www.kapitiisland.com/.

96   For over 1000 years, Māori have been the *tangata whenua*, the Indigenous People of Aotearoa, later known as New Zealand. Arriving there from the Polynesian homeland of Hawaiki over 1,000 years ago, the great explorer Kupe, was the first Māori to reach these lands. Consult for more information:
Tourism New Zealand (n.d.), 'Māori Culture', available at: https://www.newzealand.com/us/maori-culture/ [25-11-2024].

97   Website of the Government of New Zealand – Department of Conservation available at: https://www.doc.govt.nz/ [13-02-2025].

Kapiti Island Nature Tours. © Mark Tantrum

3.2
Leveraging indigenous cultural revitalization and culture-based capacity building for income generation

The non-indigenous populations are rarely familiar with the cultures of their indigenous compatriots in Asia and the Pacific. Improvements on that side are needed to generate wider identification with a country's indigenous populations and thus greater interest in safeguarding and advancing their cultures.

The tourism sector needs to elevate awareness about indigenous cultures and common concerns of Indigenous Peoples, through organized group visits, student excursions, volunteer programmes, festivals, concerts and art exhibits, and first-hand experiences. By valuing their own cultural expressions and undertaking cultural revitalization, indigenous communities acquire skills and leverage their heritage and knowledge for income generation. When recreating an attachment with their culture, indigenous communities make it easier to:

- Reach out to the **tourism value chain** and establish a dialogue;
- Sensitize key tourism stakeholders on the **symbolic or spiritual values** of their culture, and the hours of work dedicated to certain practices;
- Make the indigenous culture a lever for the Indigenous People's empowerment; Develop measures to elevate the **cultural awareness** of visitors, so they could understand the sensitive areas for their hosts and adjust their **expectations;** and
- Activate a **reconciliation process** in regions with records of previous conflicts.

The following examples illustrate different dynamics of leveraging indigenous cultural revitalization and culture-based capacity building for tourism development and income generation: Banglanatak dot com in India has successfully harnessed the cultural richness of indigenous traditions in West Bengal, transforming the region into a vibrant cultural tourism destination; the National Museum of the Philippines-Cordillera serves as an educational and cultural catalyst, reconnecting local communities in Ifugao with their heritage, while promoting sustainable practices. Both initiatives demonstrate the potential cultural transmission in enhancing the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and safeguarding their unique traditions.

Wooden tam tams, Ambrym Island, Vanuatu.
© Alyona Boiko | Dreamstime.com

Case study 3:
Banglanatak dot com, West Bengal
– India[98]

Banglanatak dot com[99] is a non-governmental champion of sustainable and inclusive development across India. It implements culture-based initiatives for socioeconomic empowerment of rural and cultural communities[100] to safeguard living heritage, while protecting the rights of women, children and Indigenous Peoples.

One of its main intervention areas is Purulia in West Bengal, where indigenous tourism has been driving development[101]. Despite its natural beauty and cultural heritage, the region used to face significant poverty.[102] In 2005, Banglanatak launched **Art for Life**, a project to protect the traditional cultural skills of indigenous communities who describe themselves as *Senge Jujung Kajigo Durung* (We dance when we walk and sing when we talk"). The Chhau dance – inscribed in 2010 on the UNESCO Representative Intangible Cultural Heritage List[103] – along with Jhumur songs and dances, are deeply embedded in Purulia people's celebrations. By harnessing the cultural richness of such traditions, Art for Life developed an ecosystem for skill transmission and innovation, creating new audiences and developing villages as cultural destinations. Experiential tourism was

promoted, increasing awareness of indigenous songs, dances, storytelling, basketry traditions, and nature-worshipping rituals and festivals. Purulia, once plagued by deprivation and violent extremism, is now peaceful and sees the highest tourist footfall in West Bengal, throughout different seasons.

The initial pilot (2005–2008) focussed on safeguarding Chhau and Jhumur traditions with support from the Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (EZCC) under India's Ministry of Culture. London Metropolitan University partnered to develop a cultural tourism plan funded by the European Union (2009–2011), seeding innovations like village festivals and community museums. Since 2013, the Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Textiles (MSME&T) of the Government of West Bengal, in

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98   Information provided by Banglanatak dot com.

99   Website of Banglanatak dot com available at: https://banglanatak.com/home [13-02-2025].

100 *A cultural community* is defined as a "knit social unit whose members experience strong feelings of unity and solidarity and which is distinguished from other communities by its own culture or cultural design, or by a variant of the generic culture".
     Source: Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO (2022), 'Draft Glossary: International Meeting of Experts on Intangible Cultural Heritage – Establishment of a Glossary', UNESCO, Paris, available at: https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/04843-EN.doc [23-06-2025].

101 Information directly provided by Banglanatak dot com to UN Tourism through the questionnaire.
     As per the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, there are 40 "scheduled tribes" in West Bengal, which correspond to indigenous peoples. Consult more information at: Government of India – Minister of tribal affairs (2025), *Scheduled Tribes Profile*, available at: https://tribal.nic.in/Statistics.aspx [20-03-2025].

102 81% deprived households according to Census 2011. More information available at:
     Government of West Bengal (2025), 'District profile', *Purulia*, available at: https://purulia.gov.in/district-profiles/ [20-03-2025].

103 Purulia Chhau is one of the three variations of Chhau dance characterized by masks and acrobatic dance movements. Chhau dance inscribed in 2010 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
     See:
     United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – Intangible Cultural Heritage (2010), 'Chhau Dance', UNESCO, Paris, available at: https://ich.unesco.org/en/home [13-02-2025].

collaboration with UNESCO New Delhi, adopted the Art for Life model to develop the rural creative economy. The State Government also supported skill development in forest fringe communities, the creation of a community museum at Chhau, mask makers in the village of Charidas, and organized annual Chhau Dance and Mask festivals. Coventry University's interdisciplinary team, supported by the British Academy, contributed to heritage-sensitive marketing strategies using digital and online tools. The project has benefited both the indigenous community and tourism stakeholders. Additionally, rebranding Purulia as a cultural destination brought pride and meaningful engagement to practising communities and boosted businesses for hotels, restaurants and local markets, receiving up to 2.5 million tourists per year.[104] This trend has created jobs and stimulated the local economy, resulting in:

- **10,000 Indigenous People in Purulia – 33% women – overcoming poverty;**
- Revitalization of the Chhau dance tradition, increasing the number of dance troupes from 20–25 in 2004 to 300–350 today;
- Women participation growth, with 20 all-female troupes active now;
- Expansion of the Chhau mask-making to over 400 artists, with their average monthly **income reaching EUR 650 – a 20-fold increase;** and[105]
- Growth of the Sabai grass[106] crafts, initially practiced by 50 women for ropemaking, now supporting 400 women crafting high-end items, earning an average of EUR 150 monthly – a 15-fold increase. This development has enhanced the mobility of rural women artists, enabling them to showcase their traditional pursuits nationally and globally.

Empowering these communities involves training, resources and advocating for their digital inclusion, for them to connect with a broader audience to share their unique cultural narratives and take part in online retail and social media networks. Furthermore, integrating intellectual property strategies, such as Geographical

Indication Chhau mask in Charida and Chhau dance as UNESCO inscription, into tourism offerings has boosted the region's appeal and brand. Art for Life demonstrates the importance of community-centric promotion, based on the diversity of indigenous groups, safeguarding their heritage and their lifestyle. While implementing indigenous tourism in Purulia, it was challenging to build and maintain trust amid new hotel developments. Educating tourists on heritage-sensitive behaviour and youth has been perceived as vital for these initiatives to thrive.

Chhau dance: Pride of Purulia. © banglanatak dot com

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104 District Science Centre Purulia (2021), 'Visitor Statistics', available at: https://dscpurulia.org/ [20-10-2024].

105 Data directly provided by Banglanatak dot com to UN Tourism through the questionnaire.

106 Sabai grass, also known as Babui grass, has emerged as a remarkable natural resource that combines tradition, fashion and sustainable development. Cultivated in the rural landscapes of India, this versatile grass has gained popularity not only for its eco-friendly attributes but also for its ability to transform the lives of rural communities.

Case study 4:
The National Museum of the Philippines–Cordillera – Philippines[107]

The National Museum of the Philippines-Cordillera in Kiangan,[108] Ifugao, is a government entity serving as an educational, cultural and research institution. The museum is reconnecting the local communities with their heritage, acting as a catalyst for indigenous tourism businesses.

Cultural tourism, as defined by UN Tourism,[109] aligns with the museum's mission of promoting cultural heritage[110] and attracting visitors by showcasing the cultural richness of the Philippines, home to 14 million to 17 million Indigenous Peoples from 110 groups.[111] Ifugao's greatest treasure is its rice terraces, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.[112] This recognition has raised awareness of the tourism potential of Ifugao's indigenous communities, while raising concerns about its sustainable management. From 2001 to 2012, the Ifugao Rice Terraces were inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger due to management challenges.[113] UNESCO called for an integrated management plan to supervise tourism-related infrastructure.[114] However, the long-term sustainable management of the site relies on the survival of the living custodians of the indigenous knowledge. Protecting and maintaining this knowledge has become a key aspect in setting up any sustainable tourism management plan.[115] The Museum plays a significant role in achieving sustainable tourism development through the Museum Educational Program, offering training courses, heritage tours and a Museum Volunteer Program, by applying the following methodology:

- **Through training courses**, conducted with the technical assistance of the Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement (SITMo), indigenous communities receive

107 Information provided by the National Museum of the Philippines – Cordillera Regional Museum.

108 National Museum of the Philippines – Cordillera website available at:
https://www.nationalmuseum.gov.ph/our-museums/regional-area-and-site-museums/cordillera/ [13-02-2025].

109 World Tourism Organization (2019), *UNWTO Tourism Definitions*, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420858.
World Tourism Organization (n.d.), 'Tourism and Culture', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: https://www.unwto.org/tourism-and-culture [26-11-2024].

110 Yani, H. (1998), 'Museums and tourism: culture and consumption', in: UNESCO (1998), *Museum international – The challenge of tourism 1*, volume 50(3), Blackwell, Malden, pp.4–12 available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000113049 [20-10-2024].

111 United Nations Development Programme (2013), 'Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines', *Fast Facts Lagom*, UNDP, Makati City, available at: https://www.undp.org/philippines/publications/fast-facts-indigenous-peoples-philippines [20-10-2024].

112 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – World Heritage Convention (n.d.), 'World Heritage List', UNESCO, Paris, available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/ [26-11-2024].

113 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – World Heritage Convention (2001–2012), 'Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras', List of World Heritage in Danger, UNESCO, Paris, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/722 [11-02-2025].
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – World Heritage Convention (2021), 'Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras', UNESCO, Paris, available at: https://whc.unesco.org [26-11-2024].

114 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – World Heritage Convention (2021), 'Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras', UNESCO, Paris, available at: https://whc.unesco.org [26-11-2024].

115 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2008), *IMPACT: the effects of tourism on culture and the environment in Asia and the Pacific. Sustainable tourism and the preservation of the world heritage site of the Ifugao Rice Terraces, Philippines*, UNESCO, Bangkok, available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000182647 [20-10-2024].

support in achieving economic resilience. Equipping community members with indigenous skills enables trainees to develop commercial potential through cultural products. These include woven textiles, baskets and rice wine, yeast making and rattan weaving.[116] The items are sold as cultural handicrafts or artistic creations to tourists, incrementing revenues.

- **The Educational Heritage Tours** play a role in the safeguarding of indigenous identity by teaching the community members about their heritage, Ifugao biodiversity, indigenous games and the weaving techniques, thereby contributing to SDG 11.4[117]. Concurrently, *heritage tour guide* is a high-demand job as it represents a reliable source of income.

- Finally, by engaging community members through its **Museum Volunteer Program**, the museum empowers them to take control of their heritage. The formation of the Kiangan Community Heritage Volunteers association symbolizes the community's growing sense of ownership

and dedication to heritage safeguarding. In collaboration with SITMo, the association organized a photo exhibit on Ifugao's history and cultural legacy dating back to the early 1900s. Volunteers have developed skills in curation, storytelling, event organization and community engagement, gaining a deeper connection to their identity.

Some of the challenges include maintaining the motivation of volunteers, securing adequate resources for museum activities, sustaining the skills over the long term, and ensuring that tours are inclusive of all community members and promote a meaningful and intercultural exchange. However, solutions for these challenges shall continue to be kept in mind by the museum's staff members who are all members of the Ifugao ethnolinguistic group.

Rice paddies in Kiangan, Ifugao, Philippines. © Melissa May Cardenas | Dreamstime.com

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116 Rattan, a vine found in abundance in the forests of the Philippines, is an exceptionally sustainable resource, regenerating naturally every 5 to 7 years. It provides a vital source of livelihood for local villages through furniture and basket weaving.

117 SDG 11.4: Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. Consult for more information: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/ [13-02-2025].

3.3
Harnessing indigenous associations and community organizations for tourism development

For Indigenous Peoples, leadership is extremely important in all processes affecting their lives, including tourism development. Amidst the present globalization, Indigenous Peoples seek to promote their culture in international markets under different forms of leadership.

This trend reflects a wide range of advances within our societies and the ways in which Indigenous Peoples' vital aspirations have evolved. Indigenous tourism leaders may have some of the following traits, knowledge and skills:

- **Official titles** conferred under indigenous laws or designated by indigenous territorial councils or associations to lead community's development;
- Leadership can be assumed by **elders or other community members without official traditional titles**. Their knowledge, activism and success in achieving improvements can be valuable advantages to lead tourism;
- Knowledge to pass on to **future generations** in the management of land, of indigenous enterprises or of environmental resources, or about their community's history, cultural expressions, values or spiritual beliefs;
- Experience in fighting for **indigenous rights** especially against any form of exploitation, in the institutional, business or law enforcement arenas;
- Understanding that indigenous tourism, while connected to political and advocacy processes, is an economic activity; and
- Establishment of processes that address political and economic aspects associated with tourism, e.g., by creating internal decision-making structures, appointing a person in charge and/or formalizing businesses or cooperatives.

The examples featured in this section include good practices from the Penglipuran Village in Indonesia, the Experience Airai in Palau and the Tày Hai village in Viet Nam. These cases highlight the role of indigenous communities and associations in leading tourism businesses, while safeguarding indigenous traditions. Government support and cooperation with external partners play a key role in ensuring the successful outcome of initiatives, by creating an enabling environment for tourism development.

Traditional Bai at Belau National Museum in Koror, Palau.
© Leonid Andronov | Dreamstime.com

Case study 5: Penglipuran Village, Bali – Indonesia[118]

The Penglipuran Village in Indonesia, is one of nine traditional villages in Bali[119] and has been recognized among UN Tourism Best Tourism Villages[120] for its efforts in cultural and natural heritage preservation, becoming a sustainably managed destination.

The culture of Penglipuran is firmly rooted in the values of Tri Hita Karana, the Balinese concept of living in harmony with God, nature and people.[121] This philosophy was at the centre of a governmental cultural and environmental revitalization programme in the 1990s, which targeted this traditional village to develop a self-financing model for the future. Visitors have begun to show their interest in the local culture, leading to the Government's official designation of the village as a *tourism destination*, in 1993. Penglipuran Village and the government have been maintaining ever since a Memorandum of Understanding to support local development. The linkages between

Indigenous Peoples and tourism present both challenges and opportunities, such as:

- **Preservation and safeguarding of the village's traditions, customs and heritage** by integrating traditional practices and values into the tourism development model. Cultural festivals and education activities connect locals with visitors, who experience performances such as the Gamelan Orchestra or the traditional Barong dance,[122] showcasing the local artistic talent;

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118 Information provided by Desa Wisata Penglipuran, original name for Penglipuran Tourism Village

119 The original inhabitants of Bali are said to have come from Bedulu village long before the Hindu-Javanese immigration wave. A legend tells that in Bedulu lived the last king of Pejeng (an old Balinese kingdom), Sri Aji Asura Bumibanten, who had supernatural powers. Consult for more information: Loose, S. (2023), Bali, Lombok, DuMont Reiseverlag, Ostfilden.

120 The Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism is a global initiative promoted, aimed at recognizing villages where tourism plays a key role in preserving cultures and traditions, creating opportunities, and protecting biodiversity.

Consult at:
World Tourism Organization (n.d.), 'Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: https://tourism-villages.unwto.org/en/ [26-11-2024].

World Tourism Organization (2023), 'Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism – Penglipuran, Indonesia', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: https://tourism-villages.unwto.org/en/villages/penglipuran/ [13-02-2025].

121 The literal translation of Tri Hita Karana is the "three causes of well-being" or "three reasons for prosperity." It is derived from the Balinese spiritualism and beliefs, which promotes harmony among fellow human beings through communal cooperation promoting compassion, harmony towards God, manifested in numerous rituals and offerings to appease deities, and harmony with their environment. *Tri Hita Karana* is credited for the island's prosperity, its relatively stable record of development, environmental practices and the overall quality of life for its residents. Consult for more information:

Krishna, A. (2008), *Tri Hita Karana: Ancient Balinese Wisdom for Neo Humans*, Anand Krishna Global Co-Operation in collaboration with Anand Ashram Foundation, Jakarta.

122 The Gamelan Orchestra is an orchestra typical of Java and Bali composed of of gongs and tuned metal instruments.

The Barong dance is a traditional performance that brings to the stage mythical creatures with the power to protect humanity. According to Balinese mythology, Barong refers to the king of spirits and the leader of the forces of good.

- **Visitor influx generating revenue and boosting local livelihoods**, through sales of entry fees, purchase at local shops, cultural performances and guided tours; revenues are reinvested in conservation, infrastructure and environmental protection, ensuring the village's long-term sustainability; and
- **Community empowerment** reflected in villagers taking charge of their cultural and natural resources and fostering an in-depth community engagement.

The village partners with companies, educational institutions, state-owned enterprises and NGOs. Tour operators benefit from offering unique experiences to their clients, which increases demand for tours and boosts the local economy. Other companies demonstrate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) commitments, contributing to community development, enhancing their social impact and brand image. Educational institutions engage in research on the ground, bringing about tangible research and practical learning for students. Tourism has empowered local people and new community leaders.

They drive all the decision-making and management and have control over their livelihoods. Tourism has created jobs, from guides and artisans to hospitality roles, reducing the rural flight migration.

Data collected from visitor tickets show a substantial annual increase, leading to a growing number of people seeking employment in the village. The village's main challenge is therefore sustaining growth while improving service quality. Uncontrolled visitor numbers could strain resources and lead to excessive commercialization.

To prevent this, villagers manage tourism from planning to implementation, ensuring cultural values are safeguarded. This is coupled with capacity building for the management committee, as well as the training in digital marketing, waste management, guiding, homestay and hospitality skills. New partnerships are needed to bolster the community's spirit, ensuring that tourism aligns well with the village's cultural values and long-term sustainability goals.

Mendak Dangsil festival in Penglipuran village. © Wayan Budiarta

Case study 6:
Experience Airai – Palau[123]

In Palau, the intersection of indigenous heritage and tourism reveals significant opportunities. Experience Airai[124] is a community-based tour, which successfully integrates cultural safeguarding with tourism, relying on Indigenous People to share their traditions and stories.

Palau's rich cultural traditions and diverse cultural backgrounds[125] attract travellers seeking authentic experiences. Community-based tours have emerged as a powerful way to blend tourism with indigenous heritage.[126] In 2018, the Palau Visitors Authority collaborated with the Airai State Government to propose the Experience Airai, centred around the Ordomel Village, home to the oldest traditional men's meeting house in Palau, known as *bai*. This tour allows visitors to explore the bai and other cultural sites while enjoying traditional meals prepared by local women, with options for half-day or full-day community experiences.

The state government ensures there are trained local guides and processes to maintain and preserve cultural sites; it manages both the marketing and booking processes. The communities have demonstrated leadership by engaging traditional chiefs, the rightful custodians of the bai, women's organizations and other community members offering traditional food

demonstrations and arts and crafts. Additionally, local travel agencies offer diverse activities, expanding the impact of the tours. Each partner's contribution is essential for creating an authentic experience and producing a meaningful cultural exchange.

This project illustrates how tourism can be a catalyst for advancing the socioeconomic well-being of indigenous communities. The initiative has benefited indigenous communities by creating jobs and supporting the preservation of cultural knowledge. Local community members have gained new income sources through their role as guides, traditional food preparers or artisans. The Airai State Government has benefited by welcoming visitors to the Ordomel Village and receiving additional revenue for maintaining cultural sites. Their active role in the tours – through providing trained guides and managing sites – strengthened their connection to the cultural assets of their communities. The success of the project depended on bringing local governments,

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123 Information provided by Palau Visitors Authority.

124 Experience Airai is located in Airai, one of the 16 states of Palau. Website of the initiative available at:
     Palau Visitors Authority (n.d.), 'Experience Airai: a community-based and regenerative tourism', Palau Visitors Authority, Koror, available at:
     https://pristineparadisepalau.com/happenings/experience-airai-a-community-based-and-regenerative-tourism/ [13-02-2025].

125 Rechad er Belau, or Palauans, are the Indigenous People of Belau, the traditional name of Palau. Palauan society is matriarchal and matrilineal, with a Council of Chiefs and a women's council overseeing land, finances and leadership. Today, women advise the president on traditional laws and customs. Consult for more information:
     Palau Visitors Authority (n.d.), 'Culture', Palau Visitors Authority, Koror, available at: https://pristineparadisepalau.com/culture/ [13-02-2025].

126 In 2023, Palau had a population of 17,600 people, with the majority being Palauans,(70% of the population). Other ethnic groups in Palau include Filipinos, Japanese and other Micronesian groups.
     Consult for more information:
     Government of Palau – Palau Explorer (n.d.), 'Palau Island People: A Look into the Culture and Traditions of the Indigenous Community', available at: https://palaugov.net [13-02-2025].

traditional leaders and indigenous communities together to share expectations and recognize the programme's value. This dialogue was crucial in making the Experience Airai work and enhance the tourist experience after post-pilot adjustments. By promoting these community-based tours, the people of Palau have been able to:

- Welcome visitors **seeking authentic cultural experiences** and exchange;
- **Enhance Palau's appeal** as a diverse and culturally rich destination; and
- Reinforce the importance of sustainable and inclusive tourism practices.

During the initial launch of Experience Airai from October 2018 to April 2022, Palau Visitors Authority generated AUD 88,000 before the pandemic, directly benefiting community members and the state government. In 2024, the revenues reached AUD 19,000 until August.[127] While this reflects the ongoing recovery, pre-pandemic tourism numbers have not been reached. However, growth is expected in the coming years, revealing the potential of indigenous community-based experiences. One of the main challenges is the shortage of local guides, which is to be addressed by involving young people to deliver high-quality experiences. Key training should include customer service, branding, marketing and social media management, all aimed at enhancing digital literacy and promoting community self-sufficiency.

Nevertheless, the success of Experience Airai has demonstrated the value of cultural visits in safeguarding indigenous heritage and enhancing economic opportunities. This has encouraged the Palau Visitors Authority to support product development in other states, making these community-based tours an integral part of Palau's tourism sector.

Dirradai Uai Skebong, a mechas or titled woman from Ordomel, Airai, making traditional skirt, called cheriut.
© Palau Visitors Authority

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127 Data directly provided by Palau Visitors Authority to UN Tourism through the questionnaire.

Case study 7:
Tày Hai village – Viet Nam[128]

The Tày Hai[129] village is home to 150 people, located in the Tày Nguyen Province, Viet Nam. It is based on the family model, where *everyone eats together, shares together,* operated under the aegis of *morality* and *love* principles, deeply rooted in the indigenous Tày culture.[130]

The Tày Hai community's development was led by the vision and perseverance of Ms. Hai, a founder and chief of the village, to preserve the community's cultural heritage, as the most precious value of the Tày people. In 2003, Ms. Hai began purchasing long-abandoned lands, buying houses and welcoming people from different regions, including ethnic Tày people. They founded together a new community led by a shared vision.

With the support of her friends and family, Ms. Hai drove the reconstruction of traditional stilt houses (almost vanished at the time, given the accelerated modernization trends) and greening efforts to heal the surrounding environment. People who joined the community welcomed those recovering from drug addiction, ex-convicts and people living with serious medical conditions, HIV and terminal illnesses, as well as elderly people with no shelter. Through training and support, they became vital contributors to the village's sustainability and restoration of traditional farming and centuries-old building techniques. Nowadays, the village subsistence relies on the community labour; every member, including the elderly and children, contributes to the community's productivity and well-being. Community members must balance a sustainable economic growth and business administration with the commitment to keep up agreed goals and cultural safeguarding. Tày people are harnessing their culture in this community by creating authentic tourism experiences, such as:

- **Cultural immersion** in the authentic daily life of the villagers, catering to domestic and international tourists, through tours guided by local people;
- **Participation in unique traditions and festivals** held on special days throughout the year, meant to ensure the community's spiritual well-being;
- **Preservation of traditional stilts houses**, as homes and as homestays;
- **Production of herbal medicines**, brewing rice wine, raising bees, making traditional Tày dishes and cakes, processing green tea and planting of crops; and
- **Maintenance of traditional methods** of animal husbandry, agriculture and long-standing artisanry to ensure better livelihoods, allowing visitors to experience daily activities and purchase local products.

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128 Information provided by Tày Hai Village.

129 Tày Hai Village website is available at: http://Tàyhai.vn/en.

The Tày Hai village was recognized as one of Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism in 2022.

Consult more information at:
World Tourism Organization (2022), 'Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism – Thái Hai, Viet Nam', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: https://tourism-villages.unwto.org/en/villages/thai-hai/ [13-02-2025].

130 Thái, Tày or Tai people are recognized by the Vietnamese Government as one of Viet Nam's 54 ethnic groups. They mostly live in the north-west region of Viet Nam.

Developing tourism in remote areas poses several challenges. In fact, the Tày Hai village is only 70 km from Hanoi attracting 4.45 million international tourists per year, while the Tày Nguyen province receives only 20,000. To enhance its appeal, Tày Hai collaborates with public administrations and companies in organizing workshops and business connections with tour operators to better promote its unique tourism experience internationally.[131] The community's external outreach consists in:

- Promotional activities and events of the Provincial Tourism Association, government tourism agencies and international organizations;
- Trainings to acquire new business management and digital marketing skills; and
- Accessing to funding and preferential loan schemes to enable growth beyond the initial investment phase.

By operating as a family-based organization focussed on cultural preservation, the village seeks to secure financial resources and better access to capital for future growth. Although high-interest private loans have created short-term financial burdens, locals view these investments as necessary steps toward long-term development. The difficulty of identifying and accessing external investment sources and loans is still one of the major challenges. Over these 20 years, this three-generation community has preserved 20 ha of forest, revitalized from previously barren land, alongside more than 20 stilt houses, some of them a century-old. Ensuring the renovation of deteriorating infrastructure, including roads and stilt houses are a key priority, requiring substantial funding and strategic planning for sustainable growth. With more external support, the village could do much more to keep its sustainability agenda, while spreading its human values to the global community.

Ms. Hai in a traditional ceremony of the Tày Hai village. © Cu Xuan Long

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131 Data directly provided by Tày Hai managers to UN Tourism through the questionnaire.

3.4
Supporting indigenous empowerment through training, entrepreneurship and market–ready experiences

Empowerment through entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in improving the indigenous livelihoods. By focussing on the development of authentic experiences that reflect their heritage, communities create sustainable tourism models that advance their economic independence, self-determination and leadership.

Indigenous tourism products, services and experiences can be based on a wide array of cultural expressions and knowledge. However, prior to developing tourism, indigenous communities and the tourism sector need to understand the overall value of the indigenous heritage on a given territory. Indigenous communities may wish to create businesses which – apart from being economically feasible – require an intracommunity consensus and focal points to run communications. Tourism experiences will have to compete for customers and adjust to the market, while pursuing the community's vital economic and cultural aspirations. This balance is hard to achieve, at times. While indigenous tourism may be advocated as a matter of intercultural exchange, tourism carries a commercial exchange and expectations of quality. Communities planning to start an indigenous tourism business may begin with an assessment and a preparatory process geared towards:

- Creating a **community dynamic** allowing members to analyse and express their interests, qualifications and talents they can bring to potential enterprises;
- **Building awareness among prospective entrepreneurs** of the necessary permits or support from intercommunity sources or external entities. These may include government administrations, business associations or NGOs offering grants, loans, knowledge, training and/or networking;
- **Getting acquainted with laws**, regulations, standards or certified training programmes to comply with, before offering tourism services on the market;
- **Adapting** these tools, in case they are not compatible with indigenous laws, informal economy models or indigenous ways of life;
- **Creating a corporate image** for a business by choosing the elements to reflect the company's logo, the fabrics, furniture, decoration or uniforms to be used (if an accommodation facility), or the menu to be offered (if a restaurant); and
- **Planning** the tourism experience, which may include basic language instruction, sharing spiritual practices or visiting particular locations (if not considered private or sacred).

Training plays a key role in acquiring skills and setting up successful cooperative enterprises for indigenous tourism in Asia and the Pacific. Business management and marketing skills are usually the top priorities, as they ensure an inclusive and diversified value chain, as well as the desired clientele and their loyalty. Specific skills are needed to adjust the focus of existing products, and to create experiences that can kindle market interest. This implies training for personnel to become good indigenous guides, quality service professionals and social media managers. Digital skills are essential in the fields of marketing, product distribution and promotion. They are crucial in the creation of many of the booking processes and services provided by community members. Initiatives like Snow Leopard Trek in Nepal and the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC) exemplify how entrepreneurship and experiential tourism create socioeconomic benefits while honouring indigenous traditions. These organizations are paving the way for Indigenous Peoples to thrive in tourism through partnerships, training and culturally sensitive practices.

Practicing Mau Rakau, ancient Maaori martial art, Kaitaia, New Zealand. © Rafael Ben Ari | Dreamstime.com

Case study 8:
Snow Leopard Trek – Nepal[132]

Snow Leopard Trek is a tour company, advocating for ecotourism in Nepal. Leveraging the significant potential of trekking as a tourism-driven business, the company offers guided tours that immerse visitors in the rich cultures of indigenous communities, while actively contributing to their preservation.

Since 2002, Nepal's Indigenous Peoples are officially recognized by the Government as Indigenous Nationalities (*Adivashi Janajati*)[133] and represent 35.81% of the total population[134]. In 2022, statistics showed that 10% of visitors travel to Nepal for adventure and mountaineering,[135] highlighting the allure of trekking business and indigenous tourism. Visitors interact with indigenous communities during treks. Snow Leopard Trek provides a range of trips featuring meaningful cultural exchanges. The "Indigenous Immersive Experience", a 20-day tour, engages visitors with the cultures of the Tamang, Tharu and Newar communities. Other tours include indigenous festivals such as the Mani Rimdu in Chiwong, those taking place at Thangboche monasteries in the Everest region and the Teji festival in Manang.

The agency contributes to the Indigenous Peoples' development and cultural safeguarding, through the following activities and specific outcomes:

- **Treks tours**, which often include visits to indigenous villages to experience traditional lifestyles, authentic craftsmanship and rituals;
- **Cultural exchange and knowledge sharing** by indigenous guides of the flora, fauna, as well as their cultural history – instilling pride in their heritage;
- **Capacity-building**, through trekking businesses providing training in foreign languages, hospitality and guiding skills;
- **Creation of jobs** in the trekking industry, for local tour guides, porters, cooks, hospitality workers, including those from the Sherpas community;
- **Growth of local businesses** such as homestays, restaurants and handicraft shops selling cultural creations that produce benefits for the communities;
- **Active engagement** of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making on how tourism is to be developed and managed within their communities; and

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132   Information provided by Snow Leopard Trek.

133   According to the NFDIN Act-2002, indigenous nationalities in Nepal – defined as *Adivasi Janajati* – are distinct communities having their own mother tongues, traditional cultures, written and unwritten histories, traditional homeland and geographical areas, and egalitarian social structures.

     Government of Nepal (2002), *National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities Act,* 2058 (2002), available at: https://nfdin.gov.np/nfdin/default/engindex/ [13-06-2025].

     Indigenous Voice (n.d.), 'Indigenous People of Nepal', Indigenous Voice, Kathmandu, available at: https://english.indigenousvoice.com/indigenous-peoples-of-nepal [25-11-2024].

134   United Nations Population Fund (2017), *Population Situation Analysis of Nepal,* UNFPA Nepal, available at: https://nepal.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Nepal%20Population%20Situation%20Analysis.pdf [27-02-2025].

135   Government of Nepal – Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation (2023), *Nepal Tourism Statistics 2022*, Kathmandu, available at: https://www.tourism.gov.np/files/NOTICE%20MANAGER_FILES/Setting_Nepal%20Tourism%20Statistic_2022.pdf [11-02-2025].

- **Empowerment of women** to become entrepreneurs or leaders in tourism and achieve greater financial independence. In this context, the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs of Nepal (F-WEAN),[136] one of Snow Leopard Trek's key partners, has developed programmes empowering women in remote areas, advancing SDG 5[137].

Trekking tourism supports Nepal's national and regional economic development by generating revenue through taxes and tourism-related expenditure. Notably, the Nepal trekking sector alone constitutes more than 10% of the Nepal tourism market.[138] Constant Infrastructure improvements, including roads, communication and healthcare services, are necessary to accommodate tourists, which in turn enhances local living standards. Finally, trekking companies advocate for eco-friendly practices, encouraging indigenous communities to manage resources sustainably, advancing SDG 13[139].

For instance, the Trans-Himalayan Environment and Livelihood Programme (T-HELP) supports Snow Leopard Trek in addressing environmental issues and promoting income generation through ecotourism and organic farming. However, there are still challenges to address, including:

- **Cultural commodification:** traditional practices risk being altered to meet tourist expectations;
- **Environmental impact:** increased tourism can lead to environmental degradation if not managed sustainably;
- **Inequality:** some communities benefit significantly from tourism, while others remain underserved due to remoteness or less attractive locations; and
- **Economic dependency:** communities may become vulnerable to market fluctuations and external economic factors due to heavy reliance on tourism.

Indigenous Dolpo people and mountain goats. © Snow Leopard Trek

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136 Website of the Federation of Woman Entrepreneurs' Associations of Nepal (FWEAN) available at: https://www.fwean.org.np/.

137 SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Consult for more information: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5 [13-02-2025].

138 Government of Nepal – Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation (2023), *Nepal Tourism Statistics 2022,* Kathmandu, available at: https://www.tourism.gov.np/files/NOTICE%20MANAGER_FILES/Setting_Nepal%20Tourism%20Statistic_2022.pdf [11-02-2025].

139 SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Consult for more information: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13 [13-02-2025].

Case study 9:
The Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council WAITOC – Australia[140]

In Western Australia 89,000 people identify as aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, accounting for 3.3% of the population.[140] The Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC)[141] is the main representative for aboriginal tours and experiences in the state, offering capacity building and skills development for indigenous tourism operators.

WAITOC programmes support indigenous tourism operators (ITOs) in developing and growing their businesses, thus fostering economic independence and self-determination. WAITOC supports ITOs building business acumen in marketing, financial and digital skills through the Aboriginal Tourism Academy. Key priorities of the project include:

- **Promoting cultural sensitivity** and authenticity in all initiatives;
- **Enhancing market access** and promotional strategies;
- Overcoming infrastructure and logistical challenges;
- Addressing historical and systemic inequities;
- Aligning community engagement and governance with local needs; and
- **Developing and retaining a skilled workforce** in remote regions.

Tourism provides a viable income source for communities, allowing them to create jobs and invest in community initiatives. WAITOC's emphasis on cultural sensitivity and authenticity ensures that tourism experiences are grounded in indigenous knowledge and traditions, promoting cultural pride and generating income. Overall, the project showcases how indigenous-led tourism can catalyse socioeconomic development, providing pathways for sustainable growth, cultural preservation and self-determined futures. The main partners that work alongside WAITOC staff are Tourism Western Australia and Lotteries West who provide funding, allowing WAITOC to run the Aboriginal Tourism Academy[142] and the Aboriginal Business Hub[143]. WAITOC has also established Aboriginal Tourism Western Australia, a charitable arm that has enabled WAITOC to grow its outreach and support aboriginal entrepreneurs through mentoring and business development programmes. The project has benefited aboriginal businesses by enhancing their capacity to operate in tourism. Key benefits to aboriginal businesses from WAITOC include:

- Increased business expertise and skills;
- Improved market access and visibility;
- Access to funding and resources;

140 Government of Australia – Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), 'Western Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population summary', ABS, published 1 July 2022, available at https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/western-australia-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-population-summary [05-11-2024].

141 WAITOC website available at: https://www.waitoc.com/ [13-02-2025].

142 Consult more information about Aboriginal Tourism Academy at: https://atwa.org.au/our-programs.

143 Consult more information about Aboriginal Business Hub at: https://wainvestments.com.au/projects/aboriginal-tourism-and-business-hub/#:~:text=WAITOC%20wishes%20to%20develop%20a%20commercial%20business%20that,entreprenuers%20and%20business%20interested%20in%20supporting%20Aboriginal-owned%20businesses [16-06-2025].

- Mentorship and business development support;
- Enhanced cultural integrity and authentic experiences;
- Stronger community and collaborative networks;
- Creation of employment opportunities; and
- Building resilience and adaptation.

WAITOC has enabled Aboriginal businesses to thrive as key players in the Western Australian tourism sector. Recent data[144] shows a significant 19% increase in visitor participation in aboriginal cultural experiences since 2017, reaching 36% in 2024. The *Aboriginal Tourism Snapshot 2021–22* underscores the sector's growth, with aboriginal tourism businesses contributing AUD 63.8 million to the gross state product – an increase of AUD 20 million since 2017 – and AUD 41 million to state incomes, an AUD 11.3 million rise.[145] Employment has also expanded, nowadays supporting 516 full-time jobs. With 87% of visitors expressing their willingness to engage with aboriginal tourism, there is an opportunity for domestic and international market growth. Nevertheless, WAITOC faces several challenges, including:

- **Need for customized support**, making WAITOC initiatives resource-intensive;
- **Limited access** to traditional finance channels and lack of intergenerational wealth due to extended colonization impacts;
- **ITOs reliance on government grants** or short-term funding, impacting long-term sustainability; and
- **Navigating complex regulations** (land rights, cultural heritage and licensing, among others), especially for smaller operators with limited resources.

Further external support could provide for access to capacity-building tools, training and digital skills, along technology integration. There is a need for stronger cross-sector networks, better market visibility, and enhanced governmental support at all levels. Improved access to finance, funding and the development of community-based tourism infrastructure are critical.

Facilitating peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing between Australia and other indigenous countries are also essential, as well as research support, better data access and promoting sustainable tourism practices.

Aboriginal woman standing next to a tree. © WAITOC

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144 Government of Western Australia – Tourism Western Australia (2024), *Visitor Experiences and Expectations Research Report*, available at: https://assets-us-01.kc-usercontent.com/53c284ed-8b6d-0077-d7d1-762b0c10baee/383717b4-638a-4cac-bf93-f0d3330ddf46/Visitor-Expectations-and-Experiences-Research-VEER-2023-24-Report.pdf [17-03-2024].

145 Government of Western Australia – Tourism Western Australia (2021), *Western Australia's Aboriginal Tourism Snapshot 2021–22*, Tourism WA, Perth, available at: https://www.tourism.wa.gov.au/Markets-and-research/Specialised-Research-Reports/Pages/WA-Aboriginal-tourism-snapshot.aspx#/ [20-10-2024].

3.5
Promoting traditional knowledge, farming practices and biodiversity preservation

The management of protected areas or those of exceptional environmental value can be challenging at locations in which indigenous communities live on their ancestral lands.[146] Governments and the private sector need to engage into a permanent dialogue with the communities over the land's ownership or use.

Indigenous Peoples cherished their own concepts of respect for nature and stewardship before the conservation movement began. They have been observing environmental changes for generations and have recognized patterns that made an impact on their lives, their health and their diet, and the nature that surrounds them.[147] Greater awareness has been a critical factor in the community governance in Asia and the Pacific, where tourists or tour-operators have often practiced activities discouraged by indigenous leaders, either for environmental security or due to their sacred importance. Many ecotourism and regenerative agritourism projects, are not only connected to the indigenous lands, as they feature inseparable links with a myriad of cultural elements or spiritual implications. These are best understood when indigenous guides interact with visitors, illustrating the nexus between the resources and their own lives. Through multipartite governance, the key stakeholders establish rules, agreements, codes of conduct[148] or ethical guidelines. These instruments should be inspired by the protection of natural and cultural assets, the safeguarding of traditional farming practices, the knowledge of biodiversity and a wide range of land-related traditions. The agreements can be of traditional nature and rooted in certain indigenous communities, or can feature novel models covering some of the following elements:

- **Consultation** mechanisms on permits for any economic activity;
- **Management of resources of a territory**, its flora and fauna, carrying capacity and limits of acceptable change;
- **Training** requirements for employees dealing with visitors or protected areas;
- **Priorities for investment** in essential infrastructure;
- **Appropriate visitor behaviour;**
- **Authorized guiding** services; and
- **Distribution of benefits** from tourism activities.

In some cases, Indigenous Peoples have gained exclusive management over protected areas following an extensive dialogue with other actors. Financial results, transmission of knowledge and optimal levels of resource conservation have often been testimony to their sound management approaches. The preservation of farming practices and biodiversity is fundamental to ensuring sustainability and resilience. By integrating these elements into

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146 The Food and Agriculture Organization identified 89 Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) in 28 different countries where living heritage systems are inhabited by communities that hold an intricate relationship with their territory. Consult for more information: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (n.d.), 'Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems', FAO, Rome, available at: https://www.fao.org/giahs/en [20-03-2025].

147 Consult for more information:
United Nations Environment Programme (2023), 'Indigenous People and the nature they protect', UNEP, Nairobi, available at: https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/indigenous-peoples-and-nature-they-protect [20-10-2024].

148 Consult more information at:
World Tourism Organization (2020), 'Tips for a responsible traveller', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-07/Tips-for-Responsible-Traveller-WCTE-EN.pdf [07-03-2025].

contemporary tourism and agriculture practices, communities address critical environmental challenges, such as climate change. The projects showcased below empower local populations economically and enable a deeper connection to their land and resources. By emphasizing regenerative practices and community-led conservation efforts, initiatives like Regenerative Vanua in Vanuatu and the Naidiri Marine Biodiversity Park in Fiji show how communities harness their traditional knowledge.

Men playing typical carryam board game, western Nepal. © Daniel Prudek | Dreamstime.com

Case study 10:
Regenerative Vanua – Vanuatu[150]

For decades, Vanuatu has been marketed as a postcard destination and cruise ship dock for short visits, offering untouched beaches for tourists from overseas to discover.[150] This model has allowed visitors to experience Vanuatu without engaging meaningfully with its culture. Regenerative Vanua[151] was founded to create positive social, cultural, environmental and health impacts on local communities, prioritize community empowerment, business diversification and cultural preservation.

Tourism in Vanuatu has been traditionally concentrated in the two main cities, and it has a had a high level of foreign ownership and control, as well as rural-urban migration – often perpetuating economic inequalities and tourism silos.[152] The latter have been enhanced through mega cruise ships and new developments in private island destinations. Furthermore, tourism in Vanuatu has had a high level of leakage and reliance on imported foods, it raised land ownership issues and restricted access to coastal areas. In many cases, vegetation clearance and dredging of mangroves for tourism development has threatened species and accelerated a loss of biodiversity. Regenerative Vanua[153] is an NGO established in 2019 as an outcome of a project funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

Regenerative Vanua piloted the Agritourism Diversification Program in collaboration with the Vanuatu Government through the European Development Fund[154] and ACIAR to address negative impacts caused by tourism and support a meaningful engagement of the indigenous Ni Vanuatu[155]. The programme was awarded an Islands Innovation Award in 2022 for the Most Transformational Sustainable Government Initiative. As a result of the pilot, 27 indigenous businesses obtained AUD 10,000 grants to purchase systems, solar water pumps and fibreglass freezers, water storage and farming equipment.

Regenerative Vanua supports Vanuas to diversify into markets such as: regenerative agritourism, gastronomy, value chains, biodiversity credits and payment for

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149 Information provided by Regenerative Vanua.

150 Addinsall, C. et al. (2024), 'The Regenerative Vanua Journey: Rekindling the Connection and Regeneration of Vanua through Regenerative Agritourism Experiences', *Tourism Cases,* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1079/tourism.2024.0073.

151 *Vanua*, in the local language, refers to "land", "home" or "village". Vanua is the relational principle that provides a cohesive sense of identity, place and belonging, referring to life in all of its various manifestations: geology, geography, spirituality, history, ecology, hydrology, fauna, flora, human presence and culture (Regenerative Vanua).

152 Cheer, J.M.; Reevers, K.J. and Liang, J.H. (2013), 'Tourism and Traditional Culture: Land Diving in Vanuatu', *Annals of Tourism Research*, volume 43, pp. 435-455, DOI:–https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2013.06.005.

153 For more information on Regenerative Vanua consult: https://www.regenerativevanua.org/ [14-02-2025].

154 European Union (n.d.), 'European Development Fund', EUR-Lex, Luxembourg, available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/european-development-fund-edf.html [14-02-2025].

155 Ni-Vanuatu (abbreviated Ni-Van) is a large group of related Melanesian ethnic groups native to the country of Vanuatu. As such, ni-Vanuatu are a mixed ethnolinguistic group with a shared ethnogenesis that speak a multitude of languages.

ecosystem services (PESs),[156] by operationalizing the Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program (RAPRP) and Regenerative Vanua Stewardship Agreements (RVSA)[157]. The organization is working with the Pacific Islands Forum[158] to apply the RAPRP and RVSA throughout the Pacific. Regenerative Vanua has had a profound impact on communities by fostering adaptation and diversification, through the development of RVSAs, deeply rooted in Vanuatu's culture. Regenerative Vanua is also having positive social, cultural, environmental and health impacts: Its programmes prioritize community empowerment to steward and care for their Vanua which support their well-being and livelihoods, rather than seeing Vanuas as tourism destinations. This approach redefines tourism as:

- A way to share and document the regenerative journey of the communities, inspiring change, facilitating (re)learning and cross-cultural connections, all essential for fostering a community's pride and resilience;

- A model which reframes tourism as an opportunity to strengthen and share culture through regenerative transformational experiences, rather than a commercialized visitor-centred business operation;[159]

- Focus on storytelling, sharing and hosting in tourism, allowing for the socioeconomic development of Vanuas, as well as the regeneration of land and community; and

- A method to diversify and protect indigenous Ni Vanuatu businesses from the unpredictability of tourism, introducing a path to increased income, renewable energy grants, cultural safeguarding, regenerative agriculture practices and reduced reliance on imported low-nutrition food.

Regenerative Vanua has recently established the Regenerative Vanua Collective which houses the Pacific administration for Regenerative Vanua, the Pacific administration for the Global Agritourism Network. It helped Kai Vanua[160] showcasing regenerative sourced nobel variety of kava[161]. It also operates a pharmacy (selling high nutritional food sourced from regenerative organic farms, as well as traditional medicinal herbs), an outdoor cinema for educational movies, a Regenerative Backyard Garden and a cooking demonstration facility.[162] Regenerative Vanua has also established the Regenerative Alliance as an outcome of their Regenerative Agritourism Symposium in June 2024, which is made up of organisations committed to building the regenerative movement.

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156 Also known as payments for environmental services (or benefits), PESs are incentives offered to farmers in exchange for managing their land to provide "ecological services". They are "a transparent system for the additional provision of environmental services through conditional payments to voluntary providers". PESs promote the conservation of natural resources in the marketplace.

Tacconi, L. (2012), 'Redefining payments for environmental services', *Ecological Economics*, 73 (1), pp. 29–36, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2011.09.028.

157 A Stewardship Agreement is defined as an agreement that facilitates the pursuance, funding and research of initiatives aimed at preserving or protecting the environment and all of its components.

158 For more information on the Pacific Island Forum consult: https://forumsec.org/ [14-02-2025].

159 Addinsall, C. et al. (2024), 'The Regenerative Vanua Journey: Rekindling the Connection and Regeneration of Vanua through Regenerative Agritourism Experiences', Tourism Cases, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1079/tourism.2024.0073.

160 Kai Vanua in an indigenous-owned restaurant established by Regenerative Vanua's local cuisine chef Leonid Vusilai.

161 Kava is a crop native to the South Pacific islands, whose roots are typically used to prepare a ceremonial beverage.

162 Educating urban communities to grow subsistence high nutritional food and cook healthy meals based on local cuisine

Significant challenges faced by the NGO include:

- **Retaining trained staff** between grants, given the absence of continued and reliable funding sources to employ permanent staff and expand the outreach;
- **Most of the funding available is research orientated**, while there is a lack of stable resources to implement programmes once the research has been validated;
- **Grant writing reduces the focus** on activities that could have a greater impact;
- **Connectivity** to rural communities and **office expenses** is not adequately covered by donors (rent and electricity are extremely expensive in Port Vila);

- **Investors are increasingly targeting untouched indigenous lands** and coastal areas, offering exorbitant sums that create vulnerability and social tension, often bypassing proper consultation channels;
- **Stronger enforcement is required** to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are not disconnected from their ancestral lands or coastal and marine areas (due to the desire from inventors for private beaches); and
- More work is urgently needed to progress the markets globally in **biodiversity credits** and PES, and make them accessible to indigenous custodians.

Group picture of Regenerative Vanua Staff close to the sea. © Laurana Tokataake

Case study 11:
Naidiri Marine Biodiversity Park – Fiji[164]

Within indigenous Fijian societies, social relationships cross several hierarchies, with protocols governing interactions between elder and younger members.[164] This dynamic is challenging for the equal distribution of revenues from tourism,[165] which accounts for 38% of GDP and 118,000 jobs in 2024.[166] The Naidiri Marine Biodiversity Park illustrates how cultural and nature-based activities drive indigenous tourism and promote youth empowerment.[167]

Located on the coral coast of the Fiji Islands, the park is managed by a community-based organization, opting for tourism as one of the activities to protect the ocean, thus supporting SDG 14[168.] In 2009, the local youth of Naidiri village launched their official marine protected area, known as *tabu*, operating as a no fishing zone. Initially covering 1,200 m² in 2009, it has expanded to 28,800 m² by 2024. The zone extends 160 m along the shore and 180 m from to the ocean². It was launched in response to the undersized fish caught close to the coast, resulting from climate change and other anthropological stressors such as illegal fishing, coastal erosion, poor farming and logging practices, as well as pollution. The Naidiri Youth Group manages this marine protected area and collaborates with government agencies, NGOs and researchers to monitor the area, restore fish stocks and restore corals and mangrove. In 2022, the Fijian Government officially recognized the marine protected area as Naidiri Marine Biodiversity Park (NMBP). [169]

The community has set up a tourism venture, providing village tours and coral reef snorkelling experiences. These activities rank among the most popular experiences in Fiji,[170] and demonstrate the economic potential for Indigenous People seeking to diversify their income. The snorkelling experience features a mapped tour of coral nurseries, giant clams and fish houses. A storytelling is delivered by local guides. Visitors may be engaged in coral planting, mangrove restoration and cleaning beaches. Snorkelling tourism in Naidiri has developed through a multistakeholder collaboration, involving:

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163 Information provided by Naidiri Marine Biodiversity Park.

164 Gibson, D. (2015), 'Community-based tourism in Fiji – A case study of Wayalailai Ecohaven Resort, Yasawa Island group', in: *Tourism in Pacific Islands: Current Issues and Future Challenges,* Routledge, London, pp. 118–133 , URI: https://repository.usp.ac.fj/id/eprint/7758.

165 Since Fiji is one of the best-connected destinations in the Pacific, tourism plays a pivotal role in the economy of the country. In 2023, Fiji welcomed 1 million visitors, a 4% increase from 2019, reflecting a post-COVID recovery. Tourism is also an integral part of the Fijian Government's 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plans.

166 Tourism Fiji (n.d.), *Corporate plan 2022–2024*, available at: pdf-tourism-fiji-corporate-plan_v1_26-05-2022.pdf (fijicdn.azureedge.net) [10-02-2025].

167 Consult for more information about Naidiri Marine Biodiversity Park: https://naidirimarinebiopark.org/about/ [14-02-2025].

168 SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Consult for more information at: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal14 [14-02-2025].

169 Information provided directly by Naidiri Marine Biodiversity Park to UN Tourism through the questionnaire.

170 Government of the Republic of Fiji – Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport (2023), *International Visitor Survey – Fiji,* available at: https://www.mcttt.gov.fj [13-06-2025].

- Manoa Duwai, the founder of the marine protected area, who manages snorkelling tourism, monitoring and awareness efforts, with Naidiri Youth Group members serving as tour guides;
- Naidiri Youth Group members to support the management and monitoring;
- Gauri Salunkhe, a researcher assisting with reef management, business and marketing plans, and conducting sustainability impact assessment of snorkelling tourism, while seeking opportunities for new partnerships and funding sources; and
- Tourism Fiji,[171] the Fijian Government's tourism marketing arm, promoting Naidiri Coral Reef snorkelling globally and providing training to local youth on marine guiding, tourism management, and the use of social media.

The Naidiri Marine Biodiversity Park trains youth on cultivating heat-resistant "supercorals" through mesh frames, rope nurseries and disc nurseries in collaboration with NGOs such as Corals 4 Conservation. This fosters pride in their marine environment, their heritage and the indigenous knowledge. The skills acquired economically empower local youth as they access new jobs, sources of income and skill sets. The venture follows a self-sustaining model, by generating funds to enhance the protected area, the *tabu* system, as well as coral and mangrove restoration. This benefits both the environment and the community, by directly reinvesting financial resources into the project. The initiative also promotes cultural transmission, allowing for Fijian indigenous culture to be shared through tourism. Nevertheless, the community still needs to achieve unity to buy-in tourism development and motivation to continue. Identifying sources of funding and submitting complex grant applications is essential. Lastly, local tour guides require product marketing, finance and business management skills. The Naidiri Youth Group is addressing all these challenges by:

- Seeking guidance from partners such as **Tourism Fiji** and researchers who help writing grant application;
- **Applying for grants** to fund tourism expansion;
- **Identifying tour operators** that could assist in attracting more tourists; and
- **Training in first aid, safety and guiding techniques** to guarantee service quality and everyone's well-being.

Coral planting with Naidiri Youth Group. © Gauri Salunkhe

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171   Consult the Tourism Fjii website at: https://corporate.fiji.travel/about-us [14-02-2025].

3.6
Understanding indigenous and non-indigenous alliance in tourism

Engaging in a thorough, transparent and permanent consultation process on the planning, design and management of tourism products and services is key to enabling lasting indigenous and non-indigenous alliances.

Engaging into diverse indigenous tourism alliances includes a dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous stakeholders (governments, destinations, tour-operators, accommodation companies and others), as well as among community members whose consent to any tourism development is necessary.[172] Solid models of indigenous and non-indigenous alliances in tourism need to be based on the principles of equitable indigenous ventures which not only ensure an enhanced economic benefit, but also contribute to protecting cultural and natural resource and intellectual property, thus improving livelihoods. Tour operators represent a key component in the value chain given their role in developing indigenous tourism products and commercializing the offering through retail distributors. In equitable alliances, indigenous products and services have the following common features:

- They are **designed in a participatory manner**;
- They are led by the **commitment to build mutual confidence** and protect indigenous culture, environment and a community's well-being; and
- The **key stakeholders sit together** and gauge the benefits that indigenous communities expect from tourism and any foreseeable disadvantages.

Projects with long-term social benefits are frequently prioritized by the communities, instead of short-term and profit-seeking initiatives. Alliances between indigenous and non-indigenous partners bring significant advantages to communities and create win-win partnerships that improve businesses for service providers, especially tour-operators, such as Intrepid Travel from Australia, and accommodation establishments, such as Songstam and Vinetree in China.

Theyyam fire ritual from Kannur, Kerala, India.
© Ajijchan | Dreamstime.com

172 World Tourism Organization (2020), *AlUla Framework for Inclusive Community Development through Tourism*, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422159.

World Tourism Organization (2019), *Recommendations on Sustainable Development of Indigenous Tourism*, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284421299.

Case study 12:
Intrepid Travel – Australia[174]

Intrepid was founded in 1989 by two Australians, Darrell Wade and Geoff Manchester, who had the bold idea to build a travel company that benefited travellers and local communities. Since then, Intrepid has taken hundreds of thousands of travellers around the globe.

Intrepid is a global, purpose-led experiential travel company with 30 offices around the world that manage more than 900 small group adventures in 116 countries. Intrepid has always been committed to operating in a responsible manner for travellers and the communities they visit. In 2002, the **Intrepid Foundation**[174] was created and in 2018, it became a B Corporation (B Corp).[175] In 2023, Intrepid was offering 100 global indigenous experiences in its portfolio,[176] across Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Canada, South, Central and North America. Intrepid Travel has long been a supporter of indigenous and responsible tourism, recognizing its power to amplify the voices, traditions and stories of First Nations. Intrepid launched its first **Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)** in 2019[177] and **Innovate RAP** in 2020[178]. In 2025, Intrepid will launch its **Stretch RAP**. These Australia-based programmes audit Intrepid's commitment to provide opportunity for First Nations people and communities, build relationships and respect the history and traditions of the First Australians, while helping travellers learn from and connect with the world's oldest living culture.[179] Intrepid educates travellers on engaging respectfully with indigenous communities, addressing key questions about culture, traditions, protocols and reconciliation to ensure meaningful and informed interactions.

173　Information provided by Intrepid Travel.

174　Consult for more information:
Intrepid (n.d.), 'The Intrepid Foundation', Intrepid travel, Melbourne, available at: https://www.intrepidtravel.com/eu/purpose/intrepid-foundation [17-02-2025].

175　"Certified B Corporations are leaders in the global movement for an inclusive, equitable, and regenerative economy [...] B Lab is unique in [its] ability to measure a company's entire social and environmental impact." From:
B Corp (n.d.), 'About B Corp Certification', B Lab Global, Philadelphia, available at: https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/certification/ [17-02-2025].

Consult for more information about Intrepid's B Corp certification at Intrepid: https://www.intrepidtravel.com/eu/purpose/b-corp [17-02-2025] and at B Corp: https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/find-a-b-corp/ [17-02-2025].

176　Globetrender (2022), 'Intrepid Travel unveils 100 indigenous tourism experiences for 2023', published 23 December 2022, available at: https://globetrender.com [11-02-2025].

177　Consult for more information:
Intrepid Group (2019), *Reconciliation Action Plan*, Intrepid travel, Melbourne, available at: https://reports.intrepidtravel.com/RAP/Intrepid_RAP_Report_2019_03.pdf [10-02-2025].

178　Consult for more information:
Intrepid Group (2020), *Reconciliation Action Plan*, Intrepid travel, Melbourne, available at: https://reports.intrepidtravel.com/RAP/Intrepid_RAP_Report_2020.pdf [13-06-2025].

179　Consult for more information:
Intrepid (n.d.), 'First Nations experiences in Australia', Intrepid travel, Melbourne, available at: https://www.intrepidtravel.com/eu/first-nations-experiences-in-australia [05-11-2024].

Consult for more information:
David, B.; Mullett, R.; Wright, N. et al. (2024), 'Archaeological evidence of an ethnographically documented Australian Aboriginal ritual dated to the last ice age', *Nature Human Behaviour*, 8, pp. 1481–1492, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-024-01912-w.

According to Intrepid, community-based tourism generates shared value and creates:

- Authentic connections between communities and travellers;
- Ways to preserve, share and celebrate their culture without commodifying traditions, misrepresenting identities or compromising cultural integrity.
- Economic benefits for local communities and tour operators; and
- Visibility and enhanced reputation for communities willing to attract tourism and for operators who prioritize respect and sustainability.

A valuable example of a sustainable indigenous tourism initiative supported by Intrepid is the **Baining Fire Dance Festival,**[180] held in the highlands of New Britain, Papua New Guinea. This sacred festival involves 57 villages and brings together Baining people[181] for an initiation ceremony, a harvest celebration and a commemoration of the departed. To fund the event, the communities considered welcoming tourists, while safeguarding the festival's cultural integrity

The approach was carefully designed to avoid the commercialization of this authentic, cultural and spiritual event. To achieve this, the involved partners ensured:

- **Local leadership:** the operator, South Sea Horizons,[182] is a trusted local partner with deep ties to the community and full permission to represent them;
- **Collaborative support:** the International Finance Corporation[183] provided technical advice and support for the initial development of the tourism product, and funding for a media trip, once it was up and running;
- **Shared value partnership:** Intrepid Travel came on board as the sales and marketing partner, ensuring a global, respectful and informed customer base;
- **Community control:** operational control and decision making remained with the community and local operator;

- **Cultural respect:** community rights were prioritized throughout the engagement process with cultural practices fully protected; and
- **Clear roles and responsibilities:** a well-defined collaboration ensured that each partner contributed effectively.

The biggest challenge in the project has been maintaining access to Papua New Guinea, where travel risks hinder support for the Firedance Festival. Strong community ties and succession planning ensure sustainable relationships, minimizing reliance on any single individual. The project had significant economic and social impacts. It created jobs for guides, caterers and performers, trained 14 new local guides (including 8 women) and boosted local businesses development. This kind of festivals made financially feasible through tourism, bring together villages to safeguard their traditions, while fostering cultural exchange.

Rabaul-Mask-festival in Papua New Guinea. © Intrepid

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180 Consult more information about the Baining Firedance Festival at:
Papua New Guinea Travel (n.d.), 'Events – Firedance Festival', PNG Travel, available at: https://papuanewguinea.travel/events/firedance-festival/ [17-02-2025].

181 The Baining people, the original inhabitants of East New Britain on the Gazelle Peninsula, have maintained cultural practices dating back approximately 60,000 years. From this area, communities dispersed across the islands of New Guinea, leaving a lasting cultural legacy with a far-reaching influence.

182 Consult South Sea Horizons at: https://southseahorizons.com/ [17-02-2025].

183 The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is a division of the World Bank. Website available at: https://www.ifc.org/en/home.

Case studies 13 and 14: Songtsam and Vinetree – China[185]

Songtsam[184] is a chain of luxury boutique hotels operating in south-western China, primarily in Yunnan and Tibet[185], developing eco-friendly hotels in collaboration with local communities, most of them ethnic minorities with distinctive cultural heritage.

Songtsam builds hotels that blend with the natural environment and local traditions, promoting a business model that covers hotel operations, travel services and cultural experiences, contributing to indigenous communities' development through:

- **Cultural heritage and handicraft promotion** by integrating traditional architecture into its hotels, providing jobs for 300 artisans. Through Thangka painting[186] and black pottery making, guests help preserve local culture and generate economic benefits;

- **Biodiversity conservation** by participating in projects such as the White Eared Pheasant conservation;[187]

- **Jobs, training and talent development** by employing over 1,600 staff, more than 90% from within local communities, who receive professional training for career growth and improving their living standards;

- **Community participation and profit sharing** by engaging in hotel management and tourism activities, increasing its income;[188] and

- **Education support** by collaborating with research institutions which directly engage locals, and by launching a Student Aid Programme, funding children's education from junior high school onwards in local villages.

The Songtsam Tacheng Lodge staff in the rice fields in front of the hotel. © Gao Weiling

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184　Songtsam Group website available at: https://www.songtsam.com/en [17-02-2025].

185　Tibetans are composed of a number of related ethnic groups sharing linguistic and cultural similarities. According to the official 2010 Census, Tibetans comprise roughly 90.5% of the population of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), or around 3 million Tibetans, with Han Chinese making up 8.17%.
　　Consult:
　　United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – Refworld (2017), 'World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples', China: Tibetans, UNHCR, Geneva, available at: https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/mrgi/2017/en/119721 [26-11-2024].

186　Thangka painting is a typical Tibetan Buddhist painting on cotton, usually depicting a deity, a mandala or spiritual events.

187　After the opening of Songtsam Meili Lodge, Songtsam not only focussed on protecting the forest vegetation but also collaborated with the Baima Snow Mountain Nature Reserve to restore the population of the White Eared Pheasant – a national second-class protected animal – in the area around the hotel.

188　According to data provided by Vinetree to UN Tourism through the questionnaire, in 2023, Dalin Village received USD 200,000, Baiba Village USD 118,000 and Jieba Village USD 145,000. Tangdui Village is also earning USD 256,000 annually.

Another case where indigenous/non-indigenous partnership is proving to be beneficial, is the Vinetree Honghegu Tented Resort,[189] located next to the Honghe Hani Rice Terraces a world heritage site in Yunnan.[190]

The resort is a revitalized abandoned village (Shitouzhai), reconstructed with the Hani indigenous group who were fully involved in the research, planning and construction phases of the camp, strengthening local participation and enhancing cultural integration.[191] The local government first invested in infrastructure improvements and attracted young emigrants to return to the area. Over 95% of the camp staff are locals, working in guiding and food services, as well as logistics personnel. Vinetree organizes cultural tours guided by Indigenous People to experience bamboo weaving, making of traditional rice cakes and visits to local markets. Additionally, the resort has established purchase agreements with local farmers to secure demand for agricultural produce. Sustaining traditional rice farming is a challenge since Indigenous People require skills in entrepreneurship, marketing, e-commerce and social media to support the red rice production. An increased investment driven by sustainability principles, would scale up the project's replicability across the entire rice terrace region. Protecting fragile ecosystems while developing tourism in remote areas is complex, given the opposing dynamics of cultural safeguarding and excessive commodification.

Indigenous farmers continue their centuries-old farming practices in the terraced fields. © Vinetree Tourism

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189 Vinetree, available at: http://www.vinetreetents.com/ [17-02-2025].

190 Recognized UNESCO world heritage site, the area is home to Hani people, a Tibeto-Burman ethnic group, part of the 56 officially recognized nationalities of the People's Republic of China.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – World Heritage Convention (2013), 'Cultural Landscape of Honghe Hani Rice Terraces', UNESCO, Paris, available at: https://whc.unesco.org [17-02-2025].

191 Vinetree holds 51% of the project company. The remaining 49% is owned by a government platform representing indigenous interests. During the development process, the project paid CNY 3.7 million in land compensation to the indigenous community.

3.7
Key takeaways from good practices

The key takeaways from the best practices analysed in this report are essential for understanding different approaches in launching new initiatives, scaling impact and ensuring that tourism truly benefits indigenous communities. The key takeaways below reflect some of the fundamental principles, opportunities and challenges, prerequisites for indigenous community empowerment and economic development, while respecting communities' autonomy in decision-making processes related to tourism.

1. Fundamental principles

- Indigenous cultures are deeply connected to their lands, with strong historical and spiritual ties that must be well understood so they could be honoured.

- Indigenous tourism works when intercultural dialogue is fostered and external models where Indigenous Peoples are passive observers get eliminated.

- When respect for cultural rights and traditional territories is practiced, it is more likely that indigenous tourism operations are fair, equitable, community-driven and community-managed.

- In order to increase local demand and resilience against global shocks, when international bookings may drop, domestic markets should cultivate appreciation for indigenous cultures.

2. Main opportunities and challenges

- Infrastructure limitations like poor road connectivity, transport services and digital connection hinder regular tourism flows to indigenous communities.

- Partnerships with public administrations, tourism companies, educational institutions, and civil society organizations are crucial to expand market reach to position indigenous tourism products successfully.

- When governments provide tailor-made plans to support indigenous tourism, and act as enablers rather than leaders, communities feel that their vision and needs are being taken into account – also in indigenous tourism development.

3. Community empowerment and economic development

- Indigenous tourism creates jobs, empowers local communities, and supports cultural safeguarding benefitting both Indigenous Peoples and broader society and economy.

- Integrating indigenous perspectives into public policies and tourism strategies fosters sustainability and enables a meaningful indigenous–non-indigenous cultural exchange. Indigenous representatives must be included in all policy developments.

- Professional training is essential to provide communities with skills in business negotiation,

management, promotion, marketing, and quality control of tourism products. Training should include knowledge on intellectual property and copyrights.

- Skill development should particularly target women and youth, reducing migration to urban areas, strengthening local economies and keeping cultural transmission for future generations.

- Community entrepreneurs, when supported by associations and grassroot community organizations, can access broader value chains and better marketing opportunities.

4. Respecting communities' autonomy

- Indigenous communities must retain full operational control and decision-making power over tourism development.

- Community visions may differ: some prioritize cultural safeguarding and nature conservation, while others seek profit. All approaches need to be respected.

- Indigenous guides play a key role in ensuring tourists understand indigenous cultures and traditions, as well as indigenous spirituality and symbolic values.

- Non-indigenous entrepreneurs should collaborate respectfully when integrating indigenous cultural elements into business design and branding and be familiar with the idiosyncrasies and development aspirations of indigenous communities. Indigenous intellectual property must be taken into account when sharing benefits.

Harvesting jhum rice, Chittagong, Bangladesh.
© Mamunur Rashid | Dreamstime.com

04.
Policy recommendations for public administrations and destinations

Shiraoi Ainu Museum, Hokkaido, Japan. © Nuvisage | Dreamstime.com

According to the **United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues**,[192] it is crucial for states to adopt legislation and regulations to ensure non-discrimination, protect indigenous rights, territories and resources, and promote the socioeconomic inclusion and political participation of Indigenous Peoples. Being a complex socioeconomic activity, tourism is intertwined with all these aspects and cannot thrive if these issues have not been tackled. Indigenous tourism must recognize the delicate and living nature of the cultures and communities it represents. Therefore, policy recommendations should go beyond safeguarding cultural integrity and community rights; they should also include specific guidelines and practical tools to ensure that legislative frameworks are effectively applied and adapted to indigenous realities, producing tangible, and measurable outcomes for Indigenous communities. This last chapter features a set of recommendations intended for public administrations represented by governments and destinations, at national, regional and municipal levels, which are the main beneficiaries of UN Tourism knowhow and experience. However, most recommendations outlined below apply to multi-stakeholder models which reflect the complexity of tourism, becoming even more intricate in the realm of indigenous tourism. Within their respective mandates, the public sector key stakeholders should address the following areas:

Tourism planning, governance and collaborative platforms

1. Tourism policies enabling the sustainable development of tourism:

- Incentivize intercultural dialogue with traditional indigenous community organizations and their leaders through formal committees and platforms, such as public-private roundtables, at national, regional and local level.

- Reflect the realities of life within indigenous communities and the need to safeguard indigenous culture as part of the policy framework.

- Design specific guidelines and tools to produce tangible and measurable results in applying legislative frameworks to indigenous communities.

- Adopt frameworks to ensure and enforce intellectual property protection for unique cultural practices and knowledge exclusive to Indigenous Peoples in close coordination with competent institutions.

2. Governance models advancing indigenous tourism:

- Support the development of organizations led by and composed of Indigenous People, working as teams to ensure that partnerships are equitable, have long-terms prospects and provide real benefits for indigenous communities.

- Consider indigenous points of view, protocols and economic priorities, which may often not coincide with the original vision of the public administrations.

- Apply organizational and governance models, including self-governance, that support capacity building and empowerment of indigenous communities.

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192 United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) is a high-level advisory body to the Economic and Social Council, established on 28 July 2000.

See:
United Nations – Department of Economic and Social Affairs (n.d.), 'United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)', UNDESA, New York, available at: https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/unpfii [17-02-2025].

3. **Adaptation of infrastructure and processes required for tourism operations:**

    ▪ Give special attention to connectivity, roads, sanitation and sewerage.

    ▪ Adapt laws and regulations, often intended for urban settings under municipal authorities, so they are tailored to specific indigenous community contexts.

    ▪ Analyse why the conditions required for obtaining format permits can sometimes be at odds with the indigenous ways of life.

4. **National associations and international networks:**

    ▪ Create and consolidate more effective marketing networks that can discuss the value of resources forming part of tourism supply, as well as the challenges of their integration into the tourism experience.

    ▪ Analyse the economic and brand value of destinations featuring communities that share common characteristics.

    ▪ Support international indigenous tourism ventures and networks that cherish the principle of collaboration and knowledge exchange instead of competition.

Research

5. **Information and awareness about the impacts of indigenous tourism:**

    ▪ Coordinate research, with the full involvement of indigenous communities, through dialogue, to encourage equal indigenous/non-indigenous partnerships in the research design and delivery.

    ▪ Undertake qualitative and quantitative research by the public-private-community and academic sectors to adopt consensus-based research

protocols that define innovative methodologies, making interpretation and wider benchmarking easier.

▪ Strengthen the processes applied in conducting research on the principal aspects of indigenous tourism to obtain up-to-date qualitative and quantitative data, which should inform policymakers.

▪ Apply data and analytical findings to improve the allocation of resources and regulate the activities of all actors, more efficiently.

▪ Research how women and youth can have more enabling conditions to thrive as community leaders and indigenous entrepreneurs through tourism.

6. **Inventory and safeguarding of cultural expressions through tourism:**

    ▪ Create multidisciplinary teams to conduct inventories of tangible and intangible elements of the community heritage.

    ▪ Explain how such inventories demonstrate cultural diversity, while also instilling pride among community members and the government administrations responsible for its protection and promotion.

    ▪ Highlight examples of cultural revitalization and culture-based capacity building that generate income for Indigenous People.

Investment and funding

7. **Public investment or public-private-community partnerships for basic services:**

   - Improve and expand the limited healthcare, sanitation, postal service and infrastructure available in rural areas, particularly in indigenous territories.

   - Establish direct relationships between strategic investments or agreements and the indigenous communities, territories and activities, including tourism.

   - Expand air, surface, marine and river transport infrastructure and service through governmental mechanisms.

   - Provide for the introduction or modernization of efficient digital infrastructure.

   - Provide means for recovering and promoting traditional knowledge and farming practices in preserving biodiversity and mitigating climate change impacts.

8. **Public-private funding for the expansion of enterprises and value chains:**

   - Improve tourism infrastructure in indigenous communities, adapting it to their cultural identity, traditional architecture and their territorial organization.

   - Analyse the benefits gained from indigenous tourism owing to the improvement and differentiation of indigenous destinations, and the contribution such tourism makes to reviving and enhancing indigenous culture and built heritage.

   - Promote financial support for indigenous organizations, including businesses and community projects, to ensure market-ready tourism experiences.

   - Make sure that investments contribute to the involvement of individuals with the business skills and access to better infrastructure offering high-quality service.

9. **Sources of funding for indigenous and community businesses:**

   - Investigate why access to investor funding is still so challenging.

   - Engage in direct support for marketing activities to ensure a better match between supply and demand and with the tourism sector.

   - Find alternative funding or banking solutions for indigenous community businesses, which, unlike other links in the tourism value chain, are often informal or not officially established or registered as legal or certified entities.

10. **Education and training**

   - Education and awareness-raising on indigenous cultures:

   - Expand awareness about different indigenous cultures, customs, languages and concerns as part of formal school curricula.

   - Promote public interest in Indigenous Peoples through student excursions, volunteer programmes and other projects providing first-hand experiences.

   - Increase national pride in and identification with indigenous communities as a basis for commitment to the effective safeguarding of indigenous cultures.

11. Improvement in the quality of tourism services and experiences:

- Take an intercultural approach to training based on respect for indigenous beliefs and ways of life, while considering the demands of the tourism market and its industries, as well as an increasingly digitalized economy and society.

- Focus training on the competencies required, including knowledge of the indigenous context and ability to compete in tourism markets.

- Develop professional certification schemes recognized within the tourism sector as a basis for formalizing professional profiles.

- Train indigenous tourism entrepreneurs for collaboration with public and private entities in developing marketing activities that can effectively promote sales.

Development and marketing of tourism experiences

12. Stakeholder coordination:

- Conduct joint activities, involving public administrations, indigenous organizations and the private sector, for the development of indigenous tourism products.

- Observe the principles of respect for intellectual property in conducting such joint activities and in community decision-making processes.

- Avoid the propagation of outdated stereotypes no longer reflective of the current realities of life in indigenous communities.

- Indigenous and non-indigenous partnerships need to be based on mutual respect and equal share of benefits.

13. Marketing plans – making tourism experiences market-ready:

- Design a marketing plan tailored to indigenous communities, showcasing their culture and pride while connecting with the targeted customer profile.

- Consider aspects of cultural identity and their interpretation in a contemporary context, from the standpoints of intellectual property protection and the self-esteem to be promoted among indigenous community members.

- Prepare marketing plans with indigenous leaders and authorities responsible for tourism promotion, since the content and approach of messages intended for domestic markets usually differ from those for international markets.

- Register collective trademarks for the tourism experiences offered by indigenous associations, especially if marketed internationally.

- Provide financial support and training to indigenous enterprises, upon identifying gaps in infrastructure, entrepreneurial skills and digital capacity.

- Design alternatives for indigenous enterprises lacking the required permits or formal clearances by the tourism sector and public administrations to market their products.

14. Marketing processes supported by tour operators:

- Train indigenous entrepreneurs in basic digital skills and more advanced capacities encompassing computer skills, e-commerce, booking engines and social media channels used for marketing, promotion and cultural awareness-raising.

- Assist communities in harnessing digital technologies in conveying personalized marketing messages and experiences, catering to specific customer profiles.

- Provide digital platforms for direct booking and sales systems championed by public agencies or public-private partnerships in charge of destination marketing.

- Promote organized incentive travel programmes for wholesalers or fairs leading to agreements between enterprises or between destinations and tour-operators.

15. **Responsible tourist conduct:**

- Encourage responsible conduct of tourists visiting indigenous territories to experience their cultures and interact with their communities.

- Educate tourists on how and why indigenous communities need to be researched, and their history, culture, spirituality and codes of conduct better understood, prior to face-to face interaction.

- Ensure tourists understand well why some areas or traditions practiced by the communities have sacred importance and are therefore restricted to tourists.

- Explain why tourists should choose indigenous guides and operators working directly with indigenous providers, and how this benefits their communities.

- Provide reasoning for hiring knowledgeable indigenous guides who are the best custodians of their people's culture and can best explain it to outsiders.

- Make sure visitors are aware of the need to manage expectations as interactions with indigenous cultures follow rules and principles of respect.

- Instruct tourists on how to purchase indigenous art and avoid buying handicrafts made using threatened species.

- Make sure visitors understand a responsible use of social media in promoting indigenous lifestyles and photographs of Indigenous People, based on consent.

Indigenous man teaching weaving a basket from coconut palm leaves, Fiji. © Rafael Ben Ari | Dreamstime.com

Annex 1
UN Tourism country classifications for the Asia and the Pacific region

North-East Asia

China

Hong Kong (China)

Japan

Korea, Democratic People's Republic of

Korea, Republic of

Macao (China)

Mongolia

Taiwan Province of China

South-East Asia

Brunei Darussalam

Cambodia

Indonesia

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Malaysia

Myanmar

Philippines

Singapore

Thailand

Timor-Leste

Viet Nam

Australasia

Australia

New Zealand

Melanesia

Fiji

New Caledonia

Papua New Guinea

Solomon Islands

Vanuatu

Micronesia

Guam

Kiribati

Marshall Islands

Micronesia, Federated States of

Nauru

Northern Mariana Islands

Palau

Polynesia

American Samoa

Cook Islands

French Polynesia

Niue

Pitcairn

Samoa

Tokelau

Tonga

Tuvalu

Wallis and Futuna Islands

South Asia

Afghanistan

Bangladesh

Bhutan

India

Iran, Islamic Republic of

Maldives

Nepal

Pakistan

Sri Lanka

Countries included in the research and for the preparation of case studies for this publication:

Australia

China

Fiji

India

Indonesia

Japan

Nepal

New Zealand

Palau

Papua New Guinea

Philippines

Viet Nam

Vanuatu

Acronyms and abbreviations

ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research	PATA	Pacific Asia Travel Association
APPA	Ainu Policy Promotion Act	PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
CBT	community-based tourism	RAPRP	Regenerative Agritourism Pathway Recognition Program
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility	RDAP	Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific
DOT	Department of Tourism		
ECSR	Ethics, Culture and Social Responsibility	RVSA	Regenerative Vanua Stewardship Agreements
GDP	gross domestic product		
ICH	intangible cultural heritage	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
ITAC	Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ITO	indigenous tourism operators		
NCIP	National Commission on Indigenous People	UNPFII	United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
NMBP	Naidiri Marine Biodiversity Park	UN Tourism	World Tourism Organizations
NGO	non-governmental organisation	UNWTO	World Tourism Organizations (former acronym)
OAS	Organization of American States		
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	WAITOC	Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council
OSC	Office of Special Concerns	WINTA	World Indigenous Tourism Alliance
OSEC	Office of the Secretary	WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization

Glossary

Adventure tourism is a type of tourism which usually takes place in destinations with specific geographic features and landscape and tends to be associated with a physical activity, cultural exchange, interaction and engagement with nature. This experience may involve some kind of real or perceived risk and may require significant physical and/or mental effort.

Community-based tourism refers to tourism activities and services which have been developed by local community members, working together in a CBT club or group, sometimes in partnership with the private sector.

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions.

Ecotourism is a type of nature-based tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to observe, learn, discover, experience and appreciate biological and cultural diversity with a responsible attitude to protect the integrity of the ecosystem and enhance the well-being of the local community

Indigenous tourism is the tourism activity in which Indigenous Peoples are directly involved through control and/or by having their culture serving as the essence of the attraction.

Mountain tourism is a type of tourism activity which takes place in a defined and limited geographical space such as hills or mountains with distinctive characteristics and attributes that are inherent to a specific landscape, topography, climate, biodiversity (flora and fauna) and local community. It encompasses a broad range of outdoor leisure and sports activities.

Rural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle/culture, angling and sightseeing.

Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as an international call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Tourism destination is a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism.

Tourism value-chain chain is the sequence of primary and support activities which are strategically fundamental for the performance of the tourism sector. Linked processes such as policy making and integrated planning, product development and packaging, promotion and marketing, distribution and sales and destination operations and services are the key primary activities of the tourism value chain.

Recommended reading

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UN Tourism

The World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism), 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 know-how. Its membership includes 160 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 500 Affiliate Members.

www.unwto.org

WINTA
WORLD INDIGENOUS
TOURISM ALLIANCE

The World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (WINTA) is an Indigenous-led global network of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and organizations who seek to give practical expression to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through tourism. Created in 2012, WINTA works with Indigenous communities, companies, States and NGOs contributing to Indigenous empowerment through tourism. WINTA supports the exchange of information on social, environmental, cultural and economic opportunities and challenges relating to Indigenous tourism.

www.winta.org

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