

UNWTO and ITC collaborate to strengthen coastal tourism in Liberia

One of the main attractions of Liberia is its Atlantic coastline. In recent years, several initiatives have been undertaken to develop and diversify Liberia's tourism sector, based on the country's natural and cultural heritage. In particular, surf tourism has been identified as a niche market with significant potential for growth.

The International Trade Centre (ITC) and UNWTO are collaborating on a project aimed at developing tourism in Liberia with a specific focus on surf tourism in the coastal town of Robertsport. The project is funded through contributions from the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) and implemented by ITC as the lead agency. As an associate partner, UNWTO is providing technical assistance for the project components on sustainable tourism governance, and marketing and promotion.

One of the project components focuses on the marketing and promotion of surf and coastal tourism, including the development of a promotional video, website, Facebook page and other (e-)marketing activities. In October 2020, an assessment of the constraints and opportunities to market tourism in Liberia will be carried out, with a view to providing guidance on the planning and development of effective promotional activities.

The project stakeholders understand that the development and promotion of tourism in Liberia can only be successfully achieved if there is proper governance and management mechanisms in place for the sustainable development of tourism in coastal areas. UNWTO has developed a methodology to assess levels of sustainable tourism governance and management in coastal destinations and to make recommendations on how to strengthen these mechanisms.

Based on this methodology, UNWTO has recently conducted advisory and capacity building missions in nine coastal destinations in Africa, and also published a report entitled "Sustainable Tourism Governance and Management in Coastal Areas of Africa". This documents the main findings and recommendations from the field missions. Additionally, the methodology developed and the lessons learned from the missions will be used to help evaluate and direct sustainable tourism development in Liberia. The report will also include advice to tourism stakeholders to strengthen governance and management mechanisms for the sustainable development of Robertsport as a destination.

Preparations for the project in Liberia started before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the global tourism sector. To take into account recent developments, the project activities will also provide guidance to tourism stakeholders in Liberia on mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sector and for accelerating tourism recovery.