UNWTO Invites Applications for Best Tourism Villages 2022

Cairo, Egypt, 29 March 2022 - The Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO initiative will return for a second year as it establishes itself as the world’s leading network focused on tourism for rural development.

Launched in 2021, Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO promotes and enhances the role of tourism in safeguarding rural villages, along with their landscapes, natural and cultural diversity, knowledge systems, and local values and activities, including gastronomy. At the same time, the initiative also promotes transformative approaches to the development of tourism in rural destinations that contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Member States invited to present candidates

Following on from the success of pilot project in 2021, UNWTO has announced the return of Best Tourism Villages for 2022. In 2021 over 40 villages from more than 30 countries across the five world regions (from over 170 applications) were recognized as Best Tourism Villages and a further 20 villages were selected to participate in the Upgrade Programme. Now, UNWTO Members States are invited once again to present candidacies through their National Tourism Administrations (NTAs). Applications will be open until 28 June 2022 and the chosen villages will be announced at the end of the year.

The initiative has three components:

• The ‘Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO’ recognizes outstanding examples of rural tourism destinations with recognized cultural and natural assets, that preserve and promote rural and community-based values, products and lifestyle and have a clear commitment to innovation and sustainability in all its aspects – economic, social and environmental. The recognition is based on an evaluation of their resources and initiatives in nine areas covering the three pillars of sustainable development.

• The ‘Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO’ Upgrade Programme assists a select number of villages among those that do not fully meet the criteria to obtain the recognition. The villages receive support from UNWTO and Partners in improving elements of the areas identified as gaps in the evaluation process.
• The ‘Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO’ Network provides a space for exchanging experiences and good practices. It includes representatives of the villages recognized as ‘Best Tourism Village by UNWTO’ as well as those participating in the Upgrade Programme and it will benefit from the contributions of experts, public and private sector partners engaged in the promotion of tourism for rural development. The Network also contributes to the work of UNWTO in identifying good practices, developing guidelines and policy recommendations as well as insights and knowledge.

Applications will be evaluated by an external independent Advisory Board consisting of experts in the different fields based on the nine evaluation areas covering natural and cultural resources as well as initiatives in the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental.

**Tourism for rural development**

Announcing the launch of the second edition on the occasion of its 48th Commission meeting for the Middle East in Cairo, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: “Tourism brings immense opportunities to communities around the world to build new businesses, promote and protect their culture. I look forward to seeing examples of villages working to realize tourism’s unique potential to foster sustainability and create opportunities for all.”

In parallel to the announcement, the kick-off meeting of the BTV Network will be held online on 30 March 2022 with more than 60 current members to take part in shaping its identity, objectives and approach. The calendar of activities within the Network (training, webinars, masterclasses, etc.) will also be expanded from April to December 2022. The Network will be enlarged with new members of Best Tourism Villages 2022 and forthcoming editions with the aim of becoming the largest international network focusing on tourism for rural development.

**Related Links**

- Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO
- Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO: Presentation
- Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Euc84j5Tj1k