

UNWTO Opens Calls for Best Tourism Villages 2023

Madrid, Spain, 23 March 2023 – UNWTO has opened applications for the third edition of its Best Tourism Villages initiative.

Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO was launched in 2021 as part of the Organization's work to make tourism a driver of rural development and wellbeing. To date, over **70 villages from almost 40 countries** have been recognized as Best Tourism Villages. A further 40 have been selected to participate in the Upgrade Programme where they benefit from expert mentorship and networking opportunities.

One initiative, three components

UNWTO's Members States can present up to eight villages through their National Tourism Administrations (NTAs). Applications will close on 23 June 2023 and the winners announced towards the end of the year. As with previous editions, the initiative has three components:

- The 'Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO' recognizes outstanding examples of rural tourism destinations with 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. Selection is based on an evaluation of their resources and initiatives in nine areas covering the three pillars of sustainable development, economic, social and environmental.
- The 'Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO' Upgrade Programme benefits a number of villages among those that do not fully meet the criteria to obtain the recognition. These villages receive support from UNWTO and partners to address the gaps identified in the evaluation process.
- The 'Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO' Network provides a space for exchanging experiences and good practices and opportunities. It includes representatives of the villages recognized as 'Best Tourism Village by UNWTO' as well as the villages 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.

Advancing tourism knowledge

Announcing the launch, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili says: "Tourism can make a real difference for rural communities, delivering jobs, supporting businesses and celebrating and protecting traditions. Through Best Tourism Villages, UNWTO is recognizing those rural destinations that committed to making tourism a pillar of opportunity and wellbeing."

Besides individual mentoring, the villages in the Upgrade Programme will also join the Best Tourism Villages Network, which today numbers over 100 members in five world regions. Since its inception the BTV Network had organized a series of training sessions and masterclasses, allowing hundreds of participants to benefit from expert guidance and feedback from sector leaders.

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