

## INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, Mediterranean nations have been exceptionally popular tourist destinations. This has led to unprecedented development around the region, especially in coastal areas. Today, tourism accounts for 92% of the Mediterranean's economic production<sup>1</sup>. Coastal tourism alone generates US\$300 billion annually, followed by marine tourism at US\$110 billion. Tourism also creates employment. In 2015, it directly supported some 7.8 million jobs in the region (4.5% of total employment), and indirectly contributed to 20 million others (11.5% of total employment). At the same time, mass tourism has caused severe social and ecological damage, thus the need to support more sustainable forms of tourism that help to preserve the unique natural characteristics of the area while promoting local culture and traditions to create authentic experiences for tourists.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.fint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/reviving\\_mediterranean\\_sea\\_economy\\_full\\_rep\\_lowres.pdf](https://www.fint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/reviving_mediterranean_sea_economy_full_rep_lowres.pdf)





## THE ISSUES

The continued growth of tourism in the Mediterranean has come at a high cost, and the economy, the environment and the people are under significant stress. The massive inflow of tourists to sensitive ecosystems unsurprisingly leads to degradation of the environment, bringing aggressive coastal development, coastal erosion, excessive consumption of energy and water, and unsustainable management of solid waste and sewage<sup>2</sup>. This not only diminishes the number of pristine destinations and ecosystems around the Mediterranean but also threatens the quality of

life, economic livelihood and traits unique to local communities.

For many communities, the rapid increase in mass tourism has replaced traditional jobs with seasonal ones<sup>3</sup>. Coastal populations can experience intense economic activity during the high season, but extremely limited economic activity during the low season. This change can alter the normal routines of local residents, at times diminishing more traditional activities in their communities.

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<sup>2&3</sup> [https://www.fint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/reviving\\_mediterranean\\_sea\\_economy\\_full\\_rep\\_lowres.pdf](https://www.fint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/reviving_mediterranean_sea_economy_full_rep_lowres.pdf)





## THE OPPORTUNITY

Increasingly, tourists demand experiences that are unique to their destination, seeking personalization and authenticity, well-preserved landscapes, local experiences and locally-sourced goods. A sustainable model for tourism can preserve a destination's unique characteristics while including the local culture and traditions to create an authentic experience for tourists.

In turn, visitors may pay more to experience cultural, historical and natural richness<sup>4</sup>. As tourists learn more about their environmental footprint, opportunities have arisen for ecotourism which focuses on a business model that preserves natural areas as part of the destination.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as: *Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education*<sup>5</sup>. If supported by smart and monitored investments, ecotourism can also help respond to the need for sustainable rural development in disadvantaged areas.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/reviving\\_mediterranean\\_sea\\_economy\\_full\\_rep\\_lowres.pdf](https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/reviving_mediterranean_sea_economy_full_rep_lowres.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [https://wwf.panda.org/our\\_work/our\\_focus/oceans\\_practice/solutions/reducing\\_tourism\\_impact/difference\\_between\\_ecotourism\\_sustainable\\_tourism.cfm](https://wwf.panda.org/our_work/our_focus/oceans_practice/solutions/reducing_tourism_impact/difference_between_ecotourism_sustainable_tourism.cfm)



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## BLUE FUTURE STORY: ECOTOURISM IN TUNISIA

Tunisia is considered to be one of the countries most exposed to climate change in the Mediterranean, facing increases in temperature, reduced precipitation, rising sea levels and escalating extreme weather that includes floods and droughts<sup>6</sup>. Such risks could affect water resources, agriculture, ecosystems, health and tourism, jeopardizing environmental and socioeconomic well-being.

In Tunisia, tourism contributes nearly 10% of the GDP and is a key source of foreign currency. Annually, the country receives approximately

9 million foreign tourists, arriving mostly from Algeria and Europe. Organizations such as the World Bank and NGOs have seen ecotourism as a positive contribution to local livelihoods while strategically preserving natural resources and biodiversity. Despite efforts to finance ecotourism projects to extend this impact, more action is needed to improve vulnerability<sup>7</sup>. Local innovation sheds light on many opportunities, however. The northwest region of Tunisia, in particular, is characterized by a wealth of natural and cultural resources<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6,7</sup> <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/tunisia>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.fsjegj.rnu.tn/Fr/problematique\\_125\\_822](http://www.fsjegj.rnu.tn/Fr/problematique_125_822)





Within the area, ecotourism has the potential to promote the natural and ecological value of Tunisia and to create a model of sustainable tourism that respects the environment and contributes to sustainable development. In Tunisia, one aspect of ecotourism activities is the promotion of Pescatourism, where travelers spend a day with local fishers to learn about traditional and local techniques. Pescatourism could initiate a real ecotourism strategy for MPAs in North Africa. Pescatourism is a way to give value to the tangible and intangible heritage of artisanal fisheries and to reduce fishing effort: it's a simple equation – the more time fishers spend demonstrating their activities and daily work to visitors and tourists, the less fishing they do and the more they can earn.

*Rania Mechergui, pictured left with her family, is a Tunisian entrepreneur dedicated to ecotourism. Her story is featured in the BLUE FUTURE documentary.*

## LEARN MORE ABOUT BLUE JOBS

BLUE FUTURE is a documentary produced by WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative and the Cogito Project.

It was created by an international group of film makers who share a profound concern for the Mediterranean Sea. Learn more about blue jobs and the BLUE FUTURE documentary [here](#).

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