

UN Tourism



Shaping Sustainable Tourism

The Role of Observatories in Latin America and the Caribbean

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and the Caribbean

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	3
Executive summary	4
Introduction	6
01. International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories	8
1.1 What type of data can tourism observatories collect?	10
1.2 How can observatories inform tourism destination governance and management?	13
02. Tourism observatories in practice: INSTO-selected case studies	14
2.1 INSTO-selected case studies from Latin America and the Caribbean	15
Buenos Aires City Tourism Observatory (Argentina) at the forefront of data-driven management	16
Center of Intelligence of Tourism Economics of the State of São Paulo (CITE), Brazil	17
Brazilian Network of Tourism Observatories	18
Bogotá Tourism Observatory (Colombia) incorporates sustainability as a central dimension to its work	20
Guanajuato State Tourism Observatory (Mexico)	21
2.2 Case studies from selected island destinations	23
Galapagos Tourism Observatory (Ecuador)	24
Mallorca Sustainable Tourism Observatory (Spain)	25
2.3 INSTO-selected international case studies	27
Yukon Sustainable Tourism Observatory (Canada)	28
Sustainable Tourism Observatory of South Tyrol (Italy)	30
03. Lessons learned, challenges and the way ahead	32
3.1 Lessons learned through the case studies	33
3.2 Challenges to be overcome	34
3.3 The way ahead	35
Annexes	36
Annex A – Historical background to the establishment of INSTO	36
Annex B – Additional resources to define objectives of sustainable tourism	38
Annex C – Guanajuato (Mexico), list of indicators	39
Annex D – Galapagos (Ecuador), indicators in use, 2023	40
Acronyms and abbreviations	41



Tequendama Falls near Bogota, Colombia. © Dvrcan | Dreamstime.com

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Executive summary

Tourism development has been a priority sector for development initiatives due to its very special characteristics. Tourism stimulates economic growth and diversification, employment opportunities, infrastructure development, connectivity and foreign exchange earnings. These are the traditional and foremost arguments for why many governments and international organizations prioritize tourism in their development strategies.

However, tourism has other unique characteristics, which allow, if well managed, to trigger multiplier effects into societies and act as a positive agent of change, whether these are cultural preservation, environmental conservation or social progress and inclusion. Given the cross-cutting nature of tourism, in order for tourism to be sustainable and act as a motor for conservation and social inclusion, sustainability needs to be regarded as an ongoing journey, integrated into daily operations, rather than a static target. It requires the interconnectedness of actors, effective communication, collaborative approaches, robust support from key stakeholders and replicability.

Regular, relevant and timely information is essential for fostering a sustainable tourism sector. Such information provides insights into various aspects of tourism – from supply and demand to resource use, waste generation and social and environmental carrying capacities. It supports innovation in terms of data collection and analytical processes, promotes a culture of continuous monitoring and impact evaluation, and encourages stakeholder engagement. Ultimately, it enables participatory processes in which relevant parties can collectively define, align and commit to sustainability goals through tourism development and management.

Observatories of sustainable tourism development – such as the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) of the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism) – play a vital role at the destination level. INSTO supports and connects destinations that are committed to the regular monitoring of the economic, environmental and social impacts of tourism, unlocking the potential of evidence-based decision-making to advance sustainability. These observatories drive innovation and data-driven policies that enhance the long-term resilience of tourism. Serving as essential tools to align local tourism practices with global sustainability goals, INSTO observatories also strengthen capacity at destination level and foster sustainable tourism both locally and globally.

This report presents an overview of what a tourism observatory is; what type of data it collects; how that data can inform sustainable tourism planning, development and management; how it supports participatory approaches; and it includes a series of case studies from tourism observatories from Latin America and other regions of the world.

In conclusion, the report finds that:

- Observatories contribute to better governance due to a participatory approach of all stakeholders, and inform integrated planning, development and management, facilitating the early identification of existing and potential opportunities and threats;
- Observatories are a strong and emerging tool to measure indicators related to economic, social and environmental sustainability in the tourism sector; and that
- There are many international networks and recommended frameworks to assist destinations and tourism observatories to identify (i) the key issues related to sustainable tourism development, and (ii) what indicators to use and how to collect, analyse and monitor results. The participation in international networks facilitates the sharing of ground-breaking research and innovative data collection procedures, as well as standardization and harmonization of indicators.



Cover page of the fourth edition of the Guanajuato Observatory (OTEG) online report.
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Introduction

Tourism is globally one of the largest and most dynamic sectors in the world. With 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals in 2024, tourism generated a record USD 2.0 trillion in export revenues – accounting for 6% of global exports and 23% of global trade in services¹. There are an estimated 270 million jobs worldwide² directly related to tourism making the sector one of the global top job creators, especially for women and youth.

While 2024 confirmed the virtual recovery (99%) of global tourism from the COVID-19 pandemic, with most destinations exceeding 2019 numbers, North, Central, South America and the Caribbean received 213 million international arrivals, recovering 97% of pre-pandemic tourist numbers. Of these, 112 million arrivals visited Latin American and Caribbean destinations and generated USD 112 billion in tourism receipts (as compared to 105 million arrivals and USD 103 billion tourism receipts in 2023).³ El Salvador (+81%), Curaçao (+51%), Colombia (+37%), Guatemala (+33%), the Dominican Republic (+32%), Aruba (+27%), Panama (+17%) and Chile (+16%) were among the strongest performers in 2024 when compared to pre-pandemic levels.⁴

However, tourism development also presents significant challenges. High visitor volumes can strain local resources in a destination – such as water and energy – and exacerbate issues related to waste management, sewerage, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Socially, unmanaged growth can lead to tension between visitors and host communities. Moreover, the seasonal nature of tourism in certain destinations affects the stability and sustainability of formal employment opportunities.

To ensure tourism contributes to long-term sustainability, there is a growing momentum among destinations to develop and implement evidence-based policies that reflect local realities and include all relevant stakeholders. This transition requires coordinated action to:

1. Identify which main factors influence sustainable development in each destination; and
2. Regularly monitor the social, economic, environmental and ecological impacts driven by tourism and other sectors to support the sustainable development of destinations.

1 World Tourism Organization (2025), *World Tourism Barometer*, volume 23, issue 2, May 2025, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/wtobarometereng>.

2 International Labour Organization – ILOSTAT (2024), 'Tracking the rebound in tourism employment', ILO, Geneva, available at: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/24-11-2025>.

3 UN Tourism follows the UN classification of Latin American and Caribbean countries to calculate tourism statistics from Latin America and the Caribbean. See:

United Nations (n.d.), 'Regional groups of Member States', UN, New York, available at: www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/regional-groups [24-11-2025].

4 World Tourism Organization (2025), *World Tourism Barometer*, volume 23, issue 2, May 2025, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/wtobarometereng>.

Recognizing the need for evidence-based tourism planning, tourism observatories have emerged both globally and in Latin America and the Caribbean as key institutional tools for guiding tourism development. The growth of tourism observatories in Latin America and the Caribbean is particularly relevant considering the dimensions of the tourism sector, threats of climate change and other social and economic challenges. These observatories which may be public, private or public-private in nature, are dedicated to collecting, analyzing and sharing data on tourism impacts. By developing indicator systems, strengthening data collection processes and promoting the use of evidence in decision-making, observatories contribute to more informed, transparent and accountable governance of tourism destinations.



Cala Fornells, Mallorca, Spain. © Victor Torres | Dreamstime.com



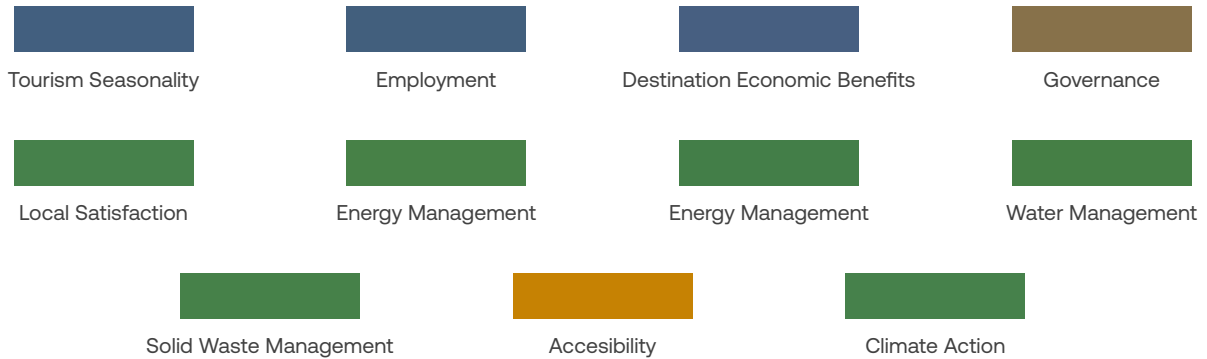
01. International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories

In 2004, the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) was established by UN Tourism to strengthen the capacity of destinations to monitor, manage and improve their sustainability performance based on evidence. INSTO functions as a collaborative network providing members with a structured system for data collection and analysis, deep insights into emerging issues and trends, and the sharing of innovative measurement tools and benchmarking practices. INSTO has since become a global initiative that serves as a collaborative platform for sustainable tourism observatories, promoting knowledge sharing, capacity building and the exchange of best practices in sustainable tourism monitoring and management. Since adopting formal operating rules in 2016,⁵ INSTO has grown to 44 observatories worldwide in 2024, including 10 in Latin America and the Caribbean. Through ongoing

collaboration and training, these observatories strengthen local capacities and governance to advance sustainable tourism at destination levels. (More information on the establishment of INSTO and additional resources on how to define and measure sustainable tourism can be found in annexes A and B, respectively).

INSTO members operate at local and regional levels around the world, often established by local governments, tourism boards, academic institutions or multi-stakeholder partnerships. They are committed to the regular collection and analysis of data, conducting research and promoting sustainable practices within their respective destinations. INSTO members work within a common framework, measuring performance across eleven **key issue areas** (see figure 1.1) to ensure comparability, relevance and effectiveness.

Figure 1.1: INSTO – 11 key issue areas



Source: World Tourism Organization (n.d.), 'UN Tourism International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: <https://www.untourism.int/sustainable-development/un-tourism-international-network-of-sustainable-tourism-observatories> [24-11-2025].

5 World Tourism Organization (n.d.), 'Rules for the Operation and Management of the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO)', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: https://insto.unwto.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/INSTO_Framework-Operation-and-Management-Rules.pdf [24-11-2025].

1.1

What type of data can tourism observatories collect?

Measuring the sustainability of tourism

UN Tourism was also mandated by the United Nations to develop a statistical framework for the measurement of sustainability in tourism. The **Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism** (SF-MST),⁶ which was endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2024, comprises a set of concepts, definitions, classifications and organizing structures for data related to the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism. The framework was developed over a period of seven years with the collaboration of over 40 countries and 30 international and regional organizations, subnational authorities, academia, as well as tourism observatories.

SF-MST is aimed to support the production of reliable, internationally comparable data on the sustainable development of tourism and can be of particular reference to observatories to identify what kinds of indicators to use depending on the aspect of sustainability that they intend to measure, understanding that yet the choice of which indicators to track should always remain rooted in the own needs and aspirations of each community, aligning wherever useful and possible.

While the SF-MST has been created primarily to measure and report key sustainability information nationally, the participation of observatories can facilitate the roll-up of information at the destination level to regional and national level, and – ultimately – support international exchange of information.

Observatories are built upon information. The choice of *what* and *how* to measure is important. Some data is available from existing sources such as a census or from other information collected by tourism companies, visitor centers; or derived from other sources such as transport companies and mobile phone operators. In other cases,

especially when it relates to a new type of data set to be collected, these can be site-specific and international recommendations such as those of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC),⁷ the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS)⁸ or the Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism

6 World Tourism Organization (n.d.), Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism, UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-statistics/statistical-framework-for-measuring-the-sustainability-of-tourism> [24-11-2025].

7 The Global Sustainable Tourism Council® (GSTC) sets global standards for sustainable tourism – *Destination*, *Industry*, and *MICE* (or *MCCI*) Criteria – organized under four pillars: sustainable management, socioeconomic, cultural and environmental impacts. These adaptable guidelines aim to establish a common sustainability framework across diverse local contexts. For more information, consult:

Global Sustainable Tourism Council (n.d.), 'About the Global Sustainable Tourism Council', GSTC, available at: <https://www.gstccouncil.org/about/> [24-11-2025].

8 The European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) is a locally-driven tool for tourism destinations to monitor, manage and assess the impact of tourism, with the aim of improving sustainability performance over time. See:

European Commission – Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (2016), *The European Tourism Indicator System – ETIS toolkit for sustainable destination management*, European Union, Publications Office, Luxembourg, DOI: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2873/983087>.

(SF-MST). International observatory networks such as INSTO can provide useful guidance and best practices. Local tourism businesses, residents and government officials tend to understand and be fully aware of local tourism challenges, the interrelationships between the environment and stressors, and possible sources of information. It is also important to understand the context for *which* data is being collected. For example, if measuring the consumption of water by a tourist, this data is only useful when seen in the context of water supply and competition for the use of water by residents and should also inform future decisions in relation to develop additional tourism services and facilities.

Some of the types of data typically collected through observatories are:

- **Visitor profiles and trends:** Tourism observatories collect data to support indicators on the number of visitors, travel patterns, demographic characteristics, seasonality, preferred sites to visit within the destination, and types of activities undertaken. This information is used to inform decisions regarding infrastructure development, marketing strategies or resource allocation, and can also inform national policies.
- **Market trends and opportunities:** The core data collected by the observatories is used to identify market trends. Information assists decision-makers in understanding market demands and developing suitable tourism products and services to serve specific segments and to target new, niche or emerging markets. For example, the Buenos Aires Observatory, Argentina (presented later in this report as a case study), informs both domestic and international marketing campaigns for the city through data and research conducted.
- **Assessment of socioeconomic benefits:** One focus by observatories is on the economic benefits generated by tourism, such as employment, sales and investment that help ensure that tourism activities contribute positively to economies and the generation of employment and income. These are predominantly quantitative indicators such as the contribution of tourism to gross domestic product (GDP); tourism value-added; total number of tourists, accommodation facilities, tourism enterprises, occupancy rate; revenue per available room (RevPAR); length of stay; tourism expenditure and revenue; and private investment in the destination. Observatories can also collect some opinion-based indicators such as visitor surveys which indicate satisfaction with the tourism experience in the destination and resident surveys to gauge the perception of benefits and challenges of tourism by local residents.
- **Evaluation of environmental impacts:** Measurement of the environmental impacts of tourism, such as solid waste generation, water consumption and signs of degradation, can guide strategies to reduce or mitigate negative effects. Several key environmental measures are considered core indicators by INSTO and are monitored by observatories. Quantitative indicators include the volume of energy and water consumption, volumes of wastewater and solid waste generated, and the number of hotels and tourism businesses adhering to sustainable tourism practices, such as using renewable energy, segregating and recycling waste, implementing water-saving policies, treating wastewater on-site and eliminating single-use plastics. Observatories can also draw meaningful comparisons using ratios and percentages, such as tourism-related electricity or water use versus local consumption, or the percentage of renewable energy use, recycled water use and on-site wastewater treatment in tourism establishments. Destinations aware of the negative impacts of tourism on flora, fauna or other valuable assets are better positioned to act, helping prevent future harm to ecosystems and to tourism itself.



Street in Guanajuato, Mexico.
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- **Climate initiatives:** Tourism observatories can collaborate with broader climate initiatives such as regional sustainability programmes, international agreements on climate change and carbon offset initiatives. They can contribute relevant data and information to these initiatives, helping drive coordinated and effective actions towards mitigating climate change within the context of tourism. Data usually collected includes: average distance travelled by tourists; number of accommodation establishments with sustainable certifications or labels; carbon emissions from main tourist events by means of transport; carbon emissions reduced due to use of renewable energy; and damages and costs incurred on the tourism sector due to storms, floods and extreme climate-induced incidents.
- **Risk and crisis management:** During crises or emergencies, such as natural disasters or pandemics, tourism observatories provide critical data supporting decision-making. The information can measure changes in visitor behaviour, assess economic and social impacts, and influence development of recovery plans. During and post-pandemic periods, observatories play a crucial role in measuring the recovery of tourism, and many governments use this information for monitoring and market intelligence.
- **Focus on hot spots and special sites:** In many destinations, tourists tend to congregate in particular sites which have special characteristics and vulnerabilities. The choice of specific indicators can be targeted at specific vulnerabilities, such as damage to fragile ecosystems or impacts on cultural and natural assets. In the Galapagos Islands (Ecuador), for example, the sites most vulnerable to damage from tourist activity are monitored specifically for human impacts and any physical damage.

1.2

How can observatories inform tourism destination governance and management?

The use of indicators by tourism observatories can be effective in the following areas of destination governance and management:

- **Better decision-making:** lowering risks or costs: The implementation of effective measurement of key issues is central to the information needed for effective planning and management of a destination. Building in a participatory approach in terms of deciding what data to collect, how to collect it, analysing information and dissemination of findings is also a building block towards achieving observatory status.
- **Identification of impacts and anticipation of emerging issues:** Where the appropriate indicators are in place, it is possible to identify existing and potential impacts and to anticipate and take measures which reinforce positive impacts of tourism and mitigate negative impacts. It facilitates the destination to be prepared and adapt to variations in the tourism sector.
- **Performance measurement:** Indicators can be used to evaluate the implementation of plans and management activities – evaluating progress in the sustainable development of tourism. Constant monitoring can lead to continuous improvement – building solutions into management, improving policies, regulations and incentives, and ensuring they align with the goals of sustainable tourism.
- **Greater accountability:** Credible information for the public and other stakeholders of tourism fosters accountability for its wise use in decision-making.
- **Technical capacity building and support for scientific research:** The indicators produced by observatories are used by local universities and educational institutions to teach students in tourism-related courses and support scientific research endeavours. Data from observatories can also lead to and support studies on key issues such as the *Carrying Capacity for Tourism in San Miguel de Allende*⁹ which was informed by data from the Guanajuato Observatory (Mexico).
- **Broadening the focus:** By diversifying indicators beyond the traditional data sets on tourist arrivals, expenditure and revenue, and including a wider variety of indicators which focus on social and environmental sustainability as well, tourism managers are better equipped and more responsive to address a broad range of values central to sustainable tourism development.
- **Integrated monitoring:** Tourism is a cross-cutting sector, impacting on the economy, society and environment of a destination. Tourism needs to be integrated into national economic planning, climate change policies, biodiversity and environmental plans, entrepreneurship and digital innovation strategies, as well as gender mainstreaming. Data from observatories can demonstrate that tourism is best planned and managed as an integrated part of a community and ecosystem.

9 Manning, E.W. (2018), *Carrying Capacity for Tourism in San Miguel de Allende*, Tourisk, available at: <https://tourisk.com> [24-11-2025].



02. Tourism observatories in practice: INSTO-selected case studies

2.1 INSTO–selected case studies from Latin America and the Caribbean

Tourism is an important sector for nearly all of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, contributing significantly to GDP, employment and foreign exchange earnings. While many destinations in the region have taken meaningful steps to integrate sustainability into tourism policy and practice, challenges remain in translating these efforts into consistent, data-driven monitoring. Measurement of tourism data at the destination level still tends to center on total visitor numbers and related economic impacts, with less attention given to environmental and social indicators. Strengthening and expanding a network of tourism observatories in Latin America and the Caribbean presents a valuable opportunity to broaden data collection and enhance the monitoring of a wider range of sustainability indicators.

As indicated earlier, INSTO observatories help destinations align tourism management with global sustainability goals. To illustrate some of the work being done through observatories in Latin America, case studies from INSTO observatories in Buenos Aires (Argentina), São Paulo (Brazil), Bogota (Colombia) and Guanajuato (Mexico) are presented.



Touristic tram in Santos, Brazil. © Ken Chu

Buenos Aires City Tourism Observatory (Argentina) at the forefront of data-driven management

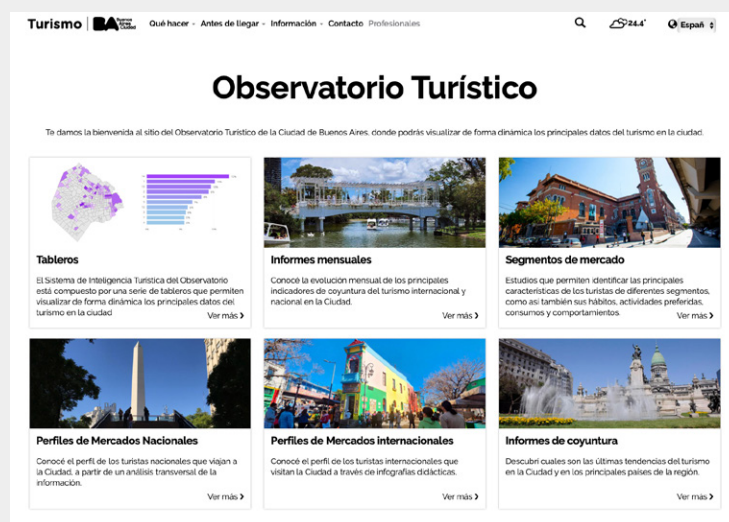
Buenos Aires was one of the first cities in Latin America to develop an innovative, open access and free web platform where the findings and surveys of the City's Tourism Observatory are shared.¹⁰ This digital tool integrates numerous information sources, offering dynamic and interactive tourism statistics.

A clear example of data-driven management is the ATI Matrix: a tool that cross-references more than 20 indicators (from administrative records, surveys and focus groups, to card transactions and online reviews) to profile the behaviour and motivations of tourists from each Argentine province. Through this analysis, it identifies gastronomic preferences, cultural activities, travel groups, age ranges and types of online reviews, among other variables. This allows for better resource allocation and increases the efficiency of the City regarding communication, promotion and tourism offerings targeting

domestic travellers. For targeting international travellers, each year, the observatory develops profiles of the main international source markets based on a set of over 15 indicators which are used by Visit Buenos Aires to strengthen its international tourism promotion strategy.

Data produced by the observatory has strategically contributed to enhancing the visitor experience across different neighbourhoods and times of the year, driving collaboration with other government departments to strengthen overall governance, shaping strategies for safety, transportation and public space.

The observatory has become a point of reference at both the national level and across Latin America, and it continues to seek out new data sources and methodologies to improve the quality of information and provide new opportunities for tourism stakeholders.



Source: Buenos Aires Observatory – Observatorio Turístico, homepage, available at: <https://turismo.buenosaires.gob.ar/es/observatorio> [27-11-2025].
© Turismo Buenos Aires.

¹⁰ Consult for details:

World Tourism Organization (2019), 'Tourism Observatory of the City of Buenos Aires', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: <https://www.untourism.int/observatories/buenos-aires-argentina> [25-11-2025].

Center of Intelligence of Tourism Economics of the State of São Paulo (CITE), Brazil

The Center of Intelligence of Tourism Economics of the State of São Paulo (CITE)¹¹ was created in 2019 – as its name suggests – to monitor economic data on tourism, as part of the São Paulo State Travel and Tourism Secretariat, in collaboration with the São Paulo State Investment Promotion Agency, to periodically analyse tourism performance in the State of São Paulo.

Since the first economic data on the contribution of tourism to GDP, tourism revenue and average tourist spending, the indicators have expanded and evolved to include other indicators of tourism sustainability, such as hotel sector performance, airport flow, vehicle flow on highways and arrivals at bus terminals, as well as employment and creation of new businesses, water and energy consumption and local community perception of tourism, among others.

Through a partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank (BR-T1455), CITE implemented a pilot project to monitor sustainable tourism management indicators on the northern coast of the state, one of the first initiatives in the country focussed on environmental governance. Among the main surveys organized by CITE, the Tourism Perception Survey, conducted with the assistance of municipalities, which measures the perception of the local population of the various positive and negative impacts of tourism, is an important tool for promoting social well-being and sustainable development.

In terms of governance, CITE is directly linked to the São Paulo State Travel and Tourism Secretariat, which highlights the importance of the observatory as an official source of data, research and analysis on tourism in the state. This government support provides guidance and guidelines for implementing the instructions and recommendations derived from the work of the observatory, ensuring that the data are translated into impactful policies and actions.

Currently, CITE collects and analyses macro data from the state with greater focus on detailed indicators for nine specific cities of major importance for tourism, distributed throughout the state, with the following indicators being monitored:¹²

- Local satisfaction with tourism;
- Market satisfaction with tourism;
- Accessibility;
- Sustainable Development Goals;
- Solid waste management;
- Accommodation facilities;
- Direct formal jobs in the tourism sector;
- Tourist enterprises;
- Electricity consumption;
- Water consumption;
- Visitor arrivals in occasional and tourist charter vehicles; and
- Beach quality index (when applicable).

11 Consult for details:

World Tourism Organization (2022), 'Center of Intelligence of Tourism Economics of the State of São Paulo (CITE)', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: <https://www.untourism.int/observatories/state-of-sao-paulo-brasil> [25-11-2025].

12 More details on usage of measures can be found at: Secretaria de Turismo e Viagens: <http://www.turismo.sp.gov.br/ciet> [25-11-2025].

Brazilian Network of Tourism Observatories

The Brazilian Network of Tourism Observatories (RBOT), with over 70 affiliated observatories, serves as a platform for:

- **Knowledge sharing and capacity building:** Through workshops, conferences and informal exchanges, members share knowledge, discuss challenges and collectively enhance their expertise in tourism data and intelligence. This strengthens the capacities of individual observatories.
- **Coordinated policy recommendations:** By working together, the observatories in RBOT can issue more impactful and coordinated policy recommendations to national and regional governments. This collective voice strengthens their influence and ensures that data-driven insights are more likely to be incorporated in tourism planning and development strategies.

Some areas in which RBOT, Embratur (Empresa Brasileira de Turismo – Brazilian Agency for International Tourism Promotion) and the Ministry of Tourism are discussing future collaboration include:

- **Standardized data protocols:** collaboratively establish standardized data collection and

- reporting protocols to ensure that data from various observatories is consistent, comparable and easily integrated into national-level analyses. This is crucial for creating a truly unified national tourism intelligence system.
- **Centralized data platform:** develop or leverage a centralized digital platform where RBOT members can feed their data, and Embratur/Ministry of Tourism can access and visualize it. This platform could offer dashboards, real-time updates and analytical tools to facilitate evidence-based decision-making.
- **API integration:** Explore API (application programming interface) integration between the systems of the observatories and the Embratur/Ministry of Tourism databases. This would enable seamless, automated data flow and reducing manual data inputting.
- **Tailored data outputs:** RBOT can work with Embratur and the Ministry of Tourism to understand their specific data needs for marketing campaigns (Embratur) and policy formulation (Ministry). This would allow observatories to tailor their data outputs (e.g., specific market segment insights, impact assessments for particular policies) that could be directly used by national bodies.

Source: Rede Brasileira de Observatórios de Turismo, homepage, available at: <https://www.rbotbrasil.com> [27-11-2025].
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São Paulo See Metropolitan Cathedral, Brazil. © Leonid Andronov | Dreamstime.com



Bogotá Tourism Observatory (Colombia) incorporates sustainability as a central dimension to its work

In recent years, the Bogotá Tourism Observatory¹³ has broadened its analytical scope to incorporate sustainability as a central dimension in its studies. As a first step, the observatory set out to understand how sustainability is perceived and valued by tourists, residents and tourism service providers (TSPs) in order to integrate these diverse perspectives to generate evidence that strengthens the design of more inclusive, place-based and culturally grounded tourism policies.

In 2025, for the first time, the observatory conducted a unified survey to understand the perceptions of tourists, residents and tourism service providers (TSPs) on how they experience and evaluate the tourism ecosystem of the city. The results revealed overall satisfaction on sustainability, heritage preservation and responsible tourism practices across all groups. Among TSPs, 62.2% agreed that tourism significantly contributes to the economic, environmental, cultural and social sustainability of Bogotá while 60.0% agreed that tourism helps conserve the natural and cultural heritage of the city. Among residents, 77.6% affirmed that the city values and preserves its natural and cultural heritage and public spaces, while 58.4% of international tourists reported observing local culture and sustainable practices during their visit.¹⁴

The data and analysis produced by the observatory have served as key inputs for shaping public policies such as the District Public Policy for Tourism which aims to consolidate the Bogota region as a sustainable, smart, responsible and inclusive tourism destination. Other government initiatives which have been informed,

in part, by the work of the observatory include at the city level: policies on climate action and circular economy, the renewal of the public transport fleet with clean technologies and the expansion of the cycling infrastructure. The District Institute of Tourism (Instituto Distrital de Turismo – IDT) has also advanced tools such as a sustainability certification guide for tourism businesses, methodologies for measuring carrying capacity and new training initiatives in sustainable tourism.



Cover of the tourism statistics bulletin of Bogotá, Colombia. © Instituto Distrital de Turismo and Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá

13 World Tourism Organization (2022), 'Bogotá's Tourism Observatory', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: <https://www.untourism.int/observatories/bogota-colombia> [25-11-2025].

14 Instituto Distrital de Turismo – Observatorio de Turismo de Bogotá (2025), *Percepciones del turismo en Bogotá: Análisis de turistas, residentes y empresarios en el marco de un Destino Turístico Inteligente*. Bogotá D.C.

Guanajuato State Tourism Observatory (Mexico)

Established within the Guanajuato State Tourism Secretariat, the Guanajuato State Tourism Observatory (OTEG)¹⁵ was officially established through the Government Agreement (Number 54) in 2012. This formal recognition gave the observatory permanence and stability, allowing it to continue its operations irrespective of government mandates. In December 2022, a new Tourism Law for the State of Guanajuato was published and was followed by the issuance of the Regulations of the State Tourism Law in 2023 which outlined the operational framework of the observatory including governance¹⁶.

Apart from the official legal status, another main contributing factor towards the success and longevity of OTEG has been its participatory approach through the establishment of working commissions and interdisciplinary groups which represent the public and private sectors and the academia in equal measure, as well as a Tourism Advisory Council. The participatory approach determines what issues need to be monitored in terms of the tourism sector, which working commissions to create, which indicators to use and how to analyse and disseminate the information.

In 2017, the OTEG work was restructured based on three main methodologies: (i) the thematic areas of INSTO, (ii) the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and (iii) the Global Sustainability Tourism Council-Destinations (GSTC-D). OTEG collects data on indicators under four main categories:

1. Inclusive economy: average daily tourism expenditure, the contribution of tourism to GDP, number of new tourism businesses;
2. Destination management: visitor satisfaction surveys, amount of public and private investment in tourism, number of quality certifications;
3. Society and culture: number of visits to archaeological sites and museums, number of handicapped tourists; and
4. Environment: waste management, air quality.

In 2024, it was decided to include more indicators including, among others, resident surveys to determine local satisfaction with the tourism sector, greenhouse gas emissions at tourism events, businesses registered as Airbnbs, and tourism to protected areas including numbers of birds sighted (the list of indicators is provided in annex C). The observatory provides individual results for indicators, and also depicts composite indices which best show the relationships between different indicators. Furthermore, each indicator is accompanied by a clear definition, interpretation guidelines, calculation formula, data coverage, source, frequency, historical data series and its alignment with the tourism policy objectives of the State.

15 World Tourism Organization (2015), 'Guanajuato State Tourism Observatory (OTEG)', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: <https://www.untourism.int/node/14304> [25-11-2025].

16 Government of Guanajuato (2023), 'Reglamento de la Ley de Turismo para el Estado de Guanajuato y sus Municipios', Decreto Gubernativo No. 161, Año CX, Tomo CLXI, Número 225, Gobierno de Guanajuato, Guanajuato, available at: <https://normatividadestatalymunicipal.guanajuato.gob.mx> [27-11-2025].

In advance of official publication of data, OTEG organizes annual events to present results on the performance of the tourism sector in the State of Guanajuato to all stakeholders: directors of tourism at the municipal levels, planning and economic development departments, public works, local transport, tour operators, hoteliers, restauranters, artisans and retail. Participation is open to any stakeholder which might be impacted by tourism. These events facilitate, on one hand, OTEG to understand the needs of the tourism sector and, on the other hand, for stakeholders to understand the results and determine how best to use and apply the information in their operations. Since 2013, OTEG also hosts an annual meeting of national and international tourism observatories.

OTEG has been informing the Guanajuato State Development Plan (Plan Estatal de Desarrollo – PED) which is prepared every five years for a long-term vision of at least 25 years: PED 2035 (prepared in 2013), PED 2040 (prepared in 2018) and PED 2050 (prepared in 2024). The PED sets sectoral and regional objectives and strategies, as well as performance indicators. OTEG has also supported several studies including the study on *Carrying Capacity of Tourism in San Miguel de Allende*.¹⁷

OTEG has been a pioneer in the Latin American region and is internationally recognized as a model for the development of indicators, monitoring and dissemination of tourism information and provides support to other observatories in Latin America.

Source: Guanajuato State Tourism Observatory (OTEG). © Miriam Adame



17 Manning, E.W. (2018), *Carrying Capacity for Tourism in San Miguel de Allende*, Tourisk, available at: <https://tourisk.com> [24-11-2025].

2.2

Case studies from selected island destinations

While there are currently no tourism observatories established in the Caribbean, this section presents the work being carried out by the observatories in Galapagos, (Ecuador) and Mallorca in Spain (the latter is also an INSTO member) which can be useful examples for island destinations.

Galapagos sea lions, Ecuador. © Mira Agron| Dreamstime.com



Galapagos Tourism Observatory (Ecuador)

The Galapagos Tourism Observatory¹⁸ focus has been collecting information on visitors and tourism assets, and measuring both tourist demand and impacts of tourism, to support decision-making at the policy level for the islands and provide information to the national and international levels.

This has permitted initiatives such as the Galapagos Guides Monitoring Network (Red de Monitoreo de Guías de Galápagos), launched in 2017 in partnership with the Galapagos National Park and World Wildlife Fund (WWF).¹⁹ It is based on a voluntary monitoring and reporting process by over 700 tour guides who work in the area. While voluntary, it is estimated that each guide completes an average of 20 reports per year which focus on accidents (animal attacks, cycling accidents, etc.), species sightings, introduced species, litter, contamination, conflicts of use (fishing, research), tourist use violations (visitor behaviour, unguided groups, drone use, etc.) and management (equipment maintenance, trail maintenance, etc.). Guides are provided training on this system on an annual basis and completion of the training is a requisite for authorizations of guiding activities. The Galapagos Guides Monitoring Network has served to strengthen links with the management and conservation of the protected areas of Galapagos and add knowledge to the conservation status of species and ecosystems, tourism management and potential threats to the ecosystems.

Currently, about 20 indicators are monitored with a significant portion generated by the Galapagos National Park that controls the bulk of the destination. Indicators range from visitor profile, tourist expenditure, total tourism assets and supply of tourism-related facilities and services, average occupancy, employment by gender, fuel and gas consumption, organic product entry control and solid waste (see annex D for more details).

From the beginning, the observatory received support from national and international organizations such as the Ministry of Tourism, Galapagos National Park, WWF, the municipalities of Santa Cruz, San Cristobal and Isabela, and the Galapagos Tourism Chamber. However, in recent years, restructuring and changes in the levels of support for the operations of the observatory have impacted the programme with loss of staff. Nevertheless, the continued cooperation with main stakeholders has enabled the monitoring of certain indicators to be maintained.

18 Ministry of Tourism Ecuador (n.d), 'El observatorio de turismo de Galápagos presentó estadísticas de las islas', Ministerio de Turismo, Quito, available at: <https://www.turismo.gob.ec> [27-11-2025].

19 World Wildlife Fund – Ecuador (n.d), 'Red de Monitoreo de Guías de Galápagos: Resultado de las observaciones de viajes', WWF, available at: <https://www.wwf.org.ec> [25-11-2025].

Mallorca Sustainable Tourism Observatory (Spain)

The Mallorca Sustainable Tourism Observatory was established in 2021 and is hosted by the Mallorca Tourism Foundation.²⁰ Mallorca attracts approximately 12 million visitors annually, and the Tourism Foundation sought to improve the monitoring and control of tourism activities due to the significant economic reliance of the island on this sector.

The observatory brings together stakeholders, including representatives from the public and private sector, as well as the local university fostering cooperation and promoting evidence-based decision-making. Data is shared continuously through interactive dashboards, maps and charts which encourage the sharing of information and dialogue. This, in turn, promotes informed decisions which enhance the competitiveness and productivity of the destination, while adhering to the guiding principles of sustainability.

One noteworthy aspect of the observatory is its nonpartisan nature – as part of its application to form part of the INSTO, an institutional declaration letter of support, signed by all political parties was submitted to UN Tourism – a significant factor in ensuring the continuity of the observatory even with political changes.

The Mallorca Sustainable Tourism Observatory conducts research on:

- Innovation;
- Production and sustainable consumption;
- Biodiversity and the safeguarding of nature;
- Cultural heritage and traditions;
- Mobility;
- Use and regional planning, tourism development supervision;
- Visitor satisfaction and behaviour;
- Safety and security, and health; and
- Sports tourism.

Mallorca has also adopted the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) for Sustainable Destination Management, built upon 27 core indicators and 40 optional indicators, which are further categorized into four key areas: (i) destination management, (ii) social and cultural impact, (iii) economic value, and (iv) environmental impact. The observatory also recognizes the importance of aligning tourism with broader global goals including the contributions of tourism to the 17 SDGs, outlined in Agenda 2030. By assessing the impact of tourism on these goals, the observatory ensures that sustainable tourism practices on the island are aligned with broader international objectives, fostering positive social, economic and environmental outcomes.

20 World Tourism Organization (2021), 'Mallorca Sustainable Tourism Observatory', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: <https://www.untourism.int/observatories/mallorca-spain> [25-11-2025].



Cathedral of Soller, Mallorca, Spain.
© Xantana | Dreamstime.com

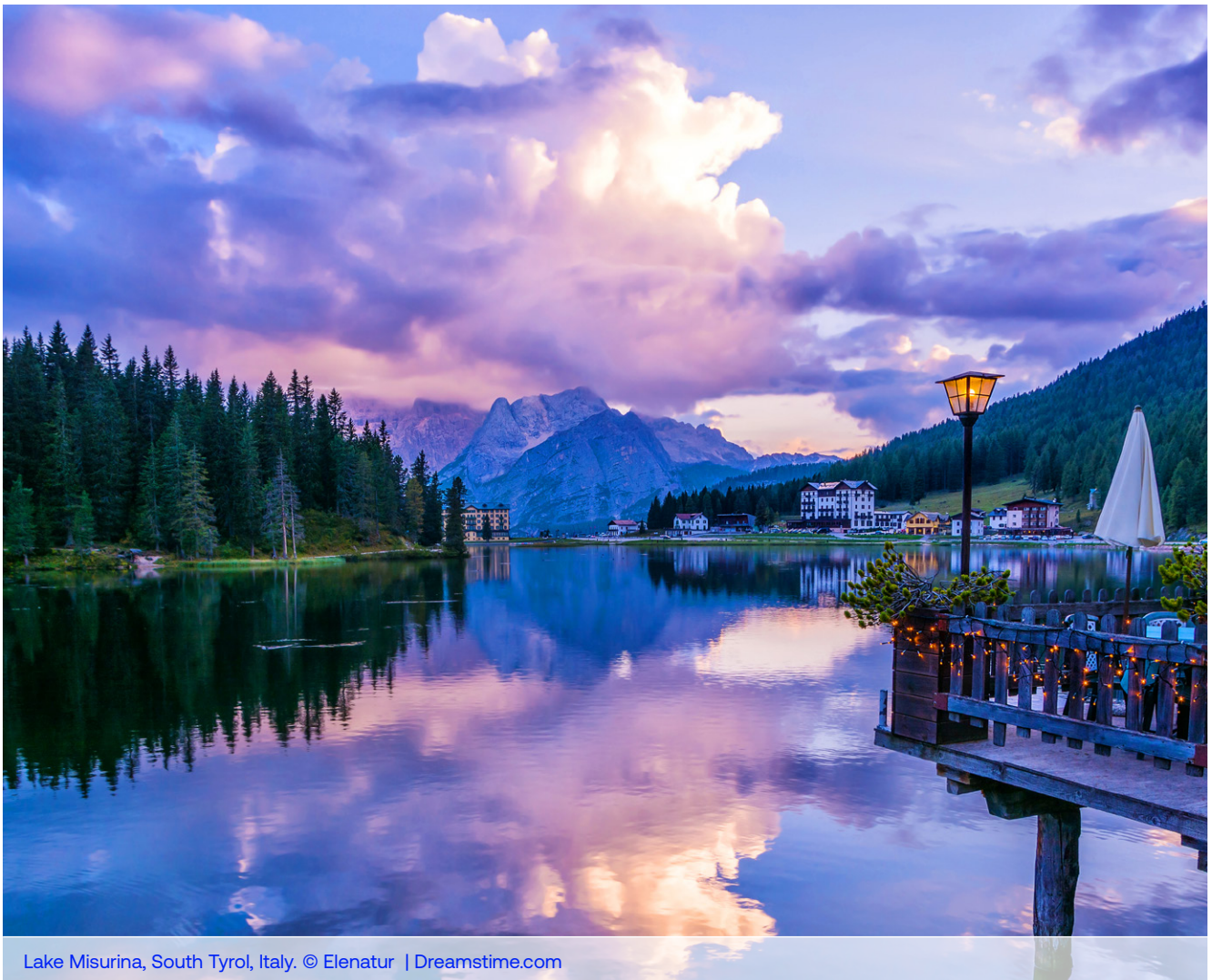
Key factors in the success of the Mallorca observatory are:

1. Wide political support: Since its establishment, the observatory has received institutional support from all political parties.
2. Use of the INSTO framework, adopting the ETIS system, and aligning indicators with the SDGs, to monitor elements related to the sustainable management of the activity and to measure effectiveness. One example of the benefits of relying on different methodologies was the inclusion of the thematic area 'Responsible consumption and production', following the understanding that sustainability is closely related to human behaviour and to SDG 12 on this topic.
3. Effective communication: making data available to all by publishing indicators and collected data through dashboards, featuring charts and maps with GIS (geographic information system) data, and making the datasets available for download as open data. This initiative offers significant benefits to businesses and researchers alike, and encourages additional research and sharing by others.

2.3

INSTO–selected international case studies

The previous sections highlighted selected case studies from Latin America and some island case studies. This section presents two examples which highlight innovative processes. The example from Yukon in Canada features the incorporation of data related to the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the tourism development process while the example from South Tyrol (Italy) exemplifies the importance of streamlining and selecting indicators to be measured.



Lake Misurina, South Tyrol, Italy. © Elenatur | Dreamstime.com

Yukon Sustainable Tourism Observatory (Canada)

The Department of Tourism and Culture of Yukon, Canada, had been publishing tourism statistics since 2012, with a focus on economic indicators (e.g., international border crossing, arrivals at the airport, occupancy rate, fuel prices). In 2018, the government launched the Yukon Tourism Development Strategy: Sustainable Tourism which led to the establishment of the Yukon Sustainable Tourism Observatory in 2022.²¹

A core focus of the work of this observatory is the measurement of impacts of tourism on the Indigenous Peoples of the Yukon Territory. As stated by the Yukon Tourism Development Strategy, “Yukon First Nations’ knowledge, values and cultures are the foundation of the Yukon’s identity”, and all actions include the need to provide opportunities for them to participate in the economy.

Partnerships and support of a local working group with 15 members from the tourism sector, indigenous communities and other governmental organizations has been integral to the discussions for the development of the monitoring framework and the definition of the initial indicators, following an initial broad consultation process with more than 40 different organizations, including the strong participation of Yukon First Nations.

Apart from measuring sustainability indicators from the 11 INSTO thematic areas, the observatory analyses indicators in 6 additional areas, as follows:

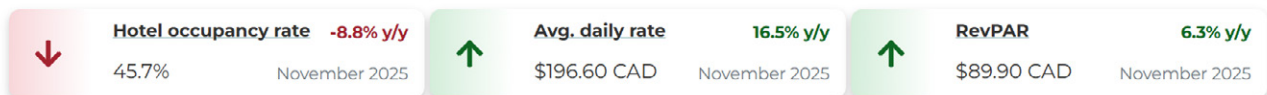
1. Infrastructure;
2. Natural environment;
3. Cultural sustainability;
4. Yukon resident travel;
5. Health and safety; and
6. Visitor sentiment.



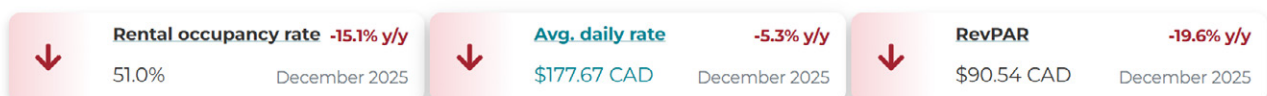
Yukon tourism indicators

[About](#)

Hotel indicators



Short term rental indicators



Dashboard of the Yukon Tourism Observatory. © Yukon Sustainable Tourism Observatory

21 World Tourism Organization (2022), ‘The Yukon Sustainable Tourism Observatory’, UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: <https://www.untourism.int/observatories/yukon-canada> [25-11-2025].

Key factors are:

- Indigenous participation: Yukon First Nations are involved in every aspect of the tourism planning process in the province. Each of the 14 different nations in the province were represented in the Steering Committee responsible for the elaboration of the Yukon Tourism Development Strategy, as well as in the participatory process to propose the monitoring framework and the establishment of the provincial observatory, as well as in the local working group and in the collection of information.
- The inclusion of indicators to measure cultural sustainability include measurement of participation levels from indigenous communities and their perceptions of the impacts of tourism on their communities. These then influence the protocols for respectful travel through indigenous territories.²²



Tagish Lake, Yukon, Canada. © Stephan Pietzko | Dreamstime.com

22 Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association (2023), 'YFNCT Releases "Walk with Us – Respectful Travel Guidelines"', press release published on 15 February 2023, YFNCT, Whitehorses, available at: <https://yfnc.ca/news/2023-02-15-yfnc-releases-walk-with-us-respectful-travel-guidelines> [25-11-2025].

Sustainable Tourism Observatory of South Tyrol (Italy)

The Sustainable Tourism Observatory of South Tyrol (STOST)²³ was established in 2018 as a collaborative effort between the Center for Advanced Studies at Eurac Research, the local destination management organization IDM South Tyrol (Innovation, Development, Marketing) and the provincial government of South Tyrol. STOST monitors, evaluates and communicates tourism developments in South Tyrol and examines the costs and benefits of tourism for South Tyrol providing recommendations and guidelines to support sustainable tourism management, awareness, learning and evidence-based decision-making for different target groups in the region.

Its primary target groups are policymakers, the private sector and the general public. Apart from the 11 mandatory areas of sustainability in tourism prescribed through INSTO, the observatory collects data on four other topics selected through a participatory stakeholder consultation process, namely: (i) mobility, (ii) nature conservation, (iii) land use and landscape diversity and (iv) culture.

One of the remarkable feats of STOST is the selection of a lower number but focussed list of indicators to be measured. Most observatories track numerous indicators, collecting all types of data, trying to satisfy the needs of as many stakeholders as possible. While a larger volume of data may initially appear more comprehensive, it can also lead to higher costs and less reliable, less transparent and less relevant indicators. In such cases, the indicators may fail to address or directly relate to the primary sustainability concerns in the region, which

affects the clear understanding of the drivers behind the impacts and could lead to lack of credibility in measuring the impact accurately. To overcome these challenges, the Observatory opted to focus on a lower number of approximately 30 indicators that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely.

An example of this approach was the development of the Tourism Exposure Index, which assesses the intensity of tourism in different municipalities within the South Tyrol region. After reviewing and evaluating different options, it was decided to measure the average daily overnights/population and the number of beds per km² to calculate the index.

In addition, the observatory tailors these indicators to the local context. Apart from commonly used indicators such as tourist arrivals or overnight stays, the observatory collects other data that specifically address key pressures on the province including mobility indicators (e.g., mobile cards, *bikemobil* cards, *museumobil* cards and guest tickets). It also collects water consumption indicators (e.g., water use by snow guns), and energy management indicators (e.g., electricity consumption of cable cars and snow guns).

During the pandemic, the local government of South Tyrol seized the opportunity to align with plans for sustainable tourism development in consultation with the local population. Based on the results of data from the observatory and regional and local surveys conducted, a law was enacted in September 2022, officially capping the number of guest beds at just under 230,000.²⁴

23 World Tourism Organization (2018), 'Sustainable Tourism Observatory of South Tyrol (STOST)', UN Tourism, Madrid, available at: <https://www.untourism.int/observatories/south-tyrol> [25-11-2025].

24 Buckley, J. (2023), 'This popular Italian region is imposing restrictions on tourists', published on 17 April 2023. CNN travel, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/italy-tourist-restrictions-alto-adige> [27-11-2025].

Key factors are:

- Targeted and relevant indicators with a local focus: By including a select and reduced number of indicators that focus on local issues, the observatory facilitates decision-makers to identify region-specific solutions that effectively address the main challenges affecting the area.
- Evidence-based decision making: The setting of growth limits on the number of tourism beds in the region, based on data from the observatory and through a participatory process with the local population, marked a significant milestone for local tourism and even contributed as a marketing tool to promote sustainable tourism practices in the region.



South Tyrol Tourism Observatory becoming an INSTO Member, 2018. © World Tourism Organization



03. Lessons learned, challenges and the way ahead

3.1

Lessons learned through the case studies

Based on the various case studies presented in this report, the following key lessons have been identified:

Participatory approach

Broad and comprehensive participation of all stakeholders (including the public and private sectors, the academia and local communities), in terms of access to data, ownership of data and decision-making processes, commitment and technical discussions, contributes to the success of tourism observatories.

Legal status and government leadership

The long-term operational sustainability of an observatory depends on its legal status. The case studies from São Paulo (Brazil) and from Mallorca (Spain) show how an observatory can be maintained and flourish over time and continue its work seamlessly under successive administrations. On the other hand, the case study from the Galapagos Islands (Ecuador) demonstrates how the lack of a formal legal status can result in reduced human and financial resources.

Indicator considerations

The selection of the most important and relevant indicators for a destination relates to the circumstances and environment faced by the destination. At the beginning, destinations often start with measuring standardized information such as the number of tourists or the number of tourism employees, and then progress onto more site-specific data collection to measure specific impacts, such as visitor concentrations in

space and time, seasonality, the role of day visitors, and carrying capacity. Through INSTO and other international recommendations (such as GSTC and ETIS to name a few), methodologies have emerged to measure social and environmental impacts of tourism, incorporating digital innovation and GIS mapping. Some observatories opt to collect data on a large number of indicators (frequently, over 100 indicators), which allows flexibility to cater to the data and planning needs of a wider number of stakeholders, but can also be more resource intensive (both human and financial). Other observatories focus on a more limited number of indicators (e.g., South Tyrol, Italy) to address most immediate challenges related to their destination. Ultimately, the decision on what data to collect and what indicators to use needs to be made through a participatory, consultative approach, bearing in mind the resources available for data collection.

International and regional networking

Networks and technical and institutional support from similar organizations can be important to the success of tourism observatories. For example, forming part of INSTO has assisted observatories in adjusting their choice of common indicators for key issues, and to share and learn from the experiences of other observatories around the world. Within Latin America and the Caribbean, there are numerous examples of exchange of data and technical guidance between observatories such as the Guanajuato State Tourism Observatory (OTEG) supporting the Observatorio Turístico del Estado de Jalisco (Mexico) and the Observatorio de Turismo Sustentable de Antigua (Guatemala), or the Brazilian Network of Tourism Observatories (RBOT) organizing annual meetings of its members to meet and discuss issues of contemporary relevance.

3.2

Challenges to be overcome

Tourism observatories still face some challenges which need to be overcome in the future:

Governance and local well-being

Observatories address broader governance and community satisfaction issues by assessing indicators related to the quality-of-life of residents, facilitating inclusive stakeholder dialogue and informing policies that enhance transparency, accountability and resilience beyond tourism alone. This expanded role of tourism needs to be understood and recognized, not merely viewed as a tourism issue.

Recognition

Observatories need to better communicate and promote the work they do, their methodologies, analyses and conclusions. This is not only a question of transparent sharing through seminars, workshops and townhall meetings, publication of data and related reports. It includes also the development of websites, interactive

dashboards and other tools which invite more widespread public recognition of the contribution of the observatories towards the sustainable development of tourism by public and private sectors, as well as residents.

Limited human and financial resources

Resource constraints can limit data collection and access to trained staff. Commitment from government and private sector is key to the feasibility of establishing and maintaining a tourism observatory.

Data collection

Observatories can be reliant on data already being collected by various government departments. Data is not always standardized which complicates comparative analysis. Access to emerging technologies continues to be a challenge for some observatories – for example, data on geolocation of cell phones or use of statistical analysis software can be quite costly.



Galapagos marine iguanas, Ecuador. © Martinmark | Dreamstime.com

3.3

The way ahead

Apart from their principal role of collecting data on economic, social and environmental sustainability indicators, tourism observatories can also contribute to the following actions:

Education and awareness

Tourism observatories can contribute to the education and awareness of society about the importance of sustainable development beyond the tourism sector. They can achieve this through data collection and dissemination, promotion of best practices, awareness campaigns, partnerships and collaborative networks, and by providing information to tourists. These actions can increase awareness, promote the adoption of sustainable practices and encourage positive change in tourism towards a more sustainable future. The exchange of success stories of what works and what has served to produce the best destinations from many perspectives is one of the most important contributions.

Supporting sustainable development

Given the cross-cutting nature of tourism across different elements of the economic, social and environmental framework of a destination, the collaborative and participatory approach adopted by observatories contributes to overall sustainable and integrated development. Collaborations bring together tourism businesses, residents and local government to: (i) decide what sustainability means in terms of tourism in their destination, (ii) determine what indicators to use and what data to collect, (iii) analyse and disseminate results, and (iv) take collective decisions which influence tourism policy, planning and management. Observatories can be a catalyst for an agreement on objectives of desired

development in a destination and foster collaborative actions among stakeholders.

Strengthening local and subnational governance

Tourism observatories play a vital role in strengthening subnational governance by acting as localized hubs for data, participatory processes based on dialogue and decision-making. In decentralized tourism systems, they bridge the gap between national strategies and regional implementation, enabling coherent, multi-level governance. By generating region-specific data and fostering participatory approaches, observatories help local authorities design tailored, evidence-based policies that address the unique challenges and opportunities of their destinations. They enhance institutional capacity through targeted training, build stakeholder trust through inclusive engagement and promote transparency by openly sharing data. This integrated, destination-based approach not only improves policy relevance but also empowers communities, strengthens resilience and supports long-term sustainability in tourism development.

The IDB has supported the work of several observatories such as CITE in Brazil and in other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. Given the increased intervention of many international organizations including multi-lateral financial institutions in sustainable tourism at the regional and local level, it is strongly recommended that programmes be developed which include supporting the work of observatories, not limited to measurement of indicators, local governance, participatory approaches and informed policies, but also to ensure the institutional, legislative and financial sustainability of observatories.

Annexes

Annex A

Historical background to the establishment of INSTO

In the early 1990s, there was growing awareness of the increasing impacts of tourism on the places used by tourists and developed for their benefit. Incidents of environmental and social impacts often harming beaches, fragile ecosystems and communities were being reported from all parts of the world associated with tourism. The lack of good information about tourism and its effects was becoming apparent and was contributing at all scales to poor management. Research showed that tourism could be made more sustainable – ecologically, socially and economically –, if planned and managed holistically to respect a wide range of values. Tourism is highly sensitive to social, environmental and economic conditions in destinations and tourism has a greater potential to promote sustainability than any other primary resource sector, if well-planned with decisions based on reliable data.

In 1992, discussions took place between representatives of several member states of the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism) on the subject of measuring the sustainability of tourism and sharing this information among countries and destinations. The discussions focussed on the use of indicators and the exchange of best practices to support improved tourism and destinations. Considerable discussions followed to determine how a destination could select the information it needed for managing all the different aspects of sustainability. Initial reactions to the concept led to many workshops regarding destination-specific cases and

the procedures to choose suitable indicators, as well as the challenge of establishing continuing monitoring programmes. A key finding was that each destination needed to use a participatory approach to determine the assets and values it needed to sustain and also to mobilize the residents and other stakeholders to support and maintain the programme.

Since the 1992 meeting, UN Tourism has been working to promote the development and use of indicators as essential instruments for policymaking, planning and management of sustainable tourism at destinations. Published by UN Tourism in 1996, *What Tourism Managers Need to Know – A Practical Guide for the Development and Use of Indicators for Sustainable Tourism*²⁵ provided a tool specifically directed at supporting the measurement of tourism impacts at destinations

Over the next two decades, further studies and workshops on indicators were held by UN Tourism to study advances in the development and application of indicators. In 2004, UN Tourism published *Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations: A Guidebook*,²⁶ – an extensive manual on indicator initiatives worldwide describing over 40 sustainability subjects, such as the management of natural resources, impacts on communities, capturing benefits, access to services, health and security, visitor management, and seasonality of use. This guidebook remains a key reference on which subsequent frameworks and measurement systems

25 World Tourism Organization (1996), *What Tourism Managers need to know*, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284401505>.

26 World Tourism Organization (2004), *Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations A Guidebook*, UN Tourism, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284407262>.

for tourism and its sustainability have been built. One of the key challenges was to balance local needs for issue-based measures with the need for standardization and the ability to exchange and benchmark data. At the same time, work was being undertaken to further develop data-based systems for tourism including the creation of tourism satellite accounts, principally for the application at national level. This was a key precursor for the development of observatories – both to support methods of data collection and sharing, and also to establish ongoing destinations as part of a network to share and expand the use of indicators of sustainable development.



Global INSTO meeting 2017 at UN Tourism headquarters. © World Tourism Organization

Annex B

Additional resources to define objectives of sustainable tourism

Many documents exist that provide support on concepts of sustainable tourism and which can serve as a starting point in terms of selection of indicators.

Twelve Aims for sustainable tourism:²⁷

1. **Economic viability:** To ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises, so that they are able to continue to prosper and deliver benefits in the long term.
2. **Local prosperity:** To maximize the contribution of tourism to the economic prosperity of the host destination, including the proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally.
3. **Employment quality:** To strengthen the number and quality of local jobs created and supported by tourism, including the level of pay, conditions of service, and availability to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability, or in other ways.
4. **Social equity:** To seek a widespread and fair distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income, and services available to the poor.
5. **Visitor fulfillment:** To provide a safe, satisfying, and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability, or in other ways.
6. **Local control:** To engage and empower local communities in planning and decision-making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders.
7. **Community well-being:** To maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities, including social structures and access to resources, amenities and life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation.
8. **Cultural richness:** To respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of host communities.
9. **Physical integrity:** To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment.
10. **Biological diversity:** To support the conservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife, and minimize damage to them.
11. **Resource efficiency:** To minimize the use of scarce and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services.
12. **Environmental purity:** To minimize the pollution of air, water and land and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors.

27 United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organization (2005), *Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guidebook for Policymakers*, UNEP/UN Tourism, Paris/Madrid, DOI: [10.18111/9789284408214](https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284408214).

Annex C

Guanajuato (Mexico), list of indicators

Indicators for destination management:

OTEGGD01	Visitor satisfaction index.
OTEGGD02	Annual registration of the supply of rooms in 1–5 star and unclassified hotels.
OTEGGD03	Annual record of the amount of private investment made in the tourism sector.
OTEGGD04	Annual record of public investment in tourism infrastructure.
OTEGGD05	Registry of tourism service companies with quality certification.
OTEGGD06	Monthly record of the number of passengers at Guanajuato International Airport.
OTEGGD07	Participation of people with disabilities employed in the Tourism Sector.

Indicators for inclusive economy:

OTEGEI01	Percentage of visitors with the intention of returning to the destination.
OTEGEI02	Annual rate of new tourism business start-ups.
OTEGEI03	Annual record of the number of international visitors to the state of Guanajuato.
OTEGEI04	Annual record of average daily visitor expenditure.
OTEGEI05	Monthly record of tourist arrivals at 1 to 5 star hotels in the State of Guanajuato.
OTEGEI06	Occupancy rate of 1 to 5 star hotels.
OTEGEI07	Percentage record of average length of stay.
OTEGEI08	Annual record of the contribution of the GDP of the Temporary accommodation and food and beverage preparation services to the GDP of the tertiary sector of the state of Guanajuato.
OTEGEI09	Number of men and women employed in the tourism sector with respect to the general total of the State of Guanajuato.
OTEGEI10	Economic revenue generated by the number of visitors to the State of Guanajuato.
OTEGEI11	Distribution by type of visitor to the State of Guanajuato
OTEGEI12	Percentage of visitors with the intention of recommending the State of Guanajuato.

Indicators of societal and cultural dimension:

OTEGSC01.	Monthly record of the number of national and international visitors to each archaeological site in the State of Guanajuato.
OTEGSC02	Monthly record of the number of national and international visitors to the museums of the State of Guanajuato.
OTEGSC03	Registration of tourist arrivals to the historical and cultural destinations of the State of Guanajuato to identify the months with the lowest number of tourists.
OTEGSC04	Registration of participants in tourism awareness actions in the destinations of the State of Guanajuato.
OTEGSC05	Annual number of visitors to the state of Guanajuato by cultural tourism segment.
OTEGSC06	Annual number of international visitors by cultural tourism segment in the State of Guanajuato.

Indicators of environmental dimension:

OTEGMA02	Monthly record of solid waste generation in tourist destinations in the State of Guanajuato.
OTEGMA03	Monthly record of air quality in tourist destinations in the State of Guanajuato.

Annex D

Galapagos (Ecuador), indicators in use, 2023

Indicators of economic dimension:

Monthly tourist arrivals
Country of origin
Visitor profile
Number of service providers per activity
Annual tourist arrivals.
Monthly tourist arrivals
Country of origin
Visitor profile
Number of service providers per activity
Installed capacity
Average occupancy
Tourism sector sales
Foreign exchange from tourism
Employment

Indicators of environmental dimension:

Species sightings
Introduced species
Litter
Accidents (animal attacks, cycling accidents, etc.)
Contamination
Conflict of use (fishing, research)
Tourist use violations (visitor behaviour, unguided groups, use of drones, etc.)
Management (equipment maintenance, trail maintenance, etc.)

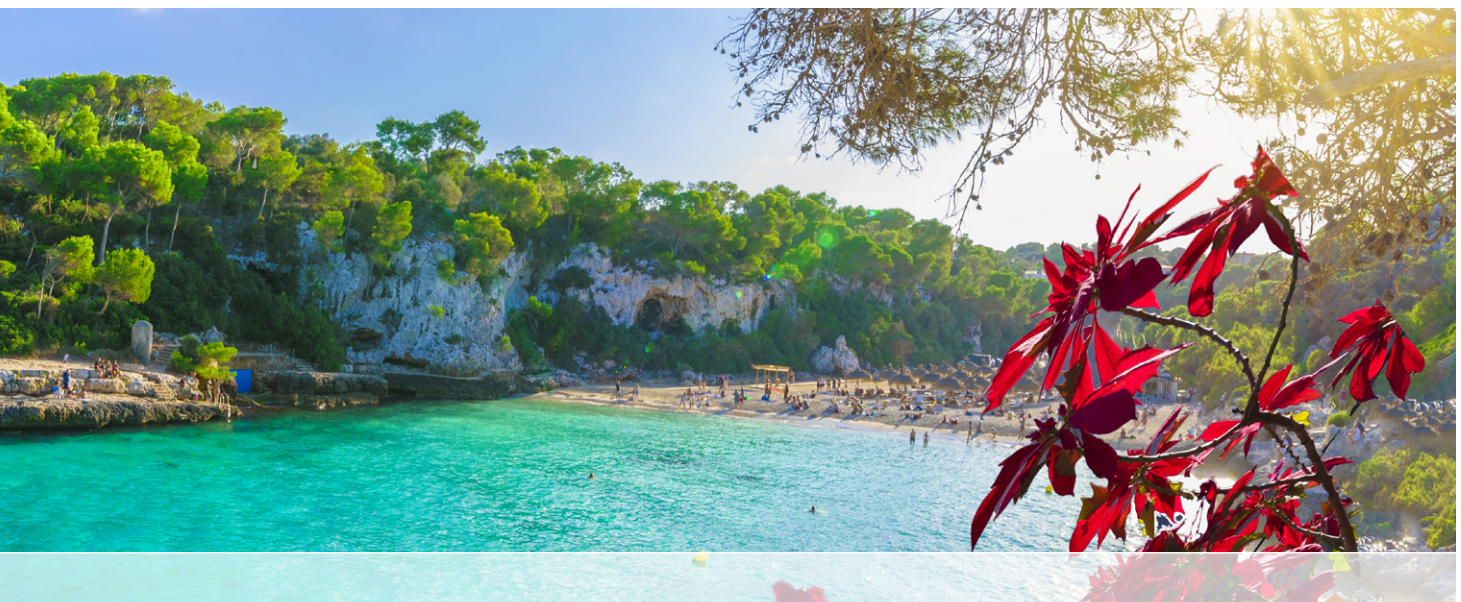
Indicators of social dimension:

Profile of tour guides (gender, age, etc.)



Acronyms and abbreviations

API	application programming interface	PED	Guanajuato State Development Plan (Mexico)
CITE	Center of Intelligence of Tourism Economics	RBOT	Brazilian Network of Tourism Observatories
ETIS	European Tourism Indicator System	RevPAR	revenue per available room
GDP	gross domestic product	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
GHG	greenhouse gas	SF-MST	Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism
GIS	geographic information system	STOST	Sustainable Tourism Observatory of South Tyrol (Italy)
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council	TSP	tourism service provider
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank	UN Tourism	World Tourism Organization
IDT	District Institute of Tourism	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
INSTO	International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories	WWF	World Wildlife Fund
OTEG	Guanajuato State Tourism Observatory (Mexico)		



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