



# REGENERATIVE TOURISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Towards a Systemic Transformation

## **From Extraction to Regeneration. From Growth to Flourishing**

The Mediterranean is a living system, which comprises a cradle of civilizations, cultures, biodiversity, and knowledge systems. The Mediterranean has shaped humanity for millennia, while also being influenced by migrations and exchange from other places. Today, it stands at a crossroads impacted by climate change, ecological distress, social inequity, and fragile economic models.

In this context, tourism is contributing to the problem.

We must collectively rethink what a healthy and socially just tourism means. This way, it could contribute to meaningful social and ecological change.

Regenerative tourism in the Mediterranean is not an incremental improvement of sustainability, but a paradigm shift which changes *how* and *why* we do tourism, while emphasizing that tourism should not be an exclusive activity for just some few.

Those working in Regenerative Tourism in the Mediterranean should commit to:

### **Mindset change**

Regeneration begins with how we think.

Tourism systems reflect the worldview that created them, and the unequal power relations embroiled in them. These relations are led by and benefit economic monopolies that extract wealth from territories and precarious labor. They prioritize growth, competition, and short-term gains and reproduce socio-ecological crises.

A regenerative future requires a shift in consciousness: from control to stewardship, from extraction to reciprocity, from fragmentation to holistic approach, from ownership to belonging.

For territories to regenerate, mindsets must change.

### **Systems Thinking**

Tourism is embedded in complex socio-ecological systems.

It shapes (and is shaped by) climate, agriculture, mobility, housing, water, energy, culture, and politics.

Regenerative tourism should embrace complexity and center on interdependencies. It must strengthen one part of the system without weakening another.

This way, systemic coherence is preferred versus fragmented solutions.

### **Life-centered, Not Industry-Centered**

Tourism is mainly an industry that creates ecological and social damage. However, the Mediterranean's coasts, forests, islands, towns, and urban centers are not resources to exploit. They are living places, with histories, communities, and limits.

Therefore, economic activity should serve the vitality of the place: to ecosystems, to communities, and to future generations.



### **Place-based and Context-Specific**

Each Mediterranean territory has its own ecological thresholds, cultural identity and community aspirations. Regeneration must emerge from within place, including its knowledge, people, landscapes, and seascapes. External solutions that mismatch the internal needs of the territory will not work.

### **Collaborative Governance 8-Helix**

Regeneration requires a shared but equitable responsibility among stakeholders. It relies on the collaboration of public authorities, private enterprises, academia, civil society, environmental actors, cultural institutions, financial stakeholders, citizens, and visitors.

No single actor can regenerate territory alone.

Governance becomes participatory, transparent and adaptive — capable of learning and evolving as conditions change.

### **From Linear to Circular**

The prevailing tourism model extracts, consumes, and discards. It funnels wealth outward, leaving territories to absorb the costs while profits accumulate elsewhere. Regenerative tourism must contribute to close loops. Specifically, it should shorten supply chains, reinvest value locally, reduce waste, and strengthen territorial economies. Circularity is also about keeping wealth, knowledge, and opportunity circulating within communities.

### **Addresses Climate Change and Enhances Biodiversity**

The Mediterranean is among the regions where the climate crisis is most intensely felt. Regenerative tourism should contribute to Climate Change mitigation, adaptation, and ecosystem restoration. It should enhance biodiversity, protect marine and terrestrial life, and strengthen resilience to climate shocks.

### **Culture as Living Heritage**

Mediterranean culture is not a commodity.

It is a living expression of memory, identity, and belonging. Regenerative tourism should safeguard intangible traditions, support local gastronomy and craftsmanship, and ensure intergenerational continuity.

This perspective aligns with diversity, dignity, and open channels for participation.

### **Stewardship**

Stewardship means caring for place through responsibility and action.

It shifts tourism from passive consumption to active engagement, where visitors and communities become caretakers of ecosystems, cultures, and local livelihoods.

Through awareness, participation, and low-impact practices, stewardship contributes to the long-term health and resilience of the territory.

### **Visitors that are Aware of their Responsibility**

Visitors are not passive consumers but are participants in the life of the place.

Regenerative tourism invites them to learn, contribute, and engage meaningfully.

Travel becomes a reciprocity. Experience becomes an exchange, a relationship. Presence becomes a responsibility.

Visitors should not contribute to the degradation of territories.



### **Reflexive Learning**

Regenerative tourism requires new metrics that assess ecosystem health, social justice, governance quality, and territorial resilience.

These metrics, which shift from traditional economic growth-oriented indicators, can be used to reflect, learn, and adapt.

### **Socially Redistributive**

A regenerative approach to tourism must contribute to the social redistribution of wealth. This means reverting the concentration of wealth for the benefit of a few towards more fair economic distributions and an increase of public and communal spaces. Moreover, it should foster combatting precarious labor conditions of those that work in tourism and be economically feasible for most of the population – not a niche solution for the wealthy.

### **Our commitment**

Regeneration requires:

- Shifting mindsets
- Challenging growth paradigms
- Redistributing power
- Embracing complexity

But the Mediterranean has always been a place of exchange, adaptation, and transformation. Following this legacy, regeneration shifts:

- From competition to collaborative relationships.
- From extraction to restoration and flourishing
- From resilience to flourishing.

Regenerative Tourism in the Mediterranean is not a niche, but a need based on planetary and social boundaries.

The future is not something we inherit but must be politically constructed