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# ‘Overtourism’?

## Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions

Volume 2: Case Studies | Executive Summary







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## Acknowledgments

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The views, thoughts and opinions expressed in each of the case studies belong solely to the respective author(s).









## Foreword

Sustainable and inclusive cities must mean cities for all: citizens, investors and visitors.

The recent growth of urban tourism requires the sector to ensure sustainable policies and practices that maximize tourism's socio-economic benefits. By the same token, potential adverse effects need to be tackled – on natural resources, infrastructure, mobility and congestion, and the socio-cultural impact on residents.

Urban tourism is multifaceted and requires a city-wide strategy with cooperation between all stakeholders and the inclusion of tourism in the urban agenda.

UNWTO has placed urban tourism among its key areas of work, against the backdrop of advancing its contribution to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, Goal 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

In September 2018, we published *'Overtourism'? – Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions*, in collaboration with the Centre of Expertise Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality (CELTH), Breda University of Applied Sciences, and the European Tourism Futures Institute (ETFI) of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences.

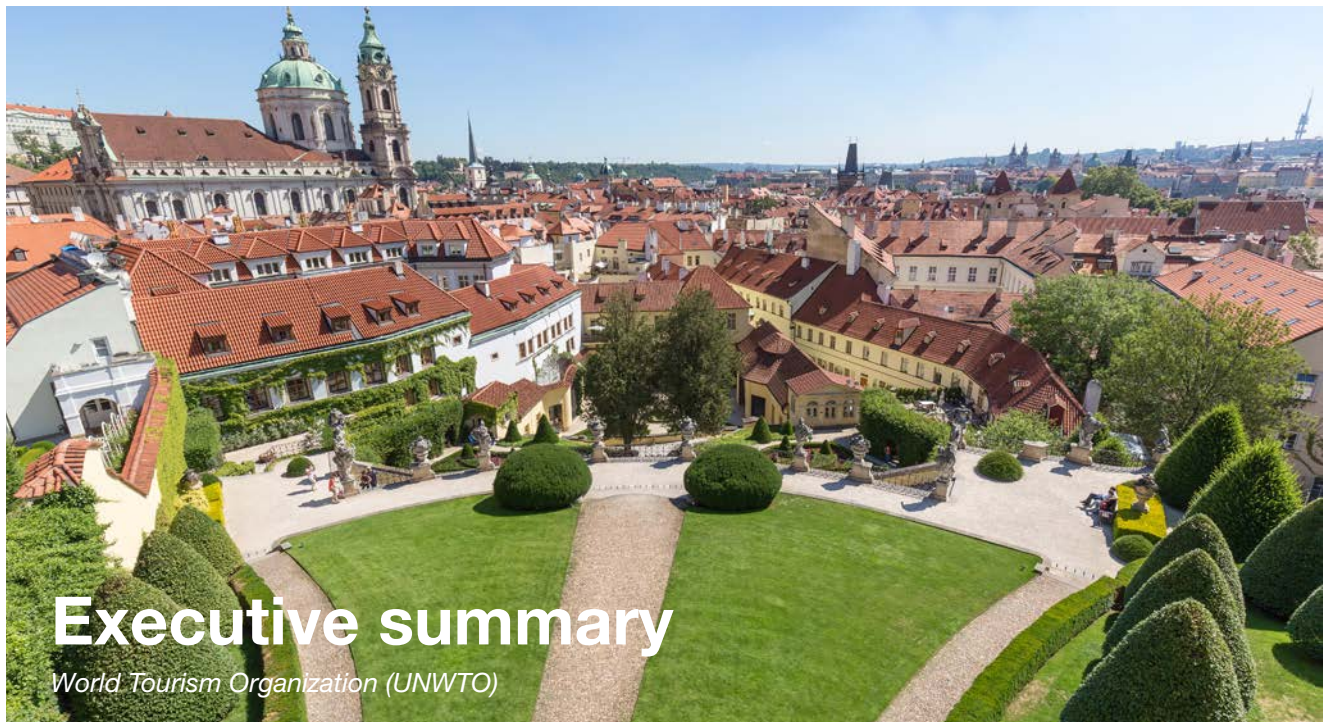
This report showcases 11 strategies and 68 measures to help better understand and manage visitor growth in cities, and examines how to manage tourism in urban destinations to the benefit of visitors and residents alike.

The second volume of *'Overtourism'? – Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions – Volume 2: Case Studies* includes examples of how 19 cities across the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe are implementing these measures.

We trust that the case studies presented in this report can provide inspiration and guidance to all cities as we work together to build a common sustainable charter for urban tourism.

Zurab Pololikashvili  
Secretary-General,  
World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)





# Executive summary

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Over half of the world's population lives in urban areas and it is estimated that, by 2050, this proportion will reach 70%. In addition, the growing number of urban tourists increases the use of natural resources, causes socio-cultural impact, and exerts pressure on infrastructure, mobility and other facilities.

Adequately managing tourism to the benefit of visitors and residents alike has always been a fundamental issue for the sector. Long before the emergence of buzzwords such as 'overtourism', UNWTO defined tourism's carrying capacity as "the maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic and sociocultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction".

Tourism will only be sustainable if developed and managed considering both visitors and local communities. This can be achieved through community engagement, congestion management, reduction of seasonality, careful planning that respects the limits of capacity and the specificities of each destination, and product diversification.

In September 2018, UNWTO launched the report '*Overtourism'? – Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions*, in collaboration with the Centre of Expertise Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality (CELTH), Breda University of Applied Sciences, and the European Tourism Futures Institute (ETFI) of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences. The report examines how to manage tourism in urban destinations to the benefit of

visitors and residents alike, showcasing eleven strategies and 68 measures to help better understand and manage visitor growth in cities.

This second volume '*Overtourism'? – Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions – Volume 2: Case Studies* includes examples on how 19 cities across the Americas, Asia and the Pacific and Europe – Amsterdam, Antwerp, Barcelona, Berlin, Besalú, Cambridge, Dubrovnik, Edinburgh, Ghent, Hangzhou, London, Lucerne, Macao (China), New York, Lisbon, Seoul, Porto, Prague and Venice – are implementing the following eleven strategies:

- Strategy 1:** Promote the dispersal of visitors within the city and beyond;
- Strategy 2:** Promote time-based dispersal of visitors;
- Strategy 3:** Stimulate new visitor itineraries and attractions;
- Strategy 4:** Review and adapt regulation;
- Strategy 5:** Enhance visitors' segmentation;
- Strategy 6:** Ensure local communities benefit from tourism;
- Strategy 7:** Create city experiences that benefit both residents and visitors;
- Strategy 8:** Improve city infrastructure and facilities;
- Strategy 9:** Communicate with and engage local stakeholders;
- Strategy 10:** Communicate with and engage visitors; and
- Strategy 11:** Set monitoring and response measures.



## Main challenges and measures

The case studies provide a wide range of approaches and strategies to the management of urban tourism and show that the impacts of tourism are diverse, complex and multidimensional.

Despite the diversity in context, unique geographical characteristics as well in current state of tourism development, the concerns and challenges raised the most often appear to be essentially the same: congestion in specific locations and sites at specific moments, mobility, pressure on infrastructure and resources, decrease in 'place' authenticity and impact on social fabrics and residents daily lives.

From the different measures implemented or under implementation in each destination it becomes clear that there are no 'one-size fits all' and that any successful destination management strategy needs to be context specific.

Among the eleven strategies identified for the report, not surprisingly, the most common measures currently being implemented by destinations relate to the dispersal of visitors within the city and beyond which shows the pressing need to manage tourism congestion in certain areas and attractions.

Moreover measures with the aim of improving the city infrastructure and facilities are also frequently mentioned, reflecting the fact that many challenges are linked not only to the growing number of visitors but also to the pressure placed by residents, commuters and tourists on the city's resources and services.

In some destinations, tools to regularly monitor and measure key indicators like carrying capacity or residents' satisfaction have already been adopted or are under development by authorities, but much is yet to be done to implement an holistic approach to measuring sustainable tourism at destination level and maximize the opportunities brought by technology. In this regard, the UNWTO Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories can be a model to consider as it provides a framework for the systematic, timely and regular monitoring of resource-use and a better understanding of the impact of tourism in nine areas – seasonality; employment; economic benefits; governance; local satisfaction; energy management; water management; waste water (sewage) management; and solid waste management.<sup>1</sup>

For the majority of the case studies, steps to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures have not yet been made. Based on the examples in this report, it becomes clear that implementing specific measures focusing solely on altering visitor numbers and travel behaviour will not suffice. An effective approach to the management of visitors will only be successful if a comprehensive and long-term planning strategy is adopted based on a multi-action, multi-stakeholder participatory approach including the local residents.

## Placing tourism in the urban agenda

Finally, as highlighted in the strategies outlined in this report, urban tourism management will necessarily require action or assistance from actors that are not directly involved in the tourism sector. In different urban destinations, efforts towards increasing cooperation between different groups of stakeholders seem to have been acknowledged. On the long term, to ensure that tourism in cities continues to be a crucial socio-economic driver and managed to the benefit of local residents and tourists alike, it is fundamental that the cooperation across sectors grows and measures taking into account the wider city policy structure are implemented.

Addressing the challenges facing urban tourism today is a much more complex task than is commonly recognized. There is a pressing need to set a sustainable roadmap for urban tourism and position the sector in the wider urban agenda.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors around the world, translating into socio-economic development, employment, infrastructure development and export revenues. Advancing the full integration of tourism in the wider urban agenda and the development and implementation of comprehensive destination management are key to address the challenges rising from urban tourism growth and the complex interactions between tourism and non-tourism stakeholders.

It is therefore critical to ensure that urban tourism is aligned with the United Nations New Urban Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, namely Goal 11 "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

### Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> For further information, see the official website of the World Tourism Organization – International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories, available at: <http://insto.unwto.org/> (26-02-2019).



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The first volume of the report *'Overtourism'?* – *Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions* examines how to manage tourism in urban destinations to the benefit of visitors and residents alike, showcasing eleven strategies and 68 measures to help better understand and manage visitor growth in cities.

This **second volume** includes 18 case studies across the Americas, Asia and the Pacific and Europe – Amsterdam, Antwerp, Barcelona, Berlin, Besalú, Cambridge, Dubrovnik, Edinburgh, Ghent, Hangzhou, London, Lucerne, Macao, China, New York, Lisbon, Seoul, Porto, Prague and Venice – on how cities are implementing the following eleven strategies:

1. Promote the dispersal of visitors within the city and beyond;
2. Promote time-based dispersal of visitors;
3. Stimulate new visitor itineraries and attractions;
4. Review and adapt regulation;
5. Enhance visitors' segmentation;
6. Ensure local communities benefit from tourism;
7. Create city experiences that benefit both residents and visitors;
8. Improve city infrastructure and facilities;
9. Communicate with and engage local stakeholders;
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11. Set monitoring and response measures.

The **World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**, a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. Its membership includes 158 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 500 Affiliate Members.



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