



UNWTO
World Tourism Organization

Walking Tourism

Promoting Regional Development

Executive Summary

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Acknowledgments

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Foreword

Walking, our most common mode of travel, is one of the most popular ways in which tourists can see a destination up close and be active during their visit. Walking tourism allows visitors to directly and deeply experience a destination through their five senses. It also promotes meaningful interactions with local people, nature and culture.

Walking tourism can be developed anywhere that possesses a route with characteristics distinctive to the area – and with relatively low investment costs. When local community residents along a route, as well as other stakeholders, are engaged in its development, walking tourism has the potential to bring a variety of social and economic benefits to the communities. It also promotes the dispersal of tourism demand towards lesser-visited areas and regions, and in off-peak seasons.

This report, which showcases various successful examples of walking tourism, aims to serve as a practical reference for destinations with a focus on the role of walking tourism in regional development. I trust that it will help destinations develop walking tourism products and initiatives that can help make the most of tourism's value in social and economic development.

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

Executive summary

Benefits of walking tourism

Walking tourism is now one of the most popular ways to experience a destination. It allows tourists to engage more with local people, nature and culture. It also meets recent travellers' need of physical and healthy activities during their travel. Walking tourism can be developed anywhere as a sustainable tourism offer with relatively small investment. It can bring about social and economic benefits to residents and communities if properly developed and managed. Since walking activity is attractive not only to visitors but also to residents to maintain and enhance their wellbeing, a destination can also consider it as a means of its welfare policy and promoting the integration between visitors and residents.

Benefits of walking tourism thus include:

- It is relatively easy to develop with relatively small investment;
- It does not require special assets;
- It has high market potential;
- It complements other tourism resources;
- It is sustainable if developed and managed properly;
- It has high potential to create local economic benefits; and
- It has high potential to promote residents' wellbeing.

Factors to be considered in walking tourism development

Even though walking tourism can be developed anywhere, a destination needs to think about its potential depending on its objectives and target segments (from casual walkers to serious hikers). During the actual development phase, the key elements are the following.

- Route characteristics (attractiveness, safety, level of difficulty, access);
- Necessary facilities (signage, toilets, benches, etc.);
- Maintenance system;
- Economic opportunities (accommodation, transport, retails, cultural programmes, links to gastronomy and wine tourism, etc.); and
- Marketing and commercialization.

At the same time, partnerships, involvement and support of local stakeholders are crucial to develop and maintain walking tourism for regional development. Walking tourism uses common goods and there may be possible conflicts between residents and tourists. Route maintenance can be carried out in cooperation with local volunteers. Access to training and financing is needed in order for new business opportunities to be utilized by local entrepreneurs and residents.

Conclusions

Walking tourism has a potential to any destination. It can be developed with relatively small investment and in combination with the destination's unique nature and culture. It can contribute to regional development through provision of job and business opportunities. In order to successfully develop it and maximize the local benefits from it, partnership and support of local stakeholders are crucial.

Demands for "experiencing" a destination in an authentic way and growing popularity of active tourism make walking tourism more and more relevant for both destinations and travellers. Walking travellers are also likely to appreciate local culture and nature, and walking tourism can be a good opportunity to showcase a destination as a whole beyond walking activities. Therefore it is hoped that destinations will make the most out of the value of walking tourism for their tourism development.

Why walking tourism?

Introduction

Walking tourism is ever popular among tourists not only who like walking but also who are interested in nature and authentic local experiences. Walking allows travellers to engage more directly with local people, nature and culture. Its popularity also comes from travellers' needs of physical and healthy activities during their travel or from the increasing number of people taking active holidays.

To be a walking tourism destination, or to offer adequate walking tourism products, it requires certain level, but not much, of investment and development. Requiring only modest investment is one of the merits to develop walking tourism.¹ Since walking tourism is low impact and not consumptive if developed and managed properly,² it can also be a sustainable tourism offering in a destination that can attract more visitors or can extend visitors' length of stay and spending, which creates employment and income opportunities.

Walking tourism can include a wide range of products. For this report, however, only those with below characteristics are considered as they can be relatively easily developed for regional development:

- Lasting from a few hours to a week or so;
- Not requiring special skills or physical strengths of tourists; and
- Taking place mostly on unpaved roads.

Hiking and trekking are also considered as one of the types of walking tourism in this report.

Benefits of walking tourism for the destinations

Walking tourism can be considered as a type of sport tourism. Compared to other types of sport tourism, walking tourism requires only modest investment (no need to construct a specific facility) to make them sufficiently attractive.³ Walking routes require substantially less maintenance cost than sport facilities.⁴ Furthermore it does not require the institutional capacity necessary to organize sport events. Thus walking tourism is relatively easy for a destination to develop. It can

1 Davies, N.J.; Lumsdon, L.M. and Weston, R. (2012), 'Developing Recreational Trails: Motivations for Recreational Walking', *Tourism Planning & Development*, volume 9 (1), pp. 77–88.

2 Palau, R. et al. (2012), 'An Analysis of Greenways from an Economic Perspective', *Tourism Planning & Development*, volume 1, pp. 15–24.

3 Davies, N.J.; Lumsdon, L.M. and Weston, R. (2012).

4 Palau, R. et al. (2012).

be combined with other local authentic experiences, which means every walking tourism product can have unique selling points.

For established destinations, it can be an additional tourism offering to make visitors explore less visited areas, spend more and stay longer. It can reduce the seasonality of tourist flows.⁵ For emerging or developing destinations, it can be a core attraction.

The benefits of walking tourism are not limited to tourism development. It helps improve the quality of life for communities⁶ as it can be developed as community-based tourism products and support the local economy in rural areas. If managed properly, it can contribute to conservation of the natural and cultural environment and enhanced understanding of it among visitors and residents alike.⁷ It also promotes walking behaviour and physical activity, discourages sedentary lifestyle and reduces obesity among residents.⁸

Benefits of walking tourism for the tourists

For a tourist, walking tourism is convenient as it requires little equipment other than outdoor garments.⁹ It is feasible for most of the population regardless of age, gender and so on.¹⁰ Depending on the offerings, tourists can choose walking routes that fit their own needs in terms of length, level of difficulty and attractions along the way. It maintains and improves physical and mental health¹¹ and provides contact with the natural environment.¹²

There are benefits not only for tourists specifically interested in walking, but also those interested in culture. It helps them better understand the heritage, landscape and culture.¹³ It allows them to interact with people and places on a deeper level.¹⁴ Walking is the best way to explore and experience the uniqueness of a place.¹⁵

5 Palau, R. et al. (2012).

6 Davies, N.J.; Lumsdon, L.M. and Weston, R. (2012).

7 Ibid.

Palau, R. et al. (2012).

Weston, R. and Mota, J.C. (2012), 'Low Carbon Tourism Travel: Cycling, Walking and Trails', *Tourism Planning & Development*, volume 9 (1), pp. 1–3.

8 Palau, R. et al. (2012).

Omar, W.R.W.; Patterson, I. and Pegg, S. (2012), 'A Green Pathway for Future Tourism Success: Walking Trail in Kuala Lumpur', *Tourism Planning & Development*, volume 9 (1), pp. 57–76.

Mnguni, E.M. and Giampiccoli, A. (2017), 'Community-Based Tourism Development: A Hiking Trails Perspective', *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, volume 6 (1), pp. 1–17.

9 Davies, N.J.; Lumsdon, L.M. and Weston, R. (2012).

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

Omar, W.R.W.; Patterson, I. and Pegg, S. (2012).

12 Davies, N.J.; Lumsdon, L.M. and Weston, R. (2012).

13 Palau, R. et al. (2012).

Mnguni, E.M. and Giampiccoli, A. (2017).

14 Omar, W.R.W.; Patterson, I. and Pegg, S. (2012).

15 Middleton, J. (2010), 'Sense and the City: exploring the embodied geographies of urban walking', *Social and Cultural Geography*, volume 11 (6), pp. 575–596.

Development of walking tourism for the benefits of residents

As mentioned in the section 1.2, walking tourism is also beneficial to residents' health and wellbeing. Therefore where appropriate, the development of walking tourism can be combined with the health and welfare policy of a destination. Increased participation in walking by residents increases opportunities for interactions between residents and tourists, which can lead to higher visitor satisfaction and enhanced welcoming environment of the place. Kaminoyama Kurort in Japan (case study 7.9) combines tourism and residents' wellness in its project.

In addition, walking tourism can be a tool for local residents to learn their own nature and culture, and to be involved in conservation efforts. A management body of the walking route can organize seminars, workshops and events aimed to local people so that they can rediscover the value of their own areas and understand the importance of conservation. The Lebanon Mountain Trail (case study 7.2) and Jeju Olle in Republic of Korea (case study 7.3) offer programmes that facilitate learning and cooperation of residents.

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Walking tourism is now one of the most popular ways to experience a destination. It allows tourists to better engage with local people, nature and culture. It also meets the growing demand of travellers of outdoor activities in general, including when they travel. Walking tourism can be developed anywhere as a sustainable tourism offer with a relatively small investment. It can bring about social and economic benefits to residents and communities if properly developed and managed. This report showcases various successful examples of walking tourism and aims to serve as a practical reference for destinations with a focus on the role of walking tourism in regional development.

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