



**Blue
Tourism
Initiative**

The Blue Tourism Initiative in the Caribbean





IDDRI is an independent think tank based in Paris (France) at the interface of research and decision-making that investigates sustainable development issues requiring global coordination.



Eco-Union is an independent Think and Do Tank based in Barcelona (Spain), whose objective is to accelerate the ecological transition of the Euro-Mediterranean region.



CORDIO East Africa is a nonprofit research organisation based in Kenya and focusing on the sustainable use and management of coastal and marine resources in the Western Indian Ocean.



IUCN Centre for the Mediterranean, established in Malaga (Spain), aims to influence, encourage and support Mediterranean societies to reconcile the conservation of natural resources with their use.



CANARI (Caribbean Natural Resources Institute) is a non-profit institute headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago, promoting and facilitating stakeholder participation and collaboration in the stewardship of renewable natural resources in the Caribbean.

Contact details:

Blue Tourism Initiative
info@bluetourisminitiative.org

Julien Rochette (julien.rochette@iddri.org) and Angelo Sciacca (angelo.sciacca@iddri.org),
IDDRI
Jeremie Fosse (jeremie.fosse@ecounion.eu) and Giulia Balestracci
(giulia.balestracci@ecounion.eu), eco-union
Nicole Leotaud (nicole@canari.org) CANARI

Blue Tourism Initiative Website: www.bluetourisminitiative.org



The Blue Tourism Initiative

The Blue Tourism Initiative supports a sustainable blue tourism economy in the Mediterranean, the West Indian Ocean and the Caribbean. The Initiative raises awareness among public and private stakeholders and facilitates the emergence of sustainable blue tourism practices, promoting cooperation and the sharing of experiences, especially at the regional level. The Blue Tourism Initiative promotes a holistic vision of maritime and coastal management in line with the worldwide effort to deliver the 2030 Agenda in marine regions. It aims to improve governance of coastal and marine tourism to contribute to sustainable, inclusive and resilient development and address the associated environmental, socio-cultural and economic challenges.

Co-led by the Paris-based Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI) and the Spanish Think and Do Tank Eco-union, the Blue Tourism Initiative is co-funded by the French Facility for Global Environmental (FFEM), and implemented with three regional partners:

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) In the Mediterranean;
- Coastal Oceans Research and Development Indian Ocean (CORDIO);
- Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI).

The Blue Tourism Initiative was launched at the United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon on 30 June 2022. This 4,3 million euro project will last 4 years - from 2022 to 2026.

Activities conducted in the Caribbean

Various activities are conducted as part of the Blue Tourism Initiative in the Caribbean.

1. A regional diagnosis of the regional blue tourism sector

The regional diagnosis will provide a state of play of coastal and maritime tourism in the Caribbean. The diagnosis will have a particular focus on:

- Detailing the main characteristics of the blue tourism sector in the region such as market evolution of the sector and key stakeholders;
- Reviewing the legal and institutional framework governing the blue tourism sector in the region, both at national and regional levels;
- Assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on regional tourism and the challenges and opportunities emerged to and for a more sustainable blue tourism sector;
- Analysing the relationship between tourism and conservation of natural areas.



2. Facilitation of sustainable blue tourism pilot projects

Sustainable blue tourism pilot initiatives will be supported by the Blue Tourism Initiative. These pilot initiatives will be implemented in Trinidad and Tobago (Nariva Swamp), Tobago (the entire island), and in Saint Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines at the UBEC¹ project sites.

Figure 1 - Pilot Project Sites in the Caribbean



In each of the pilot sites, the Blue Tourism Initiative will:

- Conduct a diagnosis focusing on the site's characteristics, their state of blue tourism, its impacts, challenges and opportunities;
- Develop a strategy and a roadmap with the local stakeholders;
- Identify and finance exemplary blue tourism initiatives addressing local issues to promote sustainable blue tourism, either directly or through a call for projects.

CANARI will coordinate these activities that will be carried out in close consultation with local stakeholders (national and local institutions and administrations).

¹ A World Bank project aimed at unleashing the Blue Economy of the Caribbean: <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P171833>



3. Fostering regional cooperation

Regional stakeholders play a key role in the governance of coastal and marine tourism. The Blue tourism Initiative aims to strengthen the inclusion of tourism in the agenda of marine regions by offering regional organizations, especially regional seas conventions, support for bringing sustainable tourism related challenges in the regional discussions (e.g. through dedicated events, reports, white papers, regional roadmaps...). Inter-regional exchanges will also be regularly organized to share best practices and discuss opportunities and challenges.

What will the Blue Tourism Initiative bring to the Caribbean region?

During the project, the Blue Tourism Initiative will:

- Facilitate discussion among local and regional stakeholders that are directly or indirectly linked to the blue tourism sector. By facilitating these discussions, the Blue Tourism Initiative will contribute to strengthening blue tourism governance and identification of blue tourism development opportunities within and beyond the Initiative;
- Organize capacity building and learning forums for tourism stakeholders to strengthen knowledge exchange and synergies for a more sustainable blue tourism economy;
- Develop a roadmap for a sustainable blue economy, focusing on sustainable financing mechanisms for tourism;
- Develop practical tourism initiatives at the sites led by local stakeholders;
- Foster experience sharing among the Caribbean, Mediterranean and the West Indian Ocean.

Additional information on the Pilot Initiatives

Nariva Swamp in Trinidad: Implementation of concrete sustainable blue tourism solutions with local stakeholders.

The Nariva Swamp Protected Area (NSPA) is the largest freshwater swamp in the country. The area consists of a complex mosaic of coastal beaches, freshwater marshes, palm swamps, freshwater swamp woodlands and mangroves. Despite the presence of natural attractions such as charismatic species like the West Indian manatee, the red howler monkey, the blue and gold macaw and nesting sea turtles, and occasional bioluminescence in the lagoon, tourist numbers are limited. This is largely due to limited community co-management, supporting infrastructure, limited community and business capacity, and weak partnerships with the private sector.

After decades of multiple interventions, which have produced few results for the local communities living in the area, the Blue Tourism Initiative focuses on implementing practical interventions in the Nariva Swamp that have already been discussed and are identified in the management plan and that bring tangible benefits to the livelihoods of local communities.



Tobago: development and promotion of sustainable tourism with civil society and private sector stakeholders

The southwestern part of Tobago is relatively developed, with many tourist accommodations and facilities, and the Buccoo Reef and its complex of coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds are heavily degraded. The north-eastern part of the island is relatively pristine, with stunning views, extensive forest cover, attractive bays and tiny offshore islands harbouring rich biodiversity. This area was declared as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2020.

Tourism is the main economic sector on the island. It offers significant economic opportunities for the island's population. Strengthening the participation of the people of Tobago as entrepreneurs is seen as essential, as is strengthening links with related sectors such as agriculture, local manufacturing, agriculture and construction. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, policy makers, as well as the private sector and civil society, are interested in and committed to shaping a new approach to revitalise tourism in Tobago. Several activities have been identified for this site to develop and promote a more sustainable blue tourism in Tobago.

These include redesigning the Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association's website and the creation of an online platform; the definition of a local carbon offset/environmental footprint project based on ecosystem rehabilitation with funding and direct involvement of tourists in ecosystem rehabilitation activities; the development of a fisherman/farmer and accommodation/restaurant programme to encourage the establishment of partnerships between the tourism and fisheries/farming sectors; and the development of a roadmap for the establishment of a Tobago Tourism Fund to facilitate sustainable funding from the existing room tax, as well as direct donations from tourists, grants and the financial sector (local banks and credit unions).

UBEC project sites in Saint Lucia and St Vincent: development of a sustainable tourism strategy with local communities

Saint Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines are part of the Eastern Caribbean island chain and are both members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). They are classified as upper-middle income countries, which masks their reality as highly vulnerable SIDS, highly exposed to external economic and environmental shocks and highly indebted. The OECS Commission is leading several regional initiatives to support the blue tourism sector, including the World Bank-funded Unleashing the Blue Economy of the Caribbean (UBEC) programme, some of whose activities will involve Saint Lucia and St Vincent and Grenadines. The UBEC project is designed to strengthen the blue economy and improve the resilience of selected coastal infrastructure in and across participating countries. The initial cohort of participating countries (Grenada, Saint Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines) will benefit from increased competitiveness of their economies in three critical and interconnected sectors: tourism, fisheries and aquaculture and waste management.

The activities of the Blue Tourism Initiative have been developed to be complementary to those of the UBEC project. These include piloting the participatory development of local blue tourism strategies and roadmaps; amplifying the voices of coastal community resource users, entrepreneurs and residents in national blue tourism initiatives within the UBEC project; mobilizing tourism MSMEs, developing a collective blue tourism position, and engaging in the development of national policy and initiatives on blue tourism in the framework of the UBEC project. The added value of the Blue Tourism Initiative project is to strengthen the capacity of local stakeholders so that they can benefit from the UBEC project.

The Project partners



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