

European
Yeti

A hand holding a seed next to a small green seedling growing from soil. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green. The hand is positioned on the left, holding a small, brown, textured seed. To the right, a small green seedling with two leaves is growing out of a small mound of dark soil. The overall scene is bright and natural, symbolizing growth and environmental care.

GIVING BACK TO NATURE

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Aim: Learning to design an ecotourism business as to contribute to the conservation and restoration of nature, beyond their income-generating activities.

Objectives:



Understanding the dangers faced by the environment.



Understanding ways in which an ecotourism business can contribute to the conservation and regeneration of nature.



Ecotourism aims not only to be a form of harmless tourism, but to be helpful tourism.

When ecotourism first appeared in the 70s, its slogan was borrowed from Chief Seattle, a 19th century Native American who tried to instil the idea of ecological responsibility to European settlers. He famously said:

“

Take only memories, leave only footsteps.

”

This was an incentive to not change the places you visit: not by littering, removing parts of the natural or cultural heritage, willingly or unwillingly carrying seeds of plants to other habitats, indirectly destroying the opportunities, living conditions and way of life of local populations etc.



The current climate crisis is forcing ecotourism to take a step further towards a positive impact.

A better slogan for today would be:

“ *Make Nature Great Again!* ”

Or better:

“ *Restore and Regenerate Nature!* ”
🔗 *More info on www.responsibletravel.com*

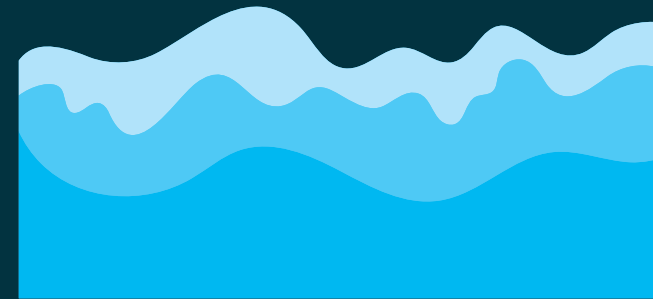
This module is about ways in which ecotourism can do that.



All our most basic needs are ensured by nature:



clean air that helps
us breathe



clean water that
helps us function



plants and animal
products that we
eat for energy



stable soil to live on



weather that enables us to
live comfortably and
grows our food

It is nature that provides us with resources to make shelters and basically all other thing humans have created, from the most basic tool to the most elaborate technology. All is done with primary resources found in nature.

WE NEED NATURE TO SURVIVE

Moreover, nature itself has the ability to regenerate and fix itself: it can absorb between 50-60% of manmade carbon emissions, thus helping us curb climate change. But not if we damage it beyond a limit.



DESTROYING NATURE IS DESTROYING OURSELVES.

WE NEED NATURE TO SURVIVE

Top 5 Causes of Loss of Nature According to UN's Environment Programme:

1

Land use change as natural habitats are converted into less diverse ones to make way for crops, livestock, or human settlements. This represents a significant portion of the Earth's surface as living takes 1% of the earths' surface, crops 12% and livestock 26%.

2

Climate change which is causing significant disruption to ecosystems across the globe.

3

Pollution in its various forms, including light and noise pollution, solid waste, and plastic waste.

4

Overexploitation of nature, where natural resources are used at rates that exceed nature's ability to replenish them, leading to their depletion.

5

Non-native invasive species which can outcompete local species and cause imbalances in habitats. Travelers can inadvertently transport non-native invasive species.



More info on www.responsibletravel.com

Ecotourism refers to a wide range of activities based **on nature and local culture.**

The main motivation of the tourist is to **observe, understand, learn and enjoy nature and local customs.**

The purpose of ecotourism activities is to help **conserve and protect natural environment.**



As an ecotourism business owner, you may have already implemented measures to reduce your impact on the environment, such as:

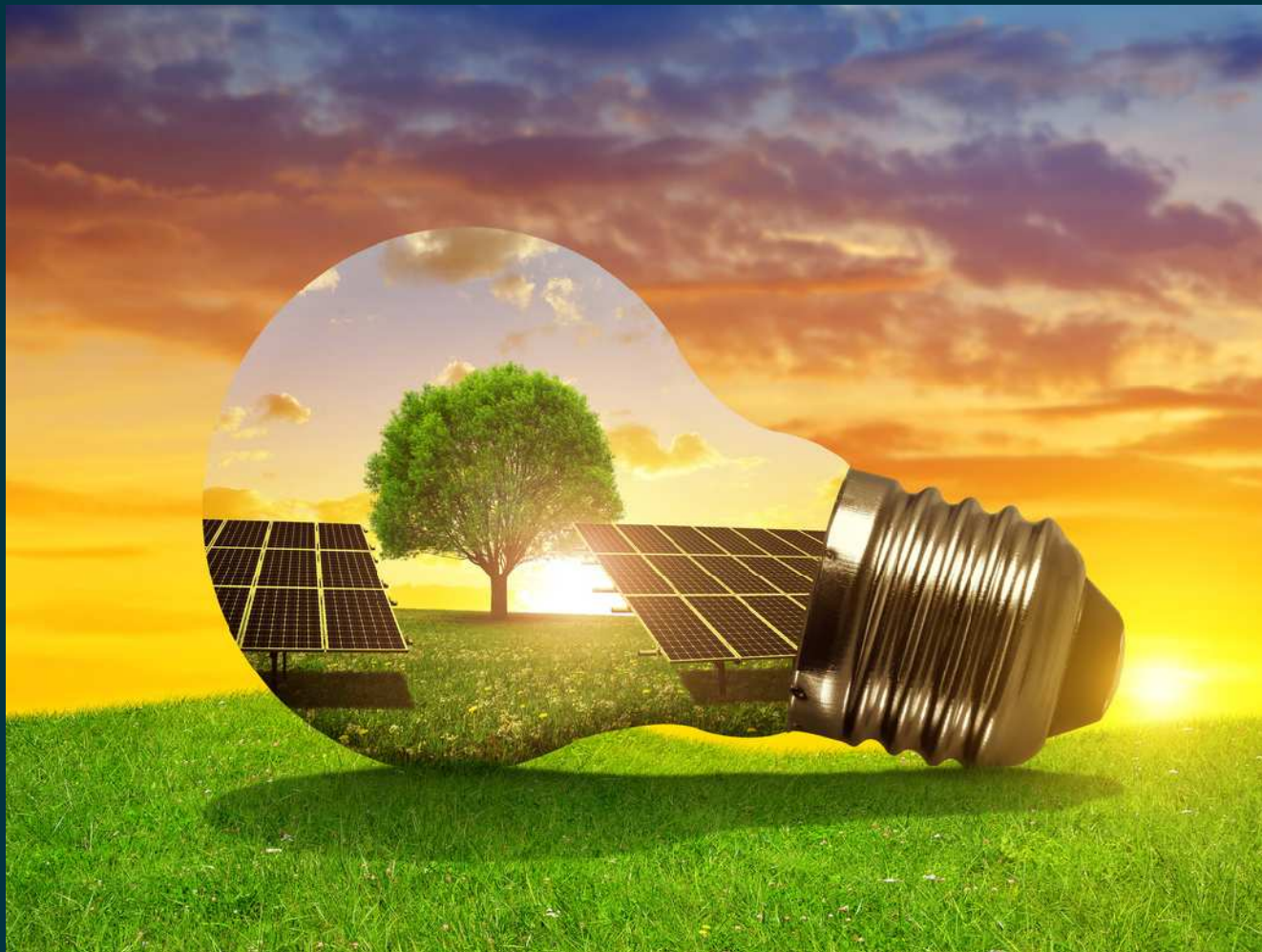
- monitoring and maintaining low levels of CO2 emissions
- using renewable energy
- reducing water consumption through filtering and reuse
- waste management
- recycling and reusing materials, and eliminating non-biodegradable materials

But is this **ENOUGH?**



The answer is: there is still room to grow and do better by nature!

Implementing additional actions can not only further reduce your business's environmental impact, but also potentially lead to ecotourism and sustainability certifications.



These certifications, based on the Global Sustainability Tourism Council Criteria, can serve as a testament to your commitment to environmental responsibility, which in turn can attract more environmentally conscious customers.

WHAT CAN ECOTOURISM BUSINESSES DO?

Financial contributions



The first and easiest step is for your business to **donate money** to other **organizations** that contribute:

- to the **conservation and restoration of nature**
- to the **wellbeing of the local community** in the area where your business is based

The advantage is that the receiving organization already understands problems and possible solutions, as well as the capacity and final responsibility in carrying out projects.

This way, you are directly supporting them in reaching their goals (and yours) of supporting the environment and local communities.



Remember! Research the organizations active in the area you are interested in. Make sure their goals align with yours!



Keep a record of the dates and value of contributions! In most cases, they are tax deductible.



Don't forget to monitor the activity of the organizations you support! Ordinarily, they should send periodical reports of activity to demonstrate how the money was spent and the projects they are working on.

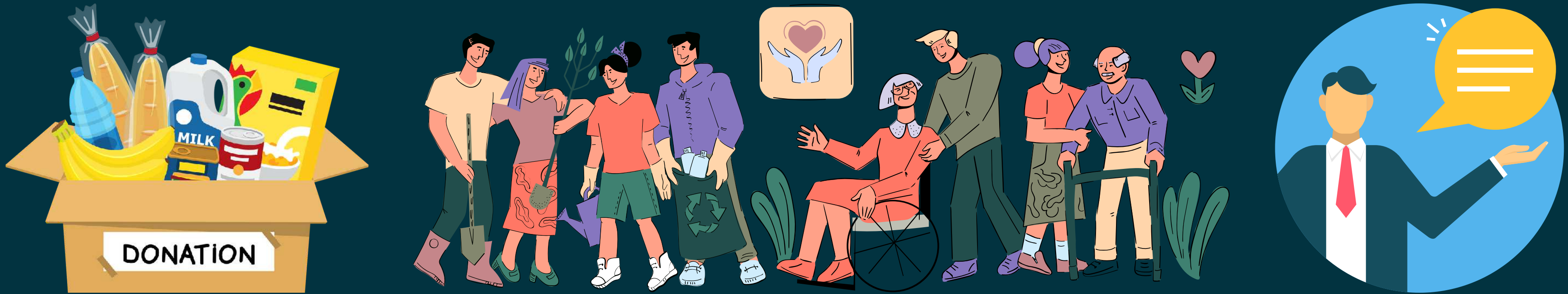
WHAT CAN ECOTOURISM BUSINESSES DO?

In-kind Contribution



Another way to support organizations is through **in-kind contributions**. This refers to all other types of contributions except for money: it can include **providing goods, services, work or the free utilisation of spaces**.

This requires a little bit more thought and it depends on the nature of your business, as well as on the nature of the organizations active in your area.



Examples of in-kind contribution:

- donating products, if your business is producing goods (sponsorship)
- letting the organization use your spaces for workshops, training or other activities, if your business includes them
- letting your employees volunteer with organizations during work hours can be considered in-kind contribution of your employees' time
- offering consultancy, training or other services that your business provides.

You can also partner up with organizations and offer your clients the opportunity to take part in activities planned and managed by your partner organization.



This is a mutually beneficial arrangement: your business will supply the organization with participants, while the organization will enable your clients to directly participate in bettering nature and the local community.

Examples of possible activities are planting trees, removing litter or carrying out monitored, minimal interventions on historical buildings. Other activities can be designed depending on the nature of the business and of the organization, as well as of the profile and challenges of the area.

If you are designing an activity in partnership with an organization, remember you need the consultancy and supervision of an expert in that area! Otherwise, you risk planting the wrong trees in the wrong habitat or carrying out a damaging intervention on a historical building. It's hard to guess all the ways in which your project might negatively impact the environment or the local community, so it is precisely for this reason that you need the help of an expert!



Remember to record the date, nature and value of in-kind contributions!

Depending on the country, these too can be tax deductible.



WHAT CAN ECOTOURISM BUSINESSES DO?

Purchases



**SHOP
LOCAL**

Another way in which businesses can contribute to restoring nature and helping local communities is by having a **purchasing policy that favours services and goods provided by business that have the same values as you**, fulfilling one or several of the following criteria:

- are **locally based**
- they **engage with and support local communities**
- provide **environmentally sustainable** products and services (including food, beverages, building materials, consumables)
- provide products and services based on the **area's history and culture**
- provide **local employment**



Preference is given to products and suppliers with **environmental certification**, and when that isn't available, consideration is given to the **origins and methods of growing or production**.



Working with businesses that have the same values and goals as you ensures that those goals are met, and **incentivises other businesses** to adopt those values and become more environmentally aware and respectful towards local community and culture.

Apart from carefully selecting the provider, you should also pay attention to what you purchase.

Aim to:

- **buy locally produced items**, which not only minimizes the carbon footprint by reducing transportation but also supports the local community
- prioritize **environmentally sustainable products** such as those that are biodegradable or made from recycled materials
- choose products that are appropriate for the **season and location**
- opt for reusable, returnable, or recycled goods
- **avoid unnecessary packaging**, especially plastic





You can also **support other local entrepreneurs** in developing and selling sustainable products by offering **advice and support**.

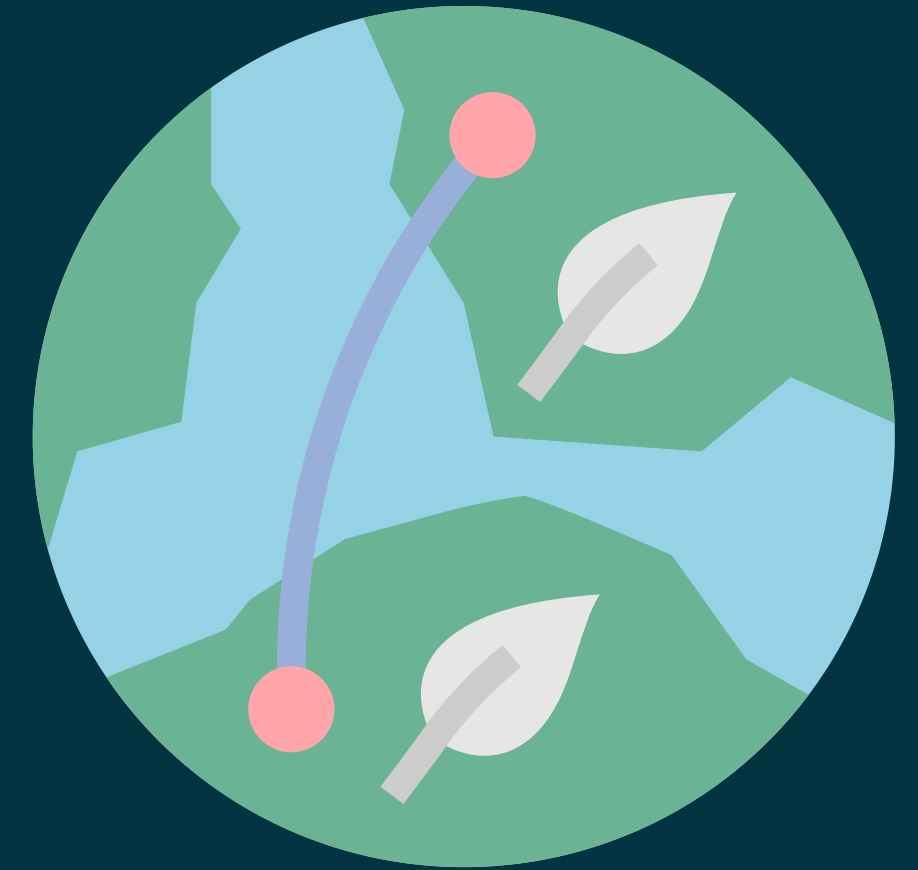
Or you can **pursue joint ventures and partnerships** with other environmentally friendly businesses.



Although such activities don't bring you any tax benefits, they are among the **requirements for sustainability certification**.

Moreover, being part of a **network means increased visibility** for your business and a **higher number of clients**.

Most importantly, it **transforms the way we think about business** and introduces sustainability in every aspect of economy, just like the Green Deal intends.



WHAT CAN ECOTOURISM BUSINESSES DO?

Giving Back to the Local Community



Mass tourism often changes the way of life of local communities, taking their resources (land, water etc.) and marginalising the locals in favour of wealthy tourists, while simultaneously commodifying their culture (reducing it to a performance and souvenirs).

Ecotourism strives to prevent this by acting in various areas.

EMPLOYMENT



- creating employment opportunities for members of the local community
- offering training opportunities to members of the local community to increase their employability
- offers equal opportunities for advancement, including in management positions
- favouring businesses that provide employment opportunities to members of the local community

RESPECT FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE



- valuing and incorporating authentic elements of traditional and contemporary local culture in its operations, design, decoration, cuisine or shops
- respecting intellectual property rights
- seeking the view of local community into the presentation of local cultural heritage



WORKING TOGETHER



- engaging with the local community; reviewing and designing the business' activity based on the local community's guidance and feedback
- consideration is given to the capacity and fragility of sites and communities in determining the size, frequency and timing of group visits
- feedback from local community is encouraged and acted upon
- make your activities accessible to the local community!

Contributing to the preservation and prosperity of the local community is a requirement for ecotourism certifications, but it is also a matter of respect for human being and the culture they have created in that place.



WHAT CAN ECOTOURISM BUSINESSES DO?

Biodiversity Conservation

You can support diversity conservation indirectly (through financial or in-kind contribution or by doing business with other environmentally aware enterprises), but you can also have a **direct impact by how you manage your property.**



- Any **property should be managed in such a way as to support biodiversity** conservation
- Any **disturbance in the habitat should be minimised, rehabilitated or compensated for** (for examples: the creation of rooftop gardens, beds of wild flowers for bees, birdhouses, insect hotels etc.)
- Compensation should be made where any disturbance has occurred. (For example, if you need to displace animals, seek to relocate them or recreate their habitat elsewhere.)
- **Visitors should be encouraged to support biodiversity**
- Take measures to **avoid the introduction of invasive species.**

WHAT CAN ECOTOURISM BUSINESSES DO?

Education



Education is at the very core of ecotourism.

It aims to educate visitors about nature and the people inhabiting it and interacting with it. This is done through a series of communication activities known as interpretation, and you have probably already included them in your business design—WELL DONE!

However, you can use the interaction with your clients to educate them in other areas of sustainability that are not necessarily related to your business.



You can:

- encourage them to use climate friendly transport and provide them with options (bike rental, car-sharing, pick-ups etc)
- illustrate how you can keep materials in use so as to reduce the overconsumption of nature
- give them guidance on how to save energy
- give them guidance on minimizing water consumption.

Most importantly, **LEAD BY EXAMPLE!** It is the first step towards teaching others.

WHAT CAN ECOTOURISM BUSINESSES DO?

Organizing Your Own Ecological Activities



This requires a higher level of effort and skill, but your business can organize, as part of your clients' ecotourism experience, activities that help preserve and regenerate nature. This can include picking litter, planting trees, planting wildflowers for bees, building birdhouses and insect hotels etc. The range of useful activities varies depending on the location of your business, the treats to the area and the action needed.

Even if you are the organizer, it is best to design the activities in collaboration with environmental organizations, as they have the experience and expertise to ensure there aren't any unforeseen negative consequences.

WHAT CAN ECOTOURISM BUSINESSES DO?

Become a European Climate Pact Ambassador

European Climate Pact Ambassadors are **designated individuals or entities** that aim to make a change in the domain of climate action, by **supporting and developing initiatives that help mitigate climate change** while also **educating individuals on sustainable practices**.

(That sounds like something you are already doing within your ecotourism business.)

The role of an ambassador is:

- to reach out to people and/or organisations who are not yet involved in climate action.
- to inform, inspire and support climate action within their communities and networks.
- to lead by example in climate action and in environmental protection.
- to become a bridge between civil society, interested stakeholders and the European Commission.



More info on www.safefoodadvocacy.eu



The benefits of being a European Climate Pact Ambassador:

- Access to local and European-wide networks of Pact Ambassadors
- Access to resources and toolkits on climate change, the Pact, and ways to engage and communicate with others on climate-related topics
- Access to Pact branded material for online use (websites and social media)
- Recognition from the European Commission and publication of a public profile on the Pact website
- Opportunities to gain visibility for your climate action and advocacy on the Pact website and on the Pact's social media channels
- Opportunities to participate in Pact events across Europe
- Access to online and in-person workshops with policy experts on climate action related topics
- Ad-hoc capacity building support.



More info on climate-pact.europa.eu

Requirements for being a European Climate Pact Ambassador:



- being a community, civil society, NGOs, organisations (including businesses), education, arts, youth, and student group leaders as well as influencers and opinion leaders, with a commitment to climate action and advocacy

- respecting the Pact values



[More info on climate-pact.europa.eu](https://climate-pact.europa.eu)

- being a resident of a EU state.



[More info on climate-pact.europa.eu](https://climate-pact.europa.eu)

CONCLUSION

Ecotourism does more than simply offer a type of tourism that doesn't do harm to the environment. It can actively contribute to the restoration and regeneration of nature. For this reason, it has been termed as NATURE POSITIVE TRAVEL or REGENERATION TOURISM.

As an ecotourism business, you must go beyond your income-generating activity and engage in other types of activities that ensure you meet the **sustainability criteria for certifications**; include you in **networks** that offer you **greater visibility and a higher number of clients**; get you **tax deductions**; and win you the **admiration and respect of your clients**.

All this while bettering the planet that sustains us.

