

# INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT

# CULTURAL SUSTAINABLE DESTINATIONS WITHOUT BORDER

15 16 17  
NOVEMBER

PORTUGAL  
CATEDRAL DE  
IDANHA-A-VELHA



ALDEIAS  
HISTÓRICAS  
DE PORTUGAL

1 destination that is in fact 12

# STATEMENT

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## Organized by



## With the support of



## Participating organizations

Prefeitura Municipal de Porto Alegre (Brazil), Junta Regional de Extremadura (Spain), NECSTour, ICOMOS (International Scientific Committee on Energy and Sustainability), Institute of Cultural Routes-EC, European Travel Commission, Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association – TOTA (Canada), United Nations Association of Russia (UNA), Institute for Tourism (Croatia), Bookdifferent.com, Tourism of Portugal, Responsible Tourism Institute (RTI), Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), Deloitte & Associados - SROC S.A, NOS Comunicações S.A., Historical Villages of Portugal, Regional Coordination and Development Commission (CCDR-C)

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# STATEMENT ON CULTURAL SUSTAINABLE DESTINATIONS WITHOUT BORDERS

## Preliminary considerations

Mass tourism, the globalisation of resources, lack of interest in real sustainable development and in local cultures and produce are leading travellers to seek alternatives to renew and innovate the way they enjoy tourism.

Traditional resources and qualities in the kinds of tourism of the past such as the integrity and quality of the surroundings, authenticity and local culture, or proximity services are flexing their muscles once again with new forms of tourism in alternative destinations (AD). This is how new alternatives to tourism are presented; alternatives characterised by the involvement of the community and the culture of hospitality.

The emergence of these destinations is accompanied by a need to offer experiences that meet the new needs and expectations of the consumer and of the people, such as the demand for authenticity or the opportunity to take a deep dive into cultures that have not been made uniform or standardised by conventional tourism activity. We are often talking about low-intensity tourism alternatives in villages, hamlets and cultural landscapes that still maintain acceptable levels of authenticity.

In general, these are small-scale, low-intensity destinations that, when considered individually, do not have a significant weight in the tourism market, but considered as a whole, they could signify a major alternative offer marked by quality and authenticity.

These are the destinations that fly the flag of sustainability that are called upon in the future to share to compete, co-operating beyond borders and regions in order to stand out as different on the global stage and to showcase a new way of sustainable development of tourism. Alternative destinations that will make up a network of places where cultural heritage, the landscape, the environment, local populations and visitors and tourists are all players on a level playing field, all with the same rights.

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Bearing these considerations in mind, the participants in the International Summit of Cultural Sustainable Destinations without Borders, meeting in the Historical Village of Idanha-a-Velha, Portugal, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2018,

*Recognising* that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, represent a significant opportunity to further guide tourism along an inclusive and sustainable course;

*Accepting* the principles of sustainable tourism set out in the 1995 World Charter for Sustainable Tourism, adopted in the Lanzarote Biosphere Reserve, together with its up-date and the new resolutions of 2015, adopted in Vitoria-Gasteiz (World Charter for Sustainable Tourism +20);

*Taking into account* that tourism must be a global driver that contributes effectively to reducing inequality and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, achieving gender equality and creating lifelong learning opportunities for all;

*Noting* that the tourism in alternative destinations is an important means to promote inter-cultural dialogue, create employment opportunities, curb rural migration, and nurture a sense of pride among host communities. Yet unmanaged, it can also harm the very heritage cultural tourism relies on;

*Bearing in mind* that alternative destinations include a series of diverse and representative sites that harbour a unique and unrepeatable cultural heritage and natural and cultural landscapes that need to be preserved;

*Remembering* the principles that inspire the most recent declarations about tourism and cultural heritage, such as the Muscat Declaration on Tourism and Culture (UNESCO-UNWTO, 2017) or the Barcelona Declaration on Tourism and Cultural Heritage: “better places to live, better places to visit” (2018).

*Recalling* that alternative destinations by definition are considered privileged places and benchmarks for fostering innovative sustainable development practises, which especially includes tourism as a cross-cutting activity;

*Considering* that moving towards sustainable destinations in alternative destinations is a process of shared responsibility of all interested parties, in which management falls fundamentally to local communities;

*Convinced* of the need and the opportunity to further strengthen and support new alliances for the future of a more sustainable tourism in alternative destinations, based on networking and the opportunities to replicate best practises and shared intelligent tourism initiatives;

## Agree and consider that:

- Sustainability in tourism is not an option or attribute of a certain brand, it is the undisputable, central cornerstone of sustainable developments strategies of alternative destinations;
- Tourist activity in these exceptional destinations must act as an ally in the conservation of their cultural landscapes and as a guarantor of preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage and its authenticity, recognising them as essential tourist values.
- Tourism must become a vector for empowering local communities by enhancing the pride of belonging to the territory and its values, and not a standardised industry exogenous to destination.
- Residents and local population must be considered as exceptional tourists, as well as being the best ambassadors of their territory and identity. Tourists on the other hand, must be considered as temporary citizens of these destinations.
- Cultural heritage is the essence of alternative destinations that also constitutes an inherent value for local communities. It is one of the main assets of a tourism destination. It is present in all aspects of a resident's life through values, traditions, ethics and social behavior, as well as more tangible cultural symbols such as monuments, sites, art, crafts and inventions, making them attractive places for residents and visitors to live, work, visit and enjoy;
- Tourism in AD must be a journey to an outstanding area to discover, interpret, enjoy and travel it, while appreciating it and making a practical contribution to its conservation and having a positive repercussion on the local community without generating impacts on the cultural heritage and environment.
- Tourism must use the local goods and services of each AD so that it can increase ties with the community, improve the local economy and minimise leakages, by making a substantial contribution to improving the quality of life of the population of each destination, and depends at the same time on preserving the main environmental assets that AD depend on.
- Tourism in AD must ensure the implementation of sustainable consumption and production patterns along the entire chain of services and activities;
- Tourism in the AD should provide innovative solutions to become more resource efficient in the context of a circular economy, avoiding the generation of waste, increasing efficiencies and reducing consumption and pollution in general, particularly the pollution that affects critical habitats and ecosystems;
- The commitment to tourist, environmental and cultural sustainability in the ADs requires leadership, co-ordination and co-operation among all the interested parties, including regional and national governments, the private sector, academe, researchers and civil society, and especially the local authorities, in order to offer a shared vision and clear objectives in and between destinations.

## Make the following recommendations and calls for action:

- Promoting national and cross-border thematic interpretive routes and shared destinations that maximise the engagement and benefits for host communities, promote cultural understanding and the links between culture and nature tourism.
- Ensuring the engagement of local communities in managing tourism at alternative destinations in a sustainable, responsible and inclusive manner and meeting the aspirations of communities on safeguarding and transmitting their tangible and intangible culture heritage and values;
- Promoting a culture of respect among tourists and local communities, their identities, ways of living, and beliefs when visiting sites and destinations for purposes of sustainable and cultural tourism;
- Creating new methods of promoting the interconnected character of the natural, cultural and social value of cultural landscapes / alternative destinations through sustainable tourism;
- Raise consciousness to the need of creating specific management measures aimed at responsible and sustainable tourism, so that alternative destinations are not targeted a process of gentrification that jeopardises the identity of the place and the interests of the local community;
- Develop shared projects and common initiatives to enhance the use of digital tools, including social media, which help to generate attraction and become familiar with life styles, values, traditions and gain a deeper insight into sites; fostering more genuine, participative experiences in this setting and use these tools to manage tourist flows and impacts better;
- Promote initiatives and shared experiences between alternative tourist destinations that have the potential to generate a positive impact for each destination, show hidden heritage, surprise visitors and enhance the authenticity of the destination;
- Alternative tourism destinations should adopt a common holistic and distinct marketing approach and foster marketing activities that promote authenticity and respect for local communities and their way of life. This way, it can create a more positive impact for all the destinations as a whole, their heritage, there businesses and their citizens;
- Given the specificity of alternative destinations and sustainable growth, build responsible forms of cooperation in the distribution and marketing sector in a multi-destination and multi- country context;
- Raise awareness to the need of a framework for the development of public policies and business strategies, in an international scale, for alternative destinations, adapting it to the reality of each country or region;

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- Within the tourism policy focused on alternative destinations, activate a work plan for the creation of areas / destinations in border regions;
- Promote the creation of an international Network of Alternative Destinations capable of sharing their offer across national and regional borders, based on their specificity and common objectives, with the support and the initiative of the local authorities of the destinations;
- Create an effective system for sharing best practises among the different alternative destinations that helps to implement and replicate viable, creative solutions in matters of sustaining, preserving and promoting cultural heritage;
- Take into account the capacity of UNESCO sites in alternative destinations as exceptional places to implement network programmes and to exchange experiences.

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## Final recommendations

1. There is a pressing need for alternative tourist destinations, their local authorities and all stakeholders with tourism competences in these territories to put the principles and recommendations set out in this Statement into practise and support their widest possible dissemination.
2. Considering that this encounter has taken place under the UNESCO patronage, the UNESCO National Commission in Portugal is urged to put this statement to the Director General of UNESCO. It is also agreed to pass on these results to the Secretary General of the UNWTO and to all and any organisation that can support this process.

## NOTE

Alternative tourism destinations are understood to be territories that have the following characteristics and attractions in the area of tourism activity:

- Places and territories that conserve a high degree of integrity and authenticity regarding their cultural and environmental resources and components.
- They are generally scattered rather than concentrated communities.
- These are relatively isolated places or regions, which are not satellites of major, conventional destinations and they do not fall within their area of influence.
- In general, we are talking about places or districts that could be called cultural landscapes that keep local cultures alive.
- They are places that have not been moulded by tourism activity in territorial terms.

Regarding the different types, they can take the form of: sustainable cultural destinations, cross-border or trans-national destinations, or multi-destinations.

### More information about the event:

<https://www.responsibletourisminstitute.com/en/event/aldeias>

### More information about Historical Villages of Portugal:

<http://www.aldeiashistoricasdeportugal.com/>