

Sustainable Tourism in Context: A Critical Evaluation of Regional Practices, Policies, and the Role of CSR

Global Sustainable Tourism

BMTP5023

Deborah Jenkins

Karina Cretu

2404425

1,853 words

AI Acknowledgement Statement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Introduction

This essay will address sustainable tourism practices in Europe, while emphasising their global importance. Sustainable tourism reduces negative environmental impacts whilst encouraging positive contributions to communities and cultures (Ecobnb, 2025). Europa.eu (2024) highlights that climate change puts the economic stability of many regions in jeopardy, while Europa.eu (2018) discusses the impact of overtourism such as the local infrastructure. These two articles highlight why Europe must implement sustainable tourism practices. It will review challenges and solutions, implement sustainability frameworks, for instance, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and consider the economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainability. The three pillars ensure tourism contributes positively to the local economy (Vergara Romero et al., 2025), promotes community development, preserves cultural heritage (Tabak et al., 2025), helps manage resources responsibly and reduces tourism's environmental impact (Ildiko et al., 2024). Moreover, the essay will address cultural, environmental and policy aspects, including UNWTO guidelines and EU Green Deal, and will also consider corporate social responsibility (CSR). A critical evaluation will be provided with an analysis of case studies from different European countries, comparing accomplishments and failures. Conclusions and recommendations will be provided following a discussion on overtourism in heritage sites, climate change challenges, sustainable transport, and travel regulations.

Sustainable Tourism and its Significance for Europe

Local ecosystems, historical sites, and community well-being are protected by sustainable tourism. Environmentally conscious methods include the use of renewable energy, waste management, sustainable transportation, and sustainable accommodation. It can generate income and jobs, boosting the local economy (Shieh and Chang, 2025).

Venice in Italy is a victim of overtourism. Due to overtourism, Venice has fewer job opportunities that go beyond the tourism sector, whilst the cost-of-living increases, making it harder for residents to live in Venice. Therefore, as there are fewer locals, the destination becomes less authentic. Most of what Venice offers, such as food or music all caters to tourists, dismissing locals. Not only do locals struggle with finding homes to live in due to properties being “converted to short term holiday rentals”, but they also struggle with the overcrowding. What they have implemented are regulations for tour groups to reduce visitor numbers and monitor the flow of people through the city and on transportation. Fairbnb for sustainable tourism as it is more ethical due to the locals being the owners (Perkins, 2025). They are putting in place regulations for people visiting the UNESCO World Heritage site, St. Mark’s Basilica, such as increasing ticket prices to ensure safety for visitors and historical sites (Slate, 2025). Hughes (2023) talked about the ban of cruise ships in Venice due to the damage they have done to the lagoon, which has affected “animal and plant life”. Cruise ships move enormous volumes of water, which wears down buildings and destroys historic landmarks. They also contribute significantly to pollution and overtourism.

The Julian Alps in Slovenia are known for their ski destinations and mountain tourism, excellent for winter sports lovers (Mander, 2023). However, due to climate change,

snowfall is decreasing, there are shorter durations of snow cover, glaciers are melting, affecting water availability as they are used as natural reservoirs and the landscape. There is an increase in rainfall, which makes it a higher risk of flooding. Floods can result in people losing their lives, homes and infrastructure. Plant and animal habitats are being disrupted, and the economic toll of these floods adds to financial hardships. Their plan of action is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to use renewable energy sources, develop strategies to handle climate change, such as improving flood management infrastructure, reforestation, and use sustainable practices (Nature and Mountains, 2023).

Switzerland encourages visitors to use environmentally friendly practices such as utilising public transport, which helps lower carbon emissions and enhances visitors' experiences due to being able to view Switzerland's landscapes. Visitors are also advised to use local products and to choose accommodations and restaurants that are eco-friendly. This boosts the local economy and can reduce transportation emissions from the products. They promote responsible travel and behaviour, such as proper water disposal, being respectful to nature and encourage avoiding using single-use plastics and not littering (Switzerland Travel Centre, 2025). The Swiss Federal Railways have switched to electric trains that are fuelled by renewable energy. They are providing the Swiss Travel Pass, which allows visitors to travel throughout Switzerland with a single ticket, promoting sustainable transport. They are reducing congestion, enhancing air quality and preserving natural habitats (Wenzel, 2025).

Case Studies

According to the case study conducted by D. Bary et al.(2020), snowmaking was used to deal with climate change at destinations with ski resorts such as Austria; however, it used extensive water and energy use as well as chemical additives, which concluded

that this was not the solution. For the impact of the coastal erosion around Europe, there were three different measures considered, such as retreat, meaning locals would have to move from the coast and the land would not be protected, accommodation, implying elevating buildings and protection, which aims to protect the land from the sea. This case study discusses the concern for sea level in Venice and how it is rising, but also the overtourism and cruise ships. Advising that in 2019, 4.7 million arrivals were registered and how it is increasing every year. It further explains the measures to take, such as large-scale engineering, to tackle the rising sea levels.

Further research shows that the city invested in sustainable transportation, including bike lanes, hybrid car sharing services and electric buses. They want to invest more by 2026 with plans of 44 new electric buses and 90 fuel cell buses and by 2029 32 hybrid waterbuses ("Venice: Embracing Sustainable Mobility Entrant Handbook", 2024).

Matej's (2012) case study regarding the Julian Alps highlights that one of the issues regarding this destination attracting tourists is that it has led to high traffic volumes, which exceed the ecological capability of the Alpine space. This caused arguments between residents and visitors. The traffic jams, noise and carbon emissions made a negative impression on this destination and caused an environmental impact.

Aspin (2025) advises that the Alps Glacial Melt Restoration aims to tackle the effects of climate change by creating protected zones to help preserve biodiversity. This can also help monitor glaciers with the use of advanced technology. A main goal would be to reduce the carbon footprint and use renewable energy that will replace fossil fuels, such as wind and solar energy. Another aim is to have energy-efficient buildings. To promote public transportation, local businesses will need to use eco-friendly practices. These will help protect the Alpines.

How does culture shape tourism and sustainability

Culture has a big impact on tourism and sustainability as it affects visitors' motivations and experiences as well as the socio-cultural dynamics of destinations. Cultural aspects have an impact on visitor satisfaction and are critical for managing and organising tourism development with an approach to respecting and maintaining local identity (Tabak et al., 2025).

Architecture, traditions, festivals, and cuisines can enhance a destination's image, which supports economic and social benefits for the local communities (Lyubka Ilieva et al., 2024).

Providing authentic experiences for visitors can attract them; however, destinations can become exploited, which leads to overtourism pushing out locals, causing a loss of authenticity, which is what happened to Venice.

Sustainable tourism must respect and protect cultural values and balance the economy's growth (UNESCO, 2019). Cultural sensitivity is also important as visitors could disregard local customs. (UNWTO, 2021). Furthermore, climate change endangers destinations such as Venice and the Julian Alps with floods and rising sea levels. To address these challenges, strategies such as promoting responsible tourism education, implementing visitor caps and heritage conservation programs are recommended (UNWTO, 2021; UNESCO, 2019).

Sustainability Frameworks, Goals, Guidelines and Policies

These frameworks are approaches to analyse sustainable practices across sectors, highlighting environmental, social and governance (ESG) dimensions. Then further strategies are implemented to mitigate these challenges (Richter et al., 2025).

The UN Sustainable Development Goals consist of 17 goals by all United Nations Member States as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They address global challenges such as poverty, inequality and climate change. The name is shortened to SDGs (United Nations, 2015). From the research provided, Venice seeks to accomplish SDG 11, 12, 13, 8, 14 and 15. To preserve Venice's historical heritage, promote responsible visitor behaviour, encourage tourists to choose local products, promote sustainable tourism practices, address climate change threats such as flooding through infrastructure plans and visitor management, reduce the city's ecological footprint, promote community well-being, promote slow tourism and protect the lagoon ecosystem and reduce pollution from mass tourism.

The EU Green Deal is a strategy aimed at making the European Union "climate neutral" by 2050, which focuses on sustainable economic growth, lowering greenhouse gas emissions and encouraging environmental preservation. This aligns with Venice's goals for the future (Europa.eu, 2019; Norton Rose Fulbright, 2021).

UNWTO guidelines focus on seven key areas for recovery of tourism, such as making safety protocols, collaborating with other sectors to create approaches, implementing measures to reduce the financial impact, fostering innovation, applying safety and security strategies, improving digital infrastructure and developing solutions of digital services (UNWTO, 2020). Venice applies these through the strategy of the Venice Access Fee and heritage conservation programs. It also aligns with the visitor caps and encourages eco-friendly travel choices. Venice also uses a digital monitoring system to manage tourist flows.

CSR referring to Corporate Social responsibility is a business model that aims to benefit society and the environment such as reducing carbon emission (Fernando, 2025). Destinations like Venice, The Julian Alps and Switzerland can use companies

that use CSR to encourage sustainable tourism practices and help bring awareness to the environmental impacts that have been caused and what will happen if there are no changes.

Conclusion & Recommendations

This report concludes that Europe has been greatly affected by climate change and mass tourism, and it may take longer to address the impacts, especially in a city like Venice, due to rising sea levels. The damage seems critical and will take time to change tourist behaviours. The reason the researcher included Switzerland, and the Julian Alps is to compare different countries in Europe and how they deal with climate change, and how they want to go forward with managing the impacts. The recommendations would be to promote sustainable tourism like Switzerland due to its well-known reputation for sustainability as a destination overall. Not only would this help the destinations image but also guests and visitors would be able to benefit in making sustainable tourism practices. Destinations can follow the circular economy life cycle, which is to continuously reuse materials, decreasing the amount of waste. They can promote local organic food, ensure historical buildings, plants and animals aren't harmed by tourists and ensuring they will take strategies such as the ban of cruises to guarantee the safety and recovery of these things. Jobs can be created to help preserve eco-friendly methods in Europe or ensure regulations are being followed by tourists and residents. Lastly, every country in Europe goes through different impacts due to global warming however, by looking at how they deal with certain challenges, other cities should try to follow with the standards and strive to overcome the obstacles to prevent the risk of falling behind with consequences that might be irreversible.

References

1. Aspin, Dave. "Restoring the Alps: Effective Strategies for Glacial Melt and Climate Change in Mountain Ecosystems." *Waynehighlands.com*, 3 Mar. 2025, waynehighlands.com/the-alps-glacial-melt-restoration-plan-addressing-climate-change-in-mountain-ecosystems/. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
2. "Climate Change's Unforgiving Touch: Recent Flooding in Slovenia's Julian - Nature and Mountains." *Nature and Mountains*, 9 Aug. 2023, natureandmountains.com/climate-changes-unforgiving-touch-recent-flooding-in-slovenias-julian/. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
3. D, Bari, et al. *THE IMPACT of CLIMATE CHANGE on TOURISM: THE CASE of VENICE*. Aug. 2020, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.36524.49283>.
4. Ecobnb. "The Rise of Green Tourism: How Travelers Are Redefining Sustainability." *Ecobnb*, 20 May 2025, ecobnb.com/blog/2025/05/rise-green-tourism-how-travelers-redefining-sustainability/. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
5. European Commission. "The European Green Deal." *European Commission*, European Commission, 2019, commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
6. Fernando, Jason. "What Is CSR? Corporate Social Responsibility Explained." *Investopedia*, 2 Sept. 2025, www.investopedia.com/terms/c/corp-social-responsibility.asp. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
7. Hughes, Rebecca Ann. "Venice Cruise Ships: Not Everyone Supports the Ban, Here's Why." *Euronews*, 13 May 2023, www.euronews.com/travel/2023/05/13/ive-lived-in-venice-for-8-years-why-do-i-see-see-cruise-ships-here-when-theyve-been-banned. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
8. Ildiko, Tulbure, et al. "OPPORTUNITIES and CHALLENGES in ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM on REGIONAL LEVEL." *Sofia: Surveying Geology & Mining Ecology Management (SGEM); International Multidisciplinary Scientific GeoConference SGEM*, vol. Vol.2024 (5.1), no. 1314-2704, 2024, pp. p.165-172, <https://doi.org/10.5593/sgem2024/5.1/s20.23>.

9. Lyubka Ilieva, et al. "Festivals: An Opportunity for Sustainable Development of Tourism Regions." *Revista de Gestão Social E Ambiental*, vol. 18, no. 11, 8 Nov. 2024, pp. e09356–e09356, <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n11-069>.
10. Mander, Brigid. "The Other Alps to Put on Your Bucket List This Winter." *Ski*, 14 Nov. 2023, www.skimag.com/ski-resort-life/europe/guide-to-skiing-slovenia/. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
11. Matej, Ogrin. "'Sustainable Mobility in Slovenian Julian Alps.'" *Dela* 38, 2012, pp. 89–108.
12. Norton Rose Fulbright. "The EU Green Deal Explained." <https://www.nortonrosefulbright.com/en/knowledge/publications/2021>, Apr. 2021, www.nortonrosefulbright.com/en/knowledge/publications/c50c4cd9/the-eu-green-deal-explained. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
13. Perkins, Rob. "Overtourism in Venice." *Responsible Travel*, 2025, www.responsibletravel.com/holidays/italy/travel-guide/overtourism-in-venice. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
14. Richter, Marc François, et al. "Indicadores ESG Em Perspectiva: Uma Análise Crítica de Frameworks E Diretrizes de Sustentabilidade Corporativas." *Revista de Gestão E Secretariado (Management and Administrative Professional Review)*, vol. 16, no. 6, 30 June 2025, pp. e5007–e5007, <https://doi.org/10.7769/gesec.v16i6.5007>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
15. Shieh, Hwai-Shuh, and Peggy Chang. "The Dual Impact of Sustainable Tourism Development on Local Economies and Ecosystems: A Mixed-Method Study in Guangzhou." *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, no. 1535-3958, 14 Sept. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.70161>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
16. Slate, Theodore. "A NEW ERA of VENICE TOURISM." *Tourism-Review.com*, Tourism Review Media, 2 June 2025, www.tourism-review.com/venice-tourism-focuses-more-on-sustainable-measures-news14975. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
17. "Sustainable Tourism - Adapting to Climate-Induced Holiday Trends | EU Tourism Platform." *Europa.eu*, 2024, transition-pathways.europa.eu/tourism/articles/sustainable-tourism-adapting-climate-induced-holiday-trends. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.

18. "Sustainable Travel in Switzerland | Switzerland Travel Centre." *Switzerland Travel Centre*, 2025, switzerlandtravelcentre.com/en-us/travel-information/sustainable-travel-switzerland. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
19. Tabak, Brankica, et al. "Economic and Socio-Cultural Development Dimension—Two Lake-Protected Areas' Sustainability: A Case of Hungary and Serbia." *Land*, vol. 14, no. 3, 26 Feb. 2025, p. 479, www.mdpi.com/2073-445X/14/3/479, <https://doi.org/10.3390/land14030479>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
20. "Unbalanced Tourism Growth in Europe: Understanding Pressures, Impacts and Sustainable Pathways." *Europa.eu*, 2018, transition-pathways.europa.eu/tourism/articles/unbalanced-tourism-growth-europe-understanding-p pressures-impacts-and-sustainable. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
21. UNESCO. "World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme." *Unesco.org*, 2019, whc.unesco.org/en/tourism/. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
22. United Nations. "The 17 Sustainable Development Goals." *United Nations*, 2015, sdgs.un.org/goals. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
23. UNWTO. "Climate Action | Transforming Tourism for Climate Action | UNWTO." *Www.unwto.org*, UNWTO, 2021, www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/climate-action. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
24. "UNWTO Launches Global Guidelines to Restart Tourism | UN Tourism." *Untourism.int*, 2020, www.untourism.int/news/unwto-launches-global-guidelines-to-restart-tourism. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
25. "Venice: Embracing Sustainable Mobility Entrant Handbook." June 2024.
26. Vergara Romero, Arnaldo, et al. "Business Management of Sustainable Destinations and Its Effect on Ecotourism Entrepreneurship to Mitigate Overtourism." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 12, no. 1, 14 June 2025, www.nature.com/articles/s41599-025-05149-4, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05149-4>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
27. Wenzel. "Public Transport in Switzerland." *Discover Swiss!*, 16 Feb. 2025, discoverswiss.ch/public-transport-in-switzerland/. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.