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**UNWTO**  
World Tourism Organization

# Walking Tourism

Promoting Regional Development





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**Walking Tourism – Promoting Regional Development**

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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)*



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## 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.

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## 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.

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## Chapter 1

### Why walking tourism?

#### 1.1 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.<sup>1</sup> Since walking tourism is low impact and not consumptive if developed and managed properly,<sup>2</sup> 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.

#### 1.2 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.<sup>3</sup> Walking routes require substantially less maintenance cost than sport facilities.<sup>4</sup> 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

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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.<sup>5</sup> 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 communities<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> It also promotes walking behaviour and physical activity, discourages sedentary lifestyle and reduces obesity among residents.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.3 Benefits of walking tourism for the tourists

For a tourist, walking tourism is convenient as it requires little equipment other than outdoor garments.<sup>9</sup> It is feasible for most of the population regardless of age, gender and so on.<sup>10</sup> 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 health<sup>11</sup> and provides contact with the natural environment.<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup> It allows them to interact with people and places on a deeper level.<sup>14</sup> Walking is the best way to explore and experience the uniqueness of a place.<sup>15</sup>

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.



## 1.4 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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## Chapter 2

### Destinations with potential for walking tourism

A rural area with natural and cultural resources has the best potential to develop walking tourism.

For a relatively short walking tourism (a few hours to a day), an already established destination or its neighboring areas is suitable. It can add a new offering to the existing destination and extend visitors' length of stay and spending. It can also help disperse visitors and economic benefits from the popular areas to the less visited areas, and reduce seasonality. It is possible to be combined with a wellness policy for residents. Kaminoyama Kurort (case study 7.9) is an example.

For longer walking tourism experiences, an area not necessarily close to existing well-known destinations can also have a potential. It can attract more serious walkers, but is required to meet their specific needs. At the same time, if the route is properly divided into sections, each of which can be walkable in half or full day, it is also attractive to other segments of travellers. If successfully developed, the destination can be branded as a walking (hiking or trekking) destination. Examples include Shinetsu Trail in Japan (case study 7.6) and Jeju Olle (case study 7.3). A walking route can cross a border when destinations are linked with a theme. One example is the Via Francigena (case study 7.5), a pilgrimage themed route from Canterbury, the United Kingdom, to Rome (though the Italian part is focused in this report). Other transnational routes can be referred to in the UNWTO and European Travel Commission's 'Handbook on Marketing Transnational Tourism Themes and Routes'.<sup>1</sup>

Another possibility is building a network of walking routes within in a wider area (region or country). This strategy needs a coordinating organization to set common standards and to carry out common product development, branding and promotion activities. Even though each walking route is relatively far from an existing destination, it can attract visitors as one of the routes under the common brand of a walking tourism destination. Georgia Hiking Trails (case study 7.1) and Kyushu Olle in Japan (case study 7.4) are examples.

Not only rural areas but an urban destination can add a new offering by developing walking tourism in the surrounding natural setting. This presents a new opportunity for a destination to show a different aspect and extend visitors' length of stay and spending, and benefits beyond major attractions and city centre. The proximity to an urban centre can help attract not only tourists but also residents, therefore contributing also to the welfare of the local communities. Hong Kong, China (case study 7.10), is an example.

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1 World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission (2017), *Handbook on Marketing Transnational Tourism Themes and Routes*, UNWTO, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284419166>.

On the other hand, it may be difficult to successfully develop one short walking tourism product in a place which is neither a tourist destination itself nor located near an established tourist destination. It is not easy to attract visitors only for a short walking route unless it is connected to an existing or potential attraction.

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## Chapter 3

### Segmenting walking travellers

Travellers who participate in walking have different motivations and different levels of expertise. A destination needs to identify what type of walkers it wants to and can attract through developing walking tourism products. This segmentation can be drawn from profiles of current visitors or by defining new segments to the destination.

Walking travellers can be loosely segmented as follows:

- 1. Serious/committed walkers:** the main motivation of travel is walking. They want high quality products and try walking routes with relatively high level of difficulty. They may have already been to well-known walking tourism destinations and be looking for new ones. They may like to take a multi-day walking itinerary. Georgia Hiking Trails (case study 7.1), Lebanon Mountain Trail (case study 7.2) and Shinetsu Trail (case study 7.6) aim mainly at this type of walkers.
- 2. Casual walkers:** walking is not necessarily a primary reason to travel, but one of the activities during the trip. When they travel for walking, it is likely to be 0.5–2 days and they are likely to prefer recreational easy/moderate walking or leisurely stroll. They do not usually consider themselves as walkers. For them, walking is a way of exploring and experiencing the destination with interaction with local people, culture and nature. Most walkers on Jeju Olle (case study 7.3), Kyushu Olle (case study 7.4), Via Francigena in Italy (case study 7.5), ONSEN and Gastronomy Walking in Japan (case study 7.7), Sierra Greenway in Spain (case study 7.8) and Hong Kong, China (case study 7.10), fall under this type.
- 3. Walkers for health:** the main purpose of walking is to maintain or improve physical and mental wellbeing rather than sightseeing. They want a walking course that matches their health conditions and that can be combined with other health-related activities. Having said that, walking with some attractive aspects are preferred. The main target of Kaminoyama Kurort (case study 7.9) is this type of walkers.

Table 1 **Segmenting walking travellers**

<b>Segment</b>	<b>Importance of walking during travel</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Serious/ committed walkers	Very important Walking is a primary reason to travel	High level of difficulty Multi-day itinerary
Casual walkers	Intermediate Walking is one of the activities during travel to experience a destination	Easy to moderate level 0.5 to 2 days
Walkers for health	Intermediate to very important Walking is important for health, but not a sole purpose of travel	Easy to moderate (depending on their physical conditions)

There are naturally many variations in between. In addition, when considering segments, it is important take into account not only motivations for walking but also demography and psychography such as age, gender, travel companions (single, couple, family), interests (culture, nature, wellbeing), lifestyle, etc.



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## Chapter 4

# Key elements for the development of walking tourism

There are several key elements to consider for the development of walking tourism as mentioned below. Within the process, it is important to engage experts, actual walkers and specialized travel companies and involve local communities.

### 4.1 Route characteristics

A walking route can be totally newly developed, but it is preferable to utilize existing paths, improve them and connect them into one route to maintain the environment and save investment. Following points need to be considered to develop a walking route:

1. **Attractiveness:** first and foremost, a route needs to be attractive. But it does not necessarily mean that there is something spectacular along the route. Most areas possess their own cultural and natural heritage, and some beautiful landscape in a preserved environment with good air quality. If these resources are well presented along the way, the route can be considered attractive. Asphalted roads should be minimized. At the same time, environmentally sensitive areas should be avoided so that walking tourism will not harm the environment;<sup>1</sup>
2. **Safety:** a walking route needs to be safe in terms of minimum risk of walking accidents, traffic accidents and crimes. Potentially dangerous sections should be avoided;<sup>2</sup>
3. **Level of difficulty:** the level of difficulty of a route needs to be considered based on the target segments in terms of appropriate physical setting, length, altitude and difference of elevation. It is preferable to maintain the same level of difficulty throughout the route;<sup>3</sup> and
4. **Access:** a route should be easily accessible from touristic centres (for tourists) and urban/residential areas (for residents). It is preferable that public transport is provided since reduction of private car use is recommended for the sake of low carbon approach. If public transport is not available, tour operators, accommodation facilities or local tourism associations may need to consider providing access and parking facilities. The shape of the route (circular or linear) needs to be considered depending on the availability of transport access.<sup>4</sup>

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1 LEADER European Observatory and AEIDL (eds.) (2001), *Developing Walking Holidays in Rural Areas: Guide on how to design and implement a walking holiday project*.

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

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

2 LEADER European Observatory and AEIDL (eds.) (2001).

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

3 Ibid.

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

Weston, R. and Mota, J.C. (2012).

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

## 4.2 Infrastructure and facilities

A route needs to be well marked so that walkers can orientate themselves. Signage and information boards should be set up at appropriate spots without spoiling the natural surroundings. Route surface should always be well maintained and accessibility can be considered for persons with disabilities by adopting universal design and other measures.<sup>5</sup> In addition, wayside facilities such as toilets, trash bins and benches should be placed at proper places. Furthermore, depending on the nature of routes, shops, accommodation (including huts and campsites), parking areas and first aid facilities need to be developed.<sup>6</sup>

## 4.3 Maintenance

The route and related services need to be well maintained and enhanced to sustain the walking tourism. The established maintenance system (who does the maintenance work and how it is financed) is essential. The route needs to be regularly monitored so that any problems can be remedied as soon as possible and the total environment of the route is maintained.<sup>7</sup> To maintain and enhance the level of customer satisfaction is required for increased visitation. A regular survey of customer satisfaction and monitoring walkers' opinions on the Internet and social media are helpful. Entrance fee can be considered to self-finance, at least partially, the maintenance cost of the route. But it should be noted that how to collect it is an issue and the fee may deter walkers from visiting in the first place.

## 4.4 Economic opportunities

Creating economic opportunities, including employment, is critical for regional development. It is either economic benefit direct from walking itself or indirect ones from the increase of walking travellers. Economic leakage should be minimized for the region and maximized use of local supplies by linking various sectors needs to be encouraged.<sup>8</sup> Major opportunities lie in the following:

- Provision of guide, accommodation (including homestays) and transport services;
- Sales of guidebooks and maps (it is advised that basic information should be provided free of charge either print or online);
- Sales of food and beverage, handicrafts and souvenirs made in the region (products with the new destination brand can be developed); and
- Provision of diversified programmes for tourists such as music and dance performances, storytelling, cooking and craft-making classes (It can also help extend length of stay and spending by visitors.)<sup>9</sup>

5 World Tourism Organization (2013), *Recommendations on Accessible Tourism*, UNWTO, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284415984>.

6 LEADER European Observatory and AEIDL (eds.) (2001).

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

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

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

8 Hill, T.; Nel, E. and Trotter, D. (2006), 'Small-scale, nature-based tourism as a pro-poor development intervention: Two examples in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, volume 27, pp. 163–175.

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

## 4.5 Marketing and commercialization

First of all, a walking route needs to be known to potential visitors. Information must be provided through the Internet, tourist information centres, tour companies, events, etc. by online, print and other forms of materials. Depending on the budget, advertising and other forms of promotion, media and familiarization trips, and so on can be carried out in cooperation with stakeholders. A destination can consider collaboration with tour companies to create and sell packaged tours that include the walking route in the itinerary and execute joint promotion. In addition, to raise awareness of a destination as a walking tourism destination, a promotional event (such as a walking festival) can be organized.

Integration of the walking tourism product into the mainstream tourism planning and the value chain needs to be encouraged so that it will attract higher-paying customers and lead to higher-quality products.<sup>10</sup>

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10 Ibid.



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## Chapter 5

### Partnerships, engagement and support of local stakeholders

One of the characteristics of walking tourism is its usage of common goods (i.e., public lands and paths). In some cases, private owners of land used for walking may not necessarily benefit from walking tourism. The fact that the place where walking tourism takes place is not limited to separate designated spaces may bring about unnecessary conflicts between visitors and residents. There are more chances of conflicts when residents and tourists directly meet during touristic activities. This is one of the reasons why walking tourism requires understanding by and engagement with local people. Therefore, from the first step of developing walking tourism, consultation with local stakeholders (i.e., residents, communities, land owners, private and public sectors) is necessary in order to thoroughly explain the concept and the plan and gain their understanding and support. This is actually the most difficult stage, and enduring and committed leadership or external facilitators (either an individual, a group of individuals or an organization) may be required. Throughout this process, transparent and democratic approach is crucial.<sup>1</sup>

The next phase where partnerships and engagement of local stakeholders are important is the development and maintenance of the route. Although some initial investment (or seed money) may be required from the public tourism sector, partnerships and engagement encourage volunteer works and other in-kind and financial support from local stakeholders, which support the project not only in financial terms but also for stimulating the good receptive environment. Local people's welcoming attitude to walkers is essential to the successful development.

Another aspect where partnerships and engagement of local stakeholders are important is creating opportunities for economic benefits and maximizing them. As mentioned in 4.4, minimizing the economic leakage and maximizing the use of local supply is critical<sup>2</sup> and it requires partnerships among local businesses, which the public sector can facilitate. Limited competence of locals and competition with non-locals will result in leakage. Therefore, the public sector and existing local businesses need to support new and entrepreneurial businesses. All the stakeholders need to cooperate with each other in order to maximize the total benefits for the area as a whole.

New business opportunities require initial investment and human capital which are not always readily available especially to small and medium enterprises or to the rural area in general.<sup>3</sup> The public sector needs to consider providing financial support and capacity building opportunities to

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1 Haven-Tang, C. and Jones, E. (2012), 'Local leadership for rural tourism development: A case study of Adventa, Monmouthshire, UK', *Tourism Management Perspectives*, volume 4, pp. 28–35.

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

2 Hill, T.; Nel, E. and Trotter, D. (2006).

3 Xu, J. et al. (2009), 'Contribution of Tourism Development to Protected Area Management: Local Stakeholder Perspective', *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, volume 16 (1), pp. 30–36.

facilitate the actualization of business.<sup>4</sup> Lack of this kind of support may result in externally driven investment, which is not necessarily bad because it creates job in the area anyway but the benefits may be smaller compared to investment from inside. Therefore, local capacity building is crucial, especially in remote areas in developing countries. When capacity building opportunities are provided, participation of women, youths and other disadvantaged people should be considered. In fact, depending on the cultural backgrounds, women may be more knowledgeable of nature and cultural traditions and better fit to demonstrate them to tourists.<sup>5</sup> In offering these supports, administrative procedures to access to financial or training opportunities need to be easy and transparent for local people and businesses.

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

5 Scheyvens, R. (2000), 'Promoting Women's Empowerment Through Involvement in Ecotourism: Experiences from the Third World', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, volume 8 (3), pp. 232–249.



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## Chapter 6

### Conclusions and recommendations

As discussed in the previous chapters, walking tourism has important competitive advantages.

Walking tourism:

1. Is relatively easy to develop with relatively small investment;
2. Does not require special assets;
3. Has a high market potential;
4. Complements other tourism resources;
5. Is sustainable if developed and managed properly;
6. Has high potential to create local economic benefits; and
7. Has potential to promote residents' wellbeing.

When developing walking tourism, there are several things to be considered:

1. Target segments;
2. Establishment of the route and facilities;
3. Establishment of the maintenance system of the route;
4. Marketing and commercialization; and
5. Presenting walking with other local authentic experiences.

In addition, for regional development through walking tourism, some conditions are required:

1. Partnerships and engagement of local stakeholders;
2. Creating economic benefit opportunities for communities and residents; and
3. Providing financial support and capacity building opportunities.

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.



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## Chapter 7

### Case studies

#### 7.1 Georgia Hiking Trails (Georgia) – creating a national network of hiking routes

##### Background

Georgia's natural environment is one of the most special in the world. Its landscape diversity is exceptional. In a mere 67,000 km<sup>2</sup> you can find 5,000-m peaks, glaciers, alpine meadows, sub-tropical coastline, high desert, semi-desert, fertile alluvial valleys, wetlands and large swathes of virgin forest.<sup>1</sup>

Nature and adventure is regarded “as one of the three segments with the greatest growth in potential, based upon the country's world-class product offering, the travel motivations of current visitors, and the growth and importance of the market globally” in the Georgia National Tourism Strategy 2025 established in May 2015.<sup>2</sup>

The strategy also identifies development needs in this sector: the management of circuits and itineraries including trail maintenance and marking and interpretive services. It emphasizes the importance of national trail certification criteria and mapping system.<sup>3</sup>

Following the national tourism strategy, the Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA) launched a five-year project (2015–2019) that aims to create a network of inter-regional (connecting regions of the country) hiking trails throughout the country by connecting existing trails and newly identified ones. Target markets are central and eastern European countries and Israel as well as domestic Georgians. In 2015, the GNTA spent USD 600,000 to renovate about 20 trails and seven were finished in 2016 and rest are to be completed by 2019.<sup>4</sup>

By developing these hiking trails, GNTA also aims at providing local communities with opportunities of economic benefits through various tourist services such as renting houses, selling local products and handicrafts, and so on.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Georgia National Tourism Administration (2017), e-mail communication (23-11-2017).

2 Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Georgia (2015), 'Georgia National Tourism Strategy 2025', p. 4.

3 Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Georgia (2015).

4 Georgia National Tourism Administration (2017).

5 Ibid.

## Trail development

The first step of the project was conducting research of every region of the country to identify hiking trails that offer hikers beautiful landscape and also have some cultural heritage on or in the proximity of the trails. Before the research, the GNTA asked members of hiking clubs for their opinions about the best trails in a specific region. Once the trails to be researched were identified, the GNTA selected a company to carry out a field research by tender. The selected company was required to meet local residents who know the region. Then another tender was called for marking of the trails. In addition to marking, information boards were installed at the beginning of each trail to give information about the trail and monuments that can be visited from the trail. The GNTA checked whether everything was appropriately done. All this process was financed through the GNTA by the central government budget. By marking the trails and providing promotional materials (maps, guide books, etc.), the GNTA intended to ensure that visitors can explore the destination on foot on their own.<sup>6</sup>

The GNTA has established technical standards and manuals for the trails in cooperation with the Agency of Protected Areas, hiking clubs and cartographic companies. During the creation process, standards for marking trails of several countries (France, Switzerland, Spain, Poland and others) were analyzed.<sup>7</sup>

As of 2017, seven hiking trails were developed in Zemo Svaneti region that is famous for its beautiful nature and medieval watchtowers. More than 20 trails are being developed in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti. A total length of these trails exceeds 400 km. According to their levels, trails are divided into three categories: easy, medium and difficult. They offer from 1-day (several hours) to 5-day hikes.

Because the project is still young and research has not been done, it is not yet clear how much local communities benefit from the project. However, hiking clubs report that marked trails has been becoming popular and it is expected for the locals to offer services and products to hikers.<sup>8</sup>

The GNTA promotes the trail network to make Georgia known as a hiking destination. In order to do it, maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the trails is crucial. Branding and targeted promotion is also important.

## Takeaways

Georgia has taken a national approach for hiking tourism development based on the national tourism strategy starting from understanding of the current situation and defining a future vision. Therefore the direction and what needs to be done is clear. This is a key to successful development in any case whether it is hiking tourism or not. Establishing the national standards is also crucial for quality control. It should also be noted that marking and mapping are well considered so that visitors can walk on their own even though guides are available if they want. This is expected to contribute to the increase in popularity among independent hikers.

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6 Georgia National Tourism Administration (2017).

7 Georgia National Tourism Administration (2016), 'Technical Regulations on Planning and Marking of the Trails'.

8 Georgia National Tourism Administration (2017).

## 7.2 Lebanon Mountain Trail (Lebanon) – rural development through hiking tourism

### Background

Tourism in Lebanon traditionally developed in the capital city of Beirut and a few highly renowned cultural sites. Rural areas did not benefit much from tourism.<sup>9</sup> Under this circumstance, the Ministry of Tourism launched the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT) project with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2005. Although the support from the USAID terminated in 2008, the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA), a non-governmental organization (NGO), established in 2007, has continued to take care of the LMT.<sup>10</sup>

### The trail and the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA)

The Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT) is a long-distance hiking trail aimed for environmentally and socially responsible tourism to bring about economic benefits in rural areas. It stretches 470 km from Andqet Akkar in the north to Marjaayoun in the south at the altitude ranging from 570 m to 2,011 m. The trail is divided into 27 sections. Each section is from 10 km to 24 km in length and can be completed in one day. The LMT passes one world heritage site, two biosphere-reserves, four protected areas and over 75 villages and towns.<sup>11</sup> It attracts 25,000 to 30,000 visitors annually from Lebanon and all over the World, mainly Europe and North America.<sup>12</sup>

In 2005, USAID allocated USD 3.3 million for the Lebanon Mountain Trail Project and ECODIT, a company of the United States of America, was selected as an implementing body. The project delineated, test-walked and mapped the LMT in cooperation with municipalities, local NGOs, community organizations, tour operators and volunteers. The project established 11 family-owned guesthouses, upgraded two historic town squares and built picnic areas and a campsite. It also trained 39 volunteers for trail construction and maintenance. Furthermore, the project published a guidebook and created a website to promote the LMT.<sup>13</sup>

Now the LMTA plays a main role to maintain the LMT, open side trails, protect natural and cultural heritage along the trail, and enhance economic opportunities for rural communities. It is basically self-financed through event participation fees, donations and grants, and the membership programme, but receives financial support for specific activities. Below are details of revenues of the LMTA in 2016.<sup>14</sup>

9 Haddad, N.F. (2015), 'Planning for Sustainable Tourism Development in a Context of Regional Instability: The Case of the Lebanon', in: Morpeth, N.D. and Yan, H. (eds.), *Planning for Tourism: Towards a Sustainable Future*, CAB International, pp. 186–202.

10 ECODIT (2008), *The Lebanon Mountain Trail Project Final Performance Report* (online), available at: <http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf/15-01-2018>.

11 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (n.d./c), 'Lebanon Mountain Trail' (online), available at: [www.lebanontrail.org](http://www.lebanontrail.org) (12-01-2018).

12 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2017a), e-mail communication (20-12-2017).

13 ECODIT (2008).

14 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2017b), *Lebanon Mountain Trail Society*, volume 6 (online), available at: [www.lebanontrail.org](http://www.lebanontrail.org) (15-01-2018).

Table 2 Revenues of the Lebanon Mountain Trail Association

Revenues of 2016	LBP	USD (approximate)
Sales	13,864,205	9,197
Membership	6,545,875	4,334
Donations and grants	117,071,386	77,505
Funded projects	113,478,380	75,126
Events	294,874,488	195,216
Other	3,541,714	2,345
<b>Total</b>	<b>549,406,048</b>	<b>363,705</b>

Source: The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (2017b), p. 120.

The LMTA's membership programme has three categories: regular member, supporting member and Adrian Life member. The regular member is for people with Lebanese nationality and the annual fee is LBP 60,000 (or USD 40). The supporting member is for non-Lebanese with the annual fee of LBP 150,000 (or USD 100). Anybody can apply for the Adrian Life membership with the one-time cost of LBP 1.25 million (or USD 830).<sup>15</sup> The Adrian Life membership fees are kept for long term conservations such as land purchase.<sup>16</sup> Members are differentiated by the right to vote in the LMTA General Assembly, but all can enjoy a discount on LMTA activities and items from the LMTA selected stores.<sup>17</sup> As of 2017, the total number of members was around 130.<sup>18</sup>

### Community involvement

The LMTA has been working on three main programmes to involve communities and residents in the development and maintenance of the LMT in collaboration with the central government, the private sector and the local communities: the "Adopt-A-Trail" programme, the community development programme and the education programme.

The "Adopt-A-Trail" programme started in 2015 to involve the community in maintenance activities of the LMT as volunteers. A person or a group of people, community organizations, youth groups, schools or families, is appointed as "Trail Adopter" who is responsible for maintenance of the designated part of the trail for one year. The LMTA provides Trail Adopters with tools and equipment as well as training of maintenance techniques. They receive a credit on the LMTA's website and annual publication. In addition, the LMTA offers a sponsorship opportunity to anyone such as companies, individuals and donor agencies, contributing USD 1,000 annually for one to

15 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (n.d./d), 'Why become a member' (online), available at: [www.lebanontrail.org](http://www.lebanontrail.org) (12-01-2018).

16 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2017b).

17 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (n.d./d).

18 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2017a).

three years. The sponsor also receives a credit on the trail as well as on the LMTA's website and annual publication. As of 2017, there were 24 Trail Adopters.<sup>19</sup>

For community development, the LMTA conducts training courses for local people in cooperation with tour operators and the USAID. It aims to improve local people's skills of guiding and knowledge of history and nature of the trail, environmental regulations and needs of hikers so that they can increase and diversify their sources of income. Participants include local guides, farmers, craftsmen, teachers and staff members of local municipalities. Their skill and knowledge acquisition are evaluated through written exams and hiking events.<sup>20</sup>

The LMTA also organizes workshops on environment for children and students in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. "Trail to Every Classroom" is a project to use the LMT as an educational tool to learn and raise awareness of environmental issues through walking on the LMT. The LMTA have launched the project in five schools since 2012 and a picture guidebook was created to teach children appropriate actions to maintain the environment.<sup>21</sup>

### Local economic benefits

In Lebanon, over 47% of accommodation is located in Beirut and other urban and coastal areas. Visitors tend to do day visits from urban areas due to the lack of accommodation in rural areas and a relatively short distance between urban and rural areas.<sup>22</sup> In the USAID-supported LMT project, 11 houses on the trail were renovated as guesthouses run by family, especially women. In addition, training programs for guesthouses owners were conducted by ECODIT. The training subjects included management, menu development, safety and sanitation, customer service, marketing and promotion, and accounting.<sup>23</sup> Improvement of guesthouse is included in the national rural tourism development strategy established in 2015 under which the LMTA and the Ministry of Tourism work to develop a guesthouse network to encourage hikers to stay longer. A total of 18 guesthouses have been refurbished by the project.<sup>24</sup>

Guiding is another income opportunity. By the end of the USAID-supported LMT project in 2008, 53 local young people were trained. The LMTA has continued the training and standardized the guiding price as USD 65 a day. It is estimated that local guides have 50 to 180 outings opportunities

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19 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2016), *Lebanon Mountain Trail Society*, volume 5 (online), available at: [www.lebanontrail.org](http://www.lebanontrail.org) (15-01-2018).

The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2017b).

The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2017a).

20 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2017b).

21 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2016).

HelpForLeb (n.d.), 'Help build environmental stewardship in Jezzine' (online), available at: [www.helpforleb.com](http://www.helpforleb.com) (15-01-2018).

22 The Ministry of Tourism (2015), *Lebanon Rural Tourism Strategy* (online), available at: [www.mot.gov.lb](http://www.mot.gov.lb) (15-01-2018), p. 18.

23 ECODIT (2008).

24 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2015), 'Concept note Conserving Heritage and increasing economic opportunities on the Lebanon Mountain Trail' (21-12-2015), p. 3.

annually depending on villages. The LMTA recommends hikers to hire these trained guides for a safe and enjoyable hike.<sup>25</sup>

The LMTA organizes two annual hiking events in order to promote the trail and bring economic benefits to the local communities: Thru-Walk in April (for about one month) and Fall-Trek in October (for about two weeks). They are organized with a different theme every year such as water conservation, protection of birds, and cultural and archaeological heritage. Food heritage was the theme of 2016 and the LMTA promoted local Lebanese cuisine in collaboration with guides and guesthouses along the trail.<sup>26</sup> Thru-Walk started in 2009 only with dozens of participants.<sup>27</sup> But in the Thru-Walk in 2017, 230 hikers from 21 countries participated. It brought over USD 60,000 direct income to local communities along the trail through accommodation, restaurants and purchases.<sup>28</sup> During the Thru-Walk in 2017, an online crowd funding campaign was held by a few hikers and raised USD 12,000 which will contribute to the protection of the trail and the trailside heritage.<sup>29</sup>

## Takeaways

The LMT started as a USAID-funded project, but the success lies in the leading role played by the LMTA as a management body of the long trail with continuous technical, political and legal support from ECODIT.<sup>30</sup>

The LMTA's various programmes and provision of support for income and job opportunities for local communities are the key contributors to economic and social development through sustainable tourism in rural areas. And the two annual walking events and the membership programme are important sources of income for the LMTA to carry out above-mentioned activities.

According to the LMTA, the key elements for fostering understanding and involvement of local communities in the LMT project are the following;

- Involving authorities and locals in the trail development and protection;
- Supporting small initiatives at destinations;
- Working with schools and educators; and
- Capacity building and awareness campaigns.

25 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2017a).  
ECODIT (2008).

The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (n.d./b), 'Local Guides' (online), available at: [www.lebanontrail.org](http://www.lebanontrail.org) (15-01-2018).

The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2017b).

26 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2016).

27 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2017b).

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 The Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA) (2017a).



## 7.3 Jeju Olle Trail (Republic of Korea) – rural development through hiking tourism

### Background

Jeju Olle Trail runs making a circuit around Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, a volcanic island one and half hours from Seoul by air. The main industry of the island used to be agriculture (mainly citrus fruits) and fishing, but now 82.9% of the GDP in Jeju is from tertiary industries.<sup>31</sup> Jeju was a popular honeymoon destination for South Koreans, but since the introduction of the visa waiver policy for most international visitors in 2006 and the entry of low cost carriers into air routes in 2008, the number of visitors has soared with more overseas and casual travellers. Jeju Olle Trail is now one of the most popular tourist attractions of the island. Olle means a narrow path between the street and the doorstep of a house in the dialect of the island, but now it is known as a general term for hiking.<sup>32</sup> Olle is very well recognized in the Republic of Korea and attracts many repeat visitors regardless of age and gender.<sup>33</sup>

### Jeju Olle Trail

Jeju Olle Trail is a series of trails almost circumnavigating the island and its total length is 425 km. It consists of 21 main routes along the coast running through farmlands, tea plantations and forests, and five sub routes in the interior and neighbouring small islands. Each route runs 10 to 20 km and requires around 3 to 7 hours for a walker to complete.<sup>34</sup>

Jeju Olle Trail was started by Ms. Myung-sook Suh, a Jeju-born journalist, who was inspired by her journey of Camino de Santiago in Spain and made up her mind to develop walking tourism and manage the environment in a sustainable way. She opened the first route in 2007 and established the Jeju Olle Foundation, a non-profit organization, in the same year to develop, manage and promote the trail. In 2012, the Foundation completed constructing all of the current routes.<sup>35</sup>

The trail is marked with blue and orange (colours of the sea and tangerines) ribbons and arrows, and Ganse (a symbol designed from a Jeju pony). Wheelchair images indicate accessible areas and routes for people with disabilities.<sup>36</sup> Visitors can customise routes according to season, weather, landscape and their conditions by using the website of the Jeju Olle Foundation.<sup>37</sup>

31 The Association of North East Asia Regional Governments (n.d.), 'Jeju Special Self-Governing Province' (online), available at: [www.neargov.org](http://www.neargov.org) (11-01-2018).

32 Ogasawara, M. and Nakajima, K. (2015), 'An Analysis of the Popular Walking Tours of the Jeju Olle Long-distance Walking Trails around Jeju Island. Founded and Managed by a Non-profit Organization', *Journal of Japan Society of Sports Industry*, volume 25 (1), pp.61–73.

33 Ibid.

34 Jeju Olle Foundation (n.d./a), [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (10-01-2018).

35 Ogasawara, M. and Nakajima, K. (2015).

36 Jeju Olle Foundation (n.d./h), 'Signpost' (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (11-01-2018).

Jeju Olle Foundation (2016a), Newsletter vol. 15, 07-13-2016 (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (11-01-2018).

37 Jeju Olle Foundation (n.d./d), 'Customized Route' (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (11-01-2018).

The concepts of Jeju Olle Trail are the following:<sup>38</sup>

- Use natural footpaths and avoid roadways;
- Link villages where walkers can experience local culture and nature, and interact with people;
- Not use artificial materials;
- Maintain original natural and living landscapes;
- Enjoyable not only under the sun, but under rain or wind;
- Enjoyable for everyone;
- Can be developed and maintained by local residents; and
- Bring about economic benefits to local enterprises and residents.

The Foundation issues an official passport for hikers for KRW 20,000 (approximately USD 19). Jeju Olle Passport holders can collect stamps for each route and receive an official certificate after completing all of 26 routes. They are offered discounts on transportation, entrance fees of tourist attractions, accommodation and restaurants.<sup>39</sup>

The Jeju Olle Trail won the International Trail Award by American Trails in 2013 for the revitalization of the local economy by combining nature, culture and communities in cooperation with residents and volunteers.<sup>40</sup> It has three sister trails in Japan, Republic of Korea and Mongolia, which it helps develop and promote the trail routes.<sup>41</sup>

### Management of the trail and the Jeju Olle Foundation

The Foundation is basically self-financed with donations and sponsorships without government grants and subsidies.<sup>42</sup> In 2016, donations were over KRW 402 million (approximately USD 370,000) from around 1,265 individuals and 60 companies.<sup>43</sup> The Foundation received KRW 50 million (approximately USD 46,000) in total from sister trails as support fees from 1 January to 30 June 2017.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to the donation, the Foundation earns money from sales of original souvenirs, food and drink, and services. In 2016, the total amount of sales was KRW 592 million (approximately USD 550,000).<sup>45</sup> These original products are sold at Jeju Olle Tourist Center, shops in villages and online. It contributes to job creation for local communities.<sup>46</sup>

38 Osumi, K. (2012), '自然と人に癒される道' (A trail where nature and people make you healed), column vol. 178, Japan Travel Bureau Foundation, 26-10-2012 (online), available at: [www.jtb.or.jp](http://www.jtb.or.jp) (11-01-2018).

Suh, M.S. (2016), 'Human Capital Development in Tourism based on the case of Jeju Olle Trail 2016', presentation at the 10th UNWTO Asia/Pacific executive training program on tourism policy and strategy, 03-29-2016, available at: <http://cf.cdn.unwto.org> (11-01-2018).

39 Jeju Olle Foundation (n.d./g), 'Jeju Olle Passport' (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (11-01-2018).

40 American Trails (2013), '21st American Trails International Trails Symposium NATIONAL TRAILS AWARDS' (online), available at: [www.americantrails.org](http://www.americantrails.org) (11-01-2018).

41 Jeju Olle Foundation (2017a), *English Guidebook Jeju Olle Trail, 4th edition*, October 2017 (online), available at: <https://jejuolletrailinformation.files.wordpress.com> (11-01-2018).

42 Ogasawara, M. and Nakajima, K. (2015), p. 62.

43 Jeju Olle Foundation (2016b), Newsletter vol. 16, 16-12-2016 (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (11-01-2018).

44 Jeju Olle Foundation (2017b), Newsletter vol. 17, 14-07-2017 (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (11-01-2018).

45 Ibid.

46 Ogasawara, M. and Nakajima, K. (2015).

Twenty full-time staff members work in three departments: planning and management (exploration planning, trail maintenance and finance), marketing communication (public relations, fundraising and global communication) and visual communication.<sup>47</sup>

Maintenance of the trail including cleaning paths and repairing signs is carried out in cooperation with volunteers and residents so that its cost is minimized. Volunteers also play an active part in guiding visitors and organizing events.<sup>48</sup> In addition, professionally skilled volunteers design the website, brochures, maps and souvenirs, and do translation and interpretation.<sup>49</sup>

Jeju Olle Academy is a 4-day education programme to enhance understanding of Jeju's history, culture, language, nature, food and lifestyle, and aimed to improve the guiding skills. More than 1,200 people graduated between 2008 and 2016 and they act as volunteer guides for daily guided walks.<sup>50</sup>

The Jeju Olle Foundation also promotes sustainability of the trail environment as the number of hikers increases. It took the first step to protect the trail by placing coconut mats and closed some routes for a year for their recovery. The Foundation conducts a waste packing campaign for the hikers to bring their own garbage bags with them. Participants can receive a stamp at a time and get a souvenir when they collect six stamps.<sup>51</sup>

## Local economic benefits

The average of spending by hikers (KRW 300,000: approximately USD 279) was 13% higher than general visitors to Jeju. Sales at local markets increased by 30%. More than 1,000 new accommodation facilities opened.<sup>52</sup> Cafes and restaurants became thriving and new establishments opened. Local bus routes returned to profitability.<sup>53</sup>

The Jeju Olle Foundation works with communities and generates business and job opportunities for local people:

### 1. One brand, one Olle

This is a project in which the Foundation connects companies and villages along the trail in order to develop business using local products. One company supports one village and the village supports the brand. As of 2017, there were 14 pairs of them. For example, in 2009, Venta Korea (company) and Daejeong-eup Murung-2ri (village) cooperated to establish Murung Farm after a nine-month communications with local farmers. It is a trusted community business that provides

47 Jeju Olle Foundation (n.d./f), 'Jeju Olle HQ Office' (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (11-01-2018).

Ogasawara, M. and Nakajima, K. (2015).

48 Jeju Olle Foundation (n.d./j), 'Volunteering Group' (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (11-01-2018).

49 Jeju Olle Foundation (n.d./i), 'Volunteer' (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (19-02-2018).

50 Jeju Olle Foundation (n.d./e), 'Jeju Academy' (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (11-01-2018).

51 Jeju Olle Foundation (n.d./b), 'Conservation Campaign' (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (11-01-2018).

52 Suh, M.S. (2016).

53 Osumi, K. (2012).

membership-based delivery service of local vegetable and fruit. Now Murung Farm also runs an experience cafe where visitors can make tangerine rice cakes.<sup>54</sup>

## 2. Jeju Olle Workshops

The Foundation holds workshops for local communities to create products with the common brand of Olle. These products include Ganse dolls, aprons and bags made from naturally dyed fabrics, aroma candles, chocolates and so on. They are sold at the tourist center, markets and shops in the villages.<sup>55</sup>

## 3. Olle Grandma Homestay programme

In 2009, the Foundation launched this programme to encourage hikers to stay overnight at houses of local families. The price is KRW 20,000–30,000 (approximately USD 19–28) per person per night. As of 2017, there were eight properties.<sup>56</sup> This programme enables local people, especially elderly women, to earn income by using their spare rooms. It also offers opportunities for visitors to experience authentic Jeju life. The Foundation is now putting efforts to promote this programme to hikers as competitions are now fierce with an increased number of accommodation facilities in the island.<sup>57</sup>

## Takeaways

The Jeju Olle Foundation is a good example of self-financing an organization and mobilizing many volunteers in the maintenance and operation of the trail. It is also worth noting that the Foundation has been providing support to create job and business opportunities for local communities through workshops and programmes. Successful branding not only promotes the trail itself but also helps add values to local products.

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54 Jeju Olle Foundation (n.d./c), 'Cooperation Project with Local Business' (online), available at: [www.jejuolle.org](http://www.jejuolle.org) (11-01-2018).

55 Ibid.

56 Jeju Olle Foundation (2017a).

57 The Jeju Weekly (2015), 'Staying with a Jeju grandma', 29-10-2015 (online), available at: [www.jejuweekly.com](http://www.jejuweekly.com) (11-01-2018).

Jeju Olle Foundation (n.d./c).

## 7.4 Kyushu Olle (Japan) – creating a new tourism attraction as a region

### Background

Kyushu is one of the four main islands of Japan located in the southwest of the country, close to the Republic of Korea. It takes around 2 hours from Tokyo and 1.5 hour from Seoul respectively by air. Kyushu consists of seven prefectures, but in order to promote the island as a whole, the Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization (KTPO) was established in 2005, of which all the prefectures, municipalities and private companies are the members. To increase international visitors to Kyushu, the KTPO promotes the nature, history, culture, *onsen* hot springs, food and hospitality of the island.<sup>58</sup>

When the KTPO considered how to further increase Korean visitors, it chose the theme of Olle (see section 7.3) that had been already very popular in the Republic of Korea and started to promote hiking as Kyushu Olle. It matched Kyushu's natural beauty and also coincided with the market change from group travel to individual travel, from sightseeing to activities to experience local culture and nature. In order to develop and promote Kyushu Olle effectively, the KTPO signed a cooperation agreement with the Jeju Olle Foundation in August 2011.<sup>59</sup>

### Development

The KTPO, in cooperation with the Jeju Olle Foundation, approves Kyushu Olle routes based on guidelines such as:

- Consisting mainly of unpaved, narrow natural paths;
- Safe and walkable for all including minors, seniors and women; and
- Having characteristic landscape and historic stories along the route.

To be approved, each prefecture submits candidate routes to the KTPO every April. Members of the KTPO actually walk the route and advise revision or improvement of the route if necessary. The approval decision is made from November to February the following year. This approval system helps ensure the quality of routes and enhance branding. In March 2012, the first four routes were approved.<sup>60</sup> As of December 2017, 21 routes were approved and each route has a theme such as sweets, history, flowers, etc.<sup>61</sup>

The KTPO actively invites the media, bloggers and travel agents especially from the Republic of Korea, the main target market. It resulted in more than 200 media exposures in the Republic of Korea and Japan in the first few years. Also the high satisfaction level of walkers encourages repeat visits and leads to good word of mouth for increased visits. Actually quite a few visitors

58 The Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization (n.d./a), 'About Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization' (online), available at: [www.welcomekyushu.com](http://www.welcomekyushu.com) (24-01-2018).

59 The Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization (2011), '九州オルレ」による韓国人旅行客の誘致について' (Attraction of Korean Tourists utilizing "Kyushu Olle"), 08-12-2011, [www.mofa.go.jp](http://www.mofa.go.jp) (24-01-2018).

60 The Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization (2017b), e-mail communication (28-03-2017).

61 The Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization (2017a), 'コース追加 2コース (筑豊香春、さいき大入島) が決定' (2 courses (Chikuho-Kawara, Saiki-Onyujima) Added) (online), 27-12-2017, available at: [www.welcomekyushu.jp](http://www.welcomekyushu.jp) (24-01-2018).

walk more than one route in one trip or come to the region to walk different routes. Now in the Republic of Korea, walking Olle is considered as one of the major tourism attractions of Kyushu.<sup>62</sup>

Development, management and maintenance of each route are handled by local organizations and the KTPO does not offer any financial support. The KTPO promotes Kyushu Olle as a whole. In addition to the KTPO, an association consisting of related local municipalities was established in order to co-purchase Olle goods and materials, disseminate information online and organize events. The KTPO works as the secretariat of the association.<sup>63</sup>

### Stakeholder involvement

Getting understanding of stakeholders is critical in development and management of Kyushu Olle. To identify a route, residents, shops and other businesses, temples and other establishments, and land owners along the route are consulted and asked for cooperation. Explanatory meetings and hospitality workshops are held for residents and other local stakeholders. They also participate in development and maintenance of the route including signage setup and cleaning work. Furthermore, they provide walkers with toilets and rest spots, and welcome walkers with greeting. This process draws media attention. Thus residents and other local stakeholders can feel the ownership of the route. Possibility and realization of international exchange also encourages residents to be supportive and involved.<sup>64</sup>

During the process, it is important to let the stakeholders understand and share the concept:

- It is not development of just a tourist attraction nor just a walking route;
- It creates a route that makes walkers, residents and nature happy:
  - Walkers will be happy for being physically and mentally happy by walking;
  - Residents will be happy for exchange with visitors and for economic benefits; and
  - Nature will be happy for being respected and sustained.<sup>65</sup>

At first, it was not very easy to convince stakeholders, but as they saw more tourists and media reports, it became a bit easier to let them understand the potential and benefits of Kyushu Olle.<sup>66</sup>

### Sustainability

Routes are developed in consideration of local environment and culture and by making the most of the original natural environment. Signage is set up carefully in order not to spoil the landscape. The more the concept of Kyushu Olle is understood, the more locals become interested in protecting local nature and historic culture. By receiving understanding and cooperation by local residents, management costs are minimized, which also leads to sustainability.<sup>67</sup>

62 The Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization (2017b).

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

In addition, walkers are encouraged to follow the rules below in order to promote sustainable tourism:

- Do not enter private gardens without good reasons;
- Get consent when taking a photo of a person or personal properties;
- Bring back trashes with you;
- Do not pick agricultural products along the route;
- Do not pick flowers and branches along the route;
- Do not shout or be noisy near houses;
- Do not take away the signage ribbons;
- Do not touch signboards;
- Follow the designated route;
- Walk slowly and enjoy landscape;
- Be careful to cars when walking on roadways;
- Refrain from risky acts off the designated route (e.g., steep slopes); and
- Exchange greeting with smile with fellow walkers and local residents.<sup>68</sup>

### Local benefits

The number of walkers has been steadily increasing. Kyushu Olle was developed in order to increase visitors from the Republic of Korea to Kyushu in the first place, which has been successful, but it has also becoming popular among Japanese.

Table 3 Numbers of visitors to Kyushu Olle

	Total (× 1,000)	Korean (× 1,000)	Japanese (× 1,000)
March 2012 – March 2013	22	17	5
April 2013 – March 2014	35	24	11
April 2014 – March 2015	69	41	28
April 2015 – March 2016	98	60	38

Source: The Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization (2017b), e-mail communication (28-03-2017).

Since Kyushu Olle is a walking activity in the rural area, economic benefits and visitor spending are not so high. However, as Kyushu Olle has become popular, it has provided business and job opportunities in the region, for example:<sup>69</sup>

- Opening cafes and restaurants along the routes;
- Sales of lunch boxes to walkers;
- Promotion of accommodation by offering transfer to the starting point of the route;
- Bus companies offering Olle walking tours; and
- Opening of a manned tourism information centre.

68 The Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization (n.d./b), 'Kyushu Olle' (online), available at: [www.welcomekyushu.jp](http://www.welcomekyushu.jp) (24-01-2018).

69 The Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization (2017b).

At the same time, social benefits have been observed:<sup>70</sup>

- Civic pride among residents has been enhanced;
- More and more locals rediscover the charm of the area. Previously they did not even think that their area could be a tourism destination;
- Locals voluntarily support and participate in the maintenance of the routes; and
- Locals start opening minds to welcome walkers, which encourages interaction between them and deeper understanding of hospitality and tourism.

## Future

The KTPO considers to increase the number of approved routes and to upgrade the quality of existing routes including enhanced guide services. It also aims at increasing business opportunities along the routes including the sales of local products (agricultural and others) by utilizing the Olle brand. The KTPO intends to promote Kyushu Olle in new markets such as Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan Province of China. To achieve these goals, the KTPO tries to collaborate more with national and local businesses and to raise fund through crowd funding.<sup>71</sup>

## Takeaways

Kyushu Olle has proved that ordinary landscape can be a tourist attraction with not so much costs to develop and maintain. This type of tourism can be only developed while the natural and cultural landscape still exists. Therefore it helps natural and cultural sustainability through tourism. But to realize this, authentic culture and nature need to be presented to visitors and involvement of local stakeholders is crucial.

To develop a route, wide range of knowledge of the area (e.g., cultural heritage, history, natural environment, agriculture, etc.) is crucial. It adds many flavours to the route, which attracts not only walking lovers but also broader segments. It is also important to raise capable guides who can explain all these contents. Quality control, good publicity and promotion are also a key to increase visitation and maintain high level of visitor satisfaction.

A network of the walking routes helps enhance branding and attract repeat visitors to the region as a whole.

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70 Toshima, S. (2017), e-mail communication (28-04-2017).

71 The Kyushu Tourism Promotion Organization (2017b).



## 7.5 Via Francigena (Italy) – developing walking tourism through interregional cooperation under a common theme

### Cultural Routes programme of the Council of Europe

The Cultural Routes programme is a 30-year-old programme, promoting the value of cultural heritage, contributing to cultural tourism and economic development.<sup>72</sup> The programme was launched by the Council of Europe in 1987 with the Declaration of Santiago de Compostela to demonstrate how cultures and the cultural heritage in European countries evolved across borders. There are 33 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe with different themes, providing leisure and educational activities and contributing to responsible tourism and sustainable development.

### The Via Francigena

The Via Francigena is a 1,800 km path from Canterbury, the United Kingdom, to Rome through four European countries: the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland and Italy. (The Via Francigena means the road originated from France in Italian.) The route was defined and reconstructed based on the journal of the Archbishop of Canterbury Sigeric who returned from Rome to Canterbury in 990. It was designated as a European Cultural Route by the Council of Europe in 1994.<sup>73</sup>

In 2001, the European Association of the Vie Francigena (EAVF) was created to promote the values of the path and of the pilgrims by sustainable cultural tourism development.<sup>74</sup> The EAVF consists of 140 municipalities, provinces and regions, 15 European universities, and 80 non-profit organizations.<sup>75</sup>

The EAVF issues the pilgrim's credential (pilgrim's passport) which certifies identity and motives of the walker. Walkers can get a stamp at tourist offices, churches and accommodation. Passport holders are offered discounts at accommodation, restaurants and train tickets of Trenitalia in Italy.<sup>76</sup> After completing the last 100 km on foot or the last 200 km by bicycle and by showing the pilgrim's passport with stamps, a walker is issued the testimonium to certify the completion of a pilgrimage to Rome. The pilgrim's credential can be bought for EUR 5.<sup>77</sup>

72 Council of Europe (2015), *Cultural Routes Management: from Theory to Practice; Step-by-Step Guide to the Council of Europe Cultural Routes*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, p. 9.

Council of Europe (n.d.), 'About the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe' (online), available at: [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int) (22-01-2018).

73 The European Association of the Vie Francigena (EAVF) (n.d./c), 'History' (online), available at: [www.viefrancigene.org](http://www.viefrancigene.org) (22-01-2018).

74 The European Association of the Vie Francigena (EAVF) (n.d./b), 'Introduction' (online), available at: [www.viefrancigene.org](http://www.viefrancigene.org) (23-01-2018).

75 Bruschi, L. (2017a), 'Good Practices of a Successful Thematic European Route Via Francigena and the Model of Its Governance', presentation at Silk Road Seminar for the Russian regions at Intourmarket 2017 in Moscow, 12-03-2017 (online), available at: <http://cf.cdn.unwto.org> (22-01-2018).

76 The European Association of the Vie Francigena (EAVF) (n.d./d), 'The Pilgrim's Credential', (online), available at: [www.viefrancigene.org](http://www.viefrancigene.org) (22-01-2018).

77 The European Association of the Vie Francigena (EAVF) (n.d./e), 'The Testimonium', (online), available at: [www.viefrancigene.org](http://www.viefrancigene.org) (22-01-2018).

In 2016, approximately 45,000 people walked on the Via Francigena, increasing 10% compared to 2015.<sup>78</sup> According to a survey for the pilgrim's credential holders by the EAVF in 2016, 41% of the walkers were in the age bracket of 40–60 years, but the number of walkers under 20 and over 70 was growing. Half of the walkers (51%) travelled for 7 to 8 days while 20% more than two weeks. Visitors travelling for a longer period of time tended to stay at pilgrim's accommodation while short-term visitors preferred hotels and B&Bs. The main motivation of travelling on the Via Francigena was the walk itself and the religious reason was relatively low with 15%.<sup>79</sup>

### Interregional and transnational cooperation

In 2012, the EAVF established the European Committee for Technical Interregional Coordination of the Via Francigena in cooperation with the Tuscany Region of Italy and the Champagne-Ardenne Region of France to foster a coordinated dialogue among 13 regions in four countries along the route and four Italian regions south of Rome. The committee is convened twice a year with experts from each region. It has three working groups: path, accommodation and services, and communication, for each of which a region in Italy is a coordinator.<sup>80</sup>

The Committee published *Guidance on European Common Path and Accommodation Standards on the Via Francigena* to set out the common quality standard to guarantee safety and access throughout the whole route.<sup>81</sup>

The general criteria for the path include:

- A leg of the route needs to be based on the Sigeric's itinerary, the historical travel records, identified by the EAVF and its partners' national and local associations in the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland and Italy and approved by the Council of Europe;
- A leg should be safe and be separated from a car route. If there is a critical situation (e.g., no sidewalk along the road), it needs to be indicated on the map as dangerous or alternative routes need to be suggested;
- A leg should be around 25 km and the level of difficulty needs to be identified;
- A leg needs to give visitors opportunities to experience local nature, history, art and gastronomy; and
- A leg should be planned to ensure the availability of food and drink, accommodation and resting areas as well as time to explore the surrounding areas.

78 The European Association of the Vie Francigene (EAVF) (2017a), e-mail communication, (14-12-2017).

79 Bruschi, L. (2017b), 'Walking on the Via Francigena. Analysis and Consideration', 20-02-2017 (online), available at: [www.viefrancigene.org](http://www.viefrancigene.org) (27-11-2017).

The European Association of the Vie Francigene (EAVF) (2017a).

80 The European Association of the Vie Francigene (EAVF) (n.d./a), 'European Committee for Technical Interregional Coordination of the Via Francigena' (online), available at: [www.viefrancigene.org](http://www.viefrancigene.org) (22-01-2018).

Coffey, V. (2016), 'European Cultural Routes as a Driver for Smart Territorial Growth', presentation at the European Association of the Via Francigena Interregional Cooperation Along The Route, Brussels, 16-06-2016 (online), available at: [www.regione.emilia-romagna.it](http://www.regione.emilia-romagna.it) (23-11-2017).

81 The European Association of the Vie Francigene (EAVF) (2016), *Guidance on European Common Path and Accommodation Standards on the Via Francigena* (online), available at: [www.viefrancigene.org](http://www.viefrancigene.org) (22-01-2018).

The minimum standards for accommodation to be labeled as “Via Francigena friendly accommodation” include:

- Accommodation should be located within 1 km from the path and 5 km from biking route;
- Offering a special rate for the pilgrim’s passport holders (at least one night);
- Placement of washing and drying machines (or external services within 100 m);
- Serving dinner proposed as a “pilgrim menu” with dishes of local tradition and with the right nutritional value;
- Provision of multi-language information on the Via Francigena;
- Provision of information on registered guides;
- Offering baggage transfer service to the following leg;
- Offering emergency service of picking up walkers when they are in difficulty (optional); and
- Availability of a stamp for the pilgrim’s passport.

As of 2017, there were over 200 labelled accommodation facilities.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, *Guidance on European Common Path and Accommodation Standards on the Via Francigena* introduces regional good practices about planning and maintaining the route, signage and safety infrastructure in cooperation with local authorities, communities, universities and private sectors.<sup>83</sup>

### The Via Francigena in the Tuscany Region in Italy

The Tuscany Region is located in central Italy and well known for its landscape, artistic heritage and medieval villages. The Via Francigena in the Tuscany Region runs 400 km from the Cisa Pass to Radicofani, 150 km from Rome.<sup>84</sup> It attracts around 35,000 walkers annually and the number has been increasing.<sup>85</sup>

In 2009, the Tuscany Region developed a regional master plan to promote sustainable regional development through tourism in rural and mountain areas. In the master plan, EUR 8 million was allocated for investment mainly for the reconstruction of the path and signposting equipment. With the addition of EUR 16 million by the operational plan in 2011, the total investment from 2009 to 2014 was EUR 24 million. Fifty-nine percent was used for the path consolidation and equipment, 20% for the restoration of the local architectural heritage and 17% for the increase of the accommodation supply. Both of the plans were funded by the FAS (Fund for Underdeveloped Areas), an instrument by which the government collects European and national resources to fund the regional policy for the economic and social balance.<sup>86</sup>

82 The European Association of the Vie Francigene (EAVF) (2017a).

83 The European Association of the Vie Francigene (EAVF) (2016).

84 Conti, E. et al. (2015), ‘The European Pilgrimage Routes as Economic Driver. The impact of the Francigena in Tuscany’, in: Bambi, G. and Barbari, M. (eds), *The European Pilgrimage Routes for Promoting Sustainable and Quality Tourism in Rural Areas*, Firenze University Press, Firenze, pp. 455–469 (online), available at: [www.fupress.com](http://www.fupress.com) (23-01-2018).

85 Bruschi, L. (2017c), ‘The Sustainable Mark of Tuscany’, 03-03-2017 (online), available at: [www.viefrancigene.org](http://www.viefrancigene.org) (23-11-2017).

86 Conti, E. et al. (2015).

Bruschi, L. (2017a).

According to the impact evaluation by the Tuscany Region in collaboration with IRPET (Regional Institute of Economic Planning in Tuscany), the Via Francigena in the Tuscany Region created 388 new jobs and GDP of EUR 21.1 million.<sup>87</sup>

The Tuscany Region has been working on the Via Francigena spa project since 2017 in cooperation with the EAVF and the thermal spa communities within 15 km of the path. The aim is to add characteristics on the path as a thermal spa road and to attract walkers who are also interested in wellbeing. The pilgrim's passport holders are offered discounts.<sup>88</sup>

## Takeaways

For an interregional and transnational long route, it is important to facilitate communication and coordination among regions along the route and share the issues and good practices in order to ensure the quality experiences on the whole route. The Via Francigena is a good example to make coherent standards of defining and maintaining the path as well as providing quality services at accommodation through interregional and transnational cooperation.

According to the EAVF, it is also important for each player to act its own roles to develop a cultural route project for regional development:<sup>89</sup>

- Municipalities and local bodies are instrumental to support the governance of an itinerary on a local level and assure the political support;
- Associations are fundamental to support the maintenance of the route and to transmit the passion for the routes. In some sense, they represent the soul of a route;
- Universities are crucial in order to consolidate the historical/cultural basis of the itinerary; and
- Small and medium-sized enterprises are fundamental to preserve the sustainability of the route and to involve the local communities.

The EAVF adds that it takes a bottom-up approach in the projects trying to promote local initiatives on a global scale. The EAVF supports residents and local enterprises in training and holding cultural events to spread the knowledge of the Cultural Routes in general and of the Via Francigena in particular.<sup>90</sup>

87 Bruschi, L. (2017c).

88 Tawfik, S. (2017), 'The Specification for the "Spa Offer along the Via Francigena" Has Been Launched, for the Creation of a Thermal Bath Touristic Product along the Ancient Via', 01-11-2017 (online), available at: [www.viefrancigene.org](http://www.viefrancigene.org) (23-01-2018).

89 The European Association of the Vie Francigene (EAVF) (2017a).

90 Ibid.

## 7.6 Shinetsu Trail (Japan) – roles of a leading body of hiking tourism development

### Area

Shinetsu Trail is located in the northern part of central Japan. It takes 2 hours from Tokyo by the Shinkansen bullet train to arrive in the area. The area is one of the snowiest regions and one of the most popular skiing areas in Japan. It also boasts natural beauty, beech forests in particular, and is full of cultural and historical traditions. In addition to skiing, the area has been trying to broaden tourism offerings in green season.<sup>91</sup>

### Trail

The trail runs along a ridge of about 1,000 m above sea level. It has relatively small undulation and it is possible to walk without special physical strength, experience or equipment. The total length is 80 km and it takes 4 to 5 days for through trekking. But it is divided into six sections (each section is 9 to 14 km) and one section can be finished within a day trip. Due to snow in winter, the trekking season is roughly from late June to late October.<sup>92</sup>

### Development and management

Shinetsu Trail Club, a non-profit organization, was established in 2003 to develop and manage the trail with the help of volunteers and financial support from the local government.

Development of the trail was started in June 2004 by volunteers. In some areas, permissions were required to cut trees and an agreement was signed between Shinetsu Trail Club and the authorities for smooth processes. In the development work, plants and trees were cut down only to the extent to make sure a person can pass the trail in order to minimize the impact on nature. The first 50 km was opened in July 2005 and the rest 30 km in September 2008. For maintenance, the trail is divided into 20 sections and each section is maintained by designated parties (e.g., municipalities, tourism associations and other local groups) and many volunteers (residents and non-residents) participate in maintenance activities.<sup>93</sup>

Shinetsu Trail Club holds up the three principles:

1. Conservation of biodiversity;
2. Preservation, development and inheritance of nature and culture; and
3. Contribution to regional vitalization through interactions of people.

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91 Kimura, H. (2017), e-mail communication (07-05-2017).

92 Inomata, Y. et al. (2017), ‘「信越トレイル」におけるトレッキング・ツーリズムの特性—日本の農山村におけるトレッキング・ツーリズムの展望—’ (Characteristics of trekking tourism in “Shinetsu Trail” – Prospects of trekking tourism in rural areas in Japan), *Annals of Human and Regional Geography*, volume 39, pp. 91–112.

Kimura, H. (2017).

93 Inomata, Y. et al. (2017).

Kimura, H. (2017).

And it carries out various activities including:<sup>94</sup>

- Development and management of the trail;
- Execution of tours and events for trekkers;
- Education and dispatch of registered guides;
- Environmental education for natural conservation;
- Activities for raising awareness of nature conservation;
- Research on endangered animals and plants; and
- Coordination and encouragement of cooperation among stakeholders (e.g., local governments, forest management authorities, tourism associations, and citizens groups) as a secretariat of Shinetsu Trail Liaison Committee.

Members of Shinetsu Trail Club in 2016 were 74 official members (annual membership fee JPY 5,000, approximately USD 45), 51 affiliate members (JPY 2000, approximately USD 18 for individuals, and JPY 5,000, approximately USD 45 for companies) and six special sponsors.<sup>95</sup> In addition to membership fees, the Club has developed various ways to get incomes to self-sustain its activities. For example:<sup>96</sup>

- Provision of guide services: the Club registers about 40 guides who have finished certain classes and have an experience of trekking the whole trail. Registered guides can be hired for JPY 10,000 (USD 90) for half day or JPY15,000 (USD 135) for full day. A maximum number of trekkers in a guided group is ten. Around 130 guides are hired in total per year and guide 1,000 walkers;
- Organizing trekking tours and events: held about 60 times a year with participation fee of JPY 5,000 (USD 45);
- Creation and sales of official maps (in addition to the maps, a local publisher creates and sells a guidebook of the trail); and
- Management of tent sites (300 to 400 users per year).

The total income of the Club in 2014 was JPY 5.6 million (USD 500,000).<sup>97</sup>

Shinetsu Trail has some disadvantages in access. Trailheads are not accessible by public transport and parking spaces at the trailheads are limited. And in any case, most of the trekkers would like a longitudinal traverse. To solve this problem, accommodation facilities registered to Shinetsu Trail Club provide trekkers free of charge with sending-off and picking-up services between the property and a trailhead.<sup>98</sup>

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94 Inomata, Y. et al. (2017).

95 Kimura, H. (2017).

96 Inomata, Y. et al. (2017).

Kimura, H. (2017).

Shinetsu Trail Club (n.d.), 'Guide' (online), available at: [www.s-trail.net](http://www.s-trail.net) (24-01-2018).

97 Inomata, Y. et al. (2017).

98 Ibid.

## Local benefits

The number of users of the trail increased from 10,000 in 2005 to 38,700 in 2017. It has been successful in extending tourism seasons to summer and autumn. Sales have increased in accommodation, transport and retails. Guide jobs were created. In addition, Shinetsu Trail has enhanced consciousness of wellbeing and local culture by residents through participation in walking and management of the trail.<sup>99</sup>

## Takeaways

The longer the trail is, the more stakeholders are there. It is the most important precondition to establish a close cooperative relationship among them. In this case, Shinetsu Trail Club has successfully taken this role in establishing policies with a local point of view, involving residents and users, and nurturing local leaders. In order to achieve sustainability of the trail, it is also essential to negotiate with land owners and to establish the maintenance system. In this regard, it is important to share the purposes and ideals, set up common rules including dealing with economic activities, overuse and environmental damage. Issues need to be discussed and understood before actual development and receiving trekkers. As the development of the trail proceeded, more and more local volunteers participated and understanding was enhanced, which turned out to be beneficial in management and maintenance of the trail. During this whole process, residents rediscovered their overlooked treasures and the value of tourism.<sup>100</sup>

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99 Inomata, Y. et al. (2017).

Kimura, H. (2017).

100 Ibid.

## 7.7 ONSEN and Gastronomy Walking (Japan) – combining walking with other resources

### Background

*Onsen* is a Japanese word for hot spring. The concept of *onsen* and gastronomy walking is to enjoy local resources (nature, culture and history) through walking at an *onsen* destination, to have a relaxing soak in hot springs, and to enjoy local food. Thus, the destination is not just a place to enjoy hot springs, but an accommodation base of long-stay and experience-style tourism. Through this action, it is expected to achieve regional revitalization by maximizing the attractiveness of the *onsen* destination and receiving more visitors. The destination's residents rediscover the values of their life and resources in the region and offer them to visitors in combination of healthy walking and relaxing hot springs. The concept is also considered to fit in an aging and stressful society. To champion this concept, ONSEN & Gastronomy Tourism Association was established in September 2016.<sup>101</sup>

### ONSEN & Gastronomy Tourism Association

The Association's mission is to provide support for development of gastronomy walking courses, to give a certification to them, to organize and promote walking events in cooperation with destinations. The Association aims to establish 100 destinations all over Japan that develop gastronomy walking by 2021. It is expected that each of 100 destinations will organize a walking event every year and there will be at least one event every weekend that has local characteristics of a destination.<sup>102</sup> Two prefectures and 27 municipalities are the members of the Association.

### *Onsen* and gastronomy walking events

The first gastronomy walking event was held in November 2016 in Beppu, Oita Prefecture, one of the most famous *onsen* destinations in Japan. Participants walked along the coastline of the *onsen* destination, visited a museum and a sand bath, tasted local drinks and foods at several stops along the route, interacted with local residents, and enjoyed sake tasting at the finishing line. In 2017, 15 walking events were held and around 3,000 people participated. It is expected that 30–40 events will be held in 2018.<sup>103</sup>

These events are organized by local municipalities with the support from ONSEN & Gastronomy Tourism Association. The Association sets a guideline for an event to be accredited as an *onsen* gastronomy walking event as follows:

- The length of the course is around 8 km;
- Along the way, eight to ten stops are set up for gastronomy and cultural experiences;

101 ONSEN & Gastronomy Tourism Association (n.d.), 'Onsen and Gastronomy Tourism' (online), available at: <https://onsen-gastronomy.com> (26-01-2018).

102 ONSEN & Gastronomy Tourism Association (2017), e-mail communication (20-11-2017).

103 Ibid.



- Locally produced and in-season products and typical cooking are offered; and
- Traditional culture is presented with explanation by local people.<sup>104</sup>

Offering locally produced products, not only agricultural products but also souvenirs to participants, results in direct income opportunities for the community. Introducing local attractions during the event encourages participants to visit them after the event or to visit the destination again.<sup>105</sup>

A municipality plays a central role in organizing an event, which makes coordination and getting permissions easier. Officials and other stakeholders discuss the route and contents that best represent the area and please the participants.<sup>106</sup>

## Takeaways

An event is a one-day thing. But it showcases attractive resources in the locality with interaction with residents and it works as a good promotion to encourage participants to re-visit the destination. Walking fits very well to achieve these objectives.

To be successful, it is crucial that local people acknowledge the area's attractiveness and promote it themselves through preparation and implementation of the event. They need to understand that visitors want to experience authentic food, culture and history through interaction with local people. The success of the event enables the locals to enhance their self-confidence and pride and promotes further cooperation within the area. Each walking event has its own uniqueness depending on the host destination. This brings about kind of rivalry among destinations, which encourages improvement and creativity in the event.<sup>107</sup>

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104 ONSEN & Gastronomy Tourism Association (2017), e-mail communication (20-11-2017).

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid.

## 7.8 Sierra Greenway (Spain) – walking tourism with accessibility

### Area

The Sierra Greenway runs in the provinces of Cadiz and Seville at the foot of the southernmost mountains of the Iberian Peninsula. The area boasts natural landscape such as River Guadalete and the natural reserve of Peñón de Zaframagón, where there is one of the largest colonies of griffon vulture in Europe. It also has a lot of cultural heritages like historic railway facilities, churches, castles and archaeological sites in different towns.<sup>108</sup>

### Greenways

According to the Lille Declaration in 2000, Greenways are “[c]ommunication routes reserved exclusively for non-motorized journeys, developed in an integrated manner which enhances both the environment and quality of life of the surrounding area. These routes should meet satisfactory standards of width, gradient, and surface condition to ensure that they are both user-friendly and low-risk for users of all abilities. In this respect, canal towpaths and disused railway lines are a highly suitable resource for the development of greenways”. The Declaration acknowledged the growing demand for non-motorized travel and low risk leisure activities accessible to all, and greenways’ merits for development of sustainable tourism.<sup>109</sup>

The Spanish Greenways project was launched in 1993 by the then Spanish Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Environment in partnership with railway companies in order to reuse abandoned railway lines in rural areas. By the middle of 2016, over EUR 174 million had been invested to convert over 2,600 km unused railway lines into 123 greenways.<sup>110</sup>

### Sierra Greenway

The Sierra Greenway is one of the routes with a total length of 36.5 km in southern Spain. It utilizes the abandoned tracks with 30 tunnels, 4 viaducts and 5 stations. Four of the stations have been reconditioned as restaurants, accommodation facilities and a bird watching centre.<sup>111</sup> It attracts approximately 300,000 visitors a year. Around half of them come on foot and the other half by bicycle.<sup>112</sup>

One of the major characteristics of the Sierra Greenway is its accessibility for wheelchair users, people with disabilities and senior people. Hand bikes, adapted bikes, adapted taxis and

108 The Spanish Railways Foundation (FFE) (n.d./d), ‘Sierra Greenway’ (online), available at: [www.viasverdes.com](http://www.viasverdes.com) (09-01-2018).

109 The European Greenways Association (EGWA) (2000), ‘Lille Declaration’ (online), available at: [www.aevv-egwa.org](http://www.aevv-egwa.org) (09-01-2018).

110 The Spanish Railways Foundation (FFE) (n.d./c), ‘Programa Vías Verdes’ (online), available at: [www.viasverdes.com](http://www.viasverdes.com) (09-01-2018).

111 The Foundation of the Sierra’s Greenway (n.d./b), ‘The Sierra’s Greenway’ (online), available at: [www.fundacionviaverdedelasierra.es](http://www.fundacionviaverdedelasierra.es) (09-01-2018).

112 The Foundation of the Sierra’s Greenway (2017), e-mail communication (15-12-2017).

accessible railway coach accommodation are offered.<sup>113</sup> In 2017, the Sierra Greenway received the first prize of the 8th European Greenway Award for its initiative for universal accessibility in terms of encouraging more people with disabilities to visit the greenway and making a high positive impact with a small budget.<sup>114</sup>

## Development of the Sierra Greenway

The Sierra Greenway project was drafted in 1994 as one of the Spanish Greenways. In 2000, the Foundation of Sierra's Greenway was established to conserve, maintain and manage the Sierra Greenway. It is constituted by the provincial councils of Cadiz and Seville and six town councils.<sup>115</sup> The annual budget of the Foundation is approximately EUR 400,000 with the support of the partners including local and provincial governments.<sup>116</sup>

The Sierra Greenway was chosen as one of the two pilot fields for the "Accessible Tourism on European Greenways: Greenways For All" project in 2013. The aim was to develop and promote accessible tourism products linked to greenways. The project was coordinated by the Spanish Railways Foundation (FFE) in partnership with the European Greenways Association (EGWA), Plataforma Representativa Estatal de Personas con Discapacidad Física (PREDIF) (National Platform for Physically Disabled People), the Foundation of the Sierra's Greenways, Comunidade Intermunicipal da Região Dão Lafões (consortium of municipalities in Portugal) and four small enterprises specialized in accessible and experiential tourism. The 18-month-long project was 75% co-funded by the European Union and the total budget was EUR 166,000.<sup>117</sup>

Development of accessible tourism products by the Greenways For All project was carried out through the following steps:<sup>118</sup>

1. **Evaluation:** a telephone survey was conducted for 134 tourist resources to identify accessible tourism attractions. Sixty-nine of them met the minimum criteria and as a result of further analysis, 43 were identified as accessible resources;<sup>119</sup>
2. **Agreement with stakeholders:** the "Local Accessibility Agreement" for the Sierra Greenway was signed. The aim was to promote accessible greenway products for everyone and encourage the commitment of both public entities and local companies. By the end of 2017, 29 public entities and local companies had signed the agreement;<sup>120</sup>

113 The Foundation of the Sierra's Greenway (2017), e-mail communication (15-12-2017).

114 The European Greenways Association (EGWA) (2017d), 'The 8th European Greenways Awards have been given' (online), available at: [www.aevv-egwa.org](http://www.aevv-egwa.org) (09-01-2018).

115 The Foundation of Sierra's Greenway (n.d./a), 'About Us' (online), available at: [www.fundacionviaverdedelasierra.es](http://www.fundacionviaverdedelasierra.es) (09-01-2018).

116 The Foundation of the Sierra's Greenway (2017).

117 The European Greenways Association (EGWA) (2017b), 'Greenways4all' (online), available at: [www.aevv-egwa.org](http://www.aevv-egwa.org) (09-01-2018).

118 Hernández Colorado, A. (2016), 'Vías Verdes Accesibles y Proyecto Greenways4ALL', presentation at Jornada "Turismo para Todos: Oportunidad, Innovación, Competitividad Territorial y Empleo", Béjar, Salamanca, 15-12-2016 (online), available at: <https://altairismorural.com> (22-1-2018).

119 The European Greenways Association (EGWA) (2017a), 'Building Accessible Tourism Products in Greenways' (online), available at: <http://greenways4all.org> (09-01-2018).

120 The Spanish Railways Foundation (FFE) and National Platform for Physically Disabled? People (PREDIF) (2017), *Practical Guide to Opening Up the territory on Accessible Greenways*, p. 54 (online) available at: [www.aevv-egwa.org](http://www.aevv-egwa.org) (10-01-2018).

3. **Training:** training for staff members of local stakeholders is important to improve the service in accessible facilities as well as raising awareness for accessible tourism. The Foundation, PREDIF and FFE cooperated to organize a training workshop for managers of the Sierra Greenway and owners of tourism facilities in October 2016.<sup>121</sup> A specific training course on “dealing with customers with disabilities and diverse needs” was also given in March 2017 by PREDIF in cooperation with the Foundation and FFE;<sup>122</sup>
4. **Creating accessible tourist products:** the three partner travel agencies visited the Sierra Greenway in March 2017 and worked on the design and creation of accessible travel packages;<sup>123</sup> and
5. **Testing:** the accessible tourism itineraries were tested by people with disabilities and specialists in accessibility.<sup>124</sup>

### Accessible tours

Several accessible tours have been designed by the partner travel agencies. Some tours offer additional experiences along the greenway. Both people with and without disabilities can participate in these tours. They are marketed on the websites of the agencies, partners in the territory and various portals.<sup>125</sup>

The Sierra Greenway (offered by Accessible Madrid):<sup>126</sup>

- 2 nights, 3 days: EUR 107/person;
- Cycling along the Sierra Greenway by rental bike or hand bike and passing the natural reserve of Peñón de Zaframagón;
- Staying at an accessible hotel converted from a 19th-century rail carriage;
- Return trip to the hotel by an adapted taxi available from anywhere along the Greenway: and
- Local gastronomic experiences.

Stars and nature on the Sierra Greenway (offered by AstroAndalus):<sup>127</sup>

- 1 night, 2 days: EUR 300/person;
- Astronomy talk and observation with professional telescopes; and
- Staying at an accessible rail carriage hotel.

### Local economic and social benefits

The Sierra Greenway has contributed to job creation by transforming abandoned railway lines and facilities as a tourism product. Thirty-five direct jobs were created in the Foundation mainly for

121 The European Greenways Association (EGWA) (2017c), “Local accessibility agreement” for La Sierra Greenway and Ecopista Do Dao’ (online), available at: [www.aevv-egwa.org](http://www.aevv-egwa.org) (10-01-2018).

122 The European Greenways Association (EGWA) (2017a).

123 Ibid.

124 Hernández Colorado, A. (2016).

125 The European Greenways Association (EGWA) (2017a).

126 The Spanish Railways Foundation (FFE) (n.d./b), ‘Accessible tourism products on Greenways’ (online), available at: [www.aevv-egwa.org](http://www.aevv-egwa.org) (10-01-2018).

127 Ibid.

administration and maintenance, and many indirect jobs at accommodation, restaurants, rental bike shops and so on.<sup>128</sup>

The Foundation holds an annual meeting with people with disabilities in the area, especially those from remote villages who have few chances to access outdoor leisure opportunities. The aim is to encourage them to enjoy cycling by adapted bike for health in natural settings and foster communication with each other. Other activities include recycling workshops and video and talk about the vultures in the natural reserve.<sup>129</sup>

The Sierra Greenway also plays a role of an educational centre. Pupils at local schools visit the greenway and learn environmental issues. It also helps to promote the greenway itself and encourages their family to visit.<sup>130</sup>

The Sierra's Greenway Foundation organizes events to encourage local people to enjoy the greenway such as mass cycling, half marathons, photographic rallies and activities for children and women.<sup>131</sup>

These activities contribute to enhancing health and social welfare of residents including those with disabilities and encourage them to enjoy the greenway.

## Takeaways

Accessible tourism is the strength of the Sierra Greenway that differentiates it from other greenways and has multiple positive effects in the area. In this regard, it is necessary to adapt a whole destination to be accessible, not only the greenway itself but also tourism facilities and services along the route. Tourism products need to be created based on the assessment and testing in collaboration with the people with disabilities and local stakeholders. Local staff training helps to improve awareness and understanding of accessible tourism. Improved accessibility encourages people with disabilities to enjoy outdoor leisure and enhances health and social welfare as a whole.

According to the Foundation of the Sierra's Greenway, it is important to consult well with subject matter experts such as PREDIF to develop an accessible walking/cycling project for regional development, and "sensitization and awareness measures" are the key elements to foster local people and stakeholders' understanding of accessible tourism and encourage them to cooperate.<sup>132</sup>

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128 The Foundation of the Sierra's Greenway (2017).

129 Hernández Colorado, A.; Luengo, A.C. and Pastor, M.I. (2013b), *Guide to best practices and recommendations for accessible Greenways* (online), available at: [www.aevv-egwa.org](http://www.aevv-egwa.org) (19-12-2017).

The Foundation of the Sierra's Greenway (2017).

130 Hernández Colorado, A.; Luengo, A.C. and Pastor, M.I. (2013a), *Best Practices Guide for the Promotion and Communication of European Greenways* (online), available at: [www.aevv-egwa.org](http://www.aevv-egwa.org) (19-12-2017).

131 Ibid.

132 The Foundation of the Sierra's Greenway (2017).

## 7.9 Kamioyama Kurort (Japan) – a programme for residents' health and walking tourism

### Area

Kaminoyama is an *onsen* (hot spring) city located in northern Japan with a history of more than 560 years. It can be reached by the Shinkansen bullet train in 2 hours 30 minutes from Tokyo. The city is also known for its fruit production and its castle. Its Zao Bodaira Athlete Village is one of the national highland training centers designated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.<sup>133</sup>

### Kurort walking

*Kurort* means *health resort* in German. Kaminoyama Kurort walking is a walking activity used for disease prevention and health promotion on medical scientific grounds and its courses are the only ones in Japan certified by the University of Munich, Germany. Participants walk at the speed suited to their own physical strength in the forest and mountain slopes, utilizing the climate factors such as “cold air and wind” and “solar rays”, strengthen their endurance, and attain increased exercise effects without trying too hard. They are accompanied by a certified guide to ensure that they can walk safely and within their physical capacity. The advantages of Kurort walking include:

1. Walking on nature-rich slopes stimulates five senses and gives a better refreshing feeling; and
2. It can be enjoyed throughout the year.<sup>134</sup>

Kaminoyama Kurort walking offers several types of walking:<sup>135</sup>

- Everyday Walking: It is held almost every day (360 days in a year) from 9:30 to 12:30. There are eight certified courses. Anyone can show up without reservation and it is held even if there is only one participant. A ticket costs JPY 500 (one time, for residents only), JPY 2,000 (four times), JPY 2,000 (monthly pass) and JPY 15,000 (annual pass);
- Early Morning Walking: There are two courses, and one of them is held every day from 6:50 to 8:00. This is a free programme and no reservation is required. Masters of hotels and inns guide the participants (both residents and visitors) before breakfast. It is now a popular activity as residents and visitors can interact with each other;
- Evening Walking: It is held every day except some days of the end and beginning of the year from 14:00 to 16:00. Reservation for a minimum of two persons is required by 10:00 of the day. This programme is targeted mainly hotel guests who want to utilize the time before checking-in. The ticket is JPY 2,600 (JPY 2,000 for hotel guests) per person; and
- Private Walking: It is a customized programme based on individual requests and reservations.

To encourage more participation and earnings for the local economy, special walking programmes are offered such as a longer walking including lunch with local ingredients, town walking in

133 Kaminoyama City (2017), e-mail communication (07-03-2017).

134 Goto, J. and Takahashi, C. (2015), 'Promoting New Health Japan 21, The Construction of a Healthy Town Based on "Kurort Health Walking" in Kaminoyama City, Yamagata Prefecture', *Yamagata Journal of Health Sciences*, volume 18, pp. 1–7.  
Kaminoyama City (2017).

135 Zao Kaminoyama Kurort (n.d.), 'Walking Menu' (online), available at: [www.city.kaminoyama.yamagata.jp](http://www.city.kaminoyama.yamagata.jp) (25-01-2018).

cooperation with the shopping district and walking on ski. A visitor survey indicates more than 90% were satisfied with the programmes and showed intention of repeat visits.<sup>136</sup>

To further utilize Kurort and hot springs, Kaminoyama has developed a health tourism product targeted mainly to companies that are keen on enhancing wellbeing of their employees. The 2 day 1 night programme is comprised of elements of Kurort walking, rest and nutrition for the middle-aged, people with risk of diabetes, etc.<sup>137</sup>

### Citizens' health and walking

Kaminoyama City started Kurort projects, of which Kurort walking is a main programme, as one of its main policies in 2008. A dedicated team was created in the city office in 2011. The main objective is enhancement of citizens' health, but it is considered to have a positive effect also on tourism and environment. "Kaminoyama-Style Hot Springs Kurort Conceptual Plan" drafted in 2013 sets three objectives:

- Health: Enhance citizens' physical and mental health through measures that utilize local resources;
- Tourism: Establish a long-stay destination and increase visitors by brushing up many local resources; and
- Environment: Conserve natural environment and build a beautiful city in harmony with local resources.

The Plan declares its aim that every citizen participates in Kurort walking (whoever and whenever) and the city has encouraged residents to do so by creation of attractive courses, promotion, and collaboration with private companies. About half of the participants of Everyday Walking are the residents. As citizens walk with visitors, interactions between them are promoted and welcoming environment is enhanced.<sup>138</sup>

The city's total budget for Kurort project in 2016 was JPY 26 million (approximately USD 240,000), around 80% of which came from central and regional governments. It was not a small budget for a city of 30,000 residents, but it was relatively easy to be approved because it directly aimed at citizens' welfare, not only economic benefits from tourism. Even if there would be little impacts on tourism, the projects would still be beneficial to the city and its citizens.<sup>139</sup>

### Partnership with stakeholders

Kaminoyama's Kurort projects have been implemented with a partnership with local stakeholders including business associations (including tourism, retail, doctors, sport, etc.), a medical college, a local bank, etc. The city and the bank signed a cooperation agreement and the bank provides

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136 Kaminoyama City (2017).

137 Ibid.

138 Kaminoyama City (2013), 上山型温泉クアオルト構想 (Kaminoyama-Style Hot Springs Conceptual Plan) (online), available at: [www.city.kaminoyama.yamagata.jp](http://www.city.kaminoyama.yamagata.jp) (25-01-2018).

Kaminoyama City (2017).

139 Ibid.

business advice on plans for Kurort projects and facilitates further partnership with private companies that are the bank's clients. Local companies participate in maintenance activities of the courses together with citizens and donate signage boards and health apparatus. Medical institutions cooperate in research on Kurort's effects on wellbeing enhancement and receiving health tourism visitors. A cooperation scheme has been established with doctors, medical institutions and ambulance services. Kurort-related tourism products are created and promoted with tourism companies. Local businesses hold Kurort walking events for their employees and customers.<sup>140</sup>

### Local benefits

Participants in Kurort walking have been increasing. In 2016, 5,700 persons participated in Everyday Walking, half of which were non-residents (including citizens of neighboring cities and travellers). Early Morning Walking has played a role to increase repeat visitors (hotel guests) to the city.<sup>141</sup>

Kurort walking is basically accompanied by a certified guide and as of 2015, 74 persons were certified. It helps create job and income opportunities. The guides are not simple tourism guides, but they are expected to communicate enjoyment of wellbeing activities in the nature. To be registered, they need to take various classes on local nature, the Kurort theory, medical and scientific knowledge, life saving techniques and guiding techniques. After registration, they are required to renew it every two years so that quality is ensured. These guides are mostly males in their 60s with leadership capability and expected to work not only as Kurort walking guides but also facilitators of health programmes in the communities.<sup>142</sup>

Under the name of Kurort, restaurant menus, lunchboxes and other food products have been developed utilizing local ingredients and considering nutrition. These are well received by walkers and visitors. The city has set the guideline of certification of Kurort products so that more products can be developed and sold by local companies.<sup>143</sup>

As mentioned above, Kaminoyama Kurort aims at enhancing residents' health. In this regard, citizens' health consciousness has been improved and exercise custom has gradually shaped through Kurort walking that is good for health, socializing opportunity and fun.<sup>144</sup>

The concept of Kurort has not yet been well-known and more promotion is needed. On the other hand, several other municipalities in Japan have started similar programmes based on the concept. It is hoped that enhanced recognition in the aging society will increase in purposeful visitors to the city. To further promote health tourism and long stay in Kaminoyama, it is considered to

140 Kaminoyama City and the Yamagata Bank Ltd. (2012), '上山市と株式会社山形銀行との連携・協力に関する協定」を締結' (Signing of "Agreement on Collaboration and Cooperation between Kaminoyama City and the Yamagata Bank Ltd."), 05-12-2012 (online), available at: [www.city.kaminoyama.yamagata.jp](http://www.city.kaminoyama.yamagata.jp) (25-01-2018).

141 Kaminoyama City (2017).

142 Goto, J. and Takahashi, C. (2015).  
Kaminoyama City (2017).

143 Kaminoyama City (2017).

144 Ibid.



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offer certified health tourism products, develop activity programmes and health care businesses, and integrate local food and other resources into health tourism. Kaminoyama City recognizes development takes time and is determined to create the Best Kurort in Japan in the long term.<sup>145</sup>

### Takeaways

Combination of citizens' welfare, tourism and environment is the strength of the Kaminoyama Kurort project. Kaminoyama City emphasizes that it brings about as many opportunities as possible to involve citizens, local companies and other stakeholders. It is necessary to discuss and share the long-term vision with citizens and businesses in the city and build up small successes step by step. This encourages local partnership, which contributes to sustainable development. Residents are involved not only as service providers or as receivers of visitors, but also participants and beneficiaries of the project in terms of health and visitor spending.<sup>146</sup>

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145 Kaminoyama City (2017).

146 Ibid.

## 7.10 Hiking trails as an additional tourism attraction (Hong Kong, China) – an urban retreat for both tourists and residents

Hong Kong, China, is one of the most visited cities in the world. Cosmopolitan urban landscape, shopping and dining experiences come to many people's mind, but Hong Kong, China, has more. Leveraging its rich natural environment not only in Hong Kong Island and Kowloon but also in North-East New Territories and outlying islands, Hong Kong, China, has been promoting green tourism including hiking trails to broaden its tourism appeal and to entice different visitor segments.

### Development through the cooperation among various organizations

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) launched the "Great Outdoors Hong Kong!" promotion in 2009. It published a guidebook so that visitors, free independent travellers in particular, could plan hiking trips at their own pace. The HKTB also organized free guided hiking tours and carried out promotional activities including inviting media from target markets.<sup>147</sup>

Developing green tourism in outlying islands has been considered not only to diversify a portfolio of tourist attractions and enhance the city's attractiveness to overseas visitors, but also to appeal to local residents. After the outbreak of SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), residents of Hong Kong, China, became more concerned about their health and partaking in outdoor activities was considered the best and the most economical way to maintain a healthy lifestyle. And hiking has become a very popular weekend leisure activity.<sup>148</sup> Along with the HKTB's promotion overseas, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) carried out local publicity through the website to provide information. In parallel, the HAD improved the infrastructure including footpaths and vehicular access in response to community needs.<sup>149</sup>

In addition, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been promoting green tourism highlighting the country parks it manages. The AFCD opened establishments for education and visitor services (including eco-tour guide services and provision of Do-It-Yourself itineraries), set up on-site interpretative plates along nature trails.<sup>150</sup> It meets the needs of the visitors who now seek a deeper understanding of the city's natural environment including biological and geological diversity.<sup>151</sup>

The Tourism Commission also installed directional signs and map boards, and improved seating facilities, lighting, toilets and other tourism facilities. It also facilitated the participation of private and voluntary organizations (for example, the Hong Kong Electric Company Limited and the

147 Hong Kong Tourism Board (2009), 'The Hong Kong Tourism Board Presents Brand New "Great Outdoors Hong Kong!" Promotion', 03-10-2009 (online), available at: <https://partnet.hktb.com> (06-03-2018).

148 Cheung, L.T.O. (2013), 'Improving Visitor Management Approaches for the Changing Preferences and Behaviours of Country Park Visitors in Hong Kong', *Natural Resources Forum*, volume 37, pp. 231–241.

149 Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (2008), 'Legislative Council Panel on Economic Development, Development of Tourism on Outlying Islands', 26-05-2008 (online), available at: [www.legco.gov.hk](http://www.legco.gov.hk) (06-03-2018).

150 Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (2018), 'Hong Kong: The Facts – Country Parks and Conservation' (online), available at: [www.afcd.gov.hk](http://www.afcd.gov.hk) (06-03-2018).  
Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (2008).

151 Cheung, L.T.O. (2013).

Conservancy Association) in providing information boards along the trails. Training courses on nature guided tours were provided for tourist guides and staff members of travel agencies to enhance the travel industry's knowledge.<sup>152</sup>

### Some environmental issues

The HKTB has continued to promote hiking trails recognizing that hikers tend to stay longer and local business will benefit in the long run, and also hiking trails are photogenic places for sharing on social media. The HKTB sees that one of Hong Kong, China's, competitive advantages to other popular hiking destinations lies in easy access to trails by public transport from downtown.<sup>153</sup>

On the other hand, due to a huge number of hikers attracted to Hong Kong, China's, picturesque nature trails, congestion has become an issue. One of the motivations of and benefits to hikers is to escape from physical pressure (crowds and noise) and the over-popularity can have negative impacts on them. Other issues have emerged including lack of infrastructure to cope with tourist coaches and increased waste found along trails.<sup>154</sup> In order to encourage hikers to take rubbish home, the AFCD removed a total of 40 bins from trails and carried out an educational campaign in cooperation with green and hiking groups.<sup>155</sup> In order to maintain visitors' enjoyment and satisfaction as well as visitors' impacts on the environment, proper visitor management would be needed. For example, improvement of hiking paths could not only enhance safety and comfort, but also help disperse visitors from ecologically sensitive areas.<sup>156</sup>

### Takeaways

This is a case that a destination can add hiking to its traditional tourism offerings. Since hiking is considered beneficial not only for tourism but also residents, trail development and promotions are carried out through effective cooperation among various public organizations. This case suggests that hiking may bring about environmental issues as it becomes popular and measures need to be taken in order to avoid degradation of natural environment on which hiking tourism relies.

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152 Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (2008).

153 Sun, N. (2016), 'Hong Kong's Hiking Trails Offer Hidden Gems Beyond Shopping and Dining ... If You Know Where to Look', *South China Morning Post*, 05-11-2016 (online), available at: [www.scmp.com](http://www.scmp.com) (06-03-2018).

154 Williams, M. (2017), 'Upturn in Hiking in Hong Kong Has a Downside, as Solitude Becomes Increasingly Hard to Find', *South China Morning Post*, 22-01-2017 (online), available at: [www.scmp.com](http://www.scmp.com) (06-03-2018).

155 Kao, E. (2015), 'Bin and Gone: Government Gets Rid of 40 Bins from Hong Kong Hiking Trails in Order to 'Reduce Waste'', *South China Morning Post*, 21-09-2015 (online), available at: [www.scmp.com](http://www.scmp.com) (06-03-2018).

156 Cheung, L.T.O. (2013).



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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.

The **World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**, a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. Its membership includes 158 countries, 6 territories, 2 permanent observers and over 500 Affiliate Members.



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