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RCI Forum
Cross Border Mobility: Sustainable Tourism

5 November 2026

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Tourism is a driver of global economic growth that can help achieve ADB Strategy 2030

Global Tourism Impacts 2025

- Tourism generated $11.7 trillion, 10% of GDP
- Created 1 in every 10 jobs
- Vital source of foreign exchange and FDI



Asia Pacific Tourism Impacts 2024

- Tourism generated $3.2 trillion across ADB's DMCs
- Created 200+ million jobs in ADB's DMCs
- Over 70% of ADB's DMCs receive 5%+ of their GDP from tourism



Alignment with ADB Strategy 2030

Climate Action: Conserves ecosystems, leverages nature-based solutions, and creates livelihoods. Enhances and protects natural capital.

Private Sector Development: Creates jobs, stimulates entrepreneurship and drive private sector investment

Regional Cooperation and Public Goods: Relies on managed public assets and spurs regional trade

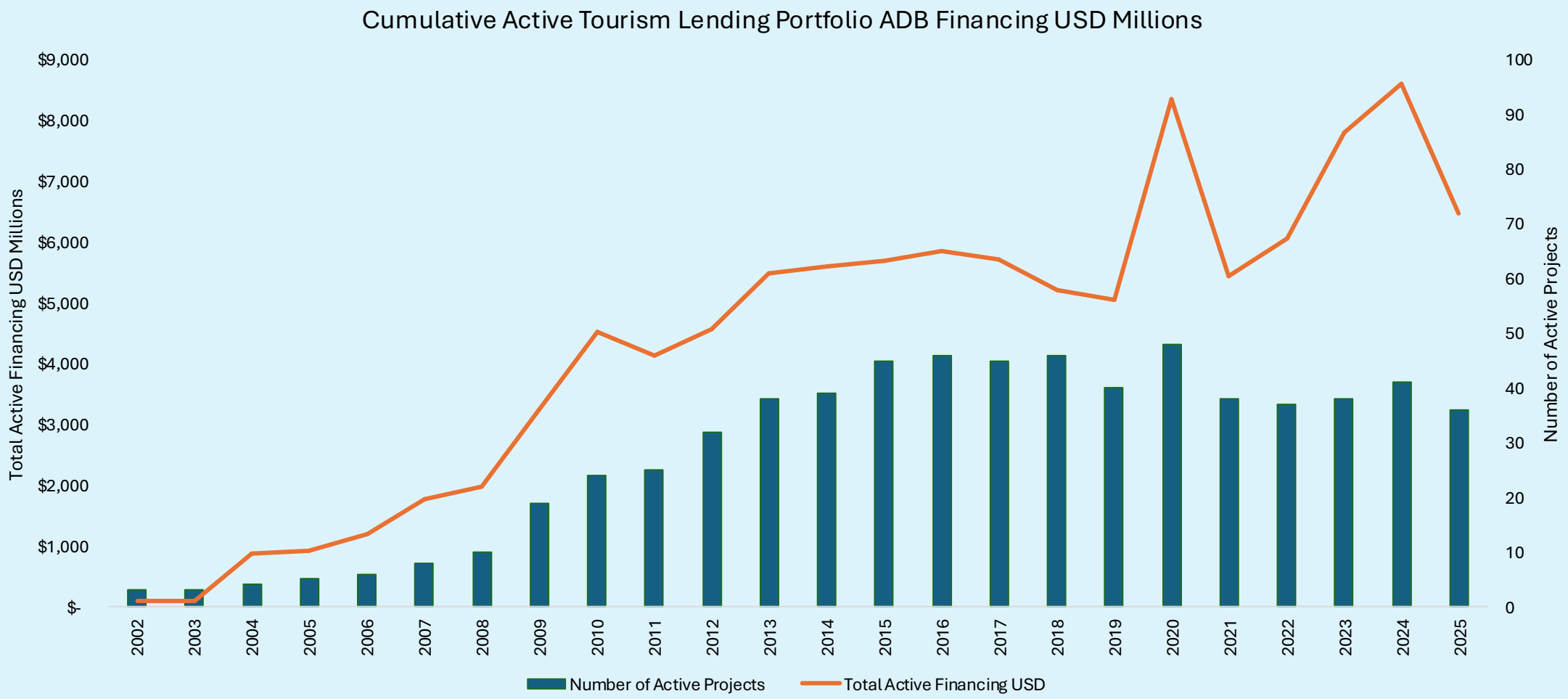
Digital Transformation: Early and extensive adopter of technology with new skills needed for the future.

Resilience and Empowerment: Employment for women, youth, and minorities and provides economic rationale for resilient infrastructure. Pro-poor tourism approaches support inclusive growth.

WTTC Travel and Tourism Economic Impact Factsheet 2025; WTTC Future of the Travel and Tourism Workforce 2025; fDi Intelligence and UN Tourism Tourism Investment 2024

ADB a strong history of investing in tourism and demand is growing

116 closed or active tourism and tourism-related projects worth $12.6 billion ADB Financing and $21 b in total financing. Demand for tourism investment grew more than triple the rate of overall ADB sovereign financing: 11.4% CAGR between 2015-2024 versus 3.4%.* The active portfolio doubled between 2019 and 2024.



*Based on ADB only financing amount in projects.

But tourism is rapidly evolving and ADB needs a coordinated approach to result to shifting client needs

Global Marco-economic and geo-politics shifts

- Slowing economic growth and impact of new tariffs
- Conflicts and civil unrest
- Vulnerability to climate change and demand shocks (e.g. COVID-19)
- Pressures and opportunities of digitalization and AI

Impacts on Tourism Demand

- **Changing source markets:** Softening US and growing SE and South Asia markets
- **Increasing personalization and digitalization:** Growing niche markets with focus on quality
- **Demand for sustainability:** Managing Impacts on local communities and drive for domestic and regional tourism

Impacts on Tourism Destinations & Supply

- **Value chains under pressure:** Increasing fragmentation and drive for quality and sustainability
- **Shifting benefits:** Increasing overtourism, changing supply (e.g. STRs), and strong vested interests
- **Digitalization:** Rapidly evolving, driving personalization and demands new skills

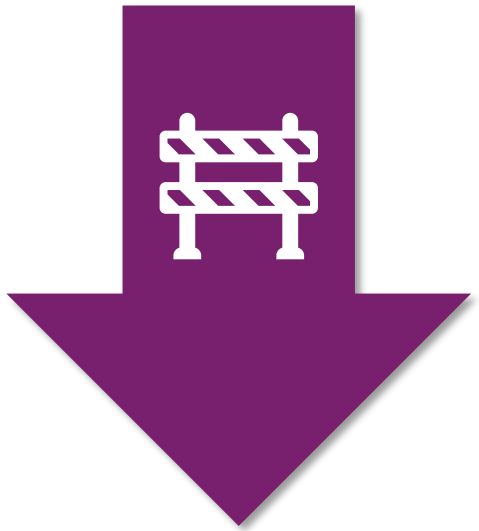
DMC Destinations and MSMEs are struggling to adapt

Rationale for ADB Engagement in Sustainable Tourism



Benefits of Tourism

- Economic growth and diversification
- Jobs and livelihoods
- Regional cooperation and integration
- Community development and inclusion
- Local enterprise development
- Infrastructure and service improvements
- Conservation and cultural preservation and utilization



Risks of Tourism

- Environmental degradation
- Overdependence and vulnerability
- Unequal distribution of benefits
- Pressure on communities and infrastructure
- Cultural and social impacts



ADB Sustainable Tourism Lessons Learned

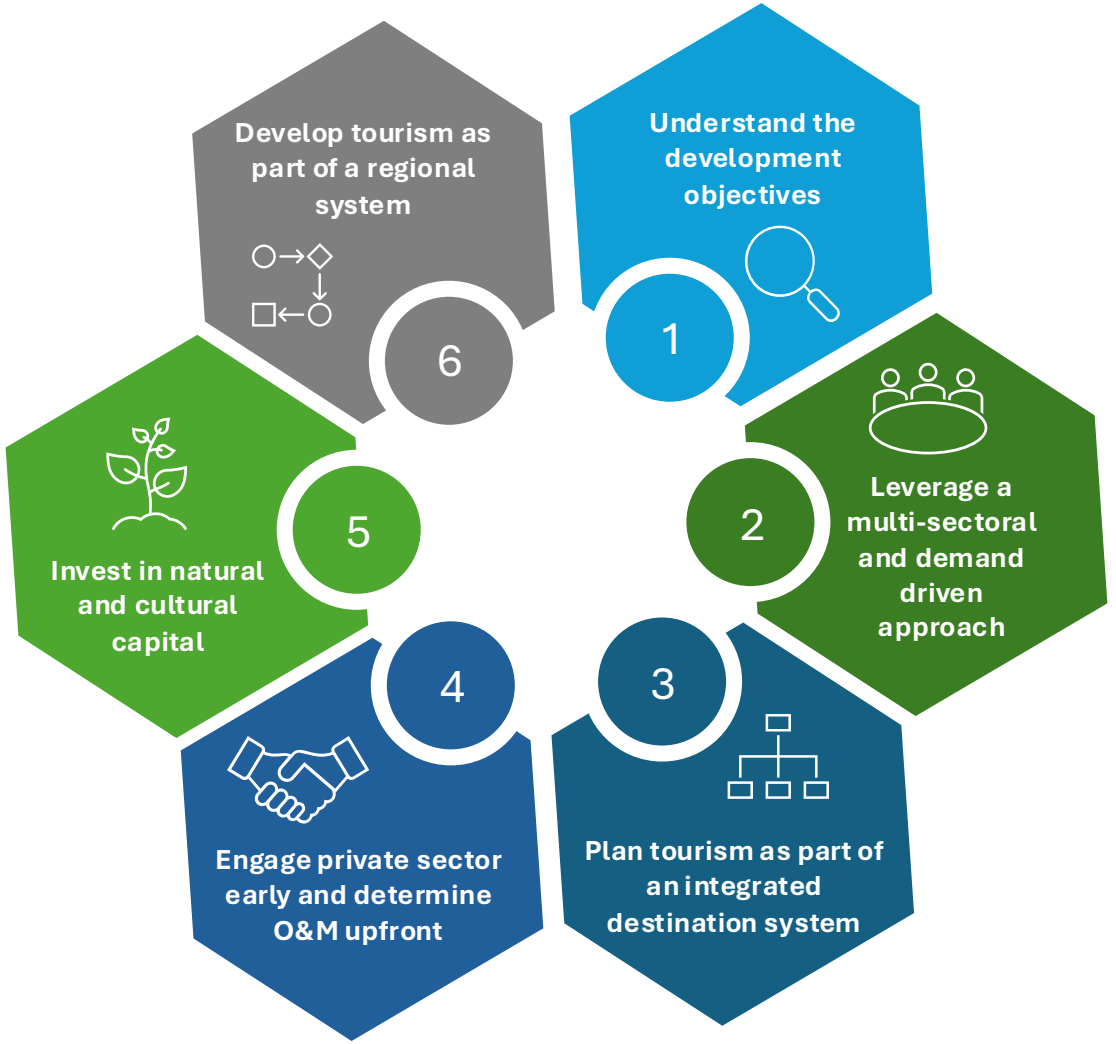
1. Tourism is a whole-of-ADB agenda, with projects and TAs being led by 10+ divisions.

2. Tourism is multi-sectoral and require integrated planning and coordination supported institutional strengthening, and formalized engagement with tourism institutions.

3. Tourism projects perform better when they explicitly include dedicated tourism outcomes and are based on tourism private sector sector diagnostics, demand forecasting and capacity assessments.

4. Tourism project should explicitly target private sector development, engage private sector in O&M, and define community benefit pathways from the start.

5. RCI tourism projects should be built on strategic regional tourism plans, integrate clear economic or infrastructure linkages at the national level, and integrate robust regional coordination mechanisms.



Principles of Sustainable Tourism Development

ADB assists DMCs to move beyond individual tourism projects toward integrated, market-oriented destination and regional development that uses public investment strategically to address binding constraints, strengthen competitiveness and resilience, and mobilize sustainable private investment.

Governance

- Integrate tourism into wider development planning at regional, national and subnational levels
- Strengthen destination governance and coordination Strengthen RCI for tourism
- Use evidence to guide decisions
- Market demand-driven investments
- Build resilience and adapt to change

Benefit

- Balance economic, financial, environmental, and social outcomes
- Deliver inclusive benefits to local communities
- Ensure benefits are accessible across communities and population groups.
- Measure impacts and adapt management accordingly:
- Support economically and financially viable, long-term investment

Destinations

- Protect and develop natural capital and cultural heritage
- Align with community visions for tourism development
- Ensure growth is balanced with destination resources and resident satisfaction
- Manage tourism specific natural and cultural safeguard risks (e.g. invasive species)
- Use resources efficiently and reduce pollution
- Manage visitor pressure and destination capacity

Sources: UNEP & UNWTO (2005), *Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers*; OECD (2024), *OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2024*; OECD (2024), *Creating Economic Prosperity through Inclusive and Sustainable Tourism*; Global Sustainable Tourism Council, *GSTC Destination Standard v2.0*.

Six Areas for Sustainable Tourism to Maximize Development Outcomes

1. Strengthen tourism policy, governance, and institutions through national and RCI platforms
2. Grow value from tourism markets, private sector, and investments
3. Enhance tourism skills, employment, and inclusion
4. Plan and manage sustainable and resilient tourism destinations for community benefit
5. Build resilient and productive tourism-enabling infrastructure and assets. Support cross border connectivity.
6. Build and protect natural capital, cultural heritage, and regional public goods

Cross-Cutting Themes: RCI, Inclusion, Resilience, Climate, and Digital

Stronger Governance, Increased Investment and More Regional Cooperation

Increased quality jobs, sustainable revenue, and inclusion

Resilient destinations, productive assets, and protected environments that benefit residents and tourists

*Based on a detailed Theory of Change



ADB's Approach to Sustainable Tourism Design

1

Understand the Development Objectives

Determine how tourism can contribute to overall development goals

2

Determine how Tourism Can Contribute to Development

Consider markets aligned with outcomes. Different markets create value, demand, jobs or investment.

3

Identify Market Failures and Constraints for Tourism Growth or Sustainability

Identify market failures at destination, national and regional levels. Consider solutions to Regional Public Goods Failures.

4

Design Interventions to Address these Failures

Identify most critical issues and create multisectoral solutions

5

Catalyze Private Sector Development and Investment

Every revenue-generating or visitor-facing asset has an O&M and asset-management decision before detailed design

6

Sequence Investments and Long-Term Planning

The ADB Tourism Forum: Knowledge exchange and foundational learning platform

November 17 – 19 2026, ADB HQ Manila

Day 1: Knowledge Exchange

Day 2: Learning Tracks

Day 3: Global Sustainable Tourism Council Targeted Training



Thank you

