

Ecotourism and COVID-19: Impacts responses and recovery

International Conference on
Responsible Tourism and Hospitality (ICRHT)
27 May 2021

Dr Anna Spenceley

Chair, IUCN WCPA Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group

Board member, Global Sustainable Tourism Council

Advisory Panel Member, Travalyst

www.anna.spenceley.co.uk



1. Tourism as we once knew it
2. Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector
3. Recovery trends and patterns
4. The way forward




1. **Tourism as we once knew it**
2. Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector
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The importance of nature-based tourism & sustainable development

Prior to the pandemic:

- 8 billion visits to protected areas p/a
- USD 600 bn direct in-country expenditure p/a
- USD 250 bn consumer surplus p/a

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a red and black striped shirt, is seen from the back, holding a smartphone to take a photo of a savanna landscape. In the foreground, a body of water reflects the sky. On the opposite bank, a large herd of animals, including elephants and a group of smaller animals (possibly buffalo or reedbucks), are gathered near a watering hole. The background features a line of green trees under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The woman is standing on a boat, with a white railing visible in the lower right.

21.8 million jobs are supported by
wildlife tourism

Global wildlife tourism generates 5 x
more revenue than the
illegal wildlife trade

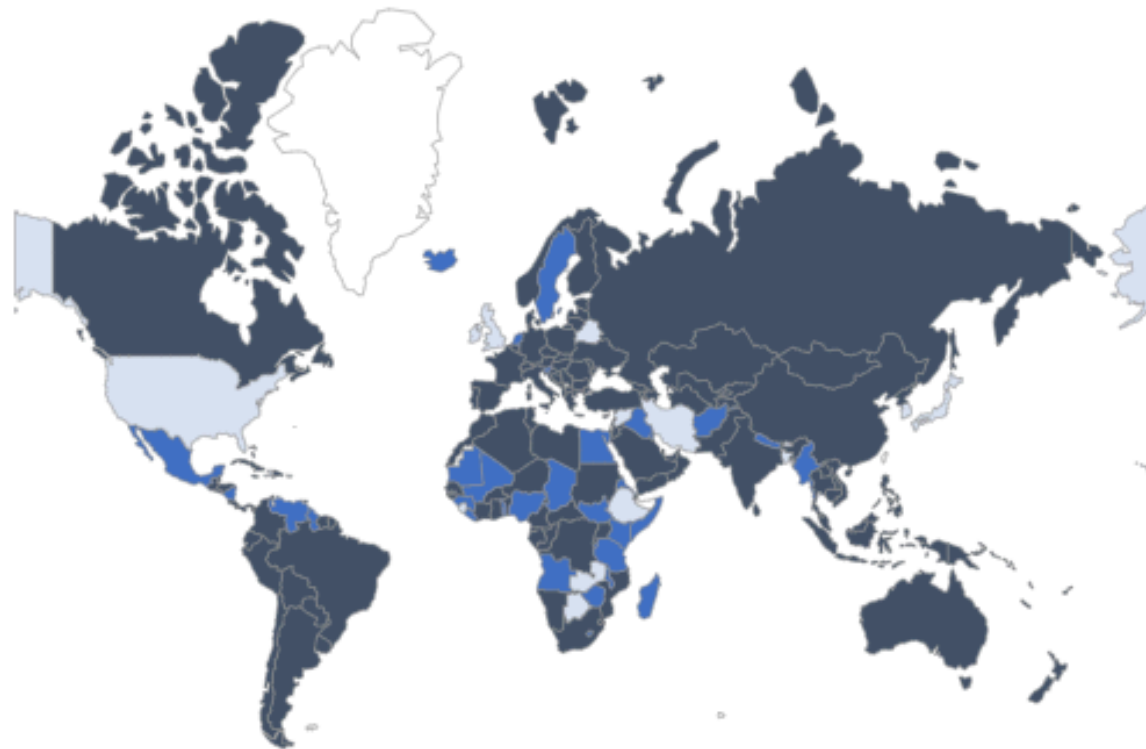
WTTC (2019)

1. Tourism as we once knew it
2. **Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector**
3. Recovery trends and patterns
4. The way forward & what IUCN WCPA can do



COVID - 19 RELATED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

● Complete Closure ● Other Measures ● Partial Closure



Select a month to see results for the selected month (based on the Travel Restrictions report)



Apr 2020

May 2020

Jun 2020

Jul 2020

Sep 2020

Nov 2020

Feb 2021

International
Tourist
Arrivals

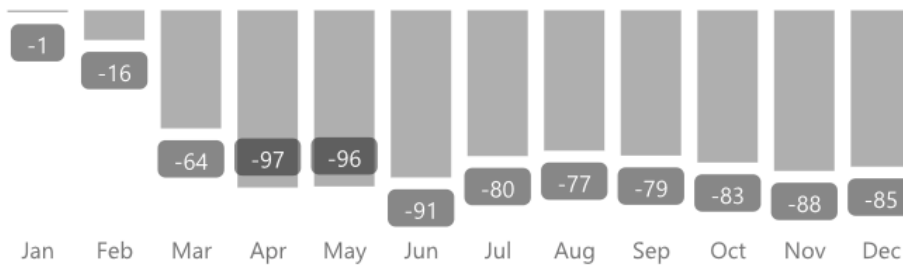
YTD change (%)

-74

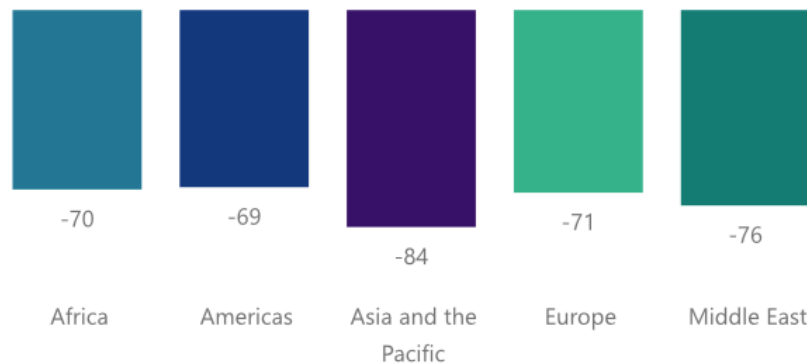
YTD available

January - December...

Change by month (%)

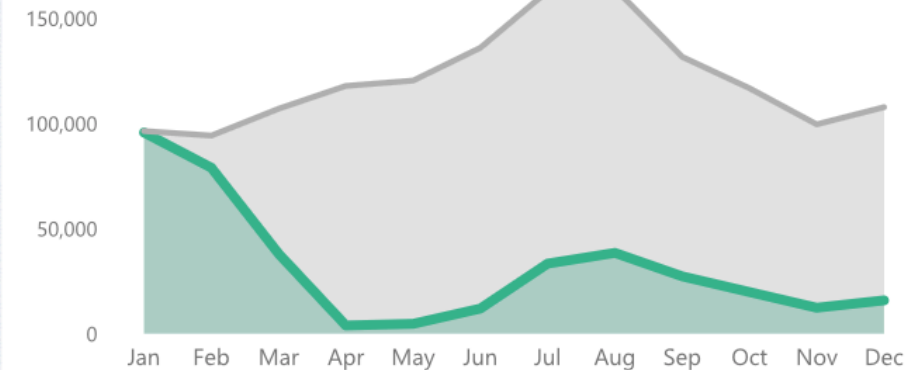


YTD change by region (%)

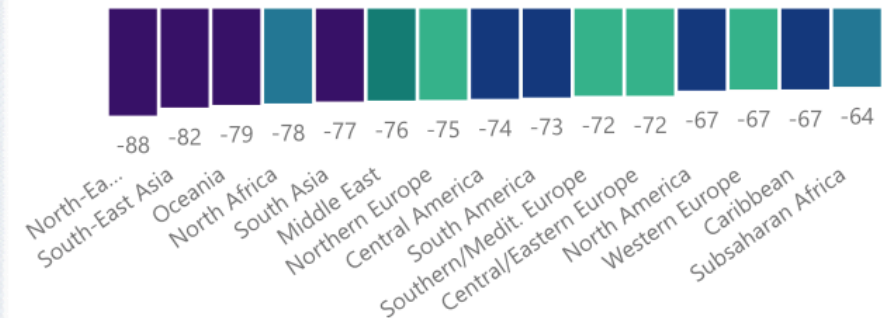


International tourist arrivals (thousands)

● Current year (2020) ● Previous year (2019)



YTD change by subregion (%)



- Loss of 850 million to 1.1 billion international tourists
- Loss of US\$ 910 billion to US\$ 1.2 trillion in export revenues from tourism
- 100 to 120 million jobs at risk

Potential impacts of COVID-19 in destinations



100s of papers & opinions

ht india cities coronavirus opinion world cricket entertainment education trending videos tech podcasts web stories lifestyle •••

Covid-19: Kenya wildlife reserves threatened as tourists stay away

In the Maasai Mara, one of Africa's most highly-rated wildlife reserves located in the vast flat plains of the Great Rift Valley, the local Maasai community, traditional herders who make up 2.5 percent of the population, now depend almost exclusively upon tourism for their livelihood.

TRAVEL Updated: Jul 13, 2020 11:00 IST

ht Agence France-Presse | Posted by Saumya Sharma
Talek, Kenya



Travel

Halt in ecotourism threatens conservation efforts worldwide



A visitor zip-lines above the tree canopy in Costa Rica's Monteverde National Park; the country is among those where ecotourism initiatives have been adversely impacted by the pandemic. (iStock)

By Hugh Biggar

Safari tourism on brink of extinction as insurers and government fiddle

Fine print gives rise to a paradoxical situation — the lockdown prevented infections on which insurance payouts are now contingent

30 JUNE 2020 - 20:59 by DON SCOTT AND BRUCE JENKINS

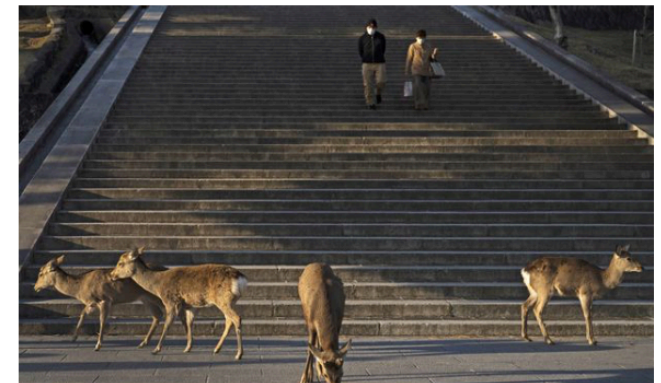


Tourists on safari in SA. Picture: 123RF.COM

Coronavirus-fuelled tourism meltdown yields pros and cons for conservation

ADAM BISBY
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL
PUBLISHED MARCH 17, 2020

2 COMMENTS SHARE



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

ANIMALS | WILDLIFE WATCH

Pandemic-induced poaching surges in Uganda

Lions, giraffes and even a silverback gorilla are recent casualties of the collapse of ecotourism.



See <https://annaspenceley.wordpress.com/2020/04/02/covid-19-and-sustainable-tourism/>

Destinations emptied



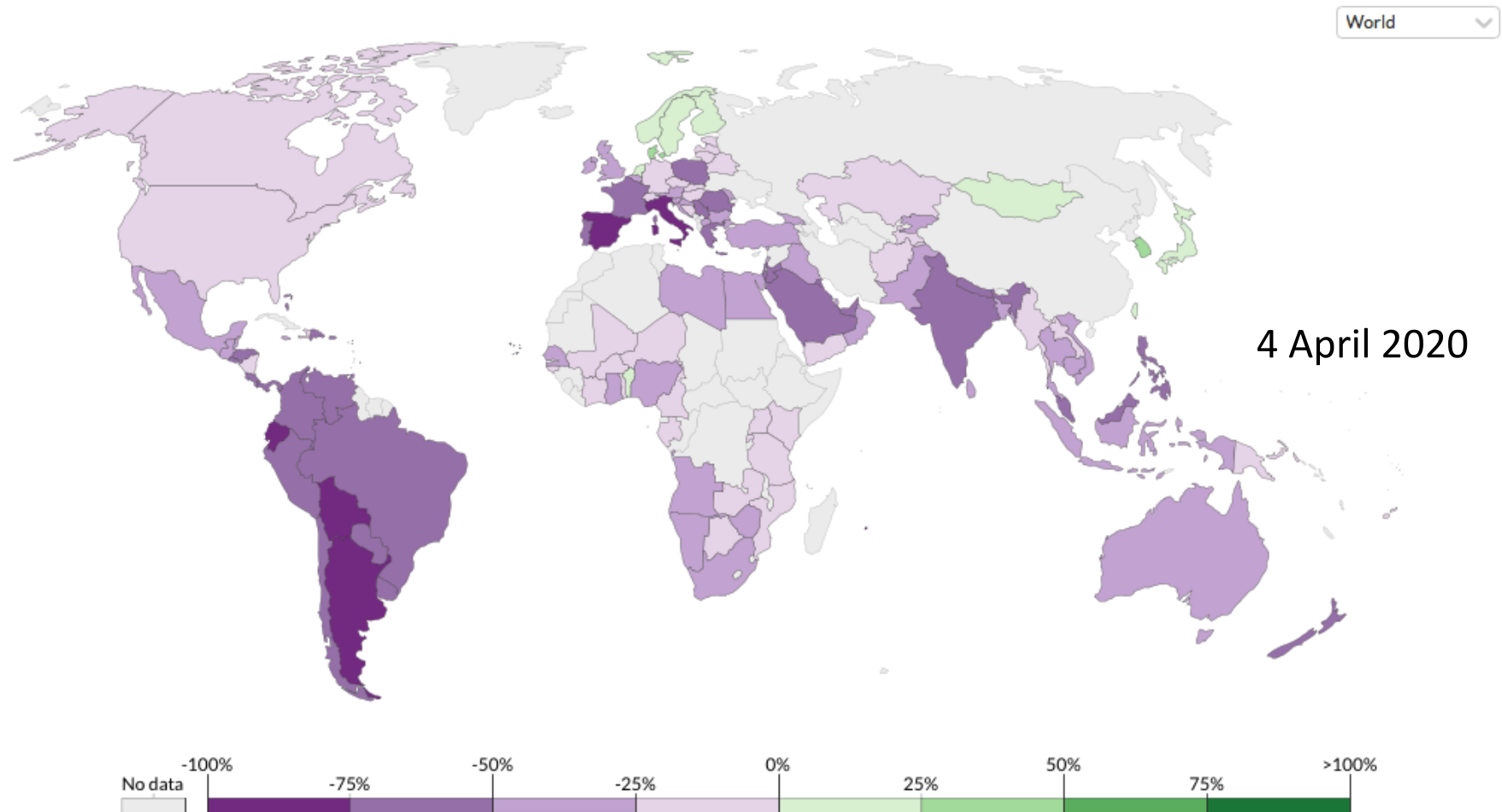
<https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/travel-leisure/article/3074414/coronavirus-and-after-amazing-photos-compare-asias>

Protected area closures

Parks and outdoor spaces: How did the number of visitors change since the beginning of the pandemic?, Apr 4, 2020

Our World
in Data

Change in visitor numbers is measured relative to a baseline day; a baseline day is the median value from the 5-week period between Jan 3rd and Feb 6th 2020. This index is smoothed to the rolling 7-day average.



Source: Google COVID-19 Community Mobility Trends – Last updated 29 October, 15:02 (London time)
Note: It's not recommended to compare levels across countries; local differences in categories could be misleading.

OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

<https://ourworldindata.org/>



Protected area closures

“Virunga National Park closed the park due to possible effect that COVID-19 would have on the mountain gorillas, being an endangered species, we had to put their welfare as a priority above everything, so therefore we have had 100% cancellations and have taken no bookings. Therefore the financial effect of COVID-19 has been devastating on cash flow for the park”.

Coronavirus: Great apes on lockdown over threat of disease

By Helen Briggs
BBC Environment correspondent

10 April 2020



Coronavirus pandemic



GETTY IMAGES

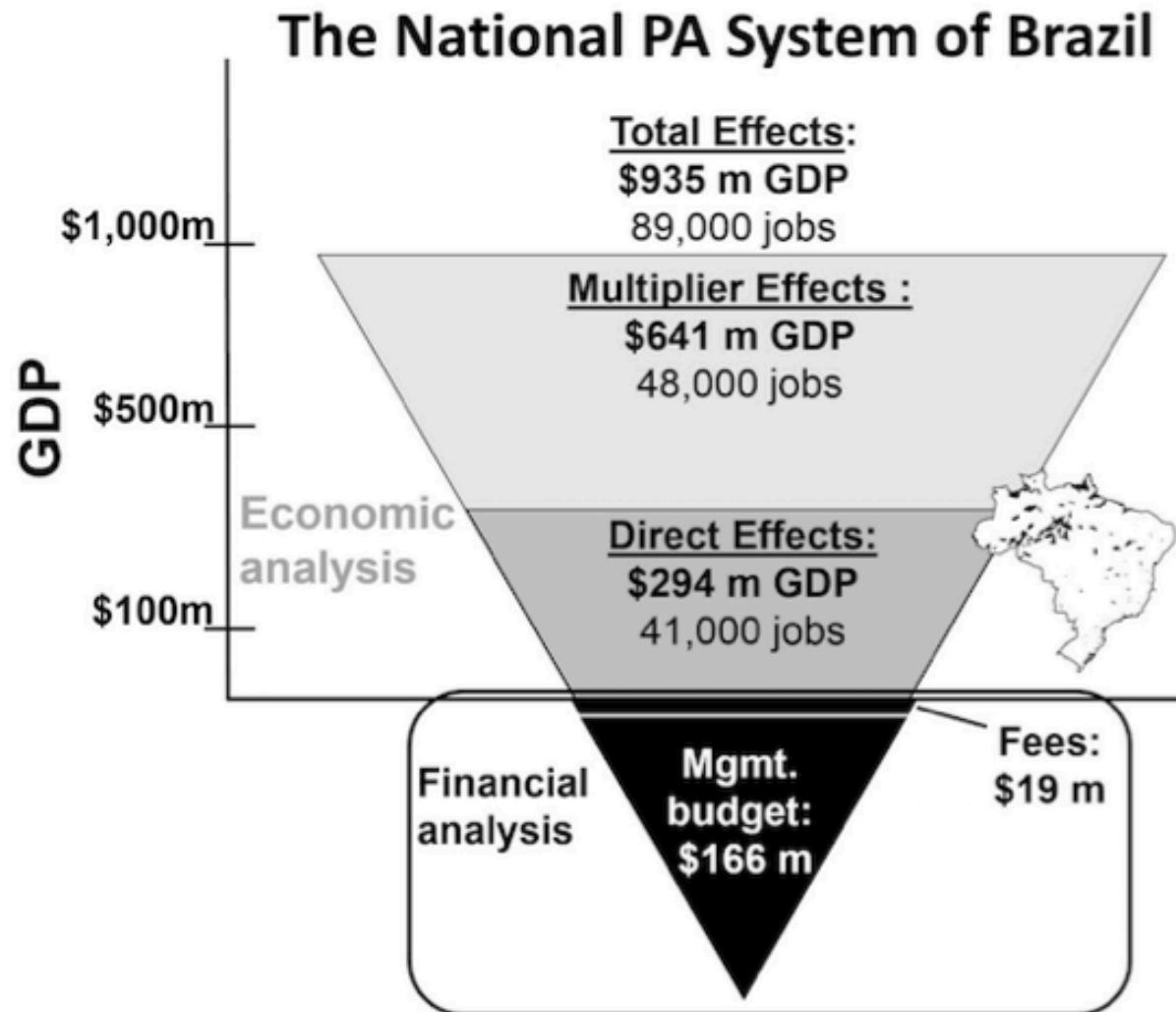
It's not known how the virus might affect great apes like gorillas

Spenceley, 2021 a & b; Briggs, 2020

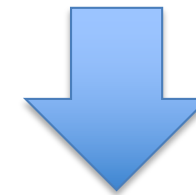
Economic effects of COVID-19 on nature-based tourism

Economic effects in 2018

Economic effects in 2020



Reduction from 15.3 million to 7 or 8 million visits



Losses of:

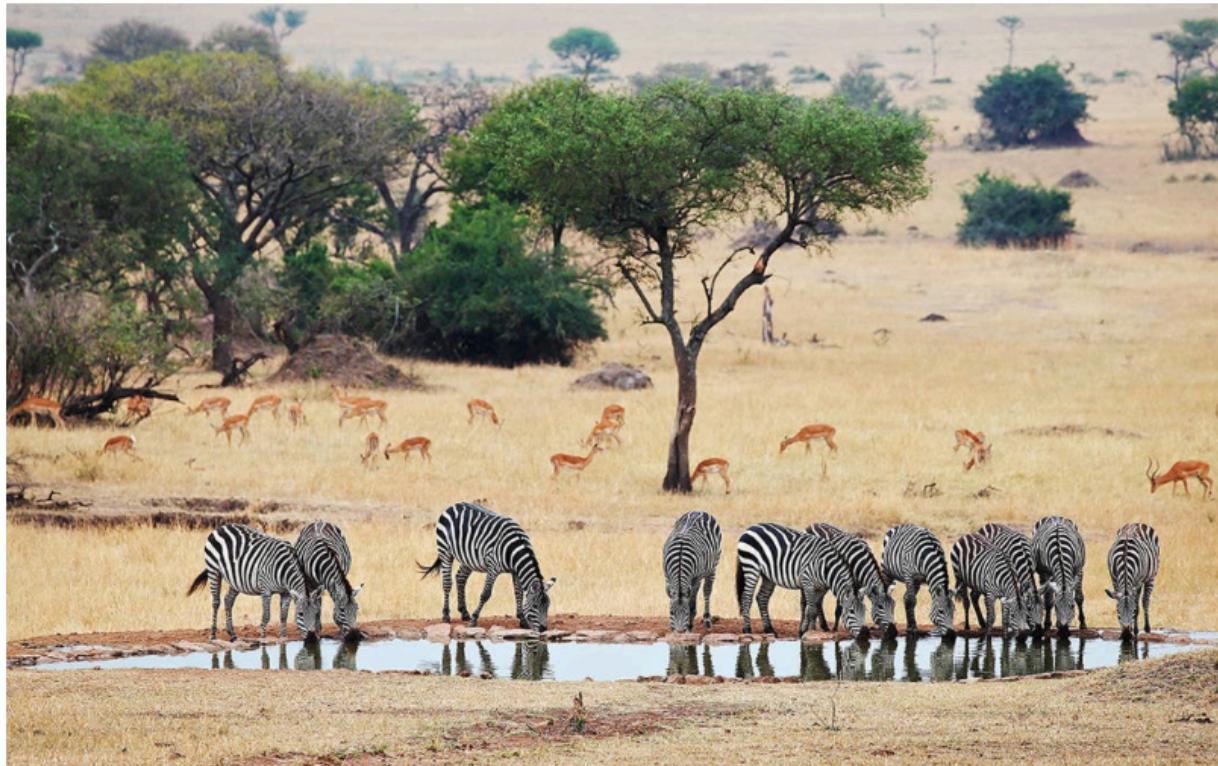
- US\$1.6 billion in total sales
- 55,000 permanent or temporary jobs
- US\$ 410 million income for employees and business owners
- US\$ 575 million in total GDP value in Brazil



Threat of loosing protected areas?

The Future of Africa's Wild Places— and Why Safaris Matter

By Jennifer Flowers May 6, 2020

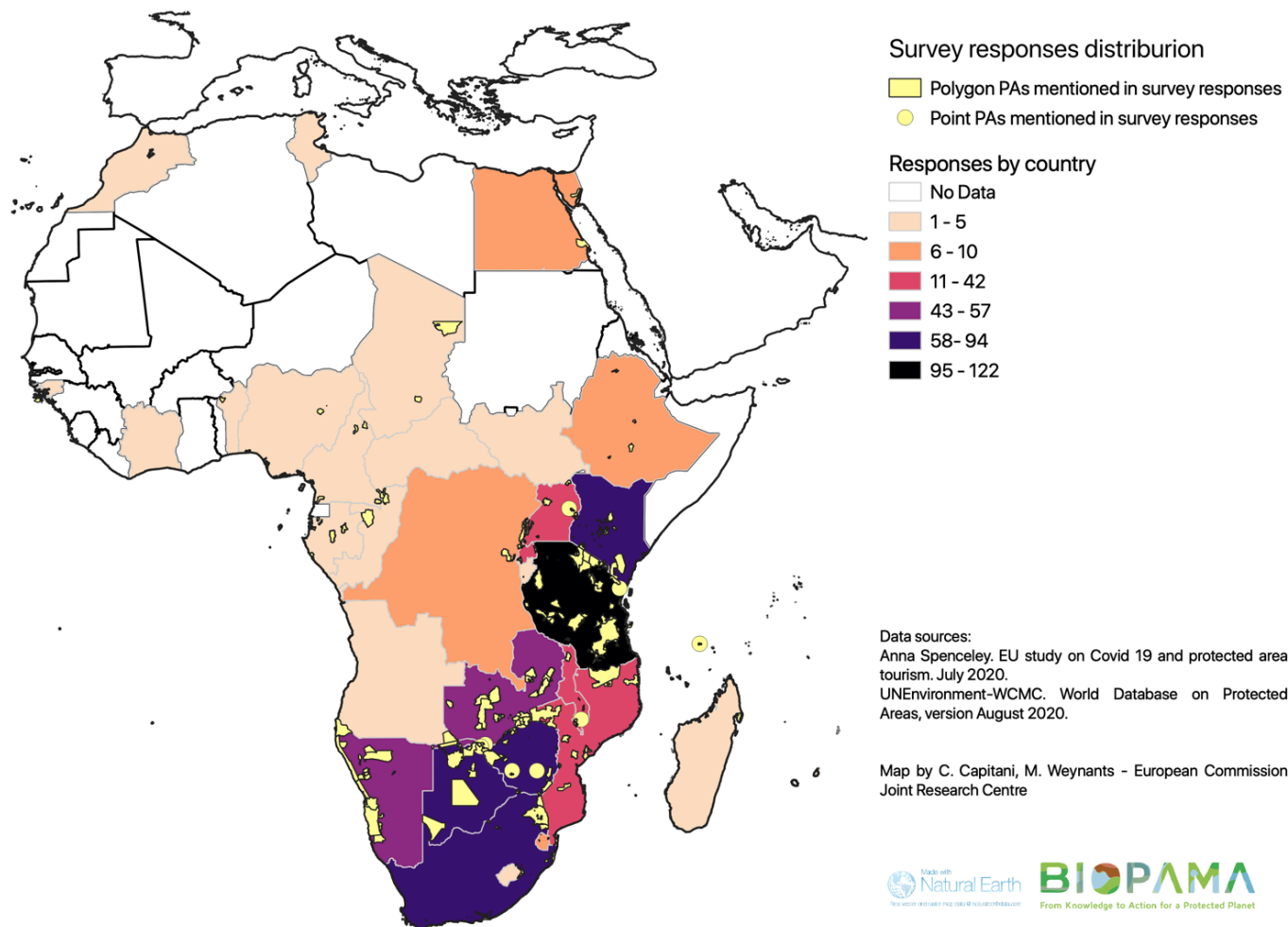


Courtesy of Singita

Zebra at a watering hole in Tanzania's Grumeti Reserve, a private, 350,000-acre reserve where Singita has five properties

<https://www.afar.com/magazine/how-the-coronavirus-is-impacting-conservation-efforts-in-africa>

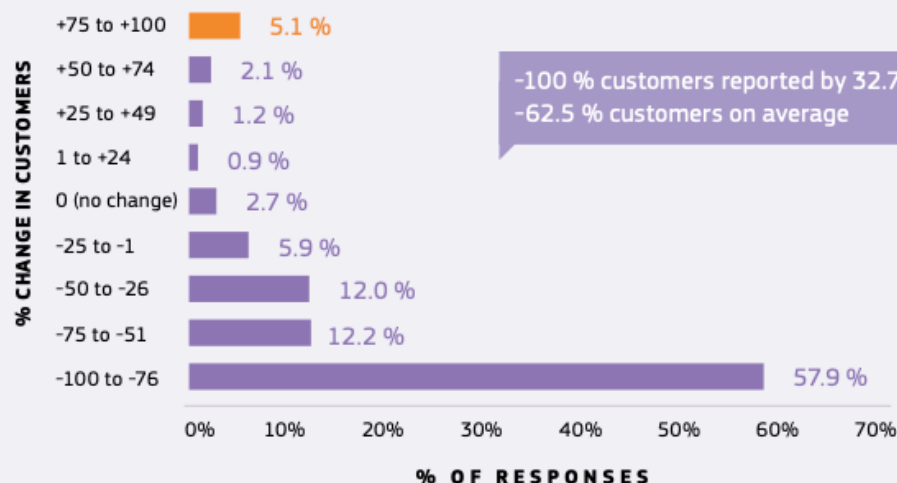
COVID-19 and nature-based tourism



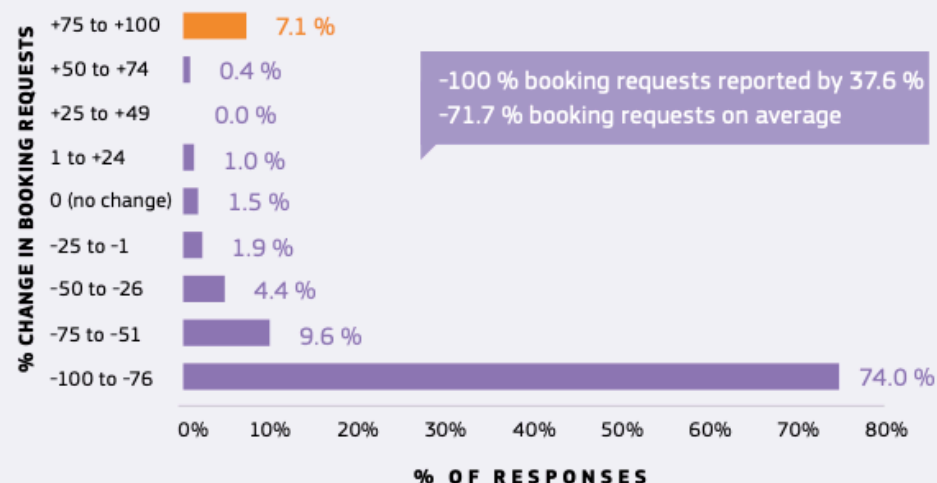
<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bda7e04d-7c9c-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-194167807>

Changes in customers and future booking requests

Change in number of customers in March 2020 compared with the same period last year, due to coronavirus



Change in booking requests for future months due to the coronavirus outbreak, compared to the same period last year

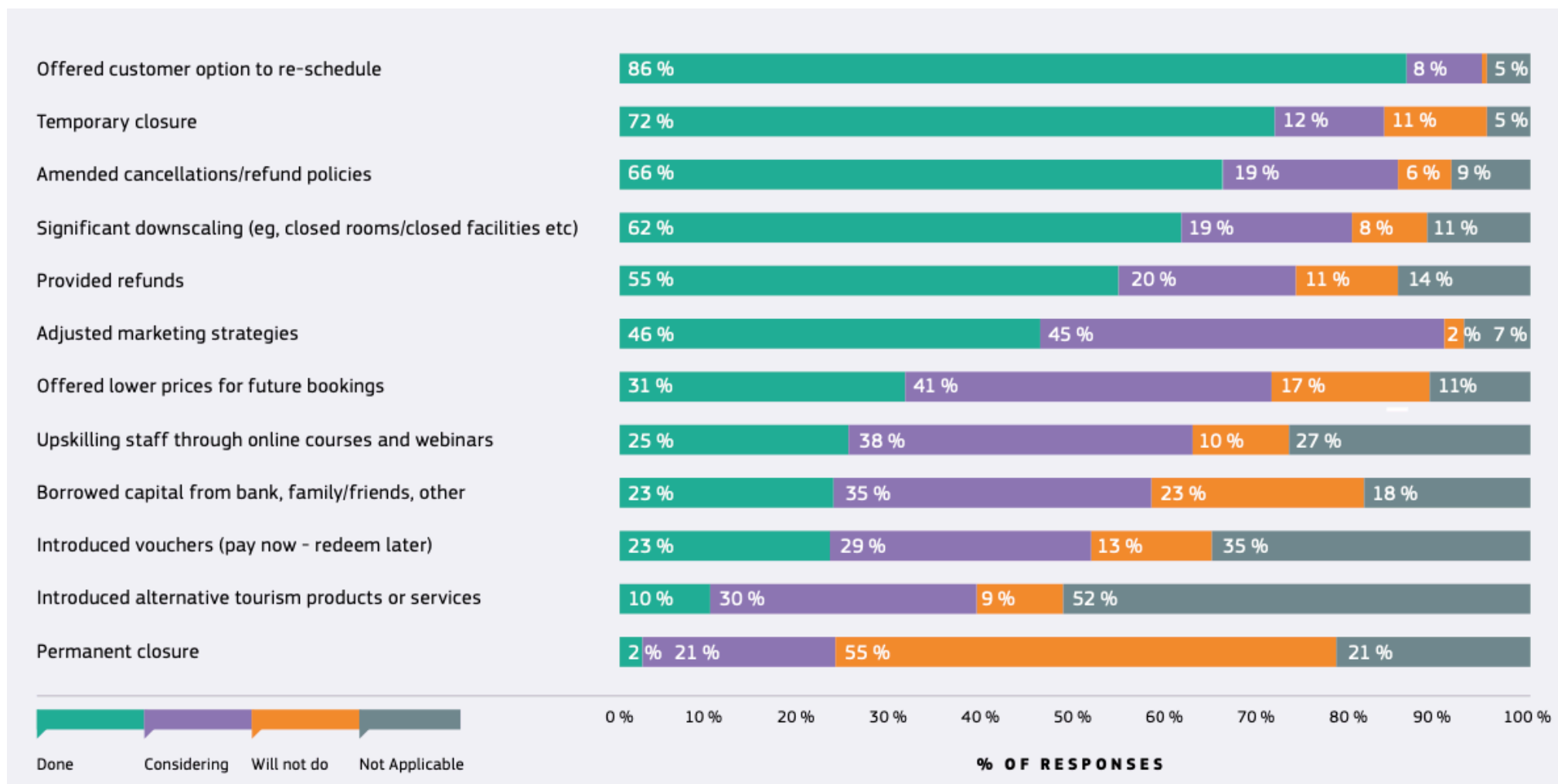


Note:

All respondents reporting +75 % were contacted to verify their responses. Most changed their response to a negative figure, but some did not reply. It is therefore possible that some the outstanding respondents in the +75 % category intended a negative figure.

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bda7e04d-7c9c-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-194167807>

Business measures put in place to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19



<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bda7e04d-7c9c-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-194167807>

Changes in local employment due to COVID-19

- 543 African operators reporting staff numbers in the last completed financial year **collectively employed 48 041 people** (with an average of 88 staff each).
- The majority are **local people** (59 % are recruited from within 50 km), followed by nationals (33 %) and expatriates (8 %).





Values for conservation

Type of procurement	Source (%)		Local spend in the last full FY (USD)	Predicted change in local spend in the current FY (%)	Estimated change in value of local procurement in the current FY (USD)	
	Average	Average	Total	Average	Average	Total
Environmental services (e.g. security, anti-poaching, park or concession fees, etc.)	Imported: 8.3 % National: 37.7 % Local: 54.0 % (n=369)	161 034 (n=358)	57 650 343 (n=358)	-36.1 % (n=388)	-100 231 (n=254)	-25 458 724 (n=254)

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bda7e04d-7c9c-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-194167807>



Reductions or increases in wildlife crime?

Local news

Sharp drop in rhino poaching amid lockdown

The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries has reported a significant decline in the number of rhino poaching incidents, not only during the lockdown, but since the beginning of the year.

• April 29, 2020

Danell Watts 1 minute read



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

ANIMALS | WILDLIFE WATCH

Pandemic-induced poaching surges in Uganda

Lions, giraffes and even a silverback gorilla are recent casualties of the collapse of ecotourism.



See <https://annaspenceley.wordpress.com/2020/04/02/covid-19-and-sustainable-tourism/>



and while tourists are away . . .

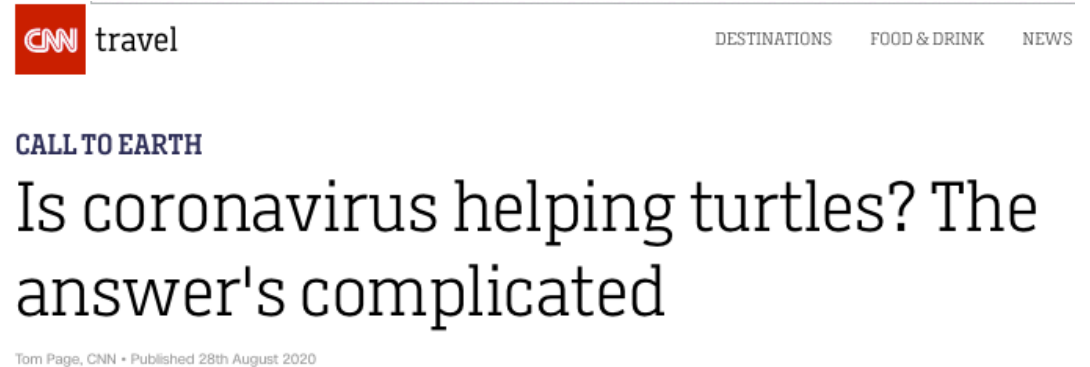


Coronavirus: Lions nap on road during South African lockdown

16 April 2020

f t e Share

Coronavirus pandemic



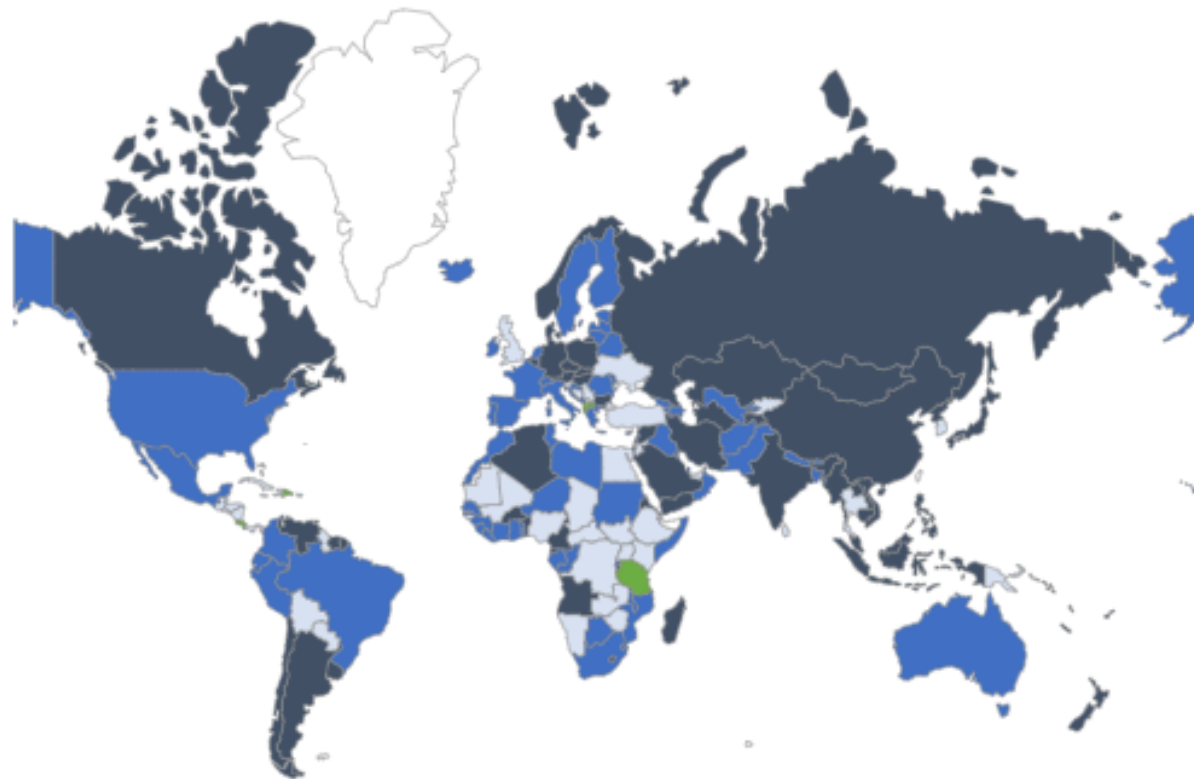
See <https://annaspenceley.wordpress.com/2020/04/02/covid-19-and-sustainable-tourism/>

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COVID - 19 RELATED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

● Complete Closure ● Lifted ● Partial Closure ● Testing/Quarantine



Select a month to see results for the selected month (based on the Travel Restrictions report)

Apr 2020

May 2020

Jun 2020

Jul 2020

Sep 2020

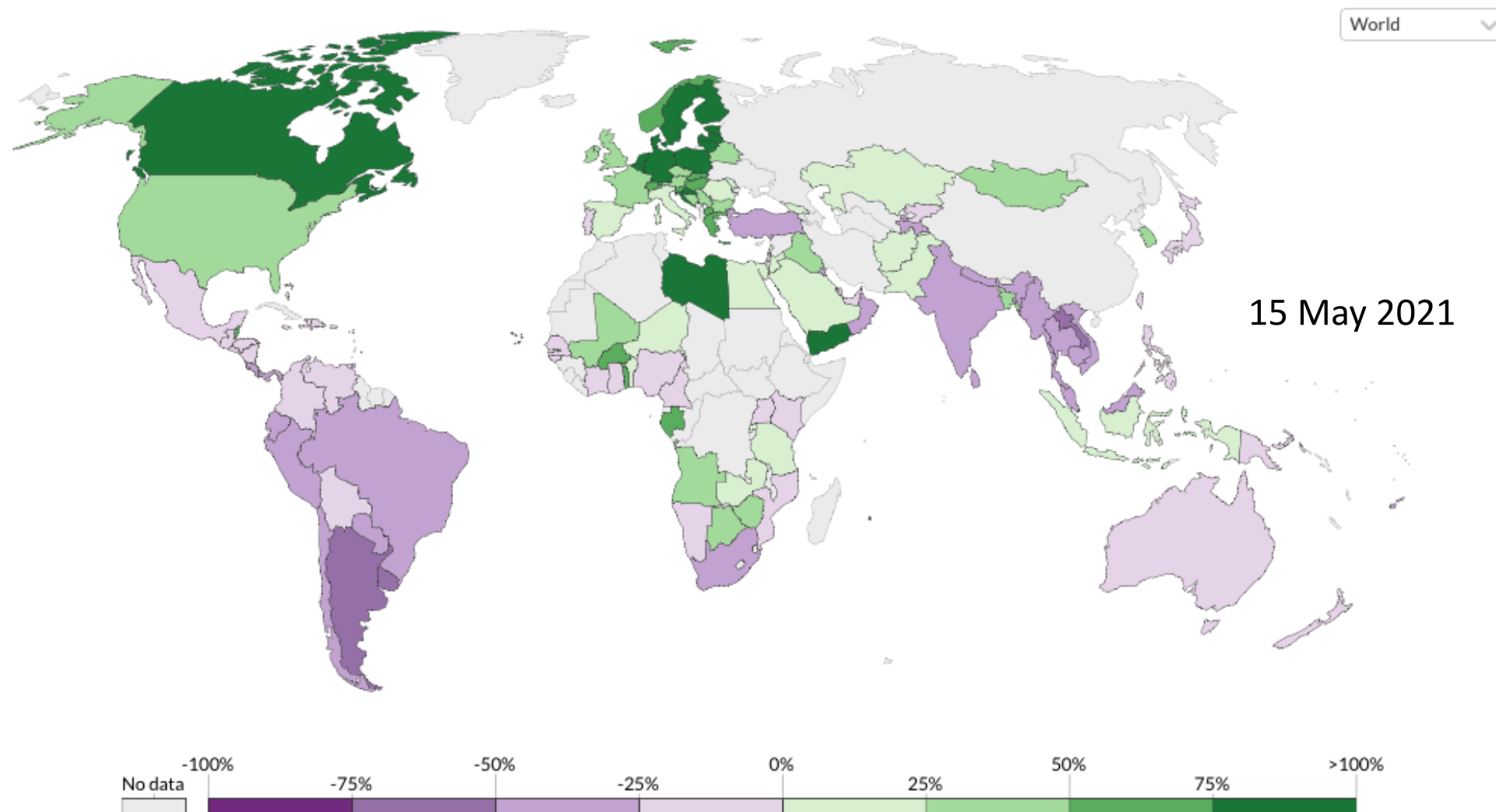
Nov 2020

Feb 2021

Parks and outdoor spaces: How did the number of visitors change since the beginning of the pandemic?, May 15, 2021

Our World
in Data

This data shows how the number of visitors to parks and outdoor spaces has changed relative to the period before the pandemic. This includes places like local parks, national parks, public beaches, marinas, dog parks, plazas, public gardens.



Source: Google COVID-19 Community Mobility Trends – Last updated 19 May, 16:21 (London time)
Note: It's not recommended to compare levels across countries; local differences in categories could be misleading.

OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

Feb 17, 2020

May 15, 2021

<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/change-visitors-parks-covid>

World Heritage Sites with different approaches

BBC

Machu Picchu reopens after eight-month Covid closure

1 day ago

Coronavirus pandemic



Officials held a special ceremony as the site reopened

BBC

Viral photo sparks concerns about Indonesia's 'Jurassic Park'

27 October



SAVE KOMODO NOW

This photo went viral on social media in Indonesia over the weekend

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-54775061>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54701239>



Healthy Parks Healthy People



Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe



The Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe Programme is developed by the EUROPARC Federation and built on the innovative practise gathered by the [Health and Protected Areas](#) commission over several years.

Our Nature Our Health

- improved sleep
- increased productivity
- lowered stress
- increased self-esteem

PARKS

PARKS VOL 26.1 MAY 2020

<https://www.ontarioparks.com/hphp/engage>
<https://www.europarc.org/nature/healthy-parks-healthy-people-europe/>
<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/one-health>



EDITORIAL ESSAY: COVID-19 AND PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS

Marc Hockings^{1*}, Nigel Dudley², Wendy Elliott³, Mariana Napolitano Ferreira⁴, Kathy MacKinnon⁵, MKS Pasha⁶, Adrian Phillips⁷, Sue Stolton⁸, Stephen Woodley⁸, Mike Appleton⁹, Olivier Chassot¹⁰, James Fitzsimons^{11,12}, Chris Galliers¹³, Rachel Golden Kroner¹⁴, John Goodrich¹⁵, Jo Hopkins¹⁶, William Jackson¹⁷, Harry Jonas¹⁸, Barney Long⁹, Musonda Mumba¹⁹, Jeffrey Parrish²⁰, Midori Paxton²¹, Carol Phua²², Raina Plowright²³, Madhu Rao²⁴, Kent Redford²⁵, John Robinson²⁶, Carlos Manuel Rodríguez²⁷, Trevor Sandwith²⁸, Anna Spenceley²⁹, Candice Stevens³⁰, Gary Tabor³¹, Sebastian Tröeng¹⁴, Sean Willmore¹⁷ and Angela Yang³²

* Corresponding author: editor@parksjournal.com

1

Decline

News and concern spreads rapidly, people begin practicing social distancing and **travel declines** sharply as a result

2

Plateau

Potential travelers **stay inside** to ensure safety and help “flatten the curve”

3

Emerge

As the crisis begins to pass, lockdown restrictions begin to ease and people begin to venture out again to **visit restaurants and businesses in their home city**

4

Domestic

As confidence continues to grow, people feel more comfortable traveling again and begin to visit friends and family **in their home country**

5

International

In the final stage of recovery, people once again feel comfortable **traveling abroad**

Nature & beach destinations are early beneficiaries of increasing demand

Consumers are 218% more likely to want to take a trip where they can relax compared to before the pandemic

Nearly two thirds (59%) would prefer to go somewhere off the beaten path versus a popular destination

... but domestic overtourism in protected areas

Art World

After China Eased Social-Distancing Rules, 20,000 Visitors Flooded This UNESCO World Heritage Site—Forcing It to Shut Down Again

The throngs of visitors were taking advantage of temporary free admission.

Caroline Goldstein, April 6, 2020



A view of the Huangshan in China. Courtesy of Wikipedia Commons.

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National parks

• This article is more than 1 month old

'The whole place was a toilet': Dartmoor reels from camping boom



Steven Morris

@stevenmorris20

Sun 6 Sep 2020 23.49 AEST

f t e

239

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This land is your land

National parks

• This article is more than 5 months old

'Not a mask in sight': thousands flock to Yellowstone as park reopens



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About this content

Samuel Gilbert in Jackson, Wyoming

@samuelgilbert1

Wed 20 May 2020 04.01 AEST

f t e

10,060

▲ Visitors watch Old Faithful erupt on Monday afternoon on Yellowstone national park's opening day. Photograph: Gabriela Campos/The Guardian



. . . and fear of tourists

NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC



“I’m scared of the tourists not returning, and I’m also scared of them coming back and bringing the virus here.”

Laura Mora, La Cuchara de la Abuela diner,
Monteverde Cloud forest, Costa Rica

US national park reopenings raise fears
of coronavirus outbreaks

The Guardian

Rural towns on the edge of parks split between fear of infection
and imperative to revive tourism-dependent economies



▲ Zion national park in Utah, one of the country's most popular, received its first visitors in over a month this week as pandemic precautions were eased. Photograph: Rick Bowmer/AP

“We don’t want the parks to become super spreaders . . . These communities simply do not have the capacity or the medical infrastructure to deal with an outbreak.”

Timothy Whithouse, Public Employees for
Environmental Responsibility, USA

www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/2020/04/costa-rica-tourism-struggles-to-survive-during-coronavirus/

New normal or back to normal?

THE CONVERSATION



Shutterstock

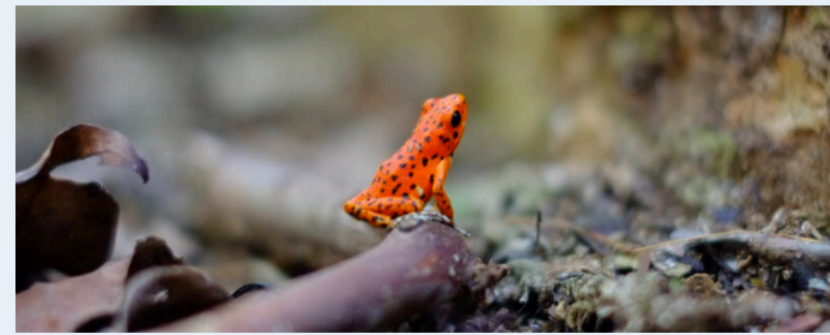
Tourism desperately wants a return to the 'old normal' but that would be a disaster

Susanne Becken, Griffith University

February 19, 2021 11.03am AEDT

PATA
Pacific Asia Travel Association

Build Back Better: Can sustainable tourism regenerate nature?



<https://theconversation-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/theconversation.com/amp/tourism-desperately-wants-a-return-to-the-old-normal-but-that-would-be-a-disaster-154182>
<https://www.pata.org/blog/build-back-better-can-sustainable-tourism-regenerate-nature>

“Nature is sending us a clear message. We are harming the natural world, to our own detriment”

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres



Devastated by pandemic, tourism sector must be rebuilt in a safe, equitable and climate friendly way – UN chief



©Eric Ganz | Tourists in India take an elephant ride at the Amber Fort, outside of Jaipur.



**ONE PLANET VISION FOR
A RESPONSIBLE RECOVERY OF
THE TOURISM SECTOR**



Recovery, Resiliency and
Rejuvenation', 28 September
2020

Monday, 28 September 2020
2 min read

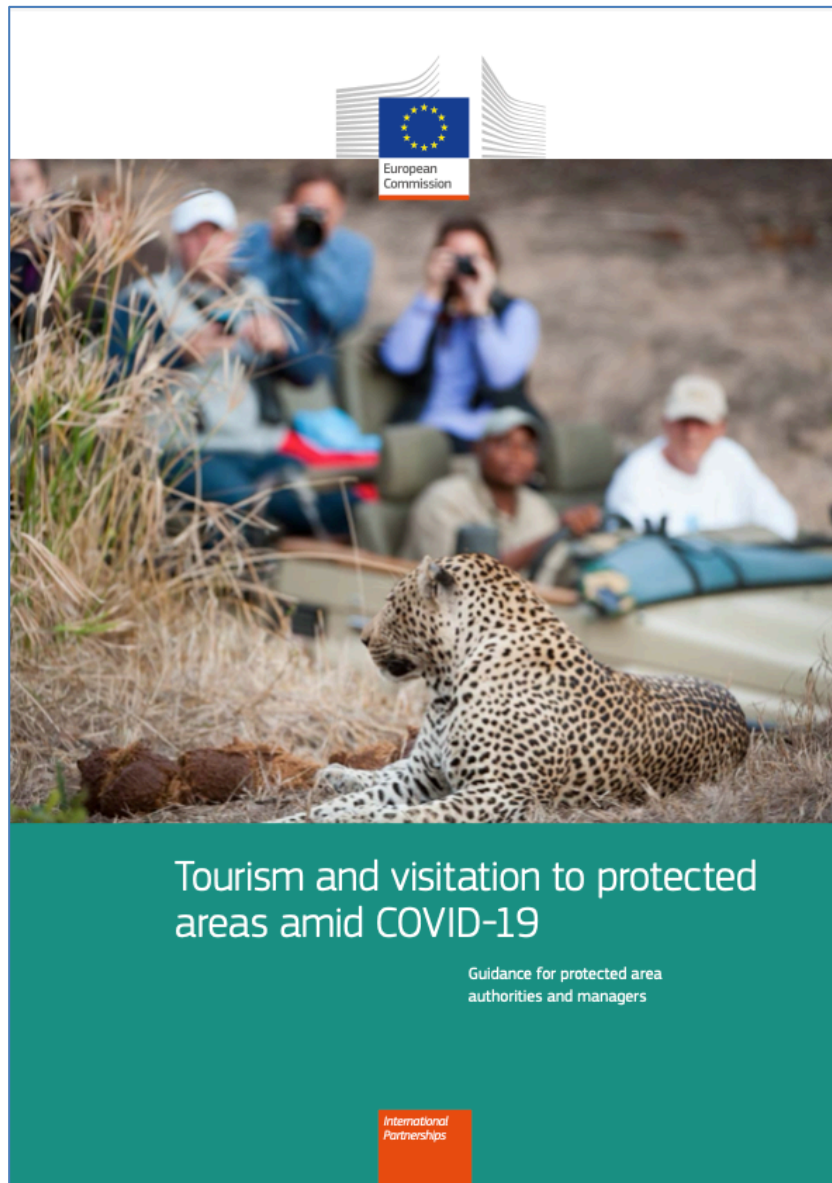


See <https://annaspenceley.wordpress.com/2020/04/02/covid-19-and-sustainable-tourism/>

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Provide guidance for tourism amid COVID

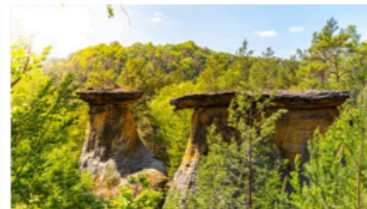


See <https://annaspenceley.wordpress.com/2020/04/02/covid-19-and-sustainable-tourism/>
& <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/general-publications/publications>

Share inspiring stories & ideas



TRANSFORMING VISION INTO ACTION - OPED



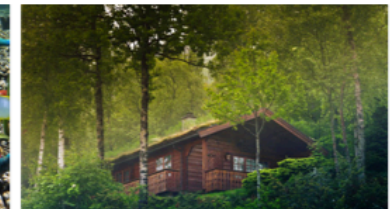
OPED TOURISM AND PROTECTED AREAS (IUCN/ WCPA)

Sustainable recovery of tourism in protected areas from the COVID-19 pandemic



OP-ED IBEROSTAR GROUP

Responsible Tourism: The Key to Building Back a Better Industry



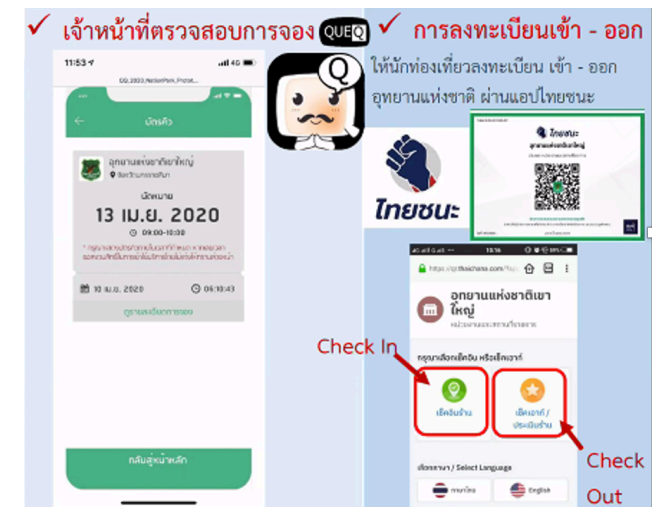
OP-ED THE LONG RUN

Conservation and community must come first for tourism to recover responsibly and build back better for people and planet



THE FUTURE OF NATURE-BASED TOURISM

Impacts of COVID-19 and paths to sustainability



<https://www.unwto.org/covid-19-oneplanet-responsible-recovery-initiatives>
<https://luchoffmanninstitute.org/future-nature-based-tourism-report/> Worapongsathon, 2020

Share inspiring stories & ideas



8 October 2020 - TAPAS - Social/cultural Dimensions of Protected Areas and COVID-19

12 November 2020 - TAPAS: Economic Dimensions of Tourism and Protected Areas

7 December 2020 - Ecological Dimensions of Tourism and Protected Areas

DIGITAL COMMUNITY LAB

The future of tourism in natural areas - Impact, governance, financing

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Apply by 7 Oct. 2020

DEADLINE EXTENDED



TRANSFORMING TOURISM FOR A RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE POST-COVID WORLD
9 November 2020 - 13:00 - 14:30 CET

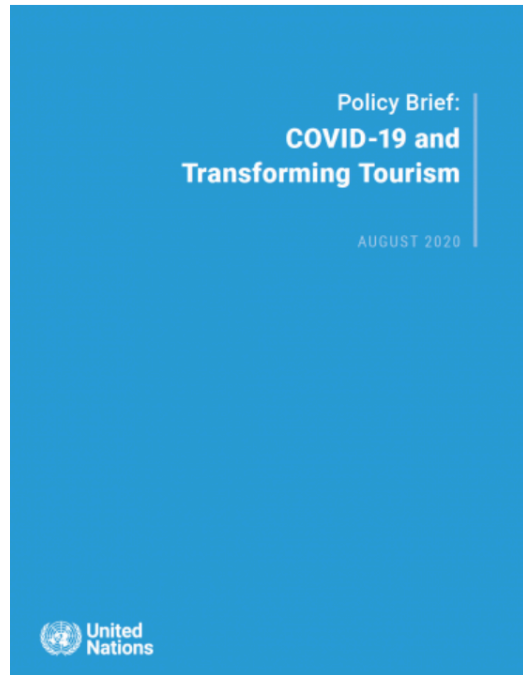
UN environment programme

 Dr Anna Spenceley Opening presentation	 Anne Pluinage-Nierengarten Ministry for Ecological Transition, France	 Tim Fairhurst European Tourism Association
 Peter Haxton Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	 Alina Szasz Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Center	 Sergio Guerreiro Tourism Portugal

Online side-event of the 26th Meeting of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy

See <https://annaspenceley.wordpress.com/2020/04/02/covid-19-and-sustainable-tourism/>

Reinforce sustainable tourism messages



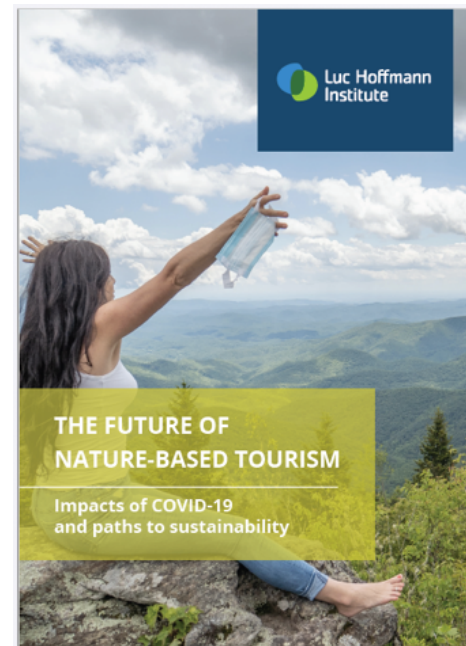
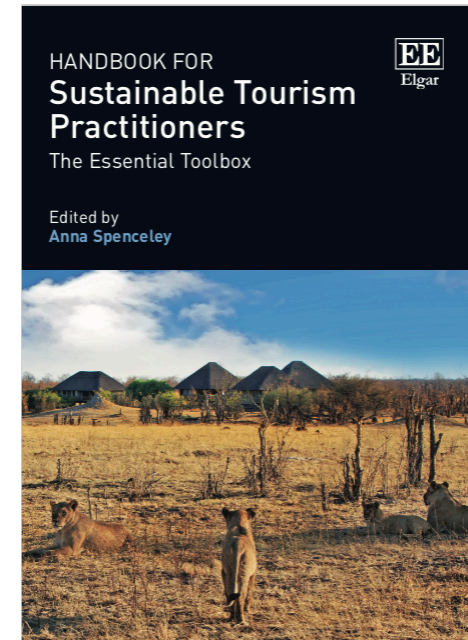
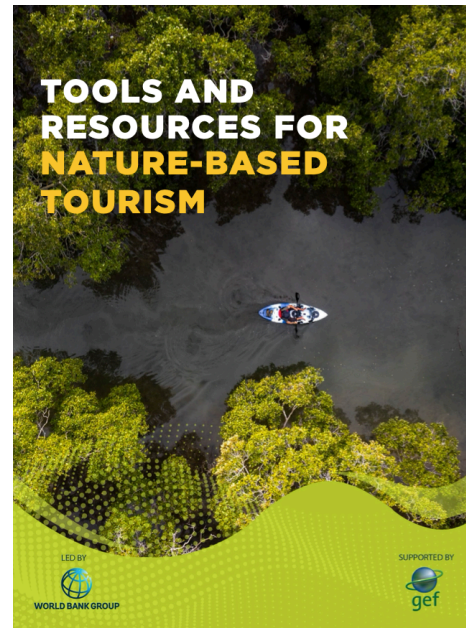
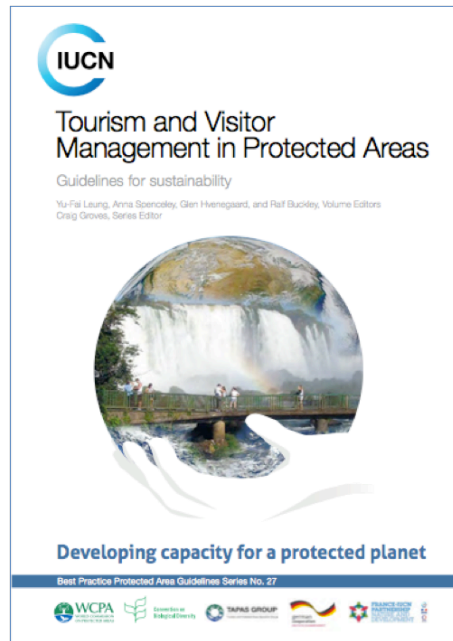
OECD Tourism Papers 2021/01

Managing tourism development for sustainable and inclusive recovery

OECD

See <https://annaspenceley.wordpress.com/2020/04/02/covid-19-and-sustainable-tourism/>

Compile and disseminate knowledge - linked with training & accessible formats



**Investment Platform
for Conservation
Economies and
Landscapes in Africa**

Concept
June 2020

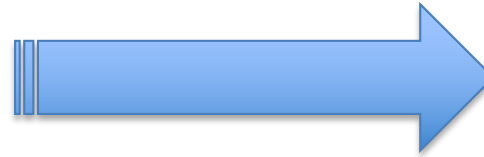


Improve access to funding:
Emergency relief + longer term

See <https://annaspenceley.wordpress.com/2020/04/02/covid-19-and-sustainable-tourism/>

Change how we measure success

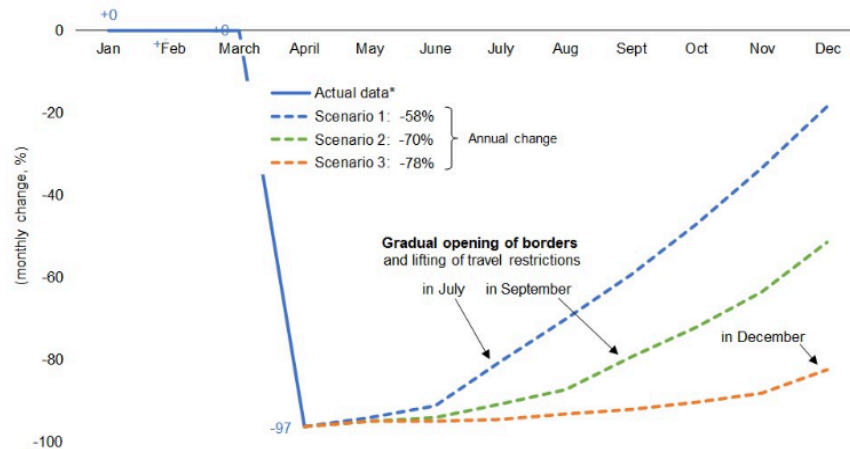
Arrivals & \$



Sustainability

2018 – 9th consecutive year of sustained growth

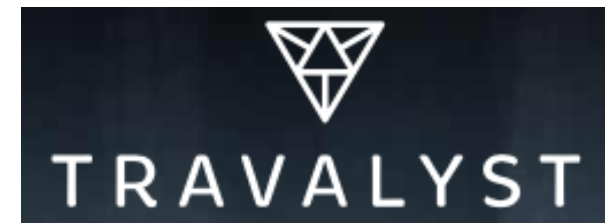
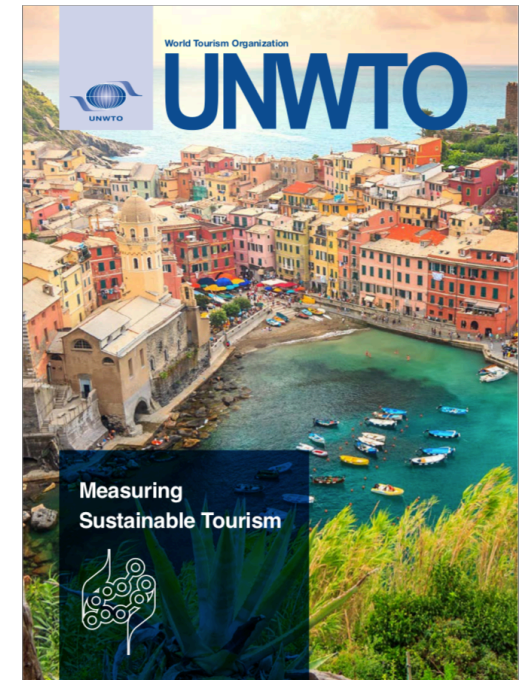
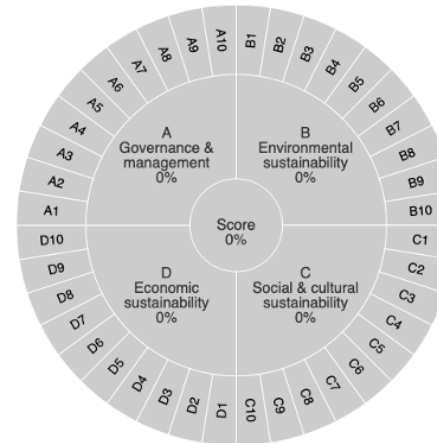
International tourist arrivals in 2020: three scenarios (YoY monthly change, %)



* Actual data through April includes estimates for countries which have not yet reported data.

Source: UNWTO (June 2020)

Note: the scenarios presented in this graph are not forecasts. They represent alternative monthly change in arrivals based on the gradual opening of national borders and lifting of travel restrictions on different dates, still subject to high uncertainty.



Strengthen partnerships to build back better



TAPAS GROUP

Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group



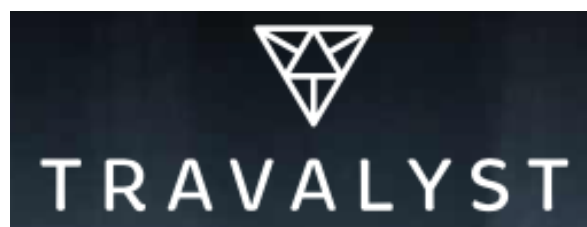
One planet
travel with care



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



World
Heritage
Convention

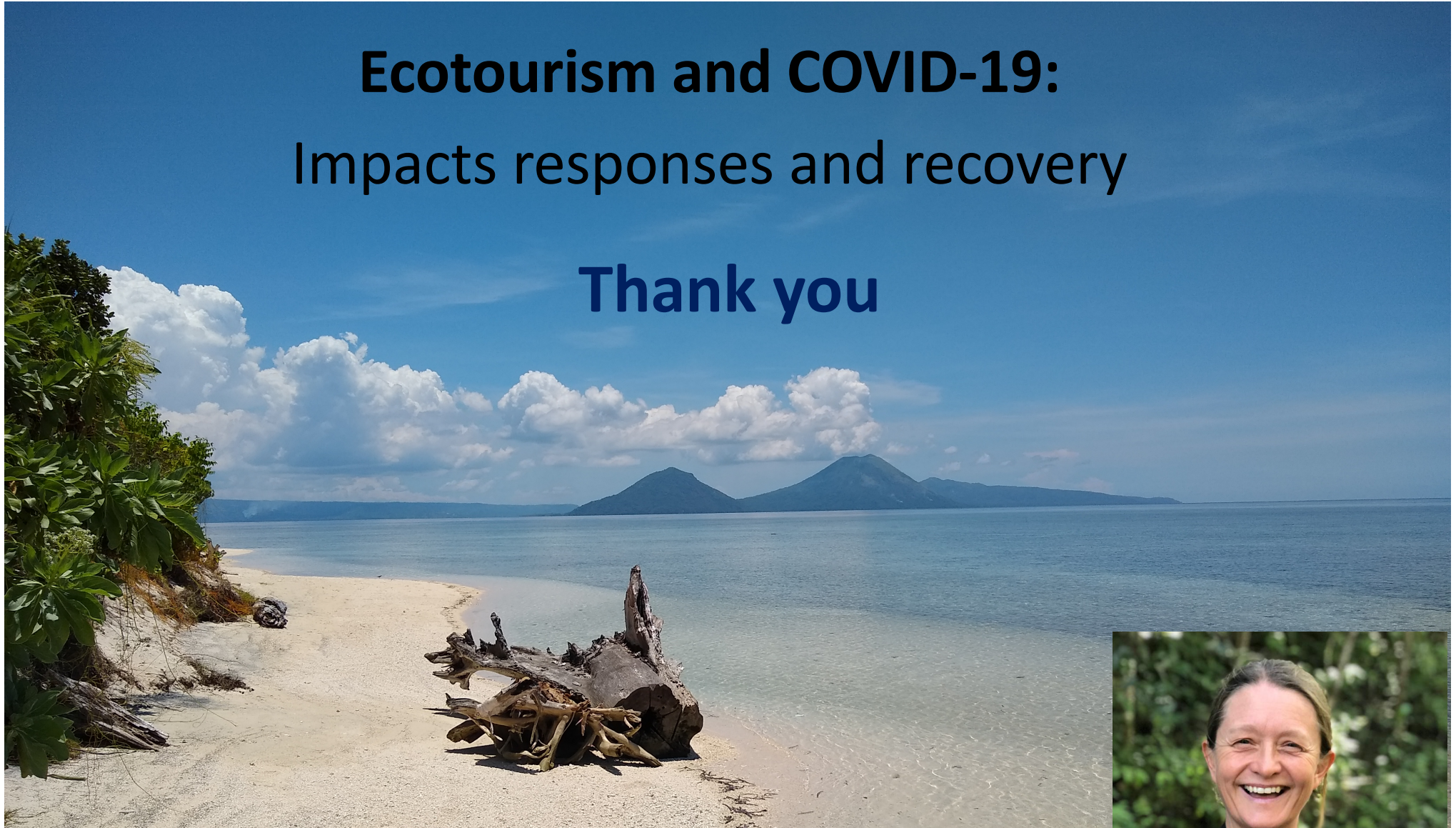


ADVENTURE TRAVEL
TRADE ASSOCIATION

Ecotourism and COVID-19:

Impacts responses and recovery

Thank you



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