



## UN Tourism opens call for Best Tourism Villages 2026

**Madrid, 25 February 2026:** UN Tourism has again opened applications as it looks to recognize the world's Best Tourism Villages.

Since its launch in 2021, Best Tourism Villages by UN Tourism attracted more than 1,000 applications from 100 countries. Today, the Network brings together 319 rural destinations worldwide, including more than 230 villages recognized as Best Tourism Villages and 83 taking part in the Upgrade Programme, representing a total of 65 countries across five world regions: Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Middle East.

UN Tourism Secretary-General Shaikha Al Nuwais says: "Tourism is a proven game changer for rural communities. And with our Best Tourism Villages we are showcasing the very best examples, where it's keeping traditions alive, supporting small businesses or preserving nature. Now we want to expand our network and give tourists even more chances to enjoy authentic experiences make a real difference when the travel."

### Best Tourism Villages 2026 - Applications Open

UN Tourism Member States are invited to submit up to eight candidate villages through their respective National Tourism Administrations (NTAs).

Applications will close on 9 June 2026. The villages recognized as Best Tourism Villages 2025 will be announced in the third quarter of the year on the occasion of a UN Tourism event.

Applications will be evaluated by an independent Advisory Board of global experts, based on criteria spanning sustainability, governance, cultural and natural heritage, infrastructure, and community wellbeing.

### Advancing Rural Development Through Tourism

As part of the Tourism for Rural Development Programme at UN Tourism, the Best Tourism Villages flagship initiative seeks to harness tourism as a catalyst for rural prosperity, resilience and well-being. By promoting the protection and promotion of landscapes, cultural diversity, and traditional knowledge systems, the initiative supports innovative tourism approaches that align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The initiative is structured around three core pillars:

- **Recognition as Best Tourism Village**

This recognition is given to rural destinations that demonstrate excellence in preserving cultural and natural heritage, strengthening community-based values and advancing sustainability. Evaluation is based on performance across nine areas covering economic, social and environmental sustainability dimensions.

- **Upgrade Programme**

This component supports villages that do not yet meet all the criteria for recognition. Participating villages receive tailored guidance and technical support to help them close identified gaps and strengthen their tourism development strategies.

- **Best Tourism Villages Network**

The Best Tourism Villages Network is comprised of villages recognized as Best Tourism Villages and those participating in the Upgrade Programme. It serves as a collaborative platform for knowledge-sharing, fostering peer learning, partnerships and capacity-building across regions and sectors.

## Related links

Best Tourism Villages [Video](#)

Tourism for Rural Development Programme [Impact Report](#) (2021-2025)

Learn More About Best Tourism Villages [here](#)