



## Press Release Naturfriends International

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# World Tourism Day: Tourism and Sustainable Transformation

*Vienna, 25 September 2025*

**On the occasion of World Tourism Day on September 27, Naturefriends International is highlighting the transformative potential of tourism as a powerful driver of positive social and environmental change. This year the official celebrations are taking place in Melaka, Malaysia.**

Tourism is more than just an economic sector. It is a catalyst for social progress, promoting education, creating job opportunities, and generating local value. To fully benefit from these advantages, a conscious and inclusive approach is needed that places sustainability, resilience, and social justice at the core of tourism development. This requires good governance, strategic planning, and clear prioritization based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **Genuine efforts instead of greenwashing in tourism**

Sustainability has become increasingly important in tourism at all levels in recent years. Nevertheless, the challenges of a fundamental transformation remain enormous. While destinations, tour operators, and companies are certifying themselves as “sustainable,” airlines are adding “sustainable aviation fuels” to kerosene and pushing for the offsetting of emissions through compensation payments, international air traffic is growing rapidly and pushing the climate crisis.

Sustainable transport offers are making it easier to get around, and the European rail network is growing together, although very slowly. On the other hand, subsidized flights continue to be exempt from kerosene tax and do not pay VAT on international routes, making them cheaper than climate-friendly forms of transport in most cases.

Individual efforts are not enough if the core business remains resource intensive. Only through a profound transformation, accompanied by appropriate legal frameworks and a change in travel behavior, will the tourism sector be able to reduce its ecological footprint.

### **Education, inclusion, and decent working conditions**

Sustainable tourism development requires people-centered planning processes, especially with a view to young people, women, and vulnerable groups. Education plays a key role in this. Despite the growth potential of tourism, almost half of young people in emerging destinations do not have the necessary qualifications to participate effectively. High-quality, accessible education programs are needed to close this gap.

### **Strategic innovation and sustainable investment**

Strategic innovation and responsible entrepreneurship are essential factors in sustainable tourism and must also promote the participation of women and young people. Equally important are sustainable investments that prioritize long-term benefits for local communities, climate protection, and resilience.

## **Tourism is based on intact ecosystems**

Responsible use of natural resources is a central component of sustainable tourism development. Diverse ecosystems and recreation in intact natural environments remain among the most important motives for travel, while uncontrolled tourism development focused on quantitative growth destroys this basis. Here, too, in addition to greater responsibility on the part of the tourism industry, appropriate legal requirements are needed to ensure the careful use of natural resources.

The desire to travel remains unbroken: according to UN Tourism, 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals were recorded in 2024, of which 747 million were in Europe and over 46 million in Austria. Steering this development in a socially and ecologically compatible direction remains a major challenge for the tourism industry, politics, and society.

### **Further Informations:**

NFI RESPECT Sustainable Tourism: [www.nf-int.org/en/themen/sustainable-tourism](http://www.nf-int.org/en/themen/sustainable-tourism)

World Tourism Day: [www.unwto.org/world-tourism-day-2025](http://www.unwto.org/world-tourism-day-2025)

#WTD25

#WorldTourismDay2025

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