



# THE COHESION POLICY SUPPORTS TOURISM IN MOUNTAIN AREAS

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Mountains are home to numerous renowned tourism destinations that attract a considerable number of visitors. The Alps alone attract 120 million tourists every year. Tourism activities vary greatly across Europe's mountain regions, encompassing different seasonal offers, visitor profiles and types of tourism (such as adventure, natural, cultural and gastronomic).

## **WHY IS TOURISM SO IMPORTANT?**

In mountain regions, tourism is a major driver of mountain development, as it helps to boost the local economy, services and infrastructure. Tourism is a key tool to promote the natural and cultural heritage of mountain regions, but certain practices and the pressure of mass tourism can harm their environment.

## **WHAT SOLUTIONS ARE BEING FOUND IN THE MOUNTAINS?**

Today, residents and visitors to mountain regions are looking for new ways to couple the tourism sector with respect for natural ecosystems, for example by reducing plastic waste, identifying solutions for reducing tourism pressures, or opting for more eco-friendly ways to travel. New tourism packages are also being developed in mountain areas to better valorize their cultural heritage and local assets and diversify their tourism offer.

**Thanks to the European Cohesion Policy, the European Union encourages new and more sustainable forms of tourism in mountains.**

**Eager to learn more? Turn the page!**



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# PLASTICOPYR

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## Stop tourist plastic in the mountains!

In the Pyrenees, single-use plastic waste is present in the rivers and has even been detected in fish. Tourist waste is one of the reasons behind this accumulation of plastic.



To make tourism compatible with the conservation of mountain ecosystems, PLASTICOPYR investigates the impact of tourist plastic through citizen science. In practice, local citizens can help by collecting information and data on plastic in their own area of the Pyrenees and pass it on to the project's research organisations. Mountain businesses will then be involved in developing business plans to boost the circular economy, especially in the intersection between plastic production and the tourism sector. Local residents will benefit the most from these activities thanks to a reduction of plastic pollution in the ecosystems of the Pyrenees and to a new cross-border strategy and business models for reducing plastic.

**Mountain area:** Pyrenees (Andorra, France, Spain)  
**Cohesion support:** European Regional Development Fund through Interreg POCTEFA  
**Period:** 2019-2022  
**Website:** <https://plastic0pyr.wordpress.com/>

# ASCENT

## Sustainable and safe solutions to upland tourism



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With the rise of social media, the popularity of the Trolltunga mountains (Norway) increased from 1,000 visitors in 2009 to 88,000 in 2018. Although this influx of new visitors has boosted local businesses and created jobs, it has also brought more waste, threatening sensitive vegetation, water quality and wild reindeer herds. New visitors to Trolltunga are mostly inexperienced travellers with inadequate clothing, preparation and equipment.

In 2015, the death of a 24-year-old student after falling from a cliff while attempting to take a picture highlighted the importance of making Trolltunga's hiking paths both safe and sustainable. Working closely with the local community, a number of steps have been taken to achieve this objective as part of the ASCENT project.

They include building a direct path from Odda car park to Trolltunga with the help of a 15-tonne excavator; the installation of "red T" markers on mountainsides to keep travellers on the main route; and the introduction of mountain guards. In addition, sheep wool was used to construct a pilot path that is resistant to heavy rainfall and erosion issues. Sheep wool is a traditional construction method used during Roman times and natural alternative to geotextiles. It traps gravel when it rains while allowing the water to run away, preventing erosion of the path. Thanks to these measures, visitors now have a clear and safer route to the most beautiful viewpoints of Trolltunga. It has also reduced the impact of their feet as they walk through this natural habitat.

**Mountain area:** Trolltunga mountains (Norway)  
**Cohesion support:** European Regional Development Fund through Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme  
**Period:** 2018-2021  
**Website:** <https://www.ascent-project.eu/>

## E-bike tourism in lesser-known Alpine destinations

The PARKRADE project aimed to develop sustainable tourism across some of the most isolated and economically poorest areas of the Italian-Austrian Alps.

A cross-border network of electric bike rentals was developed in order to encourage all bikers, including beginners, to use more sustainable travel options for their vacation. Visitors can plan their trips around these destinations using the Andromake free mobile app, developed by the project, and choose electric bikes and other intermodal mobility options. The app also offers quick tips about nearby attractions, such as e-bike charging stations, viewpoints and refreshment options.

**Mountain area:** Italian-Austrian Alps  
**Cohesion support:** European Regional Development Fund through Interreg Italia-Austria Programme  
**Period:** 2018-2020  
**Website:** <https://www.andromake.at/parkrade>

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# GEOSTARS

## Cross-border stargazing tourism

In Crete (Greece) and the Republic of Cyprus, mountains are the most depleted and sparsely populated areas of these islands. Here, a lack of business opportunities leads to outmigration and ageing of the local population.



© Geostars

To strengthen the economic development of these areas, in 2018, local and national actors launched a new project – GEOSTARS. This project aimed to create a new tourism offer in these mountains based on stargazing. GEOSTARS increases the attractiveness of the 3 UNESCO Global Geoparks (the Troodos, Sitia and Psiloritis Geoparks) that already exist in these mountains by expanding the range of tourism options.

For example, in the Sitia Geopark, Crete, the GEOSTARS project financed the construction of a new observatory. This new infrastructure will attract more visitors to the Sitia mountains, including astronomers, stargazers, researchers and general tourists, and create more job opportunities in the tourism sector. Local children will be also able to learn more about stars by visiting the observatory on school visits.

**Mountain area:** Troodos, Zakros and Alaias mountains (Cyprus, Greece)  
**Cohesion support:** European Regional Development Fund through Interreg V-A Greece – Cyprus programme  
**Period:** 2018-2021  
**Website:** <http://geostars.eu/>

# WALLACHIAN CULTURE TRAIL

## Cultural routes and pastoralism in the Carpathians

For centuries, pastoralism played a major role in the cultural and spiritual identity of mountain settlers. But today many of these pastoral routes are falling into disuse and their heritage is at risk of being lost.

In the Poland-Ukraine borderland, the Wallachian Culture Trail was created in order to preserve the knowledge and heritage of pastoralism in these areas as a motor of local development. The Wallachian Culture Trail attracts visitors thanks to a diversified tourism offer with meetings on the history of pastoralism, workshops on making traditional shepherds' musical instruments, publications on pastoral customs and traditions, etc.

© Wallachian Culture Trail



Mountain residents can use their heritage to drive economic growth in their local area while also preserving the knowledge and skills linked to pastoral practices.

Mountain area: Carpathian mountains (Poland, Ukraine)  
Cohesion support: European Regional Development Fund through Interreg Poland-Belarus-Ukraine programme  
Period: 2019-2021  
Website: <https://carpathianculture.eu/wallachian-culture-trail/>

## WHAT IS MONTANA174?

Montana174 is a communication campaign to inform you – mountain citizen - on the many opportunities offered by the Cohesion Policy in mountain areas.

In mountains, the Cohesion Policy gives funds to reinforce digital and social innovation, accelerate climate mitigation and adaptation, support tourism, foster youth employment and enhance mobility.

[www.montana174.org](http://www.montana174.org)



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