

## Mountain Tourism—Trends and Transformations Toward Sustainability and Resilience

**Deadlines:** Submit notice of intent by **15 November 2024** and full paper by **1 April 2025**

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*With this focus issue, MRD aims to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of mountain tourism and its impacts on communities and ecosystems around the world in times of growing disparities, overtourism, and climate change. In particular, we invite contributions that critically examine current tourism trends in mountain regions around the world. We are interested in pieces that offer insights into different forms and models of mountain tourism, including those that are codeveloped and implemented by mountain people and benefit their livelihoods and wellbeing while safeguarding mountains' cultural and natural heritage. Contributions should aim to inform tourism-related policies and strategies that promote sustainability and resilience in mountains.*

Tourism has grown massively over recent decades and has been promoted by many countries because of its significant role in economic development. This is also true for many mountain regions around the world. While the flow of visitors ceased temporarily during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has since regained momentum and has become even more prominent, reconfirming its economic importance (TPCC 2023). However, assessing mountain tourism and its outcomes and impacts is challenging. In a joint study, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UN Tourism estimated that mountain tourism represented 9–16% of international arrivals (corresponding to 195–375 million arrivals) worldwide in 2019. The share varies greatly between countries and mountain regions, and these figures do not include domestic tourism, which in many mountain regions contributes significantly to the sector (FAO and UN Tourism 2023).

Mountain tourism is often adopted as a strategy to diversify mountain economies and thereby create alternative livelihood options for people and communities in mountains. It is seen as offering the potential to alleviate poverty, contribute to infrastructure development, and indirectly support ecosystem conservation. Tourism's potentially positive effects on societies, economies, and the environment are frequently viewed as a way to enhance mountain people's resilience. However, to realize this potential, tourism policies and tourism governance must take an integrated and inclusive approach where local communities, policymakers, and actors across sectors work together on equal terms to address mountain communities' needs and mitigate potential negative outcomes of the sector.

Some mountain regions and protected areas are suffering from overtourism, which causes pollution and ecosystem degradation, places a heavy burden on infrastructure, and impacts the quality of life of mountain communities. Moreover, financial benefits are frequently shared unequally along tourism value chains, to the disadvantage of local service providers and employees. The lack of sustainable and fair tourism offers and

adequate infrastructure—including digitalization—as well as the high carbon footprint of international and domestic guests (TPCC 2023) are additional challenges to the sustainability and resilience of mountain societies and ecosystems. Finally, climate change and extreme weather events are increasingly calling into question the very future of mountain tourism.

While government and international financial support is still predominantly linked to high-emission tourism, sustainable and resilient forms of tourism are gradually gaining attention (TPCC 2023). Approaches such as ecotourism, agritourism, community-based tourism, and certification of sustainable tourism offers are promoted to increase mountain societies' ownership and benefits, while reducing negative social and ecological impacts. In some mountain areas, local stakeholders respond to overtourism by calling for degrowth strategies. However, such strategies are highly contentious, as illustrated by the example of a moratorium placing a limit on bed capacity in South Tyrol: in the media, the initiative was described as unfair and harmful to the economy (Kielar and Scuttari 2024). Overall, growing attention is being given to transforming the tourism sector, driven, among others, by international efforts such as the [International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories](#), the newly launched [Global Agritourism Network](#), the [Glasgow Declaration on climate action in tourism](#), and the UN's proclamation of the [International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism 2027](#).

With this focus issue, MRD aims to contribute to a better understanding of current trends and impacts of mountain tourism, as well as efforts to transform the sector toward greater environmental sustainability, equity, and resilience. In particular, MRD seeks contributions that critically examine the multifaceted socioeconomic and environmental outcomes of tourism for different social groups, or that systematically assess transformative solutions for tourism that support sustainable and resilient development in mountains. We invite contributions from scholars and development specialists for MRD's 3 peer-reviewed sections:

**[MountainDevelopment](#)** (transformation knowledge): Papers should present insights into and lessons learned from the systematic evaluation of transformation efforts in the tourism sector or from action-oriented and transdisciplinary research. They should focus on how initiatives have helped to change unsustainable tourism dynamics and patterns to forge pathways that benefit mountain communities and ecosystems while reversing negative impacts. Submissions that systematically evaluate how innovative tourism policies and tourism offers (eg agritourism, ecotourism, or homestay tourism) contribute to sustainable and resilient livelihoods are particularly welcome.

**[MountainResearch](#)** (systems knowledge): Papers should present empirical research or meta-analyses focusing on trends and impacts of tourism in mountains. This includes assessments of the economic value of tourism and its financial benefits for different social groups. MRD also invites comparative studies that investigate tourism dynamics in different mountain regions and analyses of how policies or global societal changes drive or hinder different forms of tourism in mountains.

**[MountainAgenda](#)** (target knowledge): Papers should propose agendas and priorities for future policies, interventions, or research, with a focus on transforming tourism toward sustainability and resilience. The agendas must be based on a sound state of the art that results either from a rigorous and in-depth literature review or from a systematic stakeholder process in the respective field.

## Submission details

- Email a short **notice of intent** (including a working title, 2–3 sentences on the content, and the journal section to which you intend to submit the paper) to [mrd-journal.cde@unibe.ch](mailto:mrd-journal.cde@unibe.ch) **by 15 November 2024**.
- **Submit your full paper by 1 April 2025** using MRD's online submission platform.
- The issue is scheduled for completion in **February 2026**; articles will be published on a rolling basis, as soon as they are ready.
- Before submitting, please read our guidelines for authors at <https://www.mrd-journal.org/for-authors/>.
- For more information on the journal, see <https://www.mrd-journal.org/>.
- As a not-for-profit open access journal, MRD charges authors a publication fee to offset part of its production costs: <https://www.mrd-journal.org/about/publication-fee-policy/>.

Susanne Wymann von Dach and Brigitte Portner (Associate Editors, MRD), with Sarudzai Mutana, Lupane State University, Zimbabwe and Ketema Bekele, Haramaya University, Ethiopia (Guest Editors)  
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