

Economic Brief 4 : Key Recommendations

Recreation & Tourism



Tourism is an important part of Arctic life and economy.

While the landscape of the Arctic is the primary asset for its inhabitants and local tourism entrepreneurship, it is also a source of income for outside tourism actors, such as cruise ship operators. The benefits and financial rewards of tourism are not always reaped by local businesses but by companies external to the region.

Across studies of Arctic tourism developed by JUSTNORTH researchers, a key question that emerges is how tourism as an economic sector can be developed in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner. Due to a limited regulatory regime and a broad range of both stakeholders in dispersed localities, there are significant systematic barriers to sustainability.

Today, Arctic tourism takes place in a broader context of climate change. In a rapidly warming environment areas of the Arctic have become more easily accessible, giving rise to what has become known as 'doomsday' or 'last chance' visits. Thus, tourism in the Arctic faces a very uncertain future.

In addition, the tourism sector is volatile due to fluctuations in demand over time, and consequences from unforeseen events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This characteristic adds pressure on Arctic communities and contributes to precarious employment conditions. Tight profit margins mean that companies may engage in unsustainable competitive practices.

Across the case studies, tourism stakeholders emphasised that there is a need to strengthen how local and Indigenous communities can benefit from tourism. A race to the bottom when it comes to the standards of tourism services must be averted. This could include certification schemes, licences, and a locality-based collaborative effort to channel the stream of visitors.

In order to move toward a more sustainable tourism sector in the Arctic, with greater benefits for local and Indigenous communities, our research has identified the following measures as especially important:

- 1 Local guidelines and laws need to be applied and enforced to the benefit of local service providers to a greater extent than is the case today. For the (cruise) shipping industry, this would refer to increased transparency over implementation (or failure to do so) on human rights and decent working conditions.**
- 2 Stakeholders need to be involved in spatial planning processes to a greater extent.**
- 3 A more robust system of certification of tourism operators should be developed. This would serve to ensure that standards, pertaining to health, safety and employee training, are maintained and enforced.**

