

THE GUIDEBOOK OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER FOR ECO-ITINERARIES ON CULTURAL ROUTES



MED-Routes

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

Publisher:

LIBERTAS INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
J.F. Kennedy Sq. 6B, 10 000 Zagreb, Croatia

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1.



THE DISTINCTION

THE PURPOSE

The MED-Routes Project promotes sustainable and circular tourism in the Mediterranean by developing eco-itineraries along the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. It responds to the region's growing tourism pressures, overtourism, seasonality, and environmental strain, by offering a model rooted in local heritage, community engagement, and regenerative practices.

Tourism plays a vital economic role in Mediterranean countries, yet often brings uneven benefits and ecological challenges. To oppose this, MED-Routes aligns with EU policies like the Green Deal and draws on circular economy frameworks, promoting efficient resource use, waste reduction, and sustainable mobility.

By building on knowledge from the INCIRCLE and EMBLEMATIC projects, as well as from the postulates and principles of Council of Europe Cultural Routes, MED-Routes supports the creation of low-impact, community-driven tourism experiences. Its approach revitalizes lesser-known destinations and cultural narratives, offering immersive travel while reducing pressure on popular hotspots. This guidebook supports the transfer of proven methodologies, offering practical tools and training for designing eco-itineraries along the Phoenicians' Route, Routes of the Olive Tree, European Route of Ceramics, and Destination Napoleon. It empowers local actors to co-create tourism offers that are environmentally responsible, socially inclusive, and economically viable.

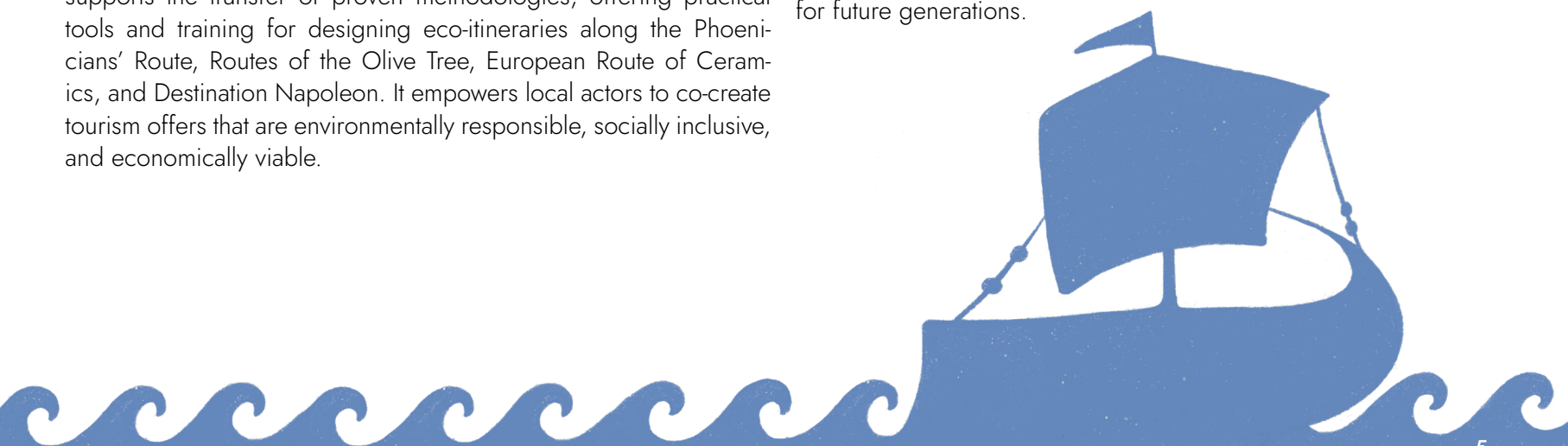
The Role of the Guidebook and Training Package:

This guidebook, together with the practical training package aims to disseminate knowledge across the Mediterranean tourism ecosystem. It introduces key methodologies for:

- Designing eco-itineraries
- Engaging communities in tourism planning
- Embedding circular economy principles in tourism offers
- Evaluating environmental and socioeconomic impacts

The Role of Circular Economy in Tourism: Circular tourism transcends the goals of traditional sustainable tourism by promoting cradle-to-cradle systems that allow tourism to become regenerative over time. The MED-Routes Project builds upon the earlier initiatives like the INCIRCLE Project. INCIRCLE emphasized improvements in energy use, water conservation, mobility, and waste management in tourism, all of which form the basis of the MED-Routes approach.

A Blueprint for the Future: Tourism in the Mediterranean is at the crossroads. MED-Routes represents a paradigm shift, a move away from extractive tourism models toward those that are circular, inclusive, and heritage-driven. MED-Routes finally offers a blueprint for a tourism model that enriches both visitors and communities, while preserving the Mediterranean's cultural and ecological legacy for future generations.





2.

WHAT IS WHAT IN CULTURE AND TOURISM - UNDESTANDING EACH OTHER

TERMINOLOGY: WHAT IS WHAT

Council of Europe Cultural Routes

A Cultural Route of the Council of Europe connects places and stories across countries that share a common cultural theme. These routes highlight both physical heritage (like historic sites) and intangible heritage (like traditions or crafts). They may not form a single path, but together they create a meaningful journey across Europe's diverse cultures. The goal is to preserve shared European heritage while celebrating local identities.

Sustainable Cultural Tourism

Sustainable cultural tourism means managing cultural heritage and tourism in a way that benefits everyone—visitors, local communities, and the environment. It ensures that tourism supports the protection of cultural sites and traditions, while also bringing long-term social and economic benefits to the area.

Cultural Tourism Destination

A cultural tourism destination is a specific place where tourists can experience local culture, history, and traditions. It includes all the related attractions, services, and activities that make up a visitor's experience. These can range from museums and festivals to food, crafts, and guided tours. Cultural routes and eco-itineraries are examples of destinations that are linked together by a shared story or theme.

Cultural Tourism Product

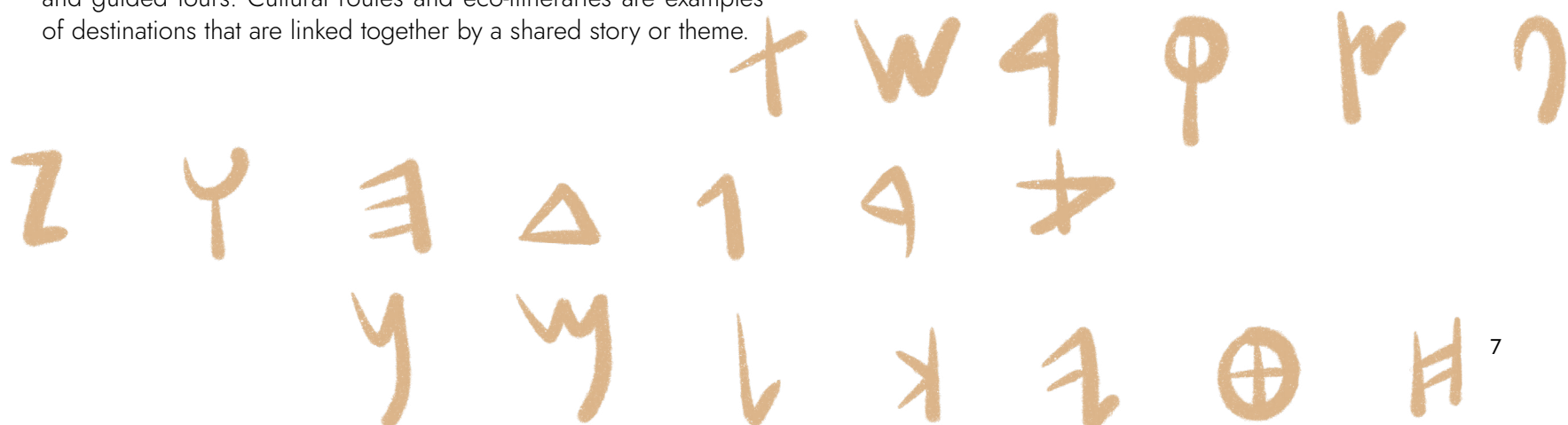
A cultural tourism product is the complete package that tourists experience and pay for. It includes cultural attractions (like monuments, sites, and events), services (like accommodation and transport), and experiences (like guided tours or workshops). These are combined to create an engaging and memorable trip that reflects the local culture on the eco-itinerary.

Circular Tourism

Circular tourism is a sustainable tourism model that focuses on sustainable mobility, reducing waste, saving energy and water, and using cultural and heritage resources wisely. It encourages tourism businesses and visitors to be environmentally responsible. The idea is to create a positive cycle where tourism supports local communities and nature, instead of harming them.

Circular Tourism in Cultural Routes' Eco-itineraries

In the context of cultural routes and their eco-itineraries, circular tourism means offering eco-friendly travel experiences that also protect and promote local culture and heritage. It involves careful planning to reduce environmental impact, preserve both physical sites and local traditions, and involve communities in tourism. This approach combines the goals of sustainable tourism with the unique cultural themes of each route to ensure tourism benefits people, culture, and the planet.



3.

THE INNOVATION



CIRCULAR TOURISM ECOSYSTEM AND VALUE CREATION

Traditionally, business models in tourism have focused on generating financial value through direct transactions between service providers and customers. However, the circular economy expands this notion of value creation by incorporating environmental and social benefits alongside economic gains. In the context of eco-itinerar-

ies, value is generated through sustainable resource use, reduced waste, and enhanced cultural and natural heritage preservation. The adoption of circular business models ensures that tourism benefits not only businesses but also the planet and local communities, in alignment with the "people, planet, profit" (PPP) principles.

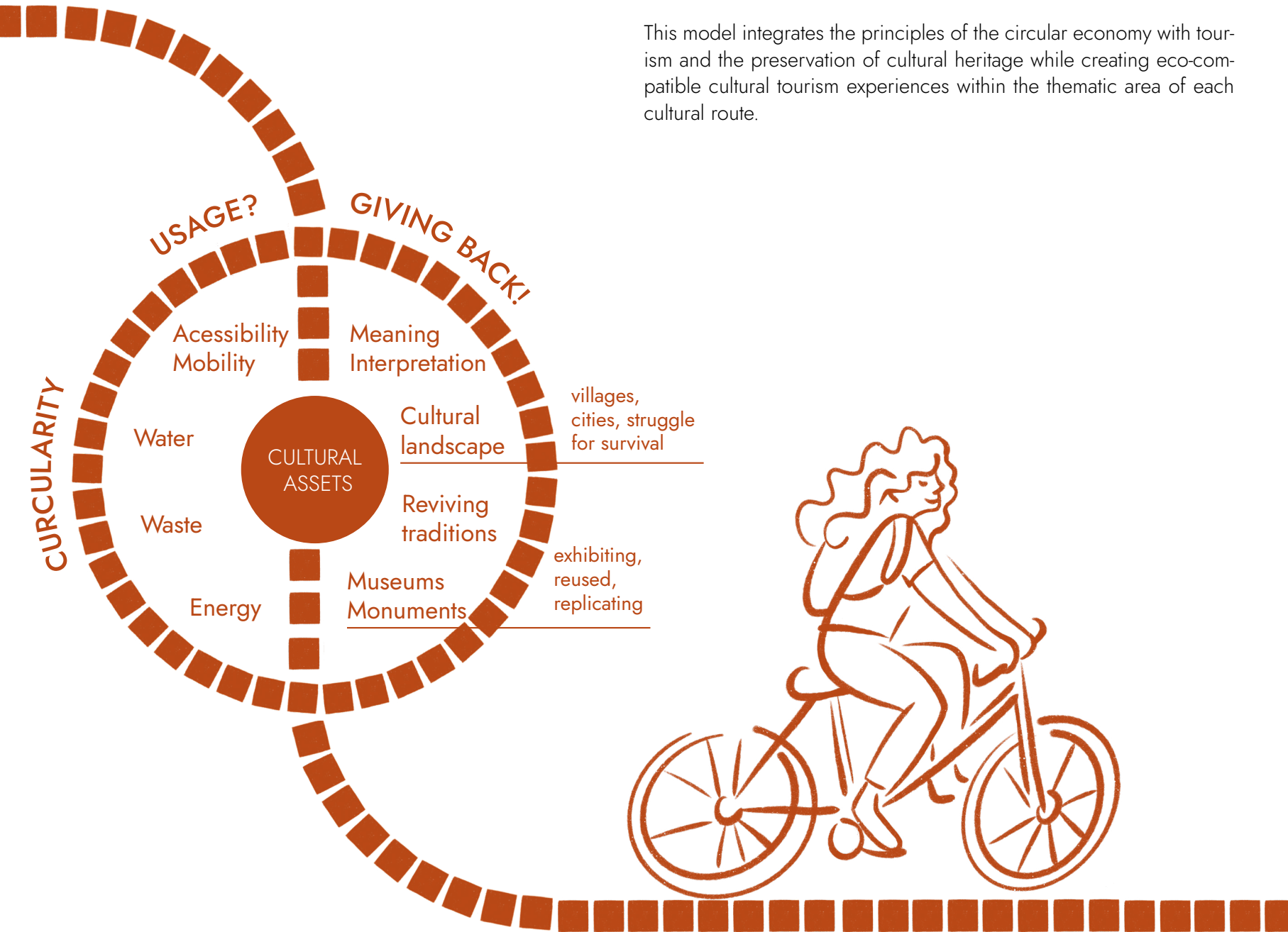


FROM profit oriented transactions
between service providers
and customers



TO environmental
and social benefits
alongside economic gain

This model integrates the principles of the circular economy with tourism and the preservation of cultural heritage while creating eco-compatible cultural tourism experiences within the thematic area of each cultural route.



INCLUSIVE TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

This approach is based on a structured methodology, technical planning and practical implementation. It brings together strategic thinking, identity levels enhanced by storytelling, and real-world action to create tourism experiences that are sustainable, culturally rich, and locally grounded.

A full model for sustainable and circular cultural tourism development:

- Integrates big-picture planning with local realities.
- Builds eco-itineraries around themes and stories, not just places.
- Focuses on circularity, action, adaptability, and impact.

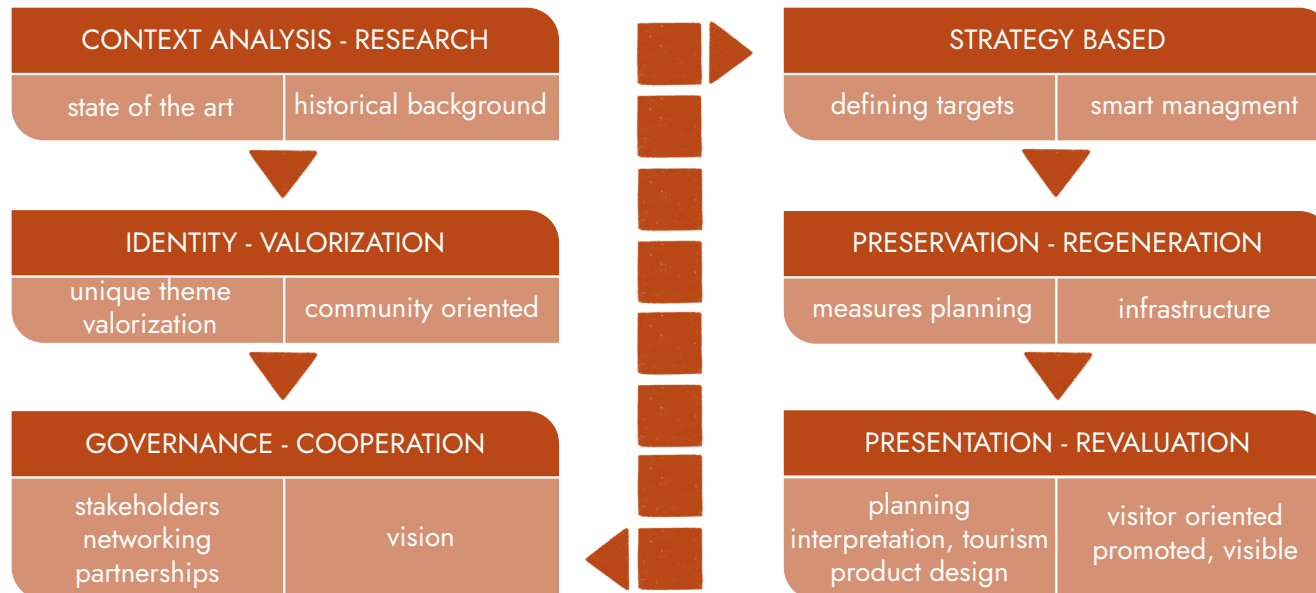
Why it's innovative

Multidisciplinarity as a standard - heritage scholars, technologists, and market analysts co-create instead of working in silos.

Science-to-Story pipeline - raw data becomes engaging narratives that boost visitor satisfaction and conservation awareness.

Adaptive, circular mindset - continuous monitoring turns research into real-time route optimization, reducing waste and increasing local value.

Methodological approach leading to strategic thinking



Combined, the methodological and the technical approach are characterized by:

- **Strategic Planning:** Combined approaches provide structured foundation for designing, implementing, and sustaining eco-itineraries. By emphasizing context analysis, governance, and adaptive management, this framework ensures that itineraries are both effective and resilient.
- **Thematic Coherence:** Focus on meaningful themes and integrating diverse compatible heritage elements. Themes create a narrative thread that enhances the cultural and environmental significance of the itineraries.
- **Practical Implementation:** Insights from the Emblematic Handbook emphasize actionable steps, such as stakeholder engagement and continuous improvement.

This practical focus ensures that strategies are translated into impactful on-the-ground actions.

Technical implementation in 5 steps (Based on Emblematic)

Step 5 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT:
And Monitoring Maintaining

Step 4 PRACTICAL DEVELOPMENT:
Creation of a Cultural Tourism Project

Step 3 IMPLEMENTATION ON THE GROUND:
Infrastructure, Measures

Step 2 DESIGN OF THE ITINERARY:
Identity based mapping resources

Step 1 STRATEGIC APPROACH:
Context - SWOT analyses, stakeholders collaboration, strategy design

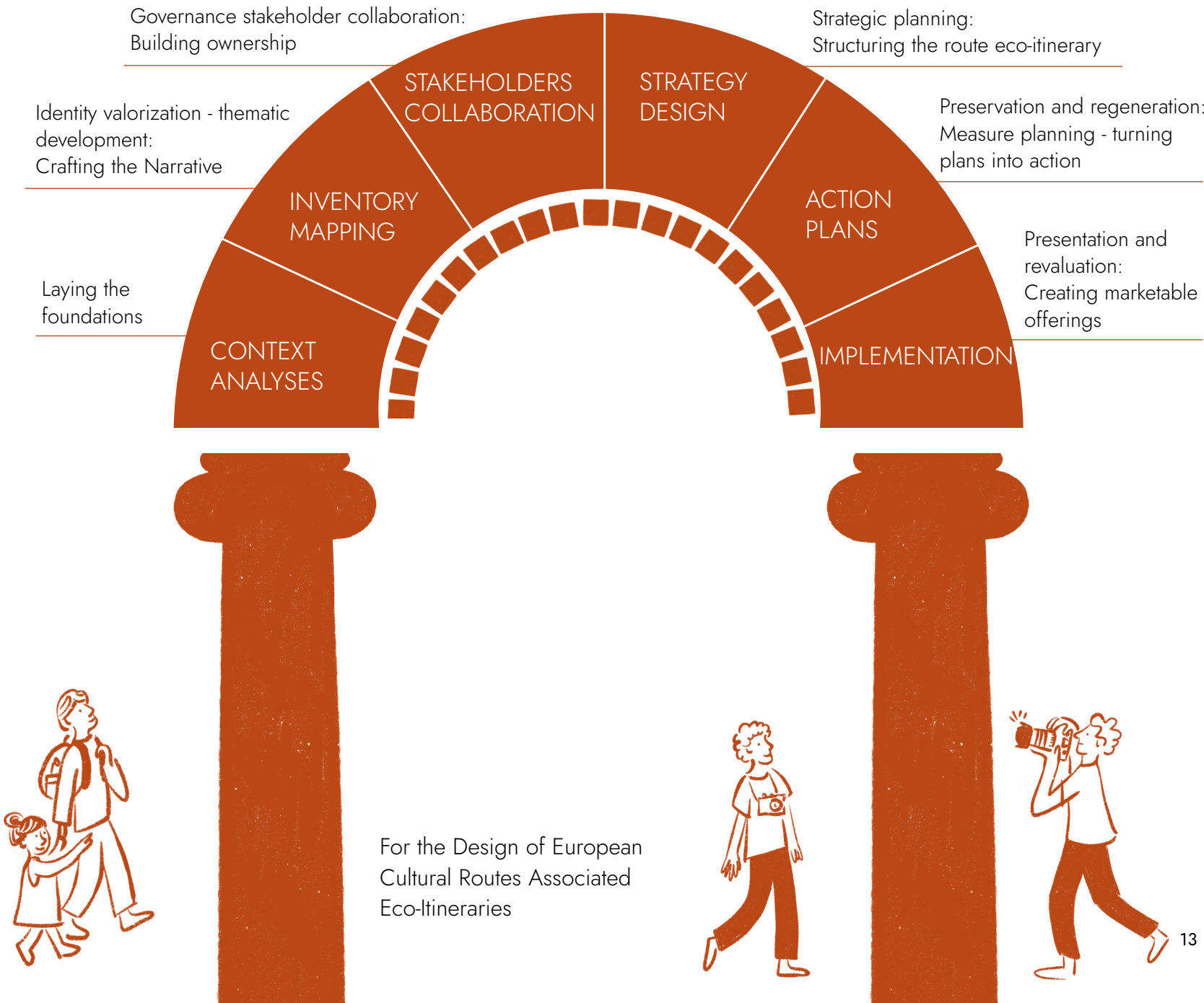
STRATEGIC PLANNING

THEMATIC COHERENCE

PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION



Common methodology overview



4.

THE REGENERATION



THE CREATION OF ECO-ITINERARIES



Context

Area and location description

Describe the location: Area where the itinerary is planned. Is there a map of itinerary? Where does the itinerary start and end.? How long is it?

Demographic situation, unemployment, number of residents per km?

Describe population - old population, families... Detected attitude to tourism?

Tourism vision of the area? Describe the vision!

Number of enterprises, cultural assets...

Tourism volume numbers in your country for the last year.

Number of tourists arrivals in the country, in the region or specific destinations and on sites of the eco-itinerary? Number of nights spent. Average length of stay in the region? Receipts per destination?

Visitors: Who are your existing and expected visitors? Individual/groups?

Youth, seniors, families... Percentage? How are they served? Who do you want to have? How do they feel?

SWOT: Strength and weaknesses of the region, destinations on eco-itinerary Describe: How does the eco-itinerary fit in the contextual situation described above, in the tourism of the area?



4.1 RESEARCH & MULTIDISCIPLINARITY

Laying theoretical foundations of cultural and sustainable eco-tourism relies on the research, overview of the historical background and present state of art. It also incorporates identification of shared values and narratives that align culture with ecological stewardship.

Research for Circular Eco-Itineraries

Use this tool to inject scientific approach, accurate analysis, and high-quality storytelling into every stage of your eco-itinerary. It is the foundation for all the next tools (especially Strategic Planning and Thematic Coherence), and ensures your itinerary stays evidence-based, culturally rich, and future-ready.

STEP	WHAT TO DO	CIRCULAR TOURISM GAINS
BUILD A MULTIDISCIPLINARY NETWORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Partner with universities, tech labs, heritage institutes, and NGOs.· Include experts in ecology, history, anthropology, digital media, and market analytics.	Local knowledge is pooled, R&D costs are shared, and solutions address environmental, cultural, and business needs simultaneously.
RUN EVIDENCE-BASED ASSESMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Conduct environmental-impact studies, heritage-value mapping, and visitor-flow modelling.· Use GIS, remote sensing, AI-aided data crunching, and on-site surveys.	Decisions on carrying capacity, itinerary design, and resource use are data-driven, cutting waste and protecting fragile sites.
CRAFT INTERPRETATION AND STORYTELLING ASSETS THEMATICALLY FOCUSED	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Translate research findings into clear narratives, digital guides, AR/VR layers, and way-finding signage.· Focus on both tangible (sites) and intangible (customs, legends) heritage.	Visitors get a richer, more meaningful experience; dwell time and spend increase without adding physical pressure.
TRACK MARKETS AND STAKEHOLDER NEEDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Monitor travel trends, sustainability preferences, and tech adoption via regular surveys and social- tools.· Map each stakeholder's interests (community, business, authority) to avoid conflicts and maximize shared value.	Products evolve with demand, extend into shoulder seasons, and spread benefits across the supply chain.
FEED RESULTS INTO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Follow feedback: publish findings, host knowledge-sharing workshops, and update the itinerary annually.· Apply circular principles—repair, reuse, regenerate—when upgrading infrastructure or content.	The route remains resilient, relevant, and regenerative, anchoring a long-term competitive edge.

4.2 THEMATIC FOCUS – IDENTITY BASED

The purpose of identity valorisation is to:

- Support a unifying theme that reflects European values and integrates cultural and natural heritage
- Highlight the theme enhancing European memory, diversity, and shared history (e.g., trade, agricultural heritage, art movements).
- Identify and catalogue heritage elements (e.g., monuments, folklore, traditional crafts, natural landscapes).
- Plan storytelling techniques to integrate the theme into a compelling narrative for the itinerary.
- Plan storytelling techniques to raise awareness and build circularity
- Ensure themes are both locally relevant and globally appealing, enabling them to attract diverse audiences.
- Stimulate visitors through interpretation to appreciate local communities, their culture sustaining meanings and sites and acting responsibly.





Use this tool to turn local identity into the driving force of your eco-itinerary while embedding circular-tourism principles. It helps you design a cohesive theme, catalogue heritage assets, and craft engaging stories that inspire responsible behaviour.

STEP	WHAT TO DO	CIRCULAR AND MARKET BENEFITS
FOLLOW THE UNIFYING THEME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Follow the theme that reflects European values and shared history (e.g. ancient trade, olive culture, ceramic arts). · Test the theme with local actors to ensure it resonates locally and appeals globally. 	Creates a clear narrative thread that spreads visitation over multiple sites and seasons, reducing pressure on hotspots.
CATALOGUE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Map monuments, landscapes, folklore, crafts and culinary traditions. · Choose the key focal points (up to 5) and the contextual heritage support. · Record each asset's capacity and preservation needs. 	Asset inventory guides visitor flow, safeguards fragile sites, and highlights circular opportunities (reuse, repair, local sourcing).
DESIGN STORYTELLING AND INTERPRETATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Translate research into storylines for guides, panels, apps, AR/VR layers. · Add visitor friendly assets and seats. · Emphasize how circular actions (low-waste events, renewable energy, local materials) protect heritage. 	Visitors gain deeper insight, stay longer, and adopt eco-friendly habits that cut waste and energy use.
ACTIVATE CIRCULARITY AT HERITAGE SITES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Introduce on-site recycling, water-saving tech, and local-produce cafés. · Offer workshops with artisans using reclaimed or bio-based materials. 	Demonstrates circular economy in practice, boosts local jobs, and reduces environmental footprint.
BUILD A COHESIVE BRAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Align visual identity, messaging, and visitor touch-points with the theme. · Highlight authenticity, sustainability, and cultural depth in all marketing. 	The route remains resilient, relevant, and regenerative, anchoring a long-term competitive edge.
MONITOR AND REFRESH THE NARRATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Collect visitor feedback, social-media insights, and conservation data. · Update stories and experiences annually to keep content fresh and relevant. 	Maintains competitiveness, supports continuous improvement, and ensures long-term route resilience.

IDENTITY BASED THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT: CRAFTING THE NARRATIVE

Thematic approach to eco itineraries:

Napoleonic
Ceramics
Olive Tree
Phoenicians
& Civilizations

By activity

- Walking
- Cycling
- Balooning
- Trekking

By purpose

- Educational
- Professional
- Scientific
- Inspirational

By interactivity

- Creative
- Eventful
- Participative

By artistic approach

- Visual
- Poetic
- Literary
- Photo

By period of the day

- In dawn
- By day
- By night
- In the evening

By demography

- For youth
- For kids
- For families
- For seniors
- For journalists

Recommendations

Conduct workshops with locals: historians, artists, and communities to enrich the narrative with authentic insights.

Use multimedia tools, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), to enhance storytelling.

Design thematic itineraries **targeted to specific target audiences** (e. g., families, history enthusiasts, or eco-tourists).

Lessons Learned:

- Themes that reflect shared European values resonate strongly with diverse audiences.
- Storytelling creates deeper emotional connections and promotes sustainable behaviors among visitors.
- Cataloging both tangible and intangible heritage ensures a holistic approach to valorization.



Follow a theme - representative of European values
· Theme should illustrate the memory, history and diversity of European heritage

Identify heritage elements that can be tangible and intangible
· To enable cultural tourism product development and contemporary artistic practices

Create a network - with a legal status

Coordinate common activities based on co-operation of experts multidisciplinary research and development

Ensure a common visibility across Europe
· Provide cultural and educational exchanges of young Europeans

In your mapping procedure check the next questions:

HOW TO USE KEY FEATURES TO CREATE THE ECO-ITINERARY?

STRUCTURAL SUPPORT

Heritage sites

List the max 5 focal heritage points of your itinerary, explaining why they are included, how they support the topic, how they include circularity measures. If possible adhere to each of the focal points supporting contextual content relating to the CR topic supported by circularity measures (archaeological site + i.e. museum, gallery, other smaller site, traditional workshop, theatre, music hall...). How does itinerary avoid the most saturated points.

Indicate the examples explaining how they support the topic and circularity measures, (heritage institutions, museums or sites or galleries or i.e lighting immovable monuments,... with water, waste, energy measures¹⁾).

Describe how heritage relates to the topic, how it is preserved, how identity is preserved, how intangible traditions are preserved, etc.? Describe the best practices in presentation, interpretation and storytelling techniques taking into account local history and community, traditions and values and circularity included.

Activities

Do you have a list of activities available for visitors in line with circularity measures existing? (Providing eco-friendly leisure activities (sport, health & wellness... mobility – biking, hiking, ballooning

or workshops – social sustainability, fruit picking, crops harvesting, garbage cleaning, swamps cleaning, trees planting, or similar where circularity, water, waste, energy is applied)

Describe only the best practice examples of activities available on your eco- itinerary: in line with circularity measures existing (water, waste, energy characteristics, heritage preservation).



1. Define criteria/indicators for: Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Sources; Water Conservation; Waste Reduction & Circular Economy Practices; Low-Impact and green Infrastructure, Eco-friendly Architecture; Sustainable Mobility and Transportation; Carbon Footprint Reduction & Carbon Neutrality; Digital Sustainability; Climate Resilience & Natural Disaster Preparedness; Certifications & Eco-labelling; Sustainable report; Local Ecosystem Restoration & Conservation; Local Sourcing & Local Artisan Support; Local Employment Opportunities; Health and Safety Standards; Accessible Tourism; Environmental Education Programs; Cultural & Historical Site Preservation; Community Engagement & Community-Based Tourism; Inclusive Tourism / Cultural Sensitivity Training; Green Events and Initiatives; Eco Partnerships;

4.3 WHO IS WHO: GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIPS

Effective stakeholder collaboration is essential for the successful development and governance of eco-itineraries.

Establishing inclusive and participatory governance structures ensures that tourism initiatives are not only well-managed but also aligned with the needs of local communities, businesses, cultural institutions, and policymakers. By fostering dialogue, engagement,

and shared decision-making, stakeholder collaboration creates long-term support and resilience within eco-itinerary projects.

A fundamental step in this process is the creation of a working group involving key stakeholders, which serves as a coordinating body to facilitate cooperation among public and private tourism stakeholders.

WHO ARE THE STRATEGIC PLAYERS IN THE PROCESS

MAIN ACTORS - GOVERNANCE

Who are your stakeholders? What is their role?

What is their benefit?

Describe models of Communication, collaboration, management applied.

Describe main actors, their role, benefit and challenges related to the topic and circularity criteria.



STAKEHOLDERS	INTEREST	EXPECTATIONS	MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES	CLEAR ROLES & DUTIES
Private persons, owners, SMMEs	Restoring estate values	Collaborate in the planning, in the regime of visits; financial participation	An active participant in the team and the creator of the project	
/Cultural/Heritage institution Museums...	Better integration into the social life of the community	Cooperation in the project development, interpretation, accessibility	Project team member	
Municipalities	New visitors Deseasonalisation	Cooperation in project development, financial support	Project team member	
NGO, association... (BTB)	Competitiveness Membership interests	Business info on attractions and resources available	Regularly reporting on project development	
National/local tourist bureau (BTC)	Visibility and Accessibility	New visitors	Regular reporting	
Hospitality TA, Hotel...	Visitors interests	New markets reach	New product development	

Stakeholder influence interest matrix will help you to pursue the next steps

Key actions

Stakeholder Identification: Identify the scope of stakeholders to be involved - key players in tourism, cultural heritage, and sustainability (circularity) sectors.

Stakeholder Working Group (SWG): Form a networking diagram and a collaborative group to facilitate decision-making and ensure inclusive participation.

Develop shared governance models and communication strategies.

Governance and frameworks: Develop clear roles and responsibilities, ensuring accountability especially in terms of circular tourism activities. Build trust and establish long-term partnerships. Define the map of influences, the role of involvement of each stakeholder and governance principles.

Capacity Building: Train stakeholders in cultural tourism, in cultural routes and in circular tourism principles and tools to build shared competencies.

Participatory approach: Organize joint events, exhibitions, and educational programs to promote cultural tourism while preserving local identities.

Priority Areas: Foster cooperation in research, cultural exchange, and tourism promotion.

Who Might Fit Here?

- Some International Financiers or
- Large Chambers that can provide resources or regulatory sway but may not see eco-itineraries as a priority.
- Entities that can influence policy or funding streams but have competing interests.

How to Engage?

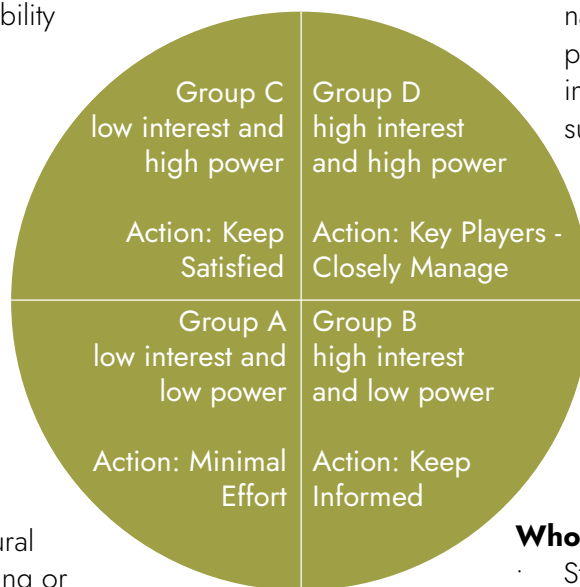
- Maintain positive relationships, communicate key successes, and show how eco-itineraries align with broader economic or sustainability goals.
- Provide clear opportunities for them to contribute when it aligns with their strategic interests.

Who Might Fit Here?

- Scientific Institutions with strong interest in research and innovation but limited policy power.
- Heritage Organizations focused on cultural preservation but reliant on external funding or support
- Small Tour Operators or local NGOs eager to participate in eco-itineraries but lacking large-scale influence.

How to Engage?

- Involve them in workshops, research collaborations, and pilot projects.
- Share progress updates, gather input on sustainability practices, and keep them motivated.



Who Might Fit Here?

- National Ministries (culture, environment, tourism) with regulatory oversight and funding capabilities.
- Major Tourism Boards that can drive promotional campaigns and shape market trends.
- Influential International Organizations fully committed to sustainable tourism.

How to Engage?

- Involve them deeply in decision-making governance, and strategic planning. Provide regular performance reports and demonstrate the impact of eco-itineraries to ensure continued support and investment.

Who Might Fit Here?

- Stakeholders who have little direct stake or influence in eco-itinerary outcomes (eg. peripheral businesses or community members not directly affected by tourism).

How to Engage?

- Provide occasional updates, but do not invest significant resources unless their interest or power changes.
- Monitor to ensure they remain informed if circumstances shift.

4.4 SEEING THE FUTURE: STRATEGIC APPROACH

Strategic planning is essential in the transition toward a circular economy in eco-itineraries and tourism. Strategically defining clear objectives, fostering stakeholder collaboration, setting measurable sustainability targets, and aligning with European policies, eco-itineraries become models for sustainable tourism that preserves cultural heritage while promoting environmental responsibility and social resilience.

Strategy is rooted in the current state of the art of the area defines the baseline against which change will be measured. It identifies the shared common vision of where the eco –itinerary needs to go in terms of circular touristic destination. It should answer the main challenges the area/route/ destination wants to tackle:

VISION AND STRATEGIC GOALS:

What specific targets have you defined for the eco-itinerary and why? Describe a shared common vision and goals where the eco – itinerary wants to go in terms of cultural tourism and circular tourism destination (such as visitor satisfaction scores, reductions in water and energy consumption, or increases in local employment rates.)

Some key starting points for strategic planning include:

New values	Establishing CIRCULAR TOURISM PRACTICES that enhance community engagement and competitiveness while integrating research and education to adapt to evolving tourism trends.
Smart Multi-Destinations	MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS MAPPING: Developing multidisciplinary.capacity building, eco-friendly itineraries that connect diverse destinations, ensuring an accessible and networked travel experience.
Content focus	QUALITY BRANDING: Highlighting cultural differentiation by evaluating resources, identifying unique selling points, and prioritizing projects that strengthen the region’s cultural identity.
Product focus	TRANSFERABILITY: Fostering and orchestrating cooperation and hybrid design to create sustainable tourism products that merge cultural heritage with innovative experiences, ensuring destination longevity.
Users focus	SLOW TOURISM MARKETING: Adressing visitors’ needs by promoting responsible travel, enhancing visibility and implementinghuman-centered (H2H) strategies for meaningful tourism experience.

NAME OF THE STRATEGY’S OBJECTIVE:

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE OBJECTIVE:

RELATED STRATEGIC INDICATOR:

BASELINE INDICATOR (CURRENT TREND):

TARGET VALUE:

4.5 IMPLEMENTATION – CULTURAL TOURISM PRODUCT DESIGN

Firm distinction should be made between an eco-itinerary and a cultural tourism product on the eco-itinerary: Cultural tourism product consists of the attraction and services provided. In this sense eco-itinerary is an attraction OR a complex networked destination and its components may be considered to be the core ingredient of the cultural tourism product which has its price.

A fundamental starting point of cultural tourism product design is the active involvement of local communities and stakeholders. Ensuring community participation throughout the planning and implementation process fosters a sense of ownership and long-term commitment to the eco-itinerary. This can be achieved through workshops and training programs that educate local businesses.

In the core of cultural tourism product is the need of the visitor, answered by the structural and infrastructural support.

Integrate diverse cultural assets, interactive experiences and sustainable practices into a product to open the way to a distinctive tourism product on eco-itinerary that contributes to both economic growth and heritage conservation.

Thematic support consists of 3 levels

Identity level is crucial in later cultural tourism product design, while tangible heritage level involves mapping of the sites on eco-itineraries tourism level involves mapping all services available on the ground.

ENVIRONMENT - NATURAL SUPPORT -
CIRCULAR SUPPORT:
water, waste, energy, mobility management

INFRASTRUCTURAL SUPPORT -
SOCIAL CAPITAL:
augmentative support, events, services

STRUCTURAL SUPPORT -
THE HERITAGE -
BUILT CAPITAL
monuments, sites, museums

THE NEED - THE THEME
intangible heritage, memory,
history and identity - HUMAN
CAPITAL

FROM ORGANIZED - TO IDIVIDUAL VISITS

Today cultural tourism product design operates on multiple levels, ranging from basic offerings to highly customized and interactive experiences. These levels determine the degree of user involvement,

co-production, adaptability, business collaboration, and digital integration within the tourism ecosystem.

CTP-cultural tourism production design	Basic CTP (Passive User Experience)	Interactive CTP	Co-Created CTP	Smart and Negotiated CTP	Future-Oriented CTP
User Involvmnt	Passive role - tailored by pre-travel choice	Visitors choose between different themes, durations or routes	High Tourists create the itinerary	Users create experiences dynamivcally and negotiate prices, activities	Users passively engage, as AI suggests preferences
Co-Production	Minimal involmnt Experience designed by tourism providers	Moderate Selection from predefined options	High - experience is shaped by real-time decision-making	AI-driven algorithms or real-time negotiations help	AI-powered systems curate personalized itineraries
Dynamic Packaging	—————	Basic adapration - Components selected by the customer	High - level adaptation and customization	Highly personalized experience that adjusts offer services	Products are automatically optimized
Business Partnerships	Simple collaboration - basic agreements between stakeholders	Stronger collaboration - combined experiences	Strong integration among stakeholders	Sophisticated shared digital environment	Data driven global integration of tourism providers
Digital Collaboration	Basic online booking Limited real-time adaptation	Ineractive websites and mobile apps - users modify plans	Cloud - based platforms, mobile apps and AI-driven itineraries	AI and IoT (Internet of Things) facilitate seamless transactions	Implies machine learning and predictive analytics
Flexibility	Low - Standartized product lacks personalisation	Moderate; structured yet adaptable experiences allow for limited customization	High; reat-time modifications based on preferences	Maximum adaptability Products evolve based on real-time demand	Highest - products constantly evolve

Conduct In-Depth Market Research to understand demand, market trends, and visitor expectations to create relevant products. Key Components:

Visitor profiling with eco-focus: Identify key demographics, interests, behaviors, and travel motivations of tourists seeking low-impact, ethical, and immersive travel experiences

Trend analysis: Monitor shifts in cultural, eco-conscious, experiential and slow tourism trends.

Segment identification: niche markets (e.g., cultural enthusiasts, eco-tourists, slow travellers).

Sustainability demand mapping: Explore interest in eco-labels, green certifications, and locally sourced products.

Feedback collection: Use surveys, interviews, and social listening tools to understand visitor satisfaction and gaps.

Benchmarking: Analyze competing destinations and similar products for inspiration and differentiation.

ECO-FRIENDLY INFRASTRUCTURAL SUPPORT

A well-planned and sustainable infrastructure framework is essential for the success of eco-itineraries. By integrating eco-friendly design, maintaining high-quality facilities, reducing environmental impact, and engaging local communities, eco-itineraries can offer enriching, responsible, and memorable tourism experiences.

The long-term viability of these initiatives depends on continuous investment in sustainable infrastructure, ensuring that cultural heritage is preserved, natural landscapes are protected, and visitors enjoy meaningful, low-impact travel experiences.

INFRASTRUCTURAL SUPPORT	
<p>SERVICES ON ECO-ITINERARY</p> <p>Is there a catalogue of existing services?</p> <p>Is there adequate signposting / maps with indicated sites and sustainability spots (water taps, selective garbage bins, electric chargers, bike rentals ... Is there a map with the description of the selected spots indicating eco elements?</p> <p>Is there a brochures educating visitors of sustainability and circularity elements on the route...</p>	
<p>TOURISM FACILITIES ON ECO-ITINERARY</p> <p>Do you have a list and description of providers of tourism services: food, accommodation, events, workshops, local products and similar providers, in line with social sustainability (local and circularity, water, waste, energy.</p> <p>Is there a possibility to meet local producers with option to buy their products in the area, when offering picnic take-away, promote sustainable and eco-friendly services...)</p>	
<p>VISITORS & COMMUNICATION ON ECO-ITINERARY</p> <p>Is there visual & clear information about the site and visitors' responsible behavior in the area. What is provided for visitors in terms of inclusivity, participation, interpretation, visitor interactivity. Is the interaction between visitors and local people promoted.</p>	
<p>ACCESSIBILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>Describe accessibility! Are there public transportation possibilities existing and Information for visitors on how can they voluntary offset their carbon footprint.</p>	
<p>NICHE TOURISM PRODUCTS OFFER ON ECO-ITINERARY</p> <p>What niche tourism products can you offer on the eco-itinerary: food tourism, creative tourism, slow tourism, active tourism, cycling tourism, hiking tourism, transformative tourism, photo tourism, volunteering tourism, heritage tourism, educational tourism, or other tourism packages?</p>	

4.6 MONITORING - REGENERATION - CIRCULARITY

One of key strategic objectives is related to sustainable infrastructure on eco-itineraries. Strategy asks for measures and indicators that should be identified for each measure.

To strengthen eco-itineraries and their infrastructure, several strategic measures can be implemented:

1. Stimulating Carbon Footprint Reduction - Incorporating nature-based solutions, such as planting trees along eco-itineraries, helps offset carbon emissions, improve air quality, and enhance biodiversity in tourism areas.

2. Establishing Rigorous Maintenance Schedules - Regular monitoring, repair, and conservation efforts are essential.

3. Incorporating Innovative and Sustainable Materials - Using recyclable, durable, and energy-efficient materials minimizes environmental impact.

4. Promoting Certifications and Eco-Labels enhances credibility and accountability.

Engaging Local Communities and Organizations - Involving residents, businesses, and environmental organizations in the design,

implementation, and maintenance of eco-friendly infrastructure ensures community ownership, and long-term sustainability.

A number of easily measurable and understandable qualitative and quantitative circular indicators can be developed that are clearly linked to objectives to be achieved. Targets must define what should be achieved, in comparison to the current situation

For each shortlisted measure, a set of relevant information is to be provided, able to convey:

WHAT goals the measure is pursuing

HOW the measure will be implemented

WHO will benefit from it

WHO and HOW will contribute to its implementation

WHICH resources and skills are required

HOW MUCH will the measure cost including setting up and operation/maintenance costs)

WHEN it will be implemented

HOW its progress and performance will be monitored



Certificate label created
for MED ROUTES project



INFRASTRUCTURE - POSSIBLE MEASURES - KEY TECHNICAL ELEMENTS



Sustainable Heritage Facilities

- Promote preservation and promotion of local cultural heritage. Conservation and preservation of historical sites.
- Promote integration of eco-friendly architectural designs.
- Promote eco-friendly architecture: construction and infrastructure designed to minimize environmental impact.
- Promote construction and utilization of buildings with zero-net energy consumption.
- Promote Green Events and Initiatives: Hosting events / initiatives with minimal environmental impact, or events that promote sustainability.
- Promote Local Sourcing & Local Artisans: Promotion of local products and services.
- Provide support for local artisans and craftsmen.



Social Sustainability

- Promote Community Engagement & Community-Based Tourism: Active involvement and benefit sharing with local communities. Promotion of tourism initiatives that directly benefit or engage local communities.
- Promote Local Employment Opportunities: Creation of job opportunities for local residents.
- Promote Health and Safety Standards: Adherence to high health and safety standards for tourists and employers.
- Promote Accessible Tourism: Facilities and services catering to people with disabilities.
- Promote Inclusive Tourism / Cultural Sensitivity Training: Inclusion of marginalized communities in tourism initiatives, working process.
- Training programs for tourism staff or tourists to be culturally sensitive and tolerant.



Sustainable Mobility

- Emphasize the development of cycling and hiking routes, electric vehicle infrastructure, and public transport enhancements.
- Promote reduced reliance on private vehicles through car-sharing schemes and soft mobility networks.
- Develop seamless connections between modes of transport to facilitate ease of travel for tourists.



Water Managment

- Introduce water-saving systems such as low-flow fixtures, recycled water reuse, and desalination for small settlements.
- Promote drought-resistant landscaping and telemetry to monitor water use.
- Encourage rainwater harvesting and community: based water conservation programs.



Energy Efficient

- Promote the installation of energy-efficient lighting and renewable energy systems at heritage sites.
- Recommend retrofitting municipal / related to heritage/ buildings to meet green standards, incorporating solar panels and smart grids.
- Introduce energy management systems to optimize resource use and reduce costs.



Waste Managment

- Promote recycling systems, prohibiting single-use plastics, and encouraging the use of reusable materials.
- Engage local communities in waste management programs, upcycling initiatives, and composting systems.
- Promote zero-waste initiatives at tourist hotspots and cultural sites.

5.



BEST PRACTICES

ECO - ITINERARIES

EUROPEAN ROUTE OF CERAMICS, GREEN AND CULTURAL ROUTES IN FAENZA LANDSCAPE

Promotes a model of slow, experiential, and environmentally respectful tourism. Interpretation and storytelling activities are entrusted to local guides, workshops, themed events, and narrative paths that combine tradition, innovation, and environmental awareness. Regenerative Weekend on the European Ceramic Route: A two-day package starting in Faenza with a guided tour of the International Museum of Ceramics and practical ceramic workshops. A cycling route to Brisighella along the main itinerary, with a gastronomic stop at a sustainable winery. Overnight stay at an eco-friendly agritourism. On the second day, a slow exploration of the village of Brisighella and the natural paths of the Vena del Gesso, with storytelling about rural traditions and tasting of local products.

DESTINATION NAPOLEON: FIT AND GREEN “GO FIT WHERE HISTORY GOES GREENER”

Each municipality along the Historical Route of the Lines of Torres maintains a local tourism services catalogue, including accommodation, restaurants, local producers, and cultural events. Clear signage and maps mark key sites, water refill stations, recycling bins, electric chargers, and bike rental points.

Informative brochures highlight sustainability and circularity practices along the route. Best practices include traditional craft workshops using natural materials, interpretive trails guided by trained local experts in sustainable tourism, seasonal food and heritage sites...

ROUTES OF THE OLIVE TREE CROATIA, FROM WARRIORS TO GUARDIANS: THE ADRIATIC'S LEGACY OF RESILIENCE

A five-day eco-itinerary offers a deep, immersive journey through Peljesac, Koreula, and Lastovo. It blends natural beauty, local gastronomy, traditional craftsmanship, and sustainable practices. From oyster farming, biodynamic olive groves, and windsurfing, to ancient dry-stone walls, sword dances, and Carnival workshops, each day invites travelers to actively connect with heritage, ecology, and community. Through e-biking, hiking, and slow food experiences, participants gain intimate insights into island life while minimizing their environmental footprint.

PHOENICIANS' ROUTE CYPRUS: WINE, FOOD AND SAINTS

The “Sacred Flavours of Aphrodite” one-day tour offers a rich blend of culture, mythology, and gastronomy.

Starting in Geroskipou, guests visit the historic Agia Paraskevi Church and join a loukoumi-making workshop. In Kouklia, they explore the Sanctuary of Aphrodite and enjoy AR storytelling at Petra tou Romiou. A traditional, zero-waste lunch follows. The afternoon features visits to an olive oil mill or carob workshop, then Salamiou village for eco-education, a cultural walk, and wine tasting. - A rich experience for families, foodies, and cultural explorers. A leisurely stroll through the village's cultural landmarks concludes the day, with a light wine tasting from a local micro-winery.

6.

FINAL TIPS AND TAKEAWAYS

ECO - ITINERARIES - OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

The first stage, establishes a framework for eco-itinerary design, lays the foundation by integrating sustainability principles, stakeholder collaboration, and territorial analysis. This ensures that itineraries are developed in a responsible and strategic manner, aligning with circular economy principles while enhancing local cultural and natural assets.

In the next stage, the design of the itinerary focuses on structuring thematic connections between cultural identity, tangible heritage, and tourism services. A well-mapped itinerary that incorporates sustainable tourism infrastructure and smart technologies creates a seamless and engaging experience for visitors while preserving local heritage and ecosystems. The implementation on the ground, transforms these plans into reality through the development of infrastructure, technological integration, and environmental safeguards. By ensuring that facilities are eco-friendly, accessible, and well-maintained, eco-itineraries can accommodate responsible tourism while reducing ecological impact.

The practical development stage, focuses on designing marketable cultural tourism products on eco-itineraries. This involves packaging services, enhancing visitor engagement, and leveraging digital marketing and branding strategies to attract sustainability-conscious travelers. A participatory approach that involves local communities, businesses, and institutions ensures authenticity, inclusivity, and economic benefits for all stakeholders.

The final stage, continuous improvement and monitoring, secures the long-term success of eco-itineraries. By implementing data-driven performance evaluation, adaptive management, and sustainable funding models, stakeholders can ensure that these itineraries remain resilient, innovative, and aligned with evolving environmental and tourism trends.



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