

Tourism Culture

World Tourism Dynamics



Introduction

Since fiscal year 2023, researchers from our foundation have conducted overseas study visits each year from August to October. Traveling to tourist destinations in the United States, Europe, Oceania, and Asia, we have shared observations from these visits from multiple perspectives while considering the directions in which tourism may continue to develop dynamically. In this volume, we focus specifically on Europe, where many advanced initiatives have been undertaken in the field of tourism, and look back on the trajectory of these three years of study visits.

* This publication is an excerpted and re-edited compilation of articles originally published in issues No. 260, 264, and 268 of Tourism Culture.

Tourism Culture ... 2026 Special Edition

World Tourism Dynamics

— **Reflections on Three Years of Overseas Field Visits** —

Special Edition: Europe

Japan Travel Bureau Foundation

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Managing the tourist city. Insights from Barcelona

Albert Arias Sans

Tourism is an inherent and constitutive part of the current urban phenomenon. Tourist practices structure urban life in cities worldwide through infrastructure, imagery, activities, and the bodies they inhabit, generating friction, tension, and burdens for the permanent resident population. In turn, tourism becomes a reality through the construction and transformation of the city, its production and consumption patterns, often intensifying dynamics of socioeconomic inequality and fragmentation. Contemporary cities must therefore embrace tourism as a collective issue and as a vector in the construction of metropolitan space which needs to be regulated and governed like any other urban phenomenon.

One of the most substantial changes in the city of Barcelona in recent years is the fact that the debate surrounding tourism has become a public concern. The progressive increase in visitors, until reaching 15.5 million in 2024 and the evidence of its effects has given rise to a visible and pluralistic debate that has multiplied the voices, themes, and even objects of dispute within the framework we call tourism. Thus, it has become evident that tourism can no longer be addressed exclusively in a sectoral way, limited to the frameworks of academic expertise, market techniques or the interests of economic agents linked to tourism. On the contrary, the discussion on sectoral policies must be integrated into a broader agenda, taking into account the opportunities and challenges for the city and the surrounding region. Thus, addressing tourism as an activity inherent to the social and economic dynamics of the metropolitan area involves considering not only tourism's shared responsibility in the configuration of the metropolis, but also and here is found the key aspect the mechanisms of metropolitan space production that have facilitated the development of tourism activities.

In this context, Barcelona was one of the first European cities to recognize the need to regulate tourism in order to address its negative effects through urban policies. Above all, the approval in 2017 of the Special Urban Plan for Tourist Accommodation (PEUAT) was undoubtedly the most significant regulatory action. This urban planning instrument limited the city's accommodation supply by prohibiting the construction of new hotels in the city center while simultaneously freezing the number of short-term

rentals permits in the city. A plan that has been approved only after a public debate beyond the sector, including other voices such as residents associations, housing right activists or environmental conservationists but also after a long data-driven discussion on the impacts of the accommodation and the short term rentals over the housing market, urban mobility or the loss of traditional business.

However, despite its technical and legal soundness and the widespread political consensus that continues to support it, there is a lot yet to be done. PEUAT alone has turned out clearly insufficient to curb the overtourism of Barcelona. The attempts of regulating visitor flows in crowded spaces, tackling sustainable mobility policies for tourism uses or improving enforcement policies to penalize illegal accommodation have proven key to mitigating certain impacts. And yet, as a global phenomenon, we need to scale up the agenda at the national and European level: urges to stop airport expansions, to tax carbon emissions from tourism, to regulate extractive digital platforms, to protect labor rights coming from tourism among others. Managing the tourist city requires a manifold of technical instruments but, above all, a political awareness of what it is at stake, this is, the future of livable and lively cities for the many.

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I. Destination Management in Switzerland and Austria



Feature Article I-1:

Nature Conservation Systems in Switzerland

Feature Article I-2:

Development and Current Use of Tourism Networks Utilizing Non-Motorized Transport in Switzerland

Feature Article I-3:

Current State of Tourism Promotion and Service Coordination Centered on DMOs, and the Tourism Finance Systems That Drive Them

Feature Article I-4:

Reflections on the Field Visit to Switzerland and Austria



Field Visit Itinerary

2023

DATE	ACTIVITIES	OVERNIGHT STAY
Monday, September 11	Arrival in Switzerland	Zurich, Switzerland
Tuesday, September 12	Field visit: Davos / St. Moritz; Switzerland Mobility routes	St. Moritz, Switzerland
Wednesday, September 13	Field visit: Swiss National Park / Regional Nature Park Biosfera Val Müstair	St. Anton, Austria
Thursday, September 14	Exchange of views: Lech Zürs Tourism Board	St. Anton, Austria
Friday, September 15	Exchange of views: University of St. Gallen / St. Gallen-Bodensee Tourism Board	St. Gallen, Switzerland
Saturday, September 16	Field visit: Wildnispark Zürich Sihlwald	Zurich, Switzerland
Sunday, September 17	Departure from Switzerland	Return to Japan on Monday, September 18

Nature Conservation Systems in Switzerland

Tourism Research Division, Researcher

Ataru Nasu

1. Introduction

Parks, as spaces open to the public, fall into two broad categories: facility-based parks, in which the managing authority owns the land, and zoning-based parks, which are designated over a defined area regardless of land ownership. National parks are among the larger-scale parks designated and managed for the primary purposes of protecting biological diversity, underlying ecological structures, and environmental processes, while also promoting education and recreation.¹

Japan's national parks operate under a zoning-based system, and land ownership within park boundaries is highly diverse. It includes land administered by the Ministry of the Environment, the supervising agency; national land under the jurisdiction of other ministries and agencies, such as national forests; public land owned by local governments; and privately owned land held by private businesses and individuals. There are also residents living within park boundaries, as well as multiple actors implementing public and private policies and projects, resulting in a wide range of stakeholders. For this reason, national park management is carried out through collaborative governance based on consensus-building among relevant parties, with comprehensive councils established for each park or management unit serving as forums for this consensus-building.

Through contracted work, the Foundation has had opportunities to become involved in the operation of councils related to national parks in various regions. In the author's own experience, a frequent challenge in regional councils has been how to enable a large number of stakeholders to share an understanding of current conditions and perceived issues, and how to move initiatives forward by sharing goals and guidelines. Facility-based parks and zoning-based parks each have their own institutional strengths and weaknesses. However, the point noted above appears to be, in a certain sense, an inherent weakness of collaborative governance in zoning-based parks.

Accordingly, the present field visit focused on systems for the protection of natural areas in Switzerland. Systems for the protection of natural areas and landscapes across Switzerland include the "Federal Inventory of Landscapes and Natural

Monuments," the "Swiss Landscape Concept," and "Parks of National Importance." Among these, this study focused in particular on "Parks of National Importance" and "Regional Nature Parks," and examined mechanisms for involving stakeholders in the management of protected areas.

It should be noted that some of the names of facilities, systems, and other items discussed in this article do not have established forms in languages other than Switzerland's official languages. Among the terms used in the text, those enclosed in double quotation marks, such as "Parks of National Importance" above, should be understood as including provisional Japanese translations by the author.

2. Overview of Parks of National Importance and the Park Designation and Recognition Process

"Parks of National Importance" is a system established under federal law and related ordinances for the designation of natural area parks. Three types of parks are recognized under this system: "National Parks," "Regional Nature Parks," and "Peri-urban Nature Parks."

As of 2023, there is one "National Park," seventeen "Regional Nature Parks," and two "Peri-urban Nature Parks."

The "National Park" is designated with the aim of excluding human influence and allowing nature to develop and change freely; tourism development, agriculture, forestry, livestock farming, and mining are strictly restricted. Only one such park exists, located in southeastern Switzerland, and it is one of the oldest nature parks in Europe, having been established in 1914. The "National Park Commission," comprising representatives of the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), cantons, municipalities, NGOs, and academic institutions, serves as the managing authority and holds long-term land leases from municipalities, making it effectively a facility-based park. It is operated as an open-air laboratory with minimal human intervention, and part of its research findings can be viewed at the visitor center. Trails and facilities are kept to a minimum, though access is permitted, and guided tours are available in some areas.

"Regional Nature Parks" and "Peri-urban Nature Parks" are categories established following legislative reforms in 2007 and are relatively recent additions to the park system. "Regional Nature Parks" are designated to maintain high-quality nature and landscapes while supporting the sustainable development of regional economies; eligible areas include rural landscapes containing residents, along with nature, scenery, and cultural assets of high resource value. "Peri-urban Nature Parks" are designated primarily to improve the quality of life (QOL) of urban residents, provide nature education, and secure buffer zones; eligible areas are semi-natural zones located within 20 km of urban areas and accessible by public transportation.

The establishment of new parks is not determined by the Swiss federal authorities. Instead, the process involves local actors within the candidate area forming the necessary organizations and preparing the required plans, which are then reviewed and formally recognized by the federal authorities.

First, an "Establishment Plan" is prepared toward the creation of the park. In parallel with the implementation of the initiatives set out in the "Establishment Plan," a "Park Charter" is developed, defining the park agreement and the post-recognition management plan. Once the "Establishment Plan" has been fully implemented and management of the target area based on the "Park Charter" has commenced, the area is formally designated by the federal government as a "Park of National Importance" and granted a dedicated certification label. The process from the commencement of the "Establishment Plan" to designation takes up to eight years for "National Parks" and up to four years for "Regional Nature Parks" and "Peri-urban Nature Parks."

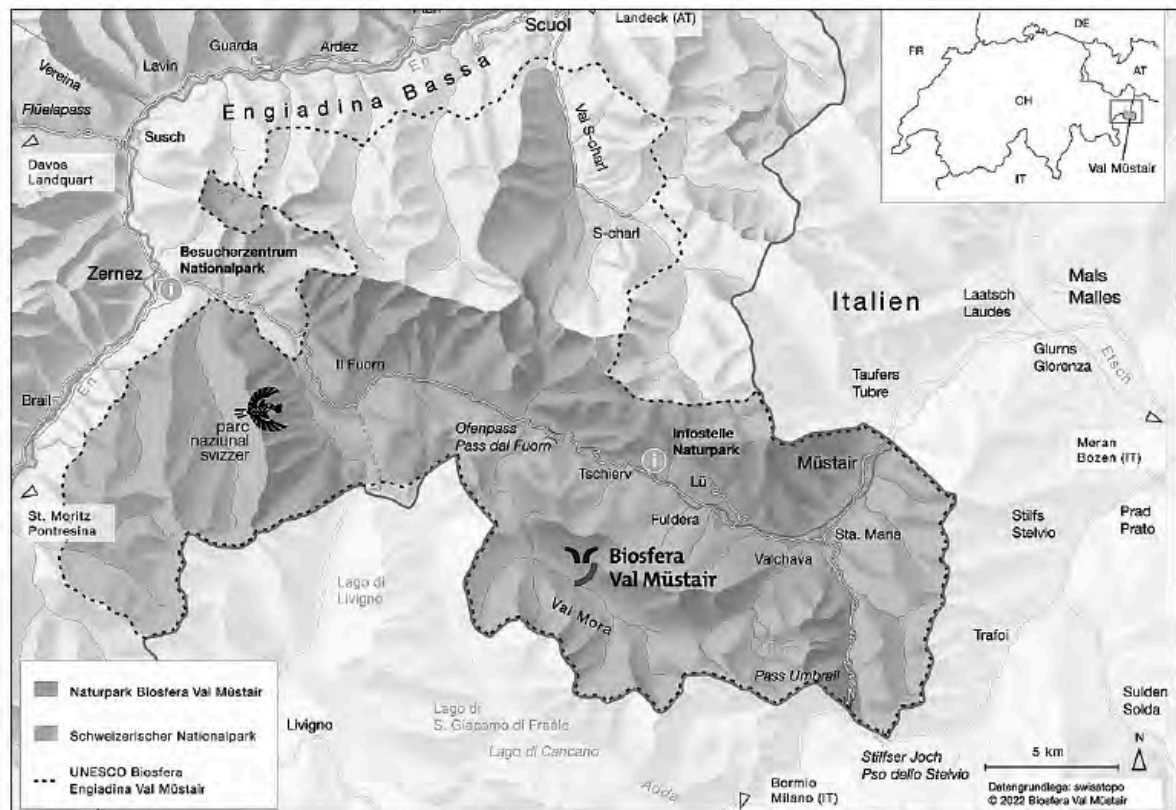
The "Park Charter" covers a planning period of ten years and includes a four-year action plan that complements the management plan. Federal recognition is valid for a limited period; areas wishing to maintain recognition must renew the "Park Charter" every ten years.

Upon designation as a "Park of National Importance," the use of a dedicated certification label is permitted for regional information dissemination and for products meeting specified standards. Financial support from the federal authorities is also available for initiatives based on the management plan. While these represent tangible benefits for the region, they do not guarantee all the personnel and budget required after designation. From the stage of preparing the "Establishment Plan" toward park creation, regions are required to meet necessary criteria not only regarding the park's resource value—such as the natural qualities of the target area and the management plan—but also regarding the park's sustainability, including democratic community participation, a continuous management structure, and funding processes.

3. A Case Study of a Regional Nature Park: Biosfera Val Müstair

As a field case study, the author visited Biosfera Val Müstair, located in southeastern Switzerland. Recognized in 2011, this "Regional Nature Park" also functions as a buffer zone for the adjacent Swiss National Park. It is a zoning-based park encompassing numerous agricultural lands, settlements, and a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site.

The current "Park Charter" covers the planning period from 2021 to 2030. The municipality of Val Müstair serves as the secretariat and handles the practical work of park management. Strategic decision-making is carried out by a committee of fourteen members, including heads of administrative bodies, municipal mayors, and representatives of tourism organizations, farmers, restaurant operators, and citizens.



Location Map of Biosfera Val Müstair

A variety of initiatives are being implemented within the park, including river channel restoration and efforts to revive the cultivation of flax used in traditional local weaving (restoration of cultural landscapes). The Monastery of Saint John in Müstair, located in the eastern part of the park, is designated as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site, and archaeological investigations are being conducted there. The park authority and the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) provide funding for these investigations, and part of the findings are on display within the monastery.



Landscape within Biosfera Val Müstair Park Area



Distant View of The Monastery of Saint John



Inside The Monastery of Saint John and Its Exhibition Displays

4. Conclusion

Switzerland's "Parks of National Importance" is a system in which parks are established through federal recognition of plans initiated at the regional level. The system is designed so that responsibility falls on the region itself—prior to recognition—to establish a protective management framework, ensure sustainability including funding, set up a managing body, and build a structure for community participation. Recognition requires consensus-building at a sufficiently high level to complete the plan preparation and organizational development. To put it plainly, if stakeholders within a region have

not reached agreement among themselves, the area cannot even reach the starting line as a park. At the same time, because the scope of park initiatives is not limited to natural resources, stakeholders are able to participate in park planning and management with their own motivations and objectives, each from their respective positions.

Among the stakeholders participating in regional councils in Japan's national parks, levels of enthusiasm and understanding of park initiatives vary considerably. While there are cases in which the efforts of Ministry of the Environment officials working in the field have successfully fostered a sense of ownership among stakeholders, this also means, conversely, that the process of aligning stakeholders toward a common direction cannot be said to be systematized.

Switzerland, as a federal state, differs from Japan in its foundational national context and in the historical background of its nature park system, and it is not possible to directly import the design or operation of Switzerland's park system. Nevertheless, the present study identified several elements in common with collaborative management approaches, and the author found much of relevance for future reference.

It should be noted that while a certain body of information has accumulated regarding the "National Park" discussed in this study, available information on cases of "Regional Nature Parks" and "Peri-urban Nature Parks," as well as the overall framework of "Parks of National Importance" encompassing all three types, remains limited. Over the seventeen years since the system was launched in 2007, nineteen parks have been newly established in Switzerland, making it one of the most dynamic fields in the world for the establishment and operation of zoning-based parks centered on natural areas. From this perspective as well, the author intends to continue monitoring developments.

Notes and Sources

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Development and Current Use of Tourism Networks Utilizing Non-Motorized Transport in Switzerland

Tourism Research Department, Senior Researcher

Naoki Ogawa

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of global decarbonization efforts and a growing trend away from private car use, particularly among younger generations, the need for tourism destination development that is not dependent on automobiles has been increasing in Japan. Furthermore, taking into account contemporary tourism needs, it can be said that means of transportation are now required not merely to function as a way of getting from one place to another, but to create value in their own right as tourist attractions. In Japan, long-distance trails and cycling paths have been developed in various regions; however, these have not necessarily been organically integrated in terms of both hardware and software, and it cannot be said that they are being fully utilized for the creation of tourism appeal.

Through the author's experience of engaging in community development from an urban planning perspective, a sense of need has emerged for connecting attractive local tourism resources—such as historical assets—and creating new value from them. With this background in mind, this paper focuses on "SwitzerlandMobility," an initiative for developing tourism networks utilizing non-motorized traffic in Switzerland, and provides an overview of the circumstances behind its establishment and the characteristics of its operating organization. To this end, a preliminary review of existing literature was conducted, followed by an on-site visit to Switzerland, where the state of trail and signage development and the conditions of use by visitors were assessed through direct observation and firsthand experience.

2. Background to the Development of the Non-Motorized Traffic Network in Switzerland

The SwitzerlandMobility Foundation, which operates SwitzerlandMobility, traces its origins to the Cycling in Switzerland Foundation. The Cycling in Switzerland Foundation was established in 1993, inspired by an idea proposed by a group of touring cyclists to build a nationwide cycling tour network. In 1995, commissioned by all Swiss cantons, the Foundation began developing nine national routes totaling more than 3,000 km in length, along with a nationwide signage system.

Subsequently, in 1998, the scope of the initiative was expanded beyond cycling to encompass other areas of non-motorized traffic, including hiking and canoeing, with the aim of providing sustainable leisure and tourism opportunities. In 1999, the Swiss Hiking Federation, which had taken an interest in the initiative, approached the Cycling in Switzerland Foundation. This led to the announcement, the following year, of the SwitzerlandMobility concept: the development of a nationwide network for leisure and tourism using non-motorized traffic. A wide range of organizations from the fields of transport, sport, and tourism joined the initiative, along with the Swiss federal government, the individual cantons, and the Principality of Liechtenstein. Work toward the realization of SwitzerlandMobility commenced in autumn 2004, and after a preparatory period of just over three years, SwitzerlandMobility was formally established in spring 2008.

In a parallel development, research was conducted at the University of Bern between 1984 and 2003 to document historic traffic routes and historically significant structures along them, resulting in the Inventory of Historic Traffic Routes (Inventar historischer Verkehrswege der Schweiz, IVS). Building on this work, "ViaStoria" was launched in 2003 as an initiative to develop the tourism potential of these historic traffic routes. ViaStoria comprises twelve primary routes, of which those meeting the specified criteria have been incorporated into SwitzerlandMobility.

3. Overview of SwitzerlandMobility

SwitzerlandMobility routes are broadly divided into national routes (single-digit route numbers), regional routes (double-digit numbers), and local routes (triple-digit numbers), with a total length of approximately 36,000 km. Approximately 200,000 uniformly designed signs have been installed nationwide. The routes are integrated with public transportation, and information on trails for summer activities—including hiking, cycling, mountain biking, skating, and canoeing—as well as winter activities such as snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and sledging, is provided through signage and mobile applications. As of spring 2023, 857 summer routes and 648 winter routes (as of winter 2022/2023) have been established.

The SwitzerlandMobility website and mobile application provide information not only on individual routes, but also on public transportation stations and stops, bicycle service stations, accommodation facilities, and tourist attractions. In addition, through a

partnership with Eurotrek, an outdoor travel company, a range of integrated tourism services are offered along the routes, including accommodation bookings, luggage transfer, and bicycle rental.

Furthermore, a paid subscription service called SwitzerlandMobility Plus (35 Swiss francs per year) is available, enabling users to plan a wide variety of tours—covering hiking, cycling, winter sports, and more—directly on the website or mobile application, and to save and record their routes. As of the end of 2022, approximately 7.4 million tours with a combined total distance of over 152 million km have been created through this service.



Left: At key locations, route maps are installed alongside wing-shaped directional signs.
Right: Barrier-free routes are also well developed, with signs indicating the routes installed on site.
(Both photos were taken in front of Davos Dorf Station.)



Left: Signage Conditions
Right: Signage and trail conditions. Routes are primarily set along existing roads and walking paths.
(Both photos were taken in Pontresina.)

4. Operations of the SwitzerlandMobility Foundation

The revenue of the SwitzerlandMobility Foundation comprises contributions from the Swiss federal government, the Principality of Liechtenstein, and the individual cantons,

as well as contributions from public bodies, private organizations, corporations, and individuals, forming a public-private partnership model. The majority of the Foundation's revenue is derived from SwitzerlandMobility Plus subscription fees, which account for approximately 70% (around CHF 4.2 million) of total revenue (approximately CHF 6.14 million). The Foundation's principal expenditures include information services (approximately CHF 2.74 million)—encompassing the provision of high-quality route information, which the Foundation regards as a key selling point of SwitzerlandMobility, as well as the operation of SwitzerlandMobility Plus—infrastructure development and maintenance (approximately CHF 920,000), and administration of the Foundation (approximately CHF 810,000). All figures are for fiscal year 2022.

In addition, the SwitzerlandMobility Foundation conducts cantonal workshops (Kantonale Workshops) in all 26 Swiss cantons and in Liechtenstein, aimed at advancing non-motorized traffic and improving its quality. Through this closely integrated collaborative framework, the Foundation addresses the review of routes and the inspection and maintenance of signage.



Left: Trail users on skates
(Rümlang, Zurich)



Right: Trail users hiking (Morteratsch Glacier, Pontresina)

5. Conclusion

SwitzerlandMobility is characterized by three features. First, it integrates multiple modes of non-motorized traffic—including walking (hiking), cycling, and skating—into a single cohesive network. It is worth noting that the primary purpose is not simply to combine different modes of non-motorized traffic into a network, but rather to provide a means for tourism and leisure.

Second, regarding its organizational structure, the system is developed and operated through a collaborative framework that extends both vertically and horizontally, with participation not only at the national level (two countries) but also from organizations across cantonal and private-sector levels in their respective fields.

Third, the findings of ViaStoria—which originated in university research—have been incorporated into SwitzerlandMobility, resulting in route planning supported by academic research in terms of tourism appeal. This too is worthy of attention.

SwitzerlandMobility, with these distinguishing characteristics, is operated through a cross-sectoral and closely integrated collaborative framework, enabling its long-term maintenance and development. It has also established a structure that generates benefits for society, the environment, and the economy. As such, it appears to offer a valuable reference case for considering the future direction of tourism destination development in Japan.

During the field visit, the author was able to observe a variety of uses of the trails, including not only walking and cycling but also skating. The way in which high-quality routes, supported by academic research, are seamlessly connected through a website and mobile application could be described as a kind of "MaaS for non-motorized traffic." The author came away with the impression that this contributes to greater convenience and enhanced experiential value for tourists, while also helping to raise the value of tourism resources for local communities.

In addition, Switzerland Tourism operates the "Swisstainable" certification scheme, which recognizes environmentally responsible practices among tourism operators within the country, with the aim of differentiating Switzerland from competing destinations. The author also felt that the utilization of non-motorized traffic networks such as SwitzerlandMobility—alongside Switzerland's well-established image of "tourism by rail"—as a means of tourism and leisure has the potential to reinforce the image that the country seeks to create at the national level as "a country engaged in sustainable tourism."

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Current State of Tourism Promotion and Service Coordination Centered on DMOs, and the Tourism Finance Systems That Drive Them

Tourism Research Department, Researcher

Takaaki Ezaki

1. Introduction

In the wake of the pandemic, discussions have been advancing across Japan regarding the introduction of tourism funding mechanisms, centered primarily on accommodation taxes. With regard to accommodation taxes in particular, as multiple regions within Japan have already implemented them, the technical or methodological challenges associated with their introduction are relatively limited; implementation has become achievable through established processes. Rather, it can be said that the current phase involves examining and developing effective mechanisms to ensure that revenue generated through accommodation taxes and similar instruments continues to be used effectively for tourism promotion.

The Foundation hosts an independent research initiative called the "Tourism Finance Study Group," of which the author serves as its secretariat and is responsible for its operation. This topic also constitutes an important research agenda within that study group. Against this background, this paper provides an overview of the effective mechanisms and approaches to the use of accommodation tax revenue for tourism promotion in Switzerland and Austria, both of which introduced accommodation taxes at an early stage. In addition, given that accommodation tax revenue in Europe serves as a funding source for destination management organizations



University of St. Gallen



Lech Zürs Tourism Board

(DMOs), the paper also examines the latest initiatives of DMOs in Switzerland and Austria.

It should be noted that this paper is a reorganization of publicly available materials, informed by interviews with three individuals on the topics described above—Professor Pietro Beritelli of the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland; Mr. Thomas Kirchhofer of St.Gallen-Bodensee Tourismus, the DMO of St. Gallen; and Mr. Hermann Fercher, Director of Lech|Zürs Tourismus, the DMO of Lech, Austria—as well as by on-site observations conducted during the field visit.

2. Statutory Regulation of the Permitted Uses of Accommodation Taxes and Related Levies

Accommodation taxes have long been introduced in Europe and North America; however, in some regions, they have been absorbed into general revenue—that is, allocated to municipal operations beyond tourism promotion—and cases have been observed in which the funds are applied to purposes that cannot be considered tourism promotion. The reasons for this include changes in the mayors and legislators who originally championed the introduction of accommodation taxes as a dedicated tourism promotion budget, as well as the tendency for accommodation tax revenue, once incorporated into municipal accounts, to be subject to an expansive interpretation of its permitted uses and redirected toward public works and similar expenditures, depending on the fiscal situation.

In the municipality of Lantsch/Lenz, Switzerland, two levies are used to secure tourism funding: an "accommodation tax" collected from guests, and a "tourism promotion tax" collected from all businesses operating within the municipality. The permitted uses of the accommodation tax are restricted by the Law on

City of Lantsch/Lenz, "Law on the Levying of Accommodation Tax and Tourism Promotion Tax"

Excerpt

(Article 1)

The City of Lantsch/Lenz levies tourism taxes in the form of an accommodation tax and a tourism promotion tax in order to promote tourism and secure funding.

(Article 12)

1. The municipality must use revenue from the accommodation tax to cover expenditures for the interests and benefits of those liable to pay the tax. It may not be used to finance ordinary or traditional municipal duties.
3. Ordinary or traditional municipal duties refer to duties that have little relation to tourism.
4. The municipality or tourism organization is required to disclose the use of funds in detail each year.

(Article 13)

All businesses located within the municipality, regardless of their legal form, are subject to the tourism promotion tax.

(Article 18)

1. The municipality must use revenue from the tourism promotion tax for the benefit of those liable to pay the tax, particularly for effective market development and tourism events. It may not be used for ordinary or traditional municipal duties.
2. Ordinary or traditional municipal duties refer to duties that have little relation to tourism.
3. The municipality or tourism organization is required to disclose the use of funds in detail each year.

Source: City of Lantsch/Lenz materials <https://www.lantsch-lenz.ch/tourismus/tfa>

Accommodation Tax and Tourism Promotion Tax to improvements in the convenience of guests as taxpayers, while the tourism promotion tax is restricted to marketing and tourism events. Furthermore, the legislation explicitly prohibits the conversion of either levy into general revenue. This approach—stipulating permitted uses in statutory provisions to ensure that tourism funding is permanently directed toward tourism promotion—is a defining characteristic of the system.

In the canton of St. Gallen, Switzerland, municipalities within the canton are granted the statutory right to collect both an accommodation tax and a tourism promotion tax as means of raising funds for tourism promotion. With respect to the accommodation tax in particular, the legislation explicitly prohibits its use for advertising activities aimed at reaching potential visitors who have not yet visited the region, thereby further restricting the permitted uses even within the broader category of "tourism promotion."

A defining feature of the Swiss approach is the use of statutory provisions both to prevent the conversion of tourism levies into general revenue and to restrict permitted uses in precise terms, in accordance with the principle that those who benefit should bear the costs, thereby ensuring that tourism funding is permanently directed toward its intended purposes.

Cantonal Tourism Act of St. Gallen Excerpt

Article 16: Principles

1. Municipalities may levy a tourism tax on the following:
 - a) Overnight guests
 - b) Beneficiaries of tourism
2. The tourism tax must be used for the benefit of those liable to pay the tax. Tourism taxes collected from overnight guests must not be used for advertising purposes.

Source: Canton of St. Gallen materials
https://www.gesetzessammlung.sg.ch/app/de/texts_of_law/575.1

3. Services That Enhance Guest Comfort

In the course of discussions held during the field visit, the author became aware of a widely held view that "accommodation tax revenue should be used for local infrastructure and services that enhance the satisfaction of guests during their stay." In this context, "infrastructure" refers to such items as the maintenance of hiking trails, the installation of benches and traffic signals, and the development of facilities for events, while "services" refers to initiatives such as the establishment of information desks and the provision of transportation and activity passes. During the field visit, the author had the opportunity to experience the "transportation and activity pass"—one of the most representative examples of the "service" uses described above—which is provided by DMOs in many European resort destinations and funded through accommodation tax

revenue. The following section introduces an overview of this service and the mechanisms underlying it.

4. The St. Anton Summer Card

St. Anton am Arlberg in Austria is a world-renowned resort destination known as the birthplace of alpine skiing. The St. Anton Tourism Association (DMO) offers the "St. Anton Summer Card" as a benefit for overnight guests, with the primary aim of enhancing visitor convenience outside the winter peak season. The card is provided to guests by their accommodation upon check-in, remains valid through the check-out date, and offers a range of benefits according to the number of nights stayed, including use of the local transportation system, admission to tourist facilities, and participation in destination-based programs. Looking at the benefits by number of nights, guests receive from the first night onward access to local bus services and admission to museums and exhibition facilities; from the second night onward, participation in hiking tours and yoga programs; and from the third night onward, use of cable cars and lifts to mountain summits, discounts on electric bicycle rental, and access to swimming pools. Notably, as the primary purpose of summer visits to the area is to enjoy the scenic views from mountain summits, the complimentary cable car and lift access—which directly fulfills this purpose—is made available only from the

St. Anton Summer Card

Experience summer up close!

This area offers many opportunities to discover the unique region around St. Anton am Arlberg. The St. Anton Summer Card is available free of charge from many accommodations from the first night of your stay. From the ninth day onward, all services can be used again.

Valid until the day of departure, the card offers a variety of activities in the region. The Summer Card includes the following services:



From the first night

- Free admission to the St. Anton am Arlberg Museum
- Free admission to the Gand exhibition
- Free admission to Tiroler Abend
- One torchlight hike
- Tours according to the weekly program, such as herb tours, dairy tours, village tours, and film evenings
- Unlimited use of all buses operating between Landeck and St. Christoph, including regular buses, hiking buses, the Verwall bus, ski buses, and local buses around St. Anton, St. Christoph, and Pettneu

From the second night

- Guided hikes according to the weekly program
- One archery session according to the weekly program
- One yoga lesson according to the weekly program
- Children's program from Monday to Friday
- Free green fee at the 9-hole golf course in St. Anton am Arlberg; a course license is required

From the third night

- One full day of unlimited use of all operating mountain lifts
- Free admission to the Arlberg WellCom swimming pool in St. Anton am Arlberg, or to the Arlberg Stanzertal Wellness Park swimming pool in Pettneu
- A €20 discount on a paid full-day or half-day e-bike ticket, or on rentals at the following sports shops: Sport Alber, Intersport Arlberg, Sport Jennewein, Sport Pete, and Sport Matt

From the fifth night

- An additional free admission to the Arlberg WellCom swimming pool in St. Anton am Arlberg, or to the Arlberg Stanzertal Wellness Park swimming pool in Pettneu am Arlberg

Source: St. Anton Tourist Association website
<https://www.stantonamarlberg.com/en/summer/the-summer-card/st-anton-summer-card>

third night onward. This is presumed to function as an incentive for extended stays and as a mechanism for reducing the disparity between peak and off-peak periods. Furthermore, the benefits available through the first two nights—including admission to facilities and guided participation in destination-based programs—are considered to encourage purchases and other spending at individual facilities, thereby contributing to increased revenue for local businesses.

5. The St. Gallen Mobility Ticket

St. Gallen, located in northeastern Switzerland, is the central city of the region and attracts many visitors drawn by the Abbey of St. Gallen—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—and its historic old town. St.Gallen-Bodensee Tourismus (DMO) offers the "St. Gallen-Lake Constance Mobility Ticket" as a benefit for overnight guests, providing unlimited access to public transportation in St. Gallen and the surrounding area. The ticket is issued when guests register their email address at check-in, upon which an email containing a QR code serving as the ticket is sent to them; the code can also be saved to a smartphone wallet.



St.Gallen-Lake Constance
Mobility Ticket

The ticket grants unlimited use of public transportation throughout the surrounding area, including trains, trams, and local buses, significantly enhancing convenience for visitors.

It should also be noted that these services are not provided solely for the purpose of improving convenience for visitors to the region. By tracking guest attribute data and ticket usage history, it becomes possible to accumulate data on such matters as from which countries visitors are currently coming, how many nights they are staying, and which services are being used and when. As such, the system also appears to serve as an effective means of informing DMO initiatives such as destination marketing.

6. Conclusion

Regarding the statutory provisions on the permitted uses of accommodation taxes introduced in the first half of this paper, one possible approach for application in Japan would be to establish, within local government accommodation tax ordinances, provisions specifying permitted uses, stipulating that accommodation tax revenue be used exclusively for tourism promotion. However, no such ordinance has yet been enacted in Japan. By contrast, in Switzerland, these discussions had already progressed a quarter of a century ago—the canton of St. Gallen's tourism law, for example, was

enacted in the 1990s. To understand why such discussions advanced at an early stage, it is necessary to recognize the nature of Swiss society. Switzerland operates under a federal system with strong decentralization, in which each canton holds sovereignty, and there is a deeply rooted culture of self-governance. Switzerland also practices direct democracy, and citizens have regular opportunities to vote on a wide range of political matters. This social framework has long provided fertile ground for asking questions such as "How can we use our own efforts and institutions to enhance the value of our communities?" and "Will the community accept a given policy decision as the right one?" During discussions held at the field visit, remarks were made to the effect that "there is a culture in Switzerland of speaking out against cantonal and federal government policies," and it can be inferred that strict demands that tax revenue be used in ways acceptable to residents led to the statutory clarification of the permitted uses of accommodation taxes.

With regard to DMO initiatives, these broadly align with the permitted uses of accommodation taxes. Based on the regional cultural context described above, the author came away with the impression that DMOs themselves place considerable importance on how their activities are evaluated by local businesses and communities. During discussions at the field visit, views were expressed to the effect that "DMO performance is measured less by visitor numbers than by whether the DMO can take pride in providing good services to visitors, and whether that translates into earning the trust of local businesses." It can also be inferred that the transportation and activity passes introduced earlier in this paper are among the initiatives that emerged from this awareness.

In this way, the field visit provided an opportunity to learn about the mechanisms and concrete practices related to the use of accommodation taxes that have emerged from European culture and values. For local governments in Japan that are considering the introduction of accommodation taxes, these findings should prove highly instructive, both as references for building sustainable systems for managing the use of such revenue and as concrete examples of how that revenue might be applied.

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Reflections on the Field Visit to Switzerland and Austria

Tourism Research Department, Senior Researcher

Masahiro Kanno

1. Background and Purpose of the Field Visit to Switzerland and Austria

The author has previously reviewed trends in research on the concepts of "destination management" (Issue 234, July 2017) and "destination governance" (Issue 245, April 2020) in earlier issues of this journal, *Tourism Culture*.

These reviews were undertaken with the recognition that by identifying and organizing the theoretical lineage of concepts developed in pursuit of better approaches to tourism destination development, they could serve as a framework for applying these concepts in practice in tourism destination development in Japan.

In the course of reviewing research trends in "destination management," a number of additional findings were also obtained. One of these was that "the institutional affiliations of authors publishing on 'destination management' are heavily concentrated in Europe and Oceania."

This observation was among the factors that informed the selection of Switzerland and Austria in Europe as one of the three overseas field visit destinations organized as part of the current research initiative.

Through previous reviews, the author has confirmed that "destination governance" is a concept that, against the backdrop of the diverse range of stakeholders present in tourism destinations and the inherent uncertainty of the environment in which they operate, captures approaches to "decision-making" and "consensus-building" among local stakeholders—either in parallel with or as an extension of "destination management."

The COVID-19 pandemic brought renewed recognition of the fact that the world we inhabit is constantly subject to "uncertainty," which can at times manifest as a tangible crisis. It was with this in mind that, at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has begun to subside, the author considered it highly valuable to revisit the current state of Europe, where there exists a well-developed research tradition of approaching tourism destinations as subjects of management and governance, as a reference for thinking

about the future direction of tourism destination development in Japan.



Townscape of St. Gallen

2. Research Trends in "Destination Management/Governance"

Following the two previous reviews discussed above, this section examines trends in research on "destination management/governance" since 2020, that is, since the onset of COVID-19.

Bichler et al. (2021), for example, conducted fieldwork and interviews at tourism destinations with the aim of understanding how local residents engage with tourism governance and how that engagement affects the sustainability and development of destinations. Through a review of the literature and analysis of international best practices, the study further examined the role of local residents in the design of tourism governance frameworks.

Thees et al. (2020) investigated how "living labs" can function as tools for promoting resident participation in destination governance. A living lab is defined as "a real-life test and experimentation environment where citizens, government, industry, and academia—the so-called Quadruple Helix Model—co-create and pursue open innovation" (European Network of Living Labs). The study sought to understand how this concept can contribute to collaboration with residents and improvements in

decision-making processes, and to propose effective approaches for promoting resident participation.

Volgger et al. (2021), meanwhile, explored the concepts and methods of tourism destination design, proposing new perspectives to complement conventional approaches and promote more continuous and sustainable destination development. The study argues that tourism destination design—by emphasizing elements such as sustainability, community participation, and respect for local culture—can serve as a methodology for fostering the ongoing growth and development of tourism destinations.

While the three studies cited above represent only a small fraction of the research published on this topic, a common thread running through all of them is a perspective that calls for a reexamination of the relationship with residents in the context of management/governance.

As reflected in the VICE model—a well-known destination management framework that conceptualizes its subject in terms of four elements: Visitors, Industry, Community, and Environment and Culture—it can be said that the perspective of "residents" has always been embedded in the concept of "destination management/governance."

This gives rise to the hypothesis that the relationship with "residents"—already a dimension inherent to the concept—has been renewed and heightened in importance through experiences such as the COVID-19 pandemic and phenomena such as overtourism, which had already become a subject of broad concern prior to the pandemic.

During the overseas field visit, the author engaged in discussions with both researchers and practitioners involved in destination management/governance. Among the comments received were the following:

- Prior to the pandemic, discussions concerning new relationships with residents had already been taking place in connection with issues such as overtourism. However, the suspension of tourism during the pandemic may have led researchers to recognize it as the ideal moment to reconsider tourism from the ground up, thereby bringing this topic into focus as a research theme.
- In the aftermath of COVID-19, awareness of community well-being has increased. Residents themselves, as stakeholders, have also come to understand the importance of paying close attention to what is happening in the areas in which they are involved. These comments can be understood as supporting the hypothesis outlined above.

3. Aspects of Governance as Reflected in Each Report

The individual reports by Nasu, Ogawa, and Ezaki can be understood as an attempt to evaluate, from their respective perspectives, a comprehensive and multifaceted set of

initiatives in which the diverse regional resources of Europe—its natural environment, landscapes, history, and culture—are: ① conserved through protected area systems; ② connected through non-motorized traffic networks; and ③ driven as a regional tourism system through DMOs and funding mechanisms.

Drawing on the case studies introduced in each report, this section extracts and evaluates cross-cutting observations relevant to the central theme of this paper: "governance"—that is, approaches to "decision-making" and "consensus-building" among stakeholders.

① Protected Area Systems

- In Switzerland, the system is designed so that the establishment of a protective management framework, the securing of sustainability including budget, the appointment of a managing body, and the preparation of a management plan are all carried out at the regional level prior to park recognition, with consensus-building among stakeholders taking place through this process.
- Conversely, it can also be said that without consensus-building at a sufficiently high level to complete the plans and organizational structures required, park recognition cannot be achieved in the first place.

② Non-Motorized Traffic Networks

- In Switzerland, SwitzerlandMobility is developed and operated through a collaborative framework that extends both vertically and horizontally, with participation not only from the national government but also from the cantons and organizations across various private-sector fields.
- The foundation at the center of this initiative conducts workshops in all 26 cantons and Liechtenstein, aimed at advancing non-motorized traffic and improving its quality, while also addressing the review of routes and the inspection and maintenance of signage.

③ DMOs and Funding Systems

- In Switzerland and other European countries, the practice of direct democracy has long provided fertile ground for questions such as "How can we use our own efforts and institutions to enhance the value of our communities?" and "Will the community accept a given policy decision as the right one?"
- It has also been noted that "there is a culture of speaking out against cantonal and federal government policies," and the resulting scrutiny over the acceptable use of tax revenue has led to the statutory clarification of the permitted uses of accommodation taxes.

From these observations, one is led to envision a defining social characteristic underlying the various initiatives in Switzerland and Austria: a strong culture of self-governance that both demands and strives to realize a high standard of governance.

In Japan, registered "Tourism Area Management Organizations" (DMOs) are expected to play a steering role in facilitating consensus-building among regional stakeholders. Beyond this, in a future that will continue to be characterized by "uncertainty," a kind of transformation in awareness may be needed among those involved in tourism destination development—one in which the various issues at hand are approached as matters of personal concern, with a strong sense of self-governance. And in the communities of Japan, which once contained within them the autonomous governance system of *yoriai* -communal assemblies, this may be a vision whose revival can be fully and reasonably anticipated.



Townscape of Lech

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II. Addressing Overtourism: Destination Management in European Cities— Amsterdam and Venice



Feature Article II-1

Overview of the Amsterdam and Venice Field Visit and Dispersal of Visitor Demand

Feature Article II-2

Trends and Recent Developments in Overtourism Policies— Focusing on Amsterdam's "Balanced Tourism Ordinance"

Feature Article II-3

Destination Management Practice Based on City Cards

Feature Article II-4

"New-Style National Parks" as Destinations on Urban Fringe



Field Visit Itinerary

2024

DATE	ACTIVITIES	OVERNIGHT STAY
Mon, Oct 14	Arrival in the Netherlands	Amsterdam (Netherlands)
Tue, Oct 15	Interviews / Site Visits: Amsterdam & Partners, Amsterdam city center	Amsterdam (Netherlands)
Wed, Oct 16	Interviews: City of Amsterdam, Inholland University of Applied Sciences	Amsterdam (Netherlands)
Thu, Oct 17	Site Visit: Hollandse Duinen (Haagse Bos), Panorama Mesdag Museum, etc.	Amsterdam (Netherlands)
Fri, Oct 18	Interviews / Site Visits: City of Venice, V.E.L.A. S.p.A., Main island Venice (Italy)	Venice (Italy)
Sat, Oct 19	Site Visits: Lido Island, Murano Island, Main Island Venice	Amsterdam (Netherlands)
Sun, Oct 20	Departure	—
Mon, Oct 21	Return to Japan	—

Overview of the Amsterdam and Venice Field Visit and Dispersal of Visitor Demand

Tourism Research Department, Senior Researcher

Reiko Gokita

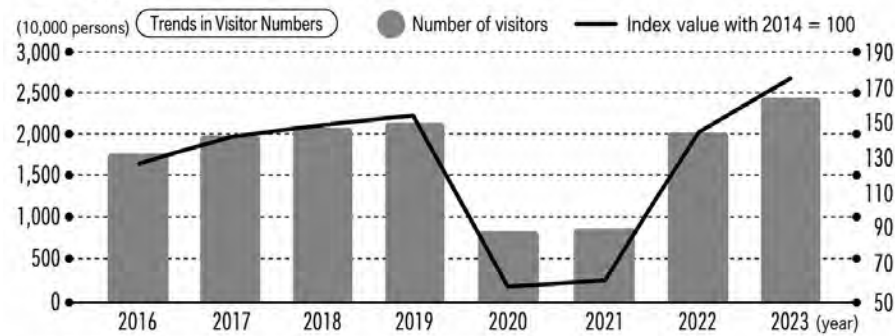
1. Background and Purpose of the Field Visit

What comes to mind when one hears the names Amsterdam and Venice? Many people may think of cities crisscrossed by countless canals, but in recent years, an increasing number would describe them as cities where the problem of overtourism has become serious. As the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided and tourist travel has resumed across the world, the number of inbound visitors to Japan has recovered to levels exceeding those before the pandemic, with the cumulative total for January through October 2024 reaching a record high. Alongside this recovery, some regions have experienced overcrowding and traffic congestion caused by tourist visits, as well as negative impacts on the living environment of local residents. Amsterdam and Venice confronted this kind of overtourism situation earlier than Japan and have implemented a wide range of comprehensive countermeasures. This was the background to the selection of these two cities as field visit destinations. The field visit to Amsterdam and Venice was conducted with the aim of learning from the destination management approaches of European cities confronting overtourism. For an account of the trajectory of overtourism policy in Amsterdam and the latest developments since the pandemic, readers are referred to the report by Goto. Among the various overtourism countermeasures examined, Itsukida takes up the dispersal of visitor demand, Ezaki focuses on destination management based on city cards, and Nasu focuses on new-style national parks as urban fringe destinations.

2. Dispersal of Visitor Demand as an Overtourism Countermeasure

Since 2015, Amsterdam has been implementing overtourism policies that prioritize the quality of life of residents (for an account of the policy trajectory, readers are referred to the report by Goto). The implementation program announced in 2019¹ set out the goal of achieving "a new balance between quality of life and hospitality," identifying two

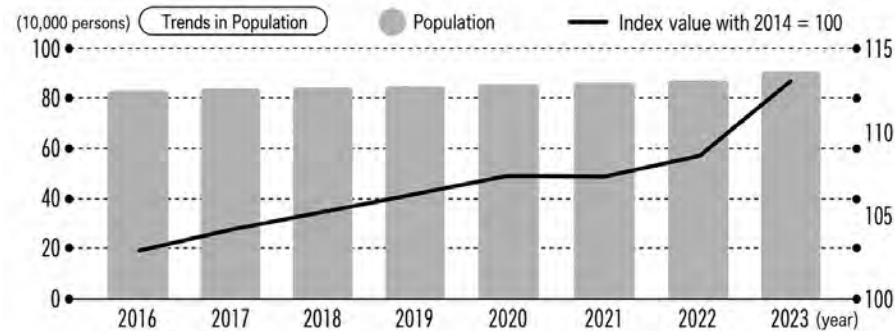
Figure 1 Overview of the City of Amsterdam



* Excluding cruise passengers. 2023 figures are provisional.

Source: City of Amsterdam website

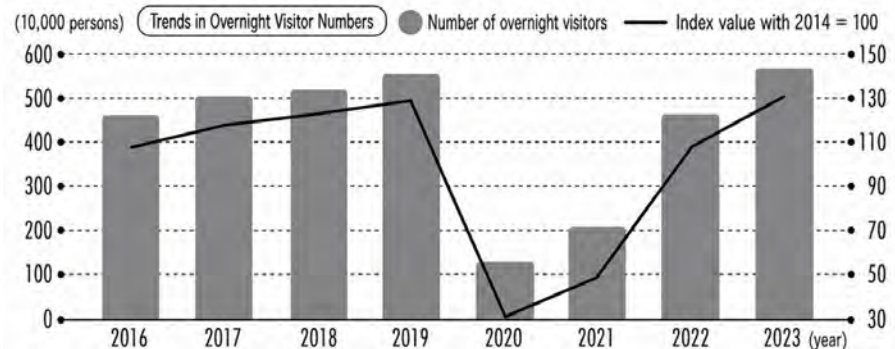
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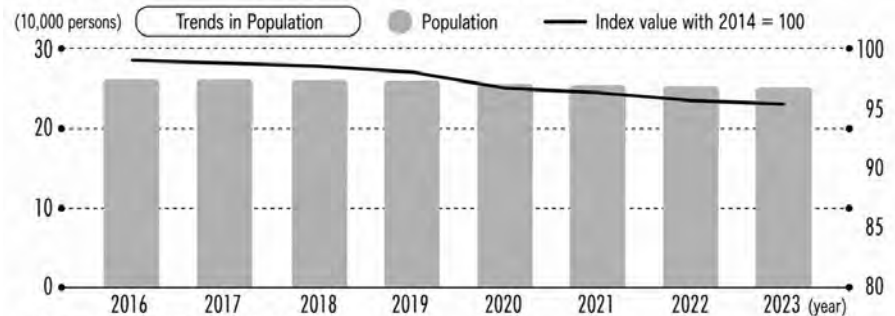
Source: City of Amsterdam website

<https://onderzoek.amsterdam.nl/artikel/bevolking-in-cijfers-2024>

Figure 2 Overview of the City of Venice



Source: City of Venice (2024), Yearbook of Tourism Data 2023

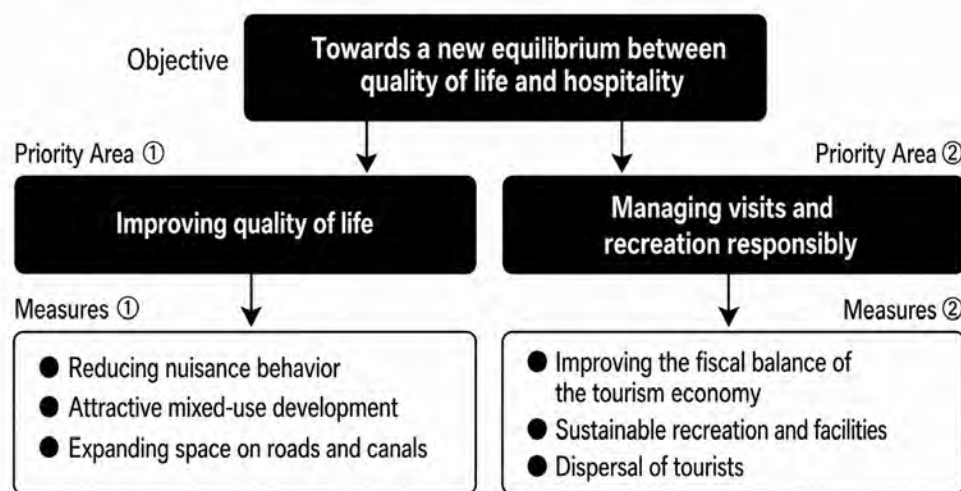


Source: City of Venice website

<https://www.comune.venezia.it/it/content/serie-storiche>

priority areas and six countermeasures [Figure 3]. One of these countermeasures is the "dispersal of tourists." In Japan as well, dispersal measures based on time of year, time of day, and location have been attempted in various regions; however, changing tourists' awareness and intentions regarding where they go and what they do is extremely difficult. Against this background, this section examines and organizes the dispersal measures that have been implemented in Amsterdam, a city that has been at the forefront of overtourism countermeasures.

Figure 3 Objectives and Measures in "City in Balance 2018–2022: Towards a New Equilibrium between Quality of Life and Hospitality (2019)"



Source: City of Amsterdam (2019): City in Balance 2018–2022: Towards a New Equilibrium between Quality of Life and Hospitality

(1) Dispersal Within a Defined Area

One example of a dispersal measure within a defined area is the imposition of group size restrictions on guided tours.² Guides leading groups of four or more people in the central area of Amsterdam are required to obtain a permit to conduct tours in the area (at a cost of €212.30). The maximum group size is capped at 15 persons, tours are restricted to the hours of 8:00 to 22:00, and certain areas are designated as off-limits throughout the day [Figure 4]. Different tour groups are not permitted to remain in the same location simultaneously, and rules prohibit contact between groups during tours. Guides found in violation are subject to fines of €190 for individuals or €950 for those employed by a company, and a permit is revoked upon a third violation.

(2) Dispersal Away from the City Center

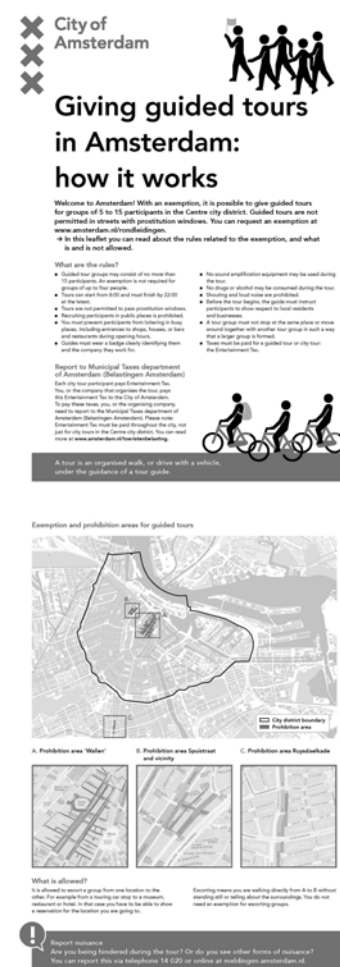
One example of a dispersal measure aimed at reducing concentration in the city center is the prohibition on large buses entering the central area.³ Buses exceeding 7.5 tonnes are in principle prohibited from entering the shaded areas shown on the map and are required to park outside this zone [Figure 5]. The city is also working to progressively

reduce the number of cruise ships calling at its ports. The City of Amsterdam plans to reduce the cap on the number of calls at the cruise terminal near Amsterdam Central Station from the current 190 to 100 by 2026—approximately half—and to remove the cruise terminal entirely by 2035.⁴ In 2018, a trial was also conducted in which differentiated tourism tax rates were applied by area (6% in the city center and 4% in outlying areas). From January 2024, a uniform rate of 12.5% has been applied across the city, making it the highest tourism tax in Europe at the time of writing. The I Amsterdam City Card, which provides access to museums, tourist facilities, and public transportation within the city at a flat rate, also contributes to dispersing demand away from the city center, in addition to promoting the diverse attractions of Amsterdam. For further details on the tourism tax, readers are referred to the report by Goto, and for the city card, to the report by Ezaki.

(3) Dispersal Within the Wider Region

Amsterdam has also sought to disperse visitor demand through cooperation with neighboring municipalities. One such initiative is a marketing and promotion strategy called "Visit Amsterdam, See Holland" (Amsterdam Bezoeken, Holland Zien: ABHZ).⁵ In 2009, the City of Amsterdam developed a joint strategy in cooperation with municipalities within the Amsterdam Metropolitan Region (MRA: Metropoolregio Amsterdam) and Amsterdam & Partners, with the aim of encouraging foreign tourists visiting Amsterdam to also visit the wider metropolitan region. Under ABHZ, the areas within the MRA are positioned and promoted as six distinctive thematic areas, and by presenting the surrounding region as an integrated destination, the strategy seeks to promote dispersal away from

Figure 4 Methods for Implementing Guided Tours in Amsterdam



Source: City of Amsterdam (2024): Giving

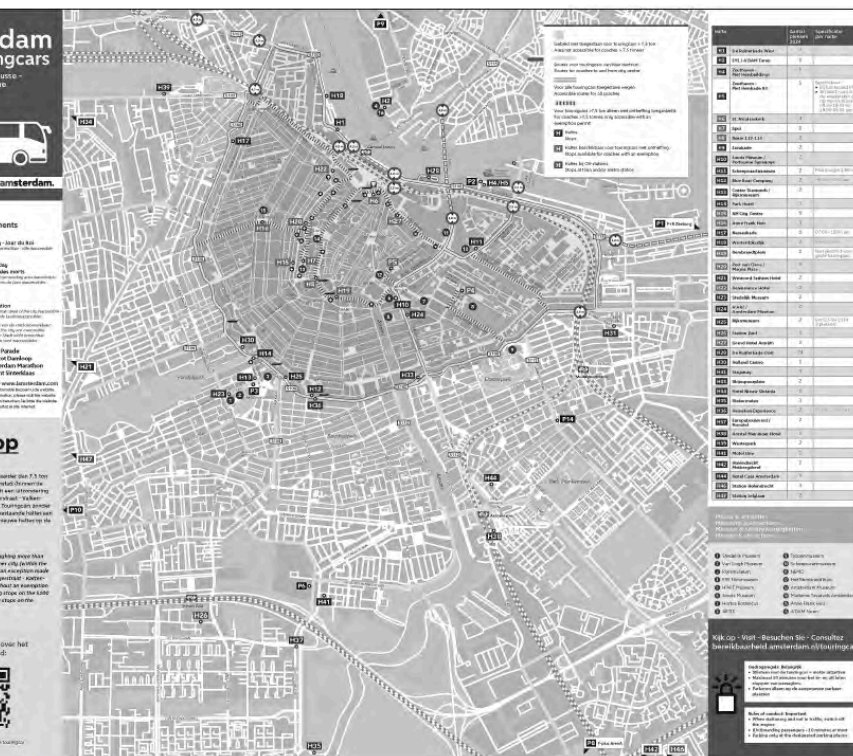


Photo 1: View near Amsterdam Central Station



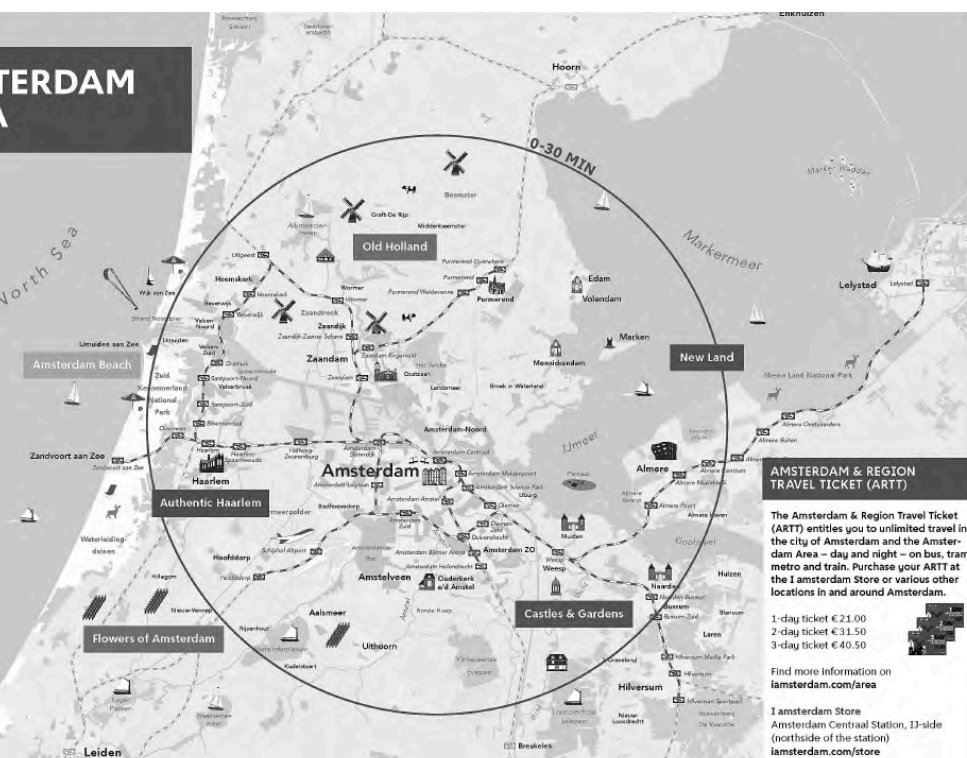
Photo 2: Zaanse Schans (Theme: Old Holland)

5



City of Amsterdam(2024): Amsterdam voor touringcars 2024

6



Amsterdam & Partners(2024): Amsterdam Area Guide

Figure 7 Storyline in the HollandCity Strategy



Source : NBTC Holland Marketing (2015) : Holland 2020:Geliefd, Leefbaar en Winstgevend?

congested spots within Amsterdam [Figure 6]. The first phase (2009–2013) placed primary emphasis on economic impact, while the second phase (2013–2016) shifted toward a greater focus on balance. The third (2017–2020) and fourth (2021–2024) phases have placed increasing emphasis on promoting the liveability of the city for residents. It should be noted that, as this strategy targets visitors from abroad, it is not conducted in Dutch. In addition to its thematic area approach, ABHZ also encompasses initiatives such as the Amsterdam & Region Travel Ticket, which provides unlimited access to public transportation across the region at a flat rate, as well as the promotion of cycling route development.

(4) Dispersal at the National Level

In 2015, the Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions (NBTC; then known as NBTC Holland Marketing) launched the "HollandCity" strategy, which positioned the

Netherlands as a single city in which distances between destinations are relatively short, with the aim of dispersing tourists across the country both temporally and spatially.⁶ At the heart of this strategy were distinctive shared themes characteristic of the Netherlands—such as Van Gogh, flowers, and water—that could motivate foreign tourists to visit the Netherlands, connected through storylines linking various locations across the country [Figure 7]. For example, works by Van Gogh can be viewed not only at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, but also in other parts of the Netherlands, such as Zundert, his birthplace. By introducing Van Gogh-related sites scattered throughout the country in this way, the strategy seeks to encourage tourists to visit other parts of the country.

Jos Vranken, General Manager of NBTC Holland Marketing at the time, is quoted as saying: "We want to encourage people to move off the beaten track through stories. By doing so, people will have a richer experience by discovering more places and products in our country, while at the same time strengthening the revenue-generating capacity of regional areas."

(5) Dispersal to Other Cities

It is particularly noteworthy that cities which are in principle in competition with one another in terms of tourism have cooperated to disperse visitors between cities. In 2017, an agreement titled "From Capital City to Court City" was concluded between the City of Amsterdam and the City of The Hague.⁷ This initiative sought to manage overtourism in Amsterdam while simultaneously promoting tourism in The Hague, attempting to redistribute tourists and foster tourism cooperation between the two destinations. The main activities implemented included the promotion of The Hague at Schiphol Airport, within the city of Amsterdam, and online. For Amsterdam, this formed part of a broader dispersal approach aimed at alleviating tourism pressure on the city center in particular. As interest in Amsterdam continues to grow, encouraging tourists to visit The Hague during their stay or on return visits contributes to achieving the goal of drawing visitors "outward." For The Hague, meanwhile, the initiative was undertaken as an effort to establish itself as a second major tourism city in the Netherlands, given its capacity to accommodate further tourist growth.

(6) Effects of Dispersal

During the field visit, discussions were held with Ms. Ellen Bulthuis and Ms. Geeske Sibrijns, researchers at Inholland University of Applied Sciences who study destination management and urban policy, including this initiative, on the approaches to and effectiveness of visitor demand dispersal [Photos 3·4].

① Inter-City Tourism Agreement (Campaign)

The initiative was intended to encourage tourists staying for a certain period, or planning a return visit, to consider The Hague as a destination of choice. Whether the

initiative can be deemed a success is difficult to assess: while tourist numbers in The Hague have indeed increased, tourist numbers in Amsterdam have not correspondingly decreased, and it is not clear whether the increase in visitors to The Hague can be attributed to this agreement.

Encouraging awareness of The Hague as a potential destination is only possible among those who already have some interest in the city. To attract visitors to The Hague, what is needed is an approach that conveys the city's own appeal rather than framing it in comparison to Amsterdam, and it is important to clearly define target groups and direct efforts accordingly. Furthermore, when conducting promotion based on an agreement intended to disperse visitor demand, the initiative will not function effectively unless the tourism infrastructure of the alternative destination is sufficiently developed.

Photo 3: Discussion session



Photo 4: At the new campus building

② On the Dispersal of Visitor Demand

Dispersing demand among domestic visitors to Amsterdam is difficult; consequently, the primary target of dispersal measures is foreign tourists. Among these, the groups that should be prioritized are longer-stay visitors and repeat visitors. First-time visitors and short-stay visitors leave little room for behavioral change even when measures are implemented. It is also necessary to identify specific locations within an area and implement targeted measures accordingly. Even where a degree of suppression is achieved, measures will not produce clear effects as long as the attractions that draw visitors, along with inexpensive food, beverages, and accommodation, continue to be available. To more strongly encourage behavioral change among tourists, options such as halting the acceptance of cruise ships or further raising the tourism tax exist; however, the balance with economic considerations and consistency with national policy must also be taken into account.

There are various perspectives on the effectiveness of dispersal measures, and it is also possible to view them as simply spreading the impacts of tourism over a wider area. Dispersal is an extremely challenging undertaking. One reason for this difficulty is that it involves a degree of displacement of problems: restricting hotel construction and short-term rentals in Amsterdam, for example, merely transfers the problem to



Photo 5: View of Piazza San Marco

suburban areas or other cities within the EU (the waterbed effect). Dispersal can be either a sound or a misguided strategy, and for this reason it is necessary to consider approaches that go beyond demand dispersal alone and incorporate other measures as well. Moreover, the issue should be understood not merely as a tourism problem but as an urban problem. It is not only tourists who visit Amsterdam: the city experiences large flows of people, including residents and workers, and it is the total volume of these flows exceeding the city's capacity that is generating the problem.

The "Stay Away Campaign" conducted in 2023 was intended to change the image and perceptions that visitors associate with Amsterdam, but such initiatives have been carried out continuously in Amsterdam since the 1960s. While signs listing prohibited behaviors have been installed, enforcement and the collection of fines have not been consistently applied, and their effectiveness remains limited. Ideally, visitor numbers would level off, but in reality they are likely to continue to increase. What can be done is to change visitors' perceptions by reshaping the image of the city, thereby encouraging behavioral change.

(7) Conclusion

Having examined the dispersal measures implemented in Amsterdam, it is worth turning briefly to Venice, the other destination visited during this field visit. In terms of

spatial measures, Venice has introduced a rule limiting group sizes to a maximum of 25 persons, and even groups of fewer than 25 are required to follow rules such as not stopping in the middle of bridges. With regard to the entry fee introduced in 2024, an expansion of the implementation period centered on the high season has been announced for 2025, which is understood to be intended to promote seasonal dispersal. Furthermore, by adopting a registration system that includes not only those subject to the entry fee but also other visitors, the visitor data obtained are expected to be used for future destination management, including demand dispersal. During discussions held on-site, the comment that stood out was: "Our basic policy is to welcome tourists warmly, and on that basis, we hope they will disperse well." For further details on the situation in Venice, readers are also referred to the report by Ezaki.

During the field visit, at each location visited, members of the group debated among themselves whether what they were witnessing was "vibrancy" or "overcrowding." Perhaps as a result of the comprehensive measures in place, the author did not encounter situations that felt overcrowded in Amsterdam. Dispersal measures are effective in avoiding concentration at specific facilities and locations, and in developing underutilized areas. At the same time, it should also be borne in mind that, at the level of the region as a whole, such measures may ultimately lead to an increase in the overall volume of tourists received, through effects such as the waterbed effect and tourism sprawl.

Acknowledgments

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Trends and Recent Developments in Overtourism Policies— Focusing on Amsterdam's "Balanced Tourism Ordinance"

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1. Introduction: The Resurgence of Overtourism and Tourism Intervention

With the rapid rebound in tourism demand following the COVID-19 pandemic, some regions are once again experiencing a resurgence of overtourism. While tourist numbers have recovered to a certain extent, it would be premature to conclude that the pandemic's impact on the tourism industry has entirely dissipated. At the same time, attention must also be paid to the fact that, during the prolonged and severe disruption caused by the pandemic, there were regions that reassessed the very nature of tourism and steadily advanced overtourism countermeasures. The City of Amsterdam is one such example. During the pandemic, it enacted a tourism ordinance and established a framework for public intervention based on objective data. Within the context of European cities, it stands out as a leading example of a municipality implementing distinctive overtourism countermeasures.

In European research on addressing overtourism, the need for public intervention has often been a subject of discussion. Before the pandemic, the limitations of market-oriented approaches in effectively tackling the issue had been pointed out, and in their place, renewed debate emerged over the potential of more



Photo 1: Scenes of Amsterdam - Canal Streetscapes and Houseboats

regulatory, government-led approaches to tourism management—approaches that had appeared to have fallen out of favor since the early 21st century. This also indicates that the impacts of tourism are diverse, complex, and multifaceted, while suggesting that cities have a carrying capacity that can be overshoot by tourism (Koens et al., 2018). Moreover, the era of simple sector-specific approaches in tourism policy and management has ended. To advance toward stable (urban) tourism, 20th-century economic sector-oriented DMOs must be transformed and integrated into an overarching approach to urban governance (Kagermeier, 2023).

“Tourism intervention” by the public sector seeks to appropriately manage and mitigate the negative impacts of tourism while guiding it in a desirable direction. In some cases, the purposes of such intervention may include securing a moratorium to allow time for considering future directions. However, insofar as temporary or permanent restrictions are imposed and resources are committed, the underlying data, procedures, and standards of action must be made transparent to society. The City of Amsterdam represents a pioneering example in the effort to build such a framework.

Amsterdam’s tourism policies and overtourism countermeasures have been periodically reported in Japan (see References 46, 48). This article therefore focuses on two aspects: the content of the tourism ordinance enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic and the actions taken under it (Section 3,5), and the broader context within which these measures can be understood (Section 4). For this study, a review of documentary sources was conducted, focusing primarily on information published on the city’s official website (<https://www.amsterdam.nl/>) and on Open Research (<https://openresearch.amsterdam/nl/>), followed by an on-site investigation.

During the fieldwork, an interview was conducted with the official in charge of the comprehensive City Centre Approach (Aanpak Binnenstad) in Amsterdam.

2. Urban Growth and Overcrowding: Tourism and Residents’ Sense of Alienation in Amsterdam

Amsterdam, the capital of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, is the country’s largest city, with a population of approximately 930,000. It serves as a business hub attracting expatriates and international students from around the world, as well as an intellectual center hosting research institutions. Known for its image as a free and tolerant city, diversity is one of its defining characteristics. In 2025, the city will celebrate the 750th anniversary of its founding. The scenic ring of canals was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010 [Photo 1]. The city is home to a wide range of institutions, from major museums such as the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum to numerous smaller venues, attracting visitors from around the world as one of the leading cities of art and culture. In 2019, the annual number of tourists reached 22 million, comprising 10 million overnight visitors, 11.3 million day-trippers, and 700,000 cruise passengers.

An important factor in understanding (over)tourism in Amsterdam—particularly in contrast to Japan—is that the city is experiencing growth. Its population has increased by 200,000 over the past two decades and is projected to exceed one million by 2038. Amid a severe housing shortage, residents have felt a sense of alienation due to the rapid growth of short-term rentals that strain the housing market; changes in the everyday consumer environment brought about by an increase in tourist-oriented shops and similar establishments (leading to landscape homogenization and monoculturalization); and nuisance behavior and congestion caused by tourists (though congestion is not attributable solely to tourism growth). While the COVID-19 pandemic dealt a severe blow to the tourism industry, there was also public sentiment against a partial return to the pre-pandemic status quo. In response, the City of Amsterdam reviewed the very nature of “how tourism should be” and introduced a new set of overtourism countermeasures.

3. Enactment of the Balanced Tourism Ordinance and Development of Data Systems

3-1. Overview of the Ordinance (2021)

— Setting Bandwidth Limits (Upper and Lower Thresholds)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Amsterdam enacted the “Balanced Tourism Ordinance.” This measure originated from a July 2017 petition by a residents’ group titled Amsterdam Heeft een Keuze (“Amsterdam Has a Choice”) and was subsequently approved by the City Council in June 2020. The ordinance consists of eight articles in total [Figure 1]. The details will be discussed later, but the ordinance’s statement of purpose clearly articulates its underlying intent.

“Essentially, tourism is a positive force for Amsterdam. It contributes to sound public finances, employment, cultural richness, and the vitality and prestige of the city.

However, there is an optimal level. Once the number of tourists exceeds a certain threshold, the balance of the city is disrupted, and the disadvantages of tourism outweigh its benefits.

The mayor and city councilors are **expected to intervene proactively** when the balance between the interests of residents, businesses, and visitors is, or is likely to be, disrupted.” (Emphasis added by the author)

The ordinance sets out three key points governing such intervention. First, it mandates that actions be based on observed and forecast data. Second, it establishes a “bandwidth” for the number of annual overnight stays in Amsterdam—setting the

Figure 1: Overview and Key Points of Amsterdam's Balanced Tourism Ordinance

Article 1: Definitions
Article 2: Bandwidth – Visitor Accommodation
Article 3: Guaranteeing Regional Capacity
Article 4: Monitoring Day-Trip Visits
Article 5: Regional Tourism Capacity
Article 6: Securing Tourism Revenue
Articles 7 & 8: Explanation of Provisions

Point 1

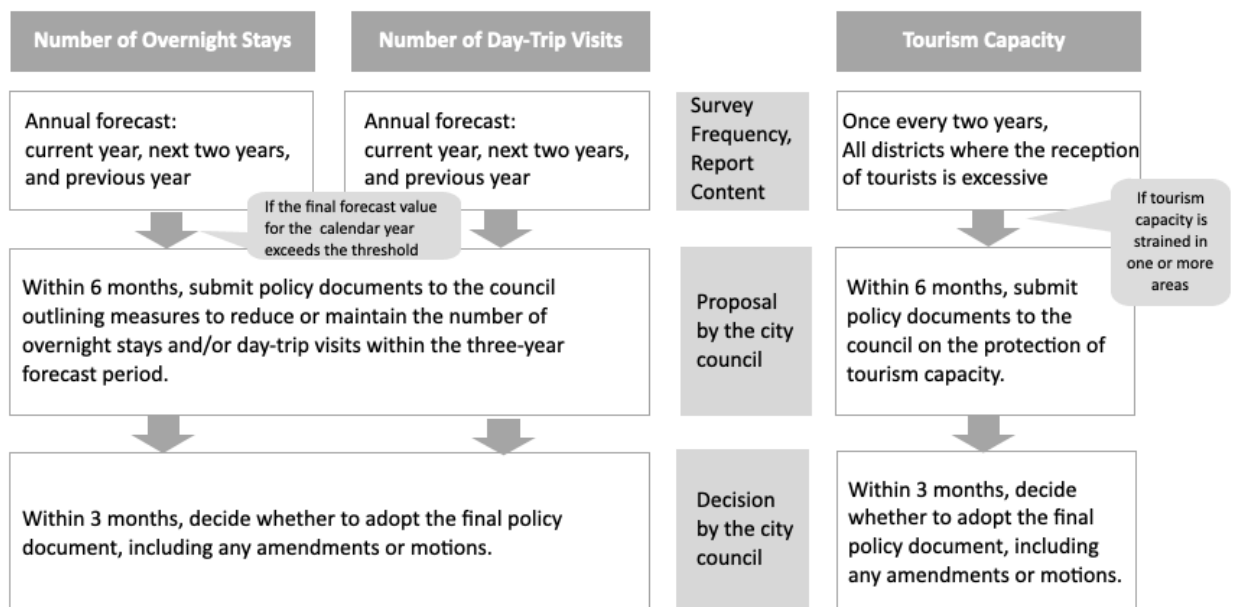
- Regulate actions based on observation and forecast data
- Demand forecast (current year + next two years) (annually)
 - Tourism carrying capacity (once every two years)

Point 2

- Set bandwidth for accommodation numbers (upper and lower limits)
- Bandwidth: 10 million – 20 million people annually
 - Threshold: 12 million – 18 million people annually

Point 3

- Establish deadlines for examining and deciding whether to adopt policy measures
- Reporting (by June 1) → Examination and proposal of measures (within 6 months)
 - Final decision on adoption or rejection of policy document (within 3 months)



Source: Created based on Verordening van de gemeenteraad van de gemeente Amsterdam houdende regels omtrent toerisme (Verordening op toerisme in balans Amsterdam) <https://lokaleregelgeving.overheid.nl/CVDR660686/1>

acceptable range between 10 million and 20 million, with “signal values” triggering action at 12 million and 18 million. Third, it specifies time limits for the consideration and decision-making process regarding whether to adopt countermeasures. If the number of overnight stays is expected to exceed a signal value, the City Council must, within six months, consider and propose countermeasures, and within a further three months decide whether to adopt the final policy document. The municipal authorities then implement measures based on this decision.

It should be noted that the aforementioned residents’ proposal had initially suggested an upper limit of 12 million annual overnight stays (the 2014 figure). However, in light of the severe impact of the pandemic not only on tourism but also on cultural institutions, subsequent adjustments were made, resulting in the establishment of a lower limit as well (Kleijn, 2021).

The following section introduces two major surveys linked to the ordinance.

3-2. Demand Forecasting for Overnight Stays

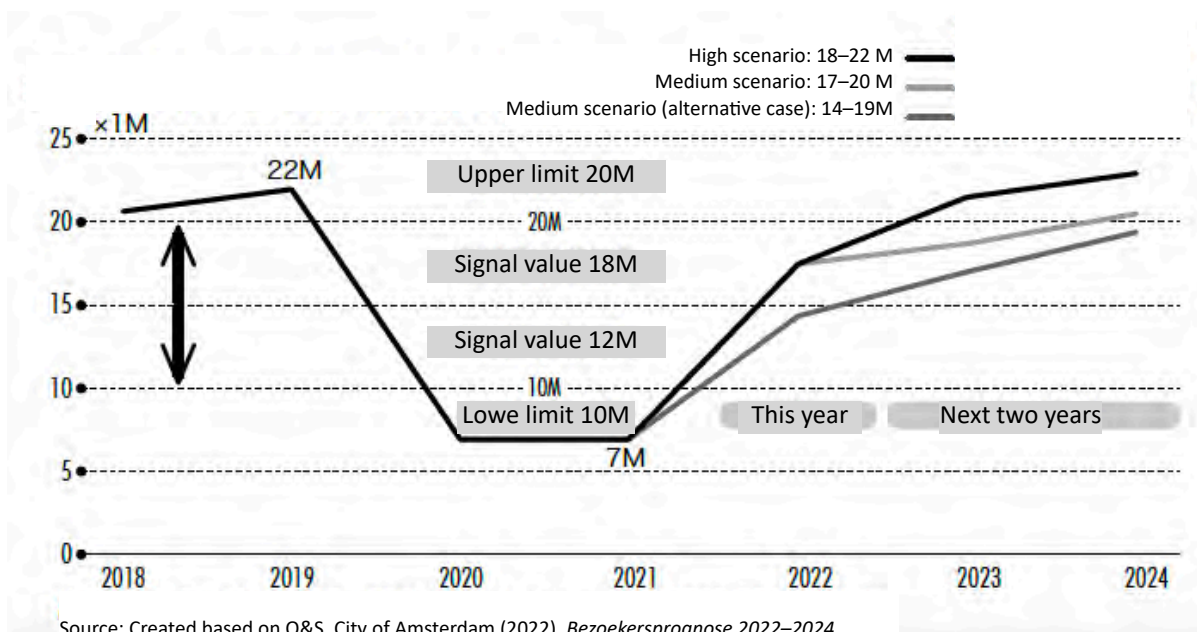
Each year, the City of Amsterdam produces forecasts for the number of overnight stays, day trips, and cruise ship passengers. For the calendar year in which the forecast is published, as well as for the subsequent two calendar years, projections are calculated under three scenarios—high, medium, and low [Figure 2]. These forecasts are based on historical data, supplemented with expert knowledge from the tourism, economic, and mobility sectors. They also take into account municipal policies on private housing rentals and hotel development. If the projected value for the final forecast year exceeds a signal value, the City Council is required to propose countermeasures within six months.

3-3. Measuring Tourism Carrying Capacity

The City of Amsterdam also measures the city’s tourism carrying capacity, an assessment that has been conducted three times to date. Tourism carrying capacity is defined as “the level of tourism pressure that a neighborhood can withstand without significantly compromising quality of life.” This definition is based on the assumption that tourism pressure (the cause) has the potential to undermine neighborhood quality of life (the effect). Under the ordinance, the measurement is conducted every two years and reported to the City Council.

Tourism carrying capacity is composed of two parameters—“tourism pressure (tourism supply and use)” and “tourism-related quality of life”—each of which is assessed using seven indicators [Figure 3, upper section]. These indicators were established through the following three steps.

Figure 2: Example of Annual Overnight Stay Projections Based on Scenarios (2022-2024)



Step 1: Compilation of the List

To compile a list of potentially relevant themes, indicators, and data sources, the municipal research and statistics department gathered expert input from various municipal policy departments as well as local and national agencies. Drawing on this expertise, along with a literature review and expert workshops, they produced a list of more than 100 indicators.

Step 2: Testing of Measurement Criteria

The listed indicators were tested by the municipal research and statistics department against the following criteria: whether data were available at the district level; whether they were available for all or most districts; and whether they could be obtained regularly (annually or biennially).

As a result, 63 indicators were classified under the theme “tourism-related quality of life,” and 36 under the theme “tourism pressure.”

Step 3: Selection of Indicators

Following an analysis of the correlations between the roughly 100 indicators and two core indicators measured in a separate survey—“neighborhood satisfaction” and “neighborhood development” (each required to have at least a linear relationship with one of the two)—the final selection of indicators was made based on the results of regression analysis. These selected indicators were then tested and finalized by the municipal research and statistics department for usability and other practical considerations.

Figure 3: Tourism Carrying Capacity Model Based on Tourism Pressure and Tourism-Related Quality of Life

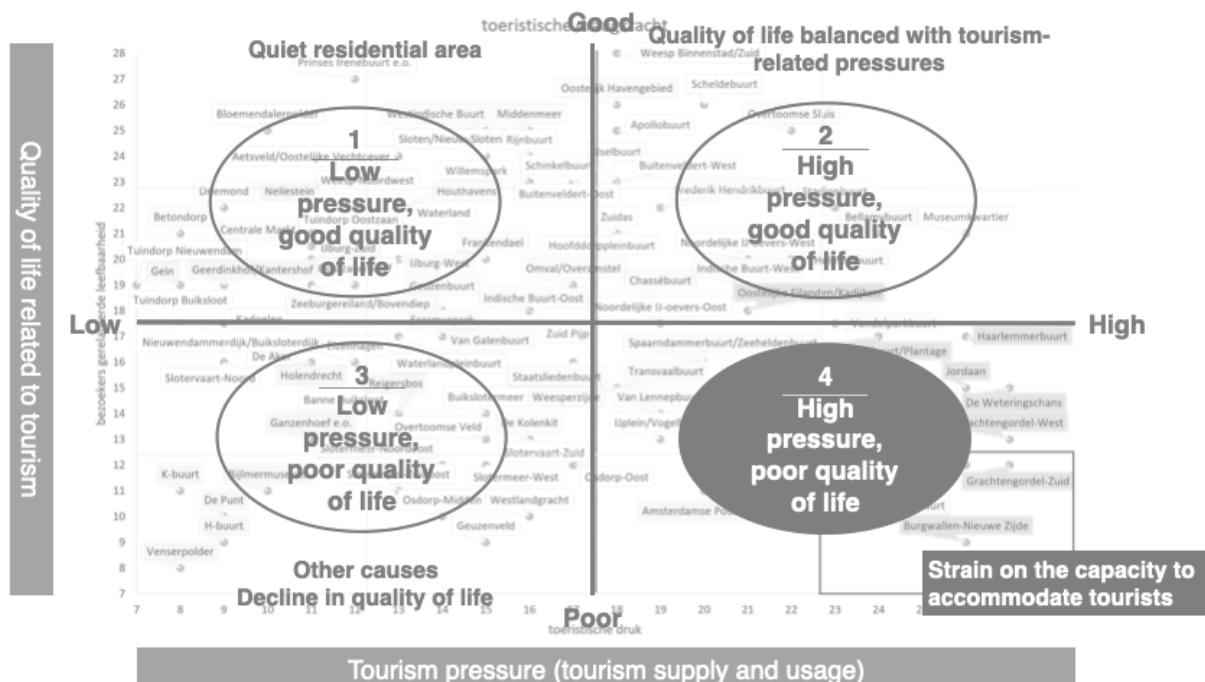
Tourism Carrying Capacity:

The level of tourism pressure that a local area can withstand without (significantly) impairing quality of life.

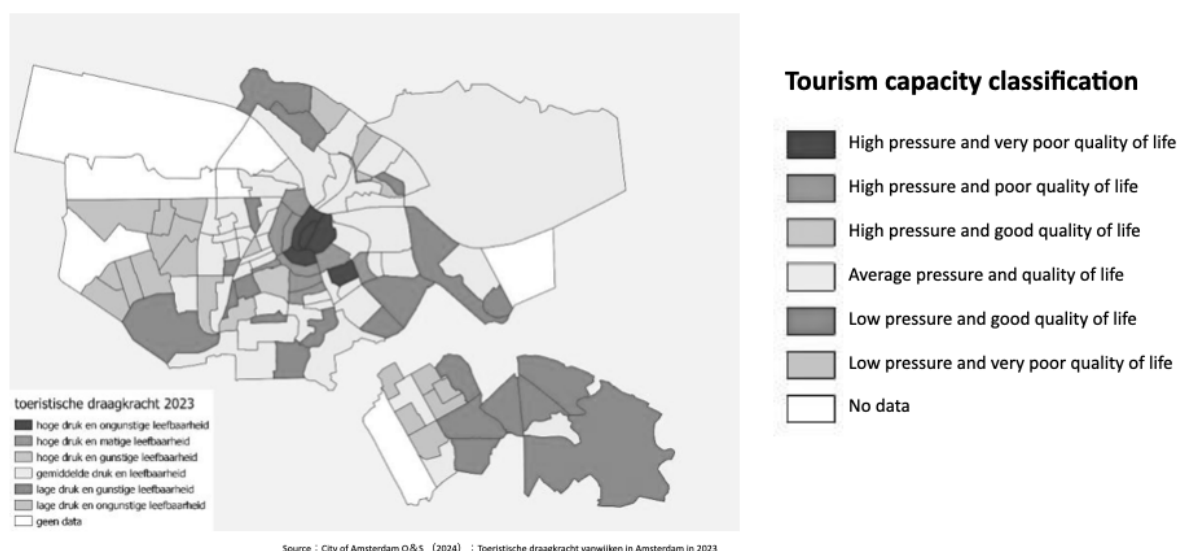
Tourism pressure (tourism supply and usage)	Quality of life related to tourism
1. Number of attractions (cinemas, museums, theaters, music venues, parks, etc.) 2. Accommodation capacity (absolute number) 3. Number of Airbnb listings per 1,000 residents 4. Other tourism offerings per square kilometer (souvenir shops, cheese shops, cultivation shops, ice cream parlors, etc.) 5. Number of coffee shops (cafés selling cannabis) per 1,000 residents 6. Percentage of sidewalks with little to no pedestrian space (congestion-related) 7. Number of PIN transactions using foreign payment cards	1. Perceived risk index 2. Social cohesion (alienation from the neighborhood) 3. Nuisance caused by tourists staying in short-term rentals 4. Nuisance caused by pollution 5. Nuisance caused by intoxicated individuals on the street 6. Nuisance caused by local residents 7. Diversity of retail goods (assessment of the range of shops necessary for daily shopping)

Note: The causes of crowding are not necessarily limited to the pressure on public spaces caused by tourists, which cannot always be avoided or reduced, but also include pressure from other uses (such as residential housing, commuting, or students). In order to distinguish between these different pressures, detailed observational data on the condition and use of facilities—targeted as much as possible to tourism—are

Tourism pressure and Quality of life related to tourism



Status of tourism capacity in the city of Amsterdam



Source: City of Amsterdam (2019). Research on the tourism carrying capacity of neighborhoods and the impact of tourism on livability. City of Amsterdam, O&S (2024). Tourism carrying capacity of neighborhoods in Amsterdam in 2023. Compiled by the author.

The tourism carrying capacity of a neighborhood is determined by the combination of its total score for “tourism pressure” and its total score for “tourism-related quality of life.” Since the units of measurement for each indicator differ, they were quartiled and converted into scores. Using the total scores for each parameter, neighborhoods were classified into four quadrants. When plotting “tourism pressure” on the horizontal axis and “tourism-related quality of life” on the vertical axis, the fourth quadrant—characterized by high tourism pressure and low quality of life—is identified as indicating that a neighborhood’s tourism carrying capacity is under strain [Figure 3, middle to lower section]. In the 2023 survey, measurements were conducted across 110 districts.

As noted in the survey report, classification using the four-quadrant method does not provide an on-the-ground visualization of crowding. Therefore, to monitor actual congestion conditions, the report includes tables showing the absolute scores for each indicator in every district.

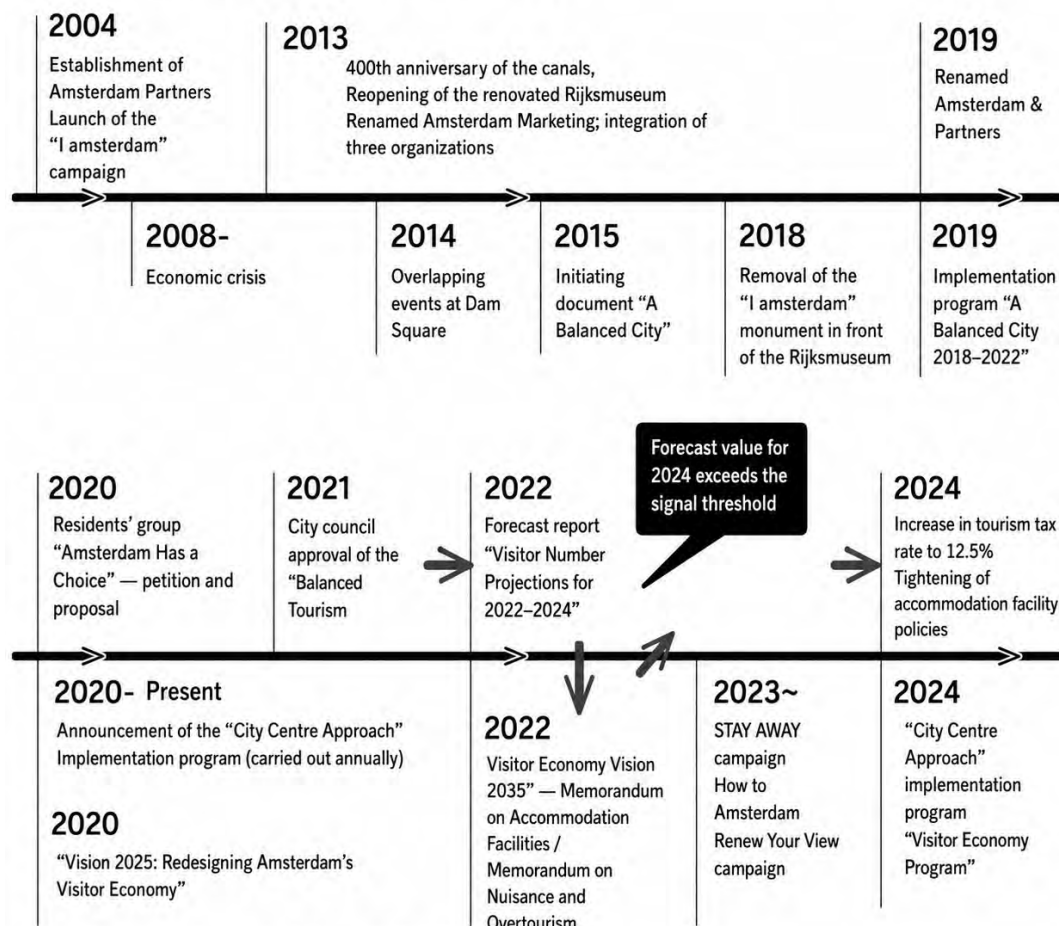
The ordinance also emphasizes that, in certain situations arising from a comparison of the results of the two surveys, it is important to adjust elements such as the bandwidth and signal values in line with residents’ lived experiences.

4. Timeline of Amsterdam’s Tourism-Related Policies and Overtourism Countermeasures"

Here, the broader trends before and after the enactment of the ordinance are outlined as the background leading up to its adoption [Figure 4] (for convenience, the timeline

begins in 2004, though tourism policy itself predates this). Amsterdam’s tourism-related policies and overtourism countermeasures are highly diverse. Drawing from planning documents and other sources that position these measures in a comprehensive framework, this section focuses on the city’s perspectives, attitudes, and values regarding tourism and visitors.

Figure 4: Amsterdam’s Tourism-Related Policies and Overtourism Countermeasures
(Top: Pre-COVID19, Bottom: Post-COVID19)



Source: City of Amsterdam website, Reference 11-20, 33-35, 46 and 48

4-1. City Marketing (2002-)

“I amsterdam”

In 2002, Amsterdam launched its city marketing initiative. Faced with intensifying intercity competition, the city’s leading position on the global stage was perceived to be under threat. Recognizing that its defining characteristic lay in its diversity, the city undertook a comprehensive profiling exercise. Based on this, seven target groups were identified, using the following criteria: whether significant benefits could be expected, whether there was an affinity in values, and whether mutual needs and shared interests existed—allowing both parties to act as consumers and co-creators in strengthening

Amsterdam's position. Overseas visitors and tourists were among these target groups. In 2003, the city established a new organization, Amsterdam Partners, and in September 2004 it unveiled the statement "I amsterdam," intended to embody Amsterdam's core values and spirit (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2004). Through strategic communication efforts both within the city and in domestic and international markets, Amsterdam worked to restore and strengthen its position.

Subsequently, as part of efforts to recover from the impact of the 2008 economic crisis, the city hosted the 400th anniversary celebration of the canals and oversaw the reopening of the renovated Rijksmuseum in 2013. In the same year, it consolidated three organizations, including the tourism board, into Amsterdam Marketing to strengthen promotional capacity. Furthermore, for a two-year period starting in 2013, the city temporarily increased the accommodation tax rate to secure funding for tourism promotion initiatives.

4-2. "A Balanced City" (2015-)

— Resident-Centered, Quality of Life as the Top Priority

Amsterdam, a city experiencing continuous growth, published the launch document for the "Balanced City" (Stad in Balans) initiative in 2015.

During this period, the population was increasing by an average of 10,000 people per year, while the number of overnight visitors rose from 4.5 million in 2008 to 7.2 million in 2014. This rapid growth brought with it a shortage of hotel beds, a surge in short-term rentals (including illegal listings), a shortage of housing, sharp increases in property purchase and rental prices, as well as heightened congestion and antisocial behavior.

Confronted with the dilemmas and tensions of growth, Amsterdam feared that the social balance could be undermined, potentially leading to fragmentation and division within the community. The document marked the first step in seeking a new balance between growth and quality of life, setting forth Amsterdam's future course as "ensuring that the city remains attractive for residents, businesses, and visitors alike."

The strategy aimed to physically expand the urban area so as to disperse visitors and stimulate urban development in surrounding districts. Anticipating continued global growth in tourism, the city chose to focus on attracting repeat and high-quality visitors, while working to distribute tourist flows both spatially and temporally.

In 2019, the city released the Balanced City 2018–2022 Implementation Program. From the outset, the document states clearly: "Visitors are very welcome, but residents come first." As the subtitle indicates, the program seeks a new balance between quality of life and hospitality. However, unlike the initial launch document, which emphasized balancing growth and quality of life, this program underscores the need to "once again put quality of life first" in order to achieve that balance. Up to that point, the city's policies had not been aimed at reducing tourist numbers or curbing the growth of the

tourism industry, but rather at “balancing tourism with other demands in the city.” The dispersal of tourists was intended to ease pressure on the urban core, but did not fundamentally challenge the prevailing premise of continuously attracting more visitors—a point later noted in academic assessments (Kuenen et al., 2023). Since 2018, measures have been further strengthened. In December of that year, the “I amsterdam” monument in front of the Rijksmuseum was removed, and in March 2019, Amsterdam Marketing was renamed Amsterdam & Partners. The organization shifted its emphasis from visitor-promotion campaigns to activities aimed more heavily at encouraging spatial dispersal and reducing nuisance behaviour.

4-3. “City Centre Approach” (2020–)

— Comprehensive Measures

The City Centre Approach (Aanpak Binnenstad) was announced in May 2020, with an implementation program reflecting its principles adopted by the city council in December of the same year and launched in 2021. This initiative integrates the efforts of the City in Balance program with those of the City Centre Approach, combining both short- and long-term measures as well as a strategic vision. It aims to address the city centre’s challenges in a comprehensive manner, setting clear priorities and implementing targeted measures to strengthen the historic core of the city. The program document is both a product and a set of guidelines, jointly developed through partnerships with existing stakeholders in the city centre, including residents’ associations, businesses, property owners, and cultural and educational institutions. In its *Ambitie* section, the document states: “The city centre must once again become a place where all residents of Amsterdam enjoy coming and where residents feel at home. We will continue to welcome visitors from both home and abroad as an open and international city centre — but **only if they share our fundamental values**” (emphasis added by the author). This marks a step beyond the pre-pandemic focus on “balance,” “resident-centered,” and “quality of life first.”

Around 80 projects are implemented annually under the six priority areas—(1) mixed-use functions and diversity, (2) management and enforcement, (3) a valuable tourism economy, (4) enhancement of cultural diversity and neighborhood identity, (5) promotion of a more varied housing supply, and (6) increasing residential space and greenery in public areas—with progress monitored through three annual observation reports.

4-4. Tourism Economy Vision (2020, 2022)

— Image, Interpretation of Freedom, and Values

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Amsterdam formulated two tourism plans: Vision 2025: Redesigning Amsterdam’s Tourism Economy (Amsterdam & Partners,

2020) and Tourism Economy Vision 2035 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022c). The latter plan was prepared in November 2022 as a measure in response to the projected final calendar year figure for annual overnight stays in 2024 exceeding the signal value, as reported earlier that year. Based on the view that desirable outcomes cannot be achieved solely through early concrete actions or individual measures, but rather through the cumulative effect of all measures, the city first developed a vision (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022b). At the same time, it published a proposal document addressing tourist accommodation facilities (including references to hotel capacity management) as well as nuisance behavior and overtourism. Since 2024, two initiatives—the City Centre Approach and the Visitor Economy Program—have been implemented.

Returning to the plans, both share two common features: (1) they redefine what “freedom” means for Amsterdam, and (2) they clearly distinguish and articulate what the city wishes to embrace and what it seeks to eliminate—namely, the forms of tourism it welcomes and those it does not. In the earlier plan, the city acknowledged the importance of balance by stating, “Without tourists, the city’s balance would also be lost,” while discarding the term “high-quality tourists” (those with higher per-capita spending) in favor of actively focusing on “valuable tourists”—visitors who come for Amsterdam’s unique values, character, and identity, and who add value themselves. In the subsequent plan, it is stated that changes which make Amsterdam a better city and a positive place for residents will also appear attractive to those who work there and to visitors, thereby drawing new audiences. The plan also makes an explicit commitment to addressing the paradox faced by any “attractive city.” It emphasizes that tackling nuisance behavior and overcrowding requires intervention, and that keeping the city livable demands choosing limits over irresponsible growth (DutchNews, 2022).

5. Measures Based on the Ordinance

Figure 5: Measures Specified in the Balanced Tourism Ordinance

Number of Overnight Stays	Number of Day-Trip Visits	Tourism Carrying Capacity
- Measures the council may take to keep or maintain the number of tourist overnight stays within the set range: - Possible regulation of the number of tourist overnight stays in residences that may be rented out for short-term tourist purposes. - Possible regulation of tourist overnight stays through the use of the tourist tax. - Any other related measures the council may take to regulate the number of tourist overnight stays. - Anticipated impacts of the measures: - Number of tourist overnight stays during the three-year forecast period. - Municipal budget.	- The municipality’s influence on the volume of day trips and tourist overnight stays within the MRA. - Possible regulation of the number of visiting days through the use of entertainment expenses. - Any other related measures the council may take to regulate the number of daily visits.	- Overview of districts where tourist carrying capacity is under pressure. Measures the council will take to reduce tourism-related pressure in the district. Measures the council will take to restore tourism-related quality of life in the district. - Expected impact of the measures on: - The tourist carrying capacity of the relevant district(s). - The municipal budget.

Source: Amsterdam’s Balanced Tourism Ordinance (Verordening van de gemeenteraad van de gemeente Amsterdam houdende regels omtrent toerisme (Verordening op toerisme in balans Amsterdam)

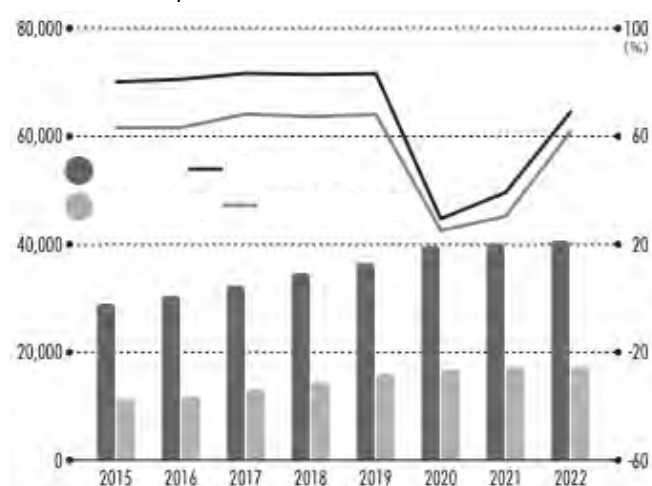
The tourism ordinance explicitly lists the possible measures that can be implemented [Figure 5]. Here, focusing specifically on responses related to the number of overnight stays, the surrounding context before and after implementation is also summarized.

5-1. Regulations on Accommodation Facilities

In recent years, the City of Amsterdam has adopted a strict accommodation policy aimed at preventing the construction of new tourist accommodation facilities and the expansion of capacity in existing ones [Table 1]. Development zones have been designated, and the Accommodation Policy sets stringent conditions regarding hotel concepts, engagement with the surrounding neighborhood, sustainability, and social entrepreneurship. Recent trends in accommodation capacity are shown in [Figure 6]. As additional context, the accommodation capacity in the City of Amsterdam increased by approximately 43,000 over the 12-year period from 2010 to 2022. In the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (excluding the city itself), capacity also rose by about 12,000 during the same period. The city's hotel occupancy rate exceeded 80% prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the number of guests staying in short-term rentals has declined and remains under control.

Initially, short-term rentals played a role in compensating for the shortage of accommodation facilities, diversifying lodging options, and providing stays that allowed visitors to experience local life. Subsequently, although the number of overnight stays within the city has been regulated through accommodation restrictions, the number of lodging facilities in surrounding municipalities has increased (the so-called “waterbed effect”). This raises concerns that the number of day-trip visitors to Amsterdam may increase as a result, and at the same time, that nuisance behavior and overtourism may be transferred to other areas (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022a).

Figure 6: Trends in Accommodation Capacity (Number of Rooms) and Room Occupancy Rates in the City of Amsterdam and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area



Source: Created based on the Amsterdam City Government website “Hoeveel toeristen komen er naar Amsterdam en regio, en waar verblijven zij?” <https://onderzoek.amsterdam.nl/interactief/toerisme-in-amsterdam>

Table 1: Measures on Accommodation Facilities in the City of Amsterdam

2007 ~2010	Statement in the “Basic Economic Program” and “Hotel Policy Document” noting that peak-time capacity is insufficient, and that hotels need to be dispersed outside the city center
2014	Amsterdam signs a cooperation agreement with Airbnb (world’s first)
2015	“Amsterdam Sharing City Declaration”
2017	Ban on new hotel construction in Centrum Mandatory registration for short-term rentals
2018	Maximum of 60 nights per year allowed for short-term rentals
2019	Maximum of 30 nights per year allowed for short-term rentals (reference: Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (MRA)) Public disclosure of hotel development policy
2020	Introduction of permit system for B&Bs Ban on short-term rentals in Centrum’s three districts Introduction of permit system for other areas
2021	“Hotel Policy 2021”: tightening of accommodation policy, restriction of development through use of land lease rights
2022	Policy document on accommodation facilities (reference: Tourism carrying capacity of Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (MRA))
2024	“Hotel Policy 2024”

Source : Reference 38 & 46, City of Amsterdam's website

Table2: Changes in the tourist tax rate in the City of Amsterdam

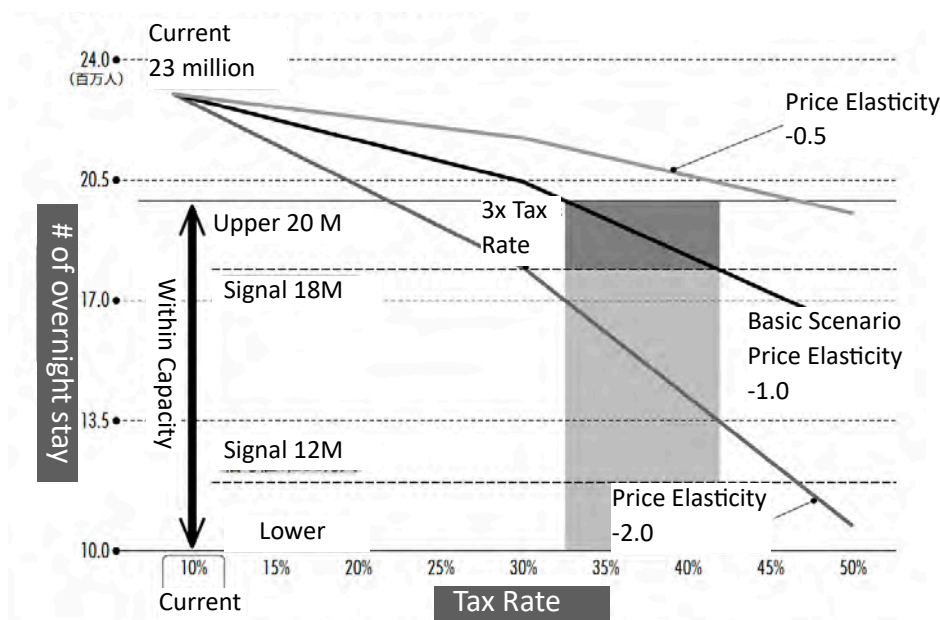
1973	4%
1988	5%
2013	5.5% *only for two years
2015	5%
2018	By Area • 6% (City Center: Centrum, Zuid, West en Oost) • 4% (Suburb)
	By Facility Type • 6% (STR, B&B, Vacation Rental)
2019	7% * Introduction of an €8 per person day-trip tourist tax (for cruise passengers) * Nationwide increase in value-added tax (VAT) in the Netherlands from 6% to 9% (lower rate)
2020	Facility type-specific, dual tax structure introduced • 7% + €3 per person per night (hotels, hostels) • 7% + €1 per person per night (campgrounds) • 10% (other lodging facilities such as B&Bs, vacation rentals)
2024	12.5% * Day-trip tourist tax increased to €14 per person

Source: Compiled from the City of Amsterdam (2015): *Onderzoek toeristenbelasting Amsterdam*, as well as Reference Document 2 and the City of Amsterdam’s official tourism tax website.

5-2. Increase in Tourist Tax Rates

The City of Amsterdam's tourist tax (Toeristenbelasting), or accommodation tax, has in recent years been revised frequently through amendments to the municipal ordinance, with rates being raised at short intervals. The current rate stands at 12.5%, the highest in Europe [Table 2]. The stated purpose of the tax increase is to provide funding for services to local residents, rather than to deliberately discourage people from visiting the city (DutchNews, 2023). According to the report (Reference 40), while an increase in the tourist tax is not without a deterrent effect, its impact on the number of overnight stays is limited, and it is expected to contribute primarily to increased tax revenue. When the objective is "to increase tax revenue," it is considered relatively effective; however, in order to keep the number of overnight stays below 18 million, the tax rate would need to be raised to at least more than three times its current level [Figure 7]. In the end, while the vast majority of tourists stay overnight in Amsterdam, half of the decrease in overnight guests is offset by visitors who lodge in surrounding municipalities and make day trips into the city. As a result, the reduction in overnight stays does not translate into a proportional decrease in nuisance behavior. The same report points out that, under these circumstances, tax revenues flow into other municipalities instead.

Figure 7: Relationship Between Annual Overnight Stays and Tourist (Accommodation) Tax Rates



Source: Created based on Significant APE (2023): Het effect van toeristenbelasting op overnachtingen en belastinginkomsten in de gemeente Amsterdam (Amsterdam Tourism Tax Survey).

Another report (Reference 2) also notes that “while nuisance behavior caused by overnight visitors in the city decreases, nuisance behavior associated with one of the main purposes of visiting the city—partying—does not.” It further states that “although the collection of tourist tax can indeed serve as one means of combating undesirable tourism in Amsterdam, it cannot constitute an independent measure for combating tourism.” This underscores the necessity of a comprehensive approach that includes the “other measures” specified in the ordinance.

6. Conclusion

Striving for the Optimal Balance

— Measures at Various Spatial Levels

The measures that the City of Amsterdam can take to address overtourism are limited to the scope of authority held by the municipal council, making it difficult to implement them solely within the framework of the local government. Needless to say, policies concerning transportation, aviation, and other areas that extend beyond the city’s boundaries are also involved.

Looking at broader spatial scales, the Metropolitan Region Amsterdam (MRA) formulated a Hotel Policy in 2019 (Reference 30) and, in 2022, also measured tourism carrying capacity at the metropolitan level (Reference 6) [Table 1]. At this wider scale, efforts are guided by data to identify areas where active promotion should be pursued, where balance has been achieved, and where restrictions should be applied. Tourism promotion is to be advanced with each area’s unique characteristics (DNA) as the central focus.

At the national level, the Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions (NBTC) formulated the national tourism plan Perspective Destination Netherlands 2030 in 2019. The plan emphasizes shifting from promoting destinations to managing and developing them, clearly stating the stance: “We put the common interest—i.e., the public interest—and local residents first.” While the Netherlands as a whole is not in an overtourism situation, the plan stresses the importance of selecting desirable visitors who align with the profiles and objectives of individual cities, regions, and provinces. It also defines the characteristics and “DNA” of each region at the national level, signaling a significant policy shift.

— Future Research Directions and Implications for Japan

Amsterdam’s tourism policy—particularly the measures based on the Balanced Tourism Ordinance—is grounded in the 2022 forecast results and represents an ongoing initiative.

Given its current and evolving nature, an assessment will be withheld at this stage, with

continued close monitoring deemed necessary going forward. In addition, the specific forms of engagement by diverse stakeholders—including local residents and community organizations—as well as initiatives aimed at revitalizing regional appeal beyond the scope of overtourism, and policies concerning the hospitality industry (HORECA: hotels, restaurants, and cafés), remain topics for future research.

Finally, in light of Japan's circumstances, it is important to adopt a perspective that assesses conditions using objective data and promotes tourism in a more appropriate manner. The comprehensive initiatives undertaken by the City of Amsterdam should not be regarded solely as measures against overtourism; rather, the key question, amid constantly changing environmental conditions, is whether their research methods and response mechanisms can be effectively adapted to the realities of Japanese tourist destinations.

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Destination Management Practice Based on City Cards

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1. Introduction

It is widely recognized that the "M" in DMO has a dual meaning—"marketing" and "management." Against the backdrop of changes in consumer behavior driven by advances in digital technology and the shifts in the social environment brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the priorities that destinations should emphasize have begun to shift from "marketing focused on how to acquire customers" to "management focused on how to continuously create high-quality experiences." While marketing and management are not entirely separate concepts, the author has encountered similar views among destination practitioners and researchers in Europe, North America, and Australia visited since the pandemic.

One of the initiatives representative of this shift toward "management" is the "city card." City cards have long been introduced in European destinations, and in recent years, advances in digital technology have enabled efforts to improve visitor convenience and to capture data on visitor behavior and satisfaction through these cards.

Through the author's experience of supporting DMO operations and initiatives via independent projects and contracted work, as well as what the author has observed and heard at DMOs and resorts both in Japan and abroad, a need has been felt to organize and clarify the current state of destination management. As one example of this, the author has long held an interest in visitor card initiatives, of which city cards are a representative example.

Against this background, this paper focuses on the city card in Amsterdam—one of the most advanced examples in Europe—and provides an overview of the latest developments in this area. It also introduces aspects of Venice's distinctive policy development, built around a city card system, visited as part of the same field visit.

It should be noted that this paper is a reorganization of publicly available materials, informed by interviews conducted with amsterdam & partners, the DMO of Amsterdam; the City of Venice; and VE.LA. S.p.A., a wholly owned subsidiary of the City of Venice responsible for transportation and event management, as well as by on-site observations during the field visit.

2. What Is a City Card?

A city card is a multi-attraction pass with added benefits, offered at destinations primarily in Europe with the aim of enhancing visitor convenience. By purchasing a city card, visitors can enjoy free or discounted admission to affiliated facilities and experiential programs, as well as benefits such as free use of public transportation and priority entry to attractions and facilities—all with a single card. City cards were introduced in Europe from around the 1970s and 1980s, and are currently offered at approximately 40 destinations in Europe alone. A network exists among city card destinations within Europe, with regular opportunities for the presentation of research findings and project reports on city cards, indicating the importance attached to city card initiatives in Europe. It should also be noted that at many destinations where city cards have been introduced, it is the DMO that is responsible for the sale and operation of the card.

3. The "I amsterdam City Card"

Amsterdam has offered a city card since 1982, currently marketed under the name "I amsterdam City Card" and targeted primarily at visitors from outside the Netherlands. The card's benefits include admission to art museums and other museums, use of public transportation, canal cruises, bicycle rental, and more (Table 1), and the card is available in five types ranging from a 24-hour pass to a 120-hour pass (Table 2). Cardholders may choose between a digital app card or a physical card. The app card can be purchased online or through a dedicated app; after purchase, an authentication code sent by email is entered into the app and the card is activated by pressing the Start button. The physical card can be purchased at the I amsterdam Store at Amsterdam Central Station and is activated at the moment it is first used (i.e., scanned) at a participating facility. In both cases, the card automatically deactivates once the usage period has elapsed after activation—for example, 24 hours in the case of a 24-hour pass. The app also offers functions beyond displaying the QR code for the app card, including introductions to participating facilities and experiential programs, their display on a map, and the ability to save favorite facilities and experiences.

The reverse side of the physical card bears an identification barcode, while the app card displays a QR code within the application. Participating facilities scan this code to record card usage. Each facility feeds back its validation records to amsterdam & partners, and settlement is calculated by multiplying the number of validations by a fixed percentage of the standard admission fee or other charges at that facility. It should also be noted that the ticket gates of Amsterdam's metro and tram system support contactless payment by credit card, and the same gates are capable of reading the codes of both app cards and physical cards.

Table 1 Overview of I amsterdam City Card Benefits

Benefit Category	Details
1. Museums, art museums, and tourist facilities	Free admission and discounts at more than 70 museums, art museums, tourist facilities, and related venues
2. Public transport	Free use of public transport throughout the city, including metro, tram, bus, and ferry services
3. Canal cruise	One free canal cruise experience within Amsterdam
4. Bicycle rental	One free one-day bicycle rental pass

Table 2 I amsterdam City Card Price List

Type	Price
24-hour pass (1 day)	€60
48-hour pass (2 days)	€80
72-hour pass (3 days)	€100
96-hour pass (4 days)	€115
120-hour pass (5 days)	€125



Physical I amsterdam City Card (left) and app-based card (right)



4. The Significance of the City Card in Amsterdam

The I amsterdam City Card is planned, sold, and operated by amsterdam & partners, the DMO of Amsterdam. While the significance of the DMO's role in the city card was previously driven primarily by the aim of enhancing visitor convenience and by its function as a business model, it has in recent years also come to encompass a destination management dimension. The objectives of promoting the city card from a

management perspective can be divided into two areas: ① encouraging visits to small and medium-sized museums (art museums, history museums, and similar institutions) to promote longer stays, and ② capturing visitor behavior through city card usage.

① Promoting Longer Stays Through Encouraging Visits to Small and Medium-Sized Museums

Amsterdam is widely known around the world for its distinctive Dutch architecture, art, and carefully developed canal network, but the abundance of museums is also one of its attractions: more than 70 museums are concentrated in the central area of Amsterdam alone. At the same time, demand is concentrated at popular facilities such as the Van Gogh Museum and the Anne Frank House, and there is a tendency for congestion to occur on specific days of the week and at specific times.

Promoting the use of the city card is synonymous with providing visitors with "options" beyond well-known facilities, including small and medium-sized museums and related facilities and experiential programs. Efforts are also being made to directly encourage behavioral change among visitors by providing information on the appeal of smaller museums and related facilities and experiences, as well as on peak congestion times, through brochures distributed at the point of city card purchase, introductions to facilities and model routes within the app, and push notifications with recommended content. "Encourage Dispersion" is listed as one of the operational goals of amsterdam & partners as a DMO, and encouraging visits to facilities beyond the most prominent ones is part of amsterdam & partners' mission, with the city card positioned as a tool for achieving this. While the promotion of city card usage has not yet resulted in the resolution of congestion or the full realization of dispersal effects, the number of city card users visiting small and medium-sized museums has been growing, and this has had a certain effect in encouraging longer stays by visitors.

② Capturing Visitor Behavior Through City Card Usage

A wide range of data on visitor movement patterns can be obtained from records of city card purchases, activations, and validations, and amsterdam & partners conducts various analyses based on the data collected. First, by analyzing the days of the week and times of day at which city cards are purchased and activated, the timing of trip initiation is identified, and the gap between purchase and activation is used to analyze how far in advance itineraries are being decided. In addition, validation records at individual facilities enable the visualization of the days and times at which demand is concentrated, as well as the capture of visitor movement patterns, including "what kinds of itineraries visitors follow," "how many facilities they are visiting," and "which areas and types of facilities are experiencing concentrated demand." Furthermore, A/B testing is being conducted to examine how visitor behavior changes in response to push notifications sent to specific users regarding recommended visiting times and locations that take into account current levels of congestion.

In this way, the provision of the city card makes it possible to obtain a comprehensive picture of visitor behavior. Post-stay surveys are also distributed to cardholders to gather feedback on satisfaction levels and areas for improvement regarding card usage and their stay in Amsterdam, with the findings used to improve the program.

5. Data Also Functioning as a “Benefit”

This section introduces a topic related to the utilization of data obtained through the city card. The visitor movement data and other information obtained via the city card, as described above, are not used solely as marketing data by Amsterdam & partners as the DMO; their aggregated results are also made available through "Visitor Insight," a data dashboard provided by the DMO. While it is widely understood that data-driven strategy development is essential for tourism promotion, in recent years a number of examples have emerged of platforms that aggregate a wide range of tourism-related data in dashboard form, enabling various stakeholders to view and analyze the information. Visitor Insight is one such example, and a distinctive feature is that access permissions to the dashboard are structured in multiple tiers. In addition to city card data, Visitor Insight aggregates a wide range of tourism-related data, from public statistical data to data provided by private facilities, including the number of overnight visitors in the city, the number of arrivals at Schiphol Airport, visitor numbers at tourism-related facilities, and the number of international conferences held. Access to this data is divided into three tiers: ① all users, ② DMO members, and ③ data-providing facilities. Users in tier ① can view aggregated totals for data such as overnight visitor numbers, airport arrivals, and visitor numbers at tourism-related facilities. Users in tier ② have the additional ability to view monthly breakdowns of each data category, city card usage data, and international conference figures. Users in tier ③ have the further ability to view detailed data by individual facility. The rationale for structuring access permissions in multiple tiers is twofold: by making data broadly available, the system serves to make DMO initiatives more visible and to provide reference material for those considering starting a business or developing new business initiatives in Amsterdam; while at the same time, by restricting access to detailed data, the system is designed to ensure that DMO membership carries tangible benefits and that individual facilities see value in contributing data from the bottom up. While publicly available statistical data could be collected through official government statistical channels, data that captures visitor movement patterns—such as city card data—cannot be obtained by individual businesses on their own, and as such carries meaningful value as a "benefit." In this way, city card data can be said to hold a certain significance from a management perspective as well, particularly in terms of building relationships with stakeholders.

6. The Relationship Between Venice's Access Fee and the City Card

Venice, visited as part of this field visit, has had a city card system since 1997. Previously marketed under names such as "Venice Connected" and "Venice Card," the card has been offered under the name "Venezia Unica City Pass" since 2013, providing benefits including use of transportation on the island, admission to museums, and access to public restrooms. In its early days, the card had to be purchased at ticket offices on the island of Venice; however, since the introduction of the Venezia Unica system, an online advance purchase system has been in place. Under the current system, visitors select their usage period and options online in advance and complete payment, after which a QR code voucher is sent by email.

Venice, like Amsterdam, is well known as a destination experiencing overtourism, and attracted attention in 2024 when a pilot initiative was conducted over 29 days between April and July in which an "access fee" (i.e., an entry fee) was charged. The access fee involves collecting €5 from day visitors to Venice. While a detailed explanation of the access fee policy itself is beyond the scope of this paper, a noteworthy point is that the collection of the access fee is administered through the Venezia Unica system. Visitors to Venice register their visitor attribute information and intended visit date on the Venezia Unica system in advance and pay the access fee via online payment. Upon completion of payment, a voucher is issued to the visitor, which is presented to staff stationed on the island of Venice at the time of the actual visit to confirm payment. It should be noted that residents are not required to register in advance nor make payment, while overnight guests are not required to pay but must register in advance through the Venezia Unica system, upon which a voucher is issued confirming their status as overnight guests.

According to materials from the City of Venice, one of the outcomes of the access fee pilot was that it became possible to obtain advance knowledge of "when, who, and how many people will visit the island of Venice." This has enabled the collection of data useful for planning cleaning, security, and other operations on the island. The fact that this kind of "advance grasp of visitor numbers" has become possible can in large part be attributed to the prior development of the Venezia Unica online system.

It has been announced that the access fee pilot will continue in 2025. The target period is to be expanded to 54 days, and a tiered payment structure will be introduced: €5 for visitors who register at least four days before their visit, and €10 for those who register within three days of their visit. The pilot will continue to examine improvements in the accuracy of advance visitor tracking and the impact of the access fee on visitor numbers.

7. Conclusion

This paper has examined the city card initiatives in Amsterdam and the utilization of the city card system in Venice. In both destinations, efforts have long been made to enhance visitor convenience through the provision of city cards; today, however, building on these city card initiatives and drawing on advances in digital technology, both cities are taking on the challenge of capturing visitor behavior through their own distinctive approaches. In Amsterdam, city card data are being used to attempt to visualize congestion and capture visitor behavior, while in Venice, the city card system is being used to improve the accuracy of advance visitor tracking.

By capturing visitor behavior with greater precision in this way, destinations are able to make preparations in advance, and communication becomes possible with those who are currently visiting or have confirmed plans to visit. It is therefore anticipated that measures related to the appropriate "guidance" of visitors will be developed further in the future.

This field visit provided an opportunity to learn, through the lens of the city card, that destination management is advancing into a more scientific domain. This series of initiatives should prove highly instructive for tourism destinations in Japan as well. It should, of course, be noted that the "cases" of both destinations are continuous with and grounded in the accumulated body of past initiatives and discussions—including those related to city cards—that have led to the present situation.

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"New-Style National Parks" as Destinations on Urban Fringe

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1. Introduction

National parks are, in essence, parks in natural areas designated by the national government. Internationally, they are defined as parks “designated primarily for the protection of natural biological diversity, together with its underlying ecological structures and environmental processes, and for the promotion of education and recreation,”¹ and may be understood as spaces intended not only for the conservation of natural resources, but also for use as park areas open to the public. The mechanisms through which national parks achieve their objectives vary by country, and the legal provisions governing park designation and management, land ownership within park boundaries, and the entities and methods responsible for management differ widely. For example, Japan’s national parks are zoning-based parks, designated by defining park areas regardless of land ownership, while national parks in the United States are operated as facility-based parks in which the managing authority owns the land within the park boundaries.

In Japan, the first national park was established in 1934, and 35 national parks have been designated to date.² Since their establishment, national parks have been closely associated with tourism. In recent years, the “Tourism Vision to Support the Future of Japan,” compiled by the government in 2016, set out guidelines for branding Japan’s national parks as world-class national parks. Similarly, the “Basic Plan for the Promotion of a Tourism Nation,” approved by the Cabinet in 2023, continues, as in preceding plans, to call for enhancing the appeal and branding of national parks.

For Japan’s national parks to demonstrate world-class appeal, their direct competitors, that is, the destinations with which travelers compare them, are national parks around the world. At the same time, while the Foundation has had opportunities through contracted work to research national parks overseas, the information encountered on such occasions has tended to center on national parks in the United States, Australia, and similar countries, giving the impression that the available information is concentrated in a limited number of countries. Looking at individual cases, Kobayashi (2014) reports that, within the framework of land development and

regional revitalization policy in France, a “Regional Nature Park system” (Parcs naturels régionaux) was established, under which areas sharing certain geographical and historical characteristics are designated and managed by multiple municipalities and related organizations.³ Furthermore, in Switzerland, visited during last year’s field visit, legislative reforms since 2007 have led to new policy developments, including the addition of zoning-based “Regional Nature Parks” (Parcs naturels régionaux) and “Peri-urban Nature Parks” (Parcs naturels périurbains) to the framework of “Parks of National Importance” (Parcs d’importance nationale), which had previously encompassed the facility-based national park.⁴

These cases suggest a direction in which, rather than limiting improvements to individual parks, existing park systems themselves are being reformed so that national parks are actively utilized as systems for the management and operation of natural areas with tourism in mind. Such insights into national parks around the world are considered valuable for Japan’s national park policies as they seek to achieve world-class status. With this in mind, this year’s field visit focused on national parks in the Netherlands. Following preliminary research to organize the development of Dutch national park policy, an on-site visit was conducted to a candidate national park area near The Hague.

It should be noted that some of the names of systems, plans, and other items discussed in this paper do not have established renderings in languages other than Dutch. As with “Parks of National Importance” above, terms enclosed in double quotation marks in this paper are provisional translations by the author, and include translations of terms for which corresponding Japanese renderings have not been established by public authorities or similar bodies.

2. Development of National Park Policy

The total land area of the Netherlands is 41,864 square kilometers, and the country is divided into 12 provinces.^{5 6} Within a national territory roughly equivalent to Kyushu in area, 21 national parks (Nationaal Park) have been designated.⁷ At the time of writing, the legal basis for national parks in the Netherlands is the Environment Act (Omgevingswet), which entered into force in January 2024. Under this act, national parks are defined as “areas of significant natural scientific or landscape value.” The Minister of LNVN,⁸ the competent ministry, has the authority to designate parks, and the criteria for designation are set out in the Policy Rule on the Designation of National Parks 2024–2030 (Beleidsregel aanwijzing Nationale Parken 2024–2030), a regulation under the act.

The names and designation years of all 21 parks are shown in the table below right. Looking at the years of designation, it can be seen that national parks were designated in three broad periods: from the 1930s to the 1950s, from 1989 to 2006, and

from 2018 onward. This is related to the history of Dutch national park policy, and these phases of designation are sometimes referred to as Nationaal Park 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0, respectively.¹⁰

According to existing literature, during the first period, three nature reserves and similar areas received national park designation. However, this movement was led by private organizations, and the government was reluctant to select candidate areas or designate parks. After the end of the Second World War, semi-natural areas of low agricultural value received protected area designation, but postwar reconstruction and the expansion of agricultural land took priority, and the protection of nature and landscapes was not regarded as a priority concern.¹¹

In the subsequent second period, the Netherlands joined the IUCN¹² in 1969. That same year, an IUCN resolution set out the criteria that national parks should meet. Faced with the need, as a member state, to introduce a system consistent with IUCN standards, the Dutch government proceeded to develop a national park system and established a review committee to examine candidate areas. In 1975, the review committee submitted a report recommending the establishment of national parks based on ecological value, and in response, the government designated 18 national parks between 1989 and 2006.¹³

Table 1 National Parks and Related Areas in the Mainland Netherlands and Year of Designation (as of November 2024)

No.	Park Name	Year of Designation	Remarks
1	Nationaal Park Veluwezoom	1930	
2	Nationaal Park De Hoge Veluwe	1935	
-	Nationaal Park Kennemerduinen	1950	Expanded and re-designated as No. 9
3	Nationaal Park Schiermonnikoog	1989	
4	Nationaal Park De Meinweg	1990	
5	Nationaal Park Dwingelderveld	1991	
6	Nationaal Park Weerribben-Wieden	1992	
7	Nationaal Park De Groote Peel	1993	
8	Nationaal Park De Biesbosch	1994	
9	Nationaal Park Zuid-Kennemerland	1995	
10	Nationaal Park De Maasduinen	1996	
11	Nationaal Park Drents-Friese Wold	2000	
12	Grenspark De Zoom - Kalmthoutse Heide	2001	
13	Nationaal Park Drentsche Aa	2002	Park name changed in 2024
14	Nationaal Park Duinen van Texel	2002	
15	Nationaal Park Oosterschelde	2002	
-	Nationaal Park De Loonse en Drunense Duinen	2002	Designation revoked; became part of No. 21
16	Nationaal Park Lauwersmeer	2003	
17	Nationaal Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug	2003	
18	Nationaal Park Sallandse Heuvelrug	2004	
19	Nationaal Park De Alde Feanen	2006	
20	Nationaal Park Nieuw Land	2018	
21	Van Gogh Nationaal Park	2024	
-	Nationaal Park Hollandse Duinen	Undesignated	Designation application pending

While the development and designation of the national park system was thus advancing, from the 1990s onward the Netherlands saw a broader trend of decentralization and regionalization across national policy, including the field of nature policy. This led national parks as well to shift toward management structures based on voluntary stakeholder participation and stakeholder consultation.¹⁴ In 2007, revisions and consolidation of relevant legislation established a framework in which national park designation is carried out by the national government, while the approval of park plans and programs is handled by the provinces. Further, in 2013, responsibility for operating the “Consultative Body” (Overlegorgaan) established at each park, for advancing and achieving the “Management and Development Plan” (BIP: Beheer- en Inrichtingsplan), and for the finances related to park operations was transferred from the national government to the province in which each park is located. Following this move toward “smaller government” in national park administration, the third period, which continues to the present day, began.

In 2014, a motion was submitted to the lower house of the Dutch parliament calling on the government to examine the concept of “New-Style National Parks” (Nationale Parken Nieuwe Stijl). In response to this request from the lower house, the government developed the policy program “Toward World-Class National Parks 2015–2018” (Naar Nationale Parken van Wereldklasse 2015–2018). In 2016, fourteen stakeholders, including the government, concluded the “National Parks Agreement” (Nationale Parken Deal) to promote the program. The official gazette relating to the conclusion of this agreement contains the statement shown in the inset above as a matter concerning the guiding principles of the initiative, offering a sense of the direction envisioned for the “New-Style National Parks.”

From 2016 onward, new criteria for national park designation were established through discussions involving the government and participants in the “National Parks Agreement.” In parallel, efforts to obtain new national park designation progressed in three regions across the Netherlands, with the development of management structures and the preparation of

the necessary plans and documents. The government reviewed the application documents submitted by each region, designating Nationaal Park Nieuw Land in 2018 and Van Gogh Nationaal Park in 2024 as new national parks.

- By combining nature conservation and appropriate access to nature in national parks with strong entrepreneurial spirit, it is possible to create opportunities to establish revenue models that can contribute to the sustainable protection and development of national park areas.
- National parks that combine nationally important natural and cultural values have the potential to develop into international and national symbols of nature and landscape, comparable to strong brands such as Amsterdam, tulips, and windmills.
- National parks can enhance the attractiveness of the Netherlands as a destination and contribute to maintaining the vitality of outlying regions by responding to the growth of visitors from both within the country and abroad.*¹⁵

3. Field Visit: Hollandse Duinen National Park

Based on the results of the preliminary research, the author visited Nationaal Park Hollandse Duinen (NPHD), located near The Hague. NPHD is a candidate national park area situated along the North Sea coast of South Holland province, with a park area of approximately 450 square kilometers extending inland from a 47-kilometer stretch of coastline. The area spans 14 municipalities within South Holland province and is a zoning-based park with approximately one million residents living within its boundaries.

As part of the initiatives under “Toward World-Class National Parks 2015–2018,” a public vote for “the most beautiful nature reserve in the Netherlands” was conducted in 2018 under government initiative. Of the 13 finalists, NPHD was ranked third and was allocated a development and improvement budget of up to €300,000 from the government. Around the time of its participation in the vote, local activity toward national park designation intensified, and in 2022 an application seeking national park designation was submitted by NPHD to the government. Although the government decided to place this application on hold, NPHD submitted a revised application in September 2024 in accordance with the current requirements.

One of the principal landscapes of NPHD is the dune system along the North Sea coast. On the sandy terrain that forms several terraces from the coast toward the inland area, various types of vegetation, including herbaceous plants, shrubs, and open woodland, are distributed according to the local microtopography.

The coastal area is also included within the park boundaries, although some sections have been used as seaside resort areas from the nineteenth century to the present day. Around historically significant structures such as the Kurhaus, facilities for dining, accommodation, entertainment, and other uses are concentrated. As a result, sections that at first glance may not appear to be part of a national park are also included within the NPHD park boundaries.

The park area is designated not only along the coast but also within urban areas on the inland side. Haagse Bos is a green area of approximately one square kilometer located very close to Den Haag Centraal station. After being protected in the medieval period as a private hunting ground for the nobility, it has been maintained as woodland despite exposure to various development pressures over the centuries. The entire area forms part of the NPHD park zone, and within it, related organizations including the City of The Hague are advancing the redevelopment of the area as public green space and the construction of an NPHD visitor center.

Returning once again to the coastal area, seawater permeates the sandy soil beneath the coastal terrain, while freshwater, which has a lower specific gravity, remains closer to the surface than the seawater below. Consequently, by balancing the inflow of freshwater from rainfall and rivers with the volume of water extracted, the dunes function as a water extraction site. Since the nineteenth century, the water company

Dunea has extracted water within NPHD and supplied drinking water to nearby urban areas.

Dunea directly manages three water extraction zones within NPHD. However, its role is not limited to managing the areas related to its own operations; the company has also played a leading role in organizational formation and planning processes aimed at obtaining national park designation for NPHD. Within the park, multiple facilities that appear to have been developed by the company can be found, including signs, information boards, rest areas, and free drinking water stations. A water tower that was used in the past has also become one of the landmarks of the dune area.

Landscapes in National Park Hollandse Duinen

Haagse Bos



Coastal Area



Dune Area



Status of Park Facility Development



4. Conclusion

National parks in the Netherlands date back to the 1930s, while the government's full-scale system design and park designation took place from the 1960s through the 2000s. Following a gradual reduction in governmental authority and responsibility, and amid efforts to redefine the role of national parks, policies aimed at realizing "New-Style National Parks" were pursued from the 2010s onward. These policies envision the sustainable protection and development of national park areas, the establishment of a national image comparable to the traditional imagery of "tulips and windmills," and the development of urban fringe areas through enhanced appeal as travel destinations. In these respects, a certain degree of similarity can be observed with Japan's efforts to enhance the appeal and branding of national parks within the context of regional revitalization through tourism. At the same time, in the Netherlands, rather than limiting changes to policy guidelines alone, improvements have also been pursued in the existing administrative framework for national parks, including relevant legislation and designation criteria, suggesting a dynamic approach to policy development. With regard in particular to the rebranding of the conventional image of national parks, a certain degree of effect was already perceptible at the time of the field visit, and further significant progress may be anticipated as the "New-Style National Parks" continue to develop and mature.

At NPHD, which is seeking designation as a "New-Style National Park," a comprehensive collaborative management approach based on public-private partnership had been established, led by the private water company Dunea. According to planning documents, more than 50 stakeholders are involved in the management of NPHD, and stakeholder collaboration, including budget procurement through investment from each organization, is a prerequisite for the implementation of projects within the park. Not only information dissemination and planning initiatives, but also various facilities have been developed to a high standard, suggesting that broad partnerships led by the private sector have enabled active investment in both soft and hard infrastructure. Given that Dunea holds water extraction zones within the park area, it can be inferred that the company has strong motivation to support the national park designation of NPHD, both from the perspective of maintaining high-quality water sources and enhancing its own brand. On the other hand, the question of what motivations each stakeholder has for endorsing the goal of national park designation and participating in the management of NPHD remains a subject for further research.

The field visit examined the situation from two perspectives: the national park system as a national framework, and its implementation at the local level. At the same time, national parks are spaces open to people, and aspects such as visitor dynamics and visitor experience also require attention. It is hoped that, by continuing to monitor the developments and outcomes of the "New-Style National Parks," which are in the midst of

significant change, valuable insights will be gained for Japan's national parks, which, like those of the Netherlands, are premised on collaborative management and governance.

Notes and Sources

¹ IUCN (2012): Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/PAPS-016-Ja.pdf>

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³ Kobayashi, K. (2014): The significance of the regional nature park system as a regional revitalization entity in French rural revitalization policy. *Hokkaido University Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 69, pp. 1–12.

⁴ Nasu, S. (2024): Nature conservation systems in Switzerland (Tourism Culture, No. 260, Japan Tourism Agency Foundation). pp. 22–24.

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan: Kingdom of the Netherlands. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/netherlands/data.html>

⁶ This paper does not cover the Caribbean territories or former special autonomous regions of the Netherlands.

⁷ As of November 2024.

⁸ Dutch: Ministerie van Landbouw, Visserij, Voedselzekerheid en Natuur; English: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Nature.

⁹ Compiled based on CLO (2022): Nationale parken, 2022: <https://www.clo.nl/nl131410> and the Government Gazette (Staatscourant 2024, 32539). Note that the numbering (No.) has been assigned by the author based on designation year in relation to national parks at the time of writing, and does not follow the cited sources.

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¹⁴ Gerritsen, A. & Pleijte, M. (2006): National Parks in the Netherlands: a policy arrangement on the brink of change. Paper presented at the International Conference on Civil Society and Environmental Conflicts, pp. 1–13.

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III. Destination Management and Guest Cards at European Mountain Resorts



Feature Article III-1

Recent Developments in Guest Cards at European Mountain Resorts

Feature Article III-2

Overview of the Field Visit and Strengthening the Foundations of Destination Management



Field Visit Itinerary

2025

	DATE	ACTIVITY	OVERNIGHT STAY
1	Sunday, September 28	Arrival in Austria	Innsbruck, Austria
2	Monday, September 29	Interview: Innsbruck Tourism Board	Innsbruck, Austria
3	Tuesday, September 30	Field visit: St. Anton	St. Anton, Austria
4	Wednesday, October 1	Field visit / Interview: St. Anton Tourism Board / Lech	St. Anton, Austria
5	Thursday, October 2	Field visit: Diavolezza / St. Moritz	St. Moritz, Switzerland
6	Friday, October 3	Field visit / Interview: St. Moritz Tourism AG / Morteratsch Glacier / Pontresina	St. Moritz, Switzerland
7	Saturday, October 4	Field visit: Davos / Zurich	Zurich, Switzerland
8	Sunday, October 5	Departure from Switzerland	—

Recent Developments in Guest Cards at European Mountain Resorts

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Takaaki Ezaki

1. Introduction

The author previously provided an overview of "guest cards"—widely used at European mountain resorts—in a special feature article titled "How to Capture Visitor Dynamics" in Tourism Culture No. 266, specifically in Special Feature 5: "The Development of 'Guest Cards' in Europe and Data Collection." A guest card is a card provided free of charge to overnight guests who stay for a minimum number of nights in a given area, offering benefits such as free use of public transportation during their stay and discounted or free access to tourist facilities and activities. In that earlier article, a distinction was drawn between "guest cards," provided free of charge to overnight guests, and "city cards," which are sold at a price, and the systems in use across various European destinations were organized in a cross-cutting manner.

Table 1 Differences Between Guest Cards and City Cards		
	Guest Card	City Card
Target Users	Provided only to overnight guests staying in a specific region	Available for purchase by anyone, including tourists, day visitors, and residents
Price	In principle, free of charge (generally understood to be included in accommodation tax, etc.)	Paid
Funding Source	Operated primarily using accommodation tax revenue, etc.; has a strong public-service character	Operated as a revenue-generating business of the DMO (business model)
Benefits	Free use of public transport; discounted or free use of cable cars; discounted or free use of tourism facilities and activities, etc.	Discounted or free use of tourism facilities and activities
Development Pattern	Mainly developed in mountain resorts	Mainly developed in urban tourism destinations

This paper serves as a case-based follow-up to that overview. Drawing on interviews conducted with DMOs during a field visit to Switzerland and Austria in autumn 2025, as well as desk research, it focuses on three mountain resorts—Innsbruck and St. Anton in Austria, and the Engadin region in Switzerland—with the aim of providing a concrete picture of the "latest developments" in guest cards. At this point, it is worth clarifying the terminology used in this paper. While the two types of cards share many similarities in terms of the benefits they offer, they differ in

character with respect to whether they are free or paid, whether they are targeted at overnight guests, and what their funding sources are.

The focus of this paper is the former—that is, "guest cards" linked to overnight stays. The following sections examine three cases in turn: the "Welcome Card" in Innsbruck, the "Summer Card" in St. Anton, and "Mountain Railways Included" in the Engadin region, including St. Moritz.

2. Innsbruck: The "Welcome Card" for Extending Stays and Promoting Regional Touring

Innsbruck, the capital of the Austrian state of Tyrol, is a world-renowned destination that combines urban tourism with mountain resort appeal. The city offers a guest card known as the "Welcome Card."

A Card Designed to Extend Stays and Promote Regional Touring

The Welcome Card has been in operation since 2017, and its objectives can be summarized under two main headings. The first is to disperse the flow of visitors—who tend to concentrate in the historic city center as the primary tourist area—into the wider Innsbruck region. The intention is for visitors to experience not only Innsbruck as a historic city, but also the foothill villages and mountain hiking areas as an integrated destination for a longer stay. The second objective is to contribute to decarbonization by reducing private car use and encouraging the use of public transportation and cable cars. With these objectives in mind, the Welcome Card is designed not merely as a collection of benefits, but as a mechanism that simultaneously targets "extended length of stay," "broad regional touring," and "modal shift."

A Tiered Benefits Structure Based on Stays of Two Nights or More and Three Nights or More

A key feature of the Welcome Card's design is that the level of benefits varies according to the length of stay. Guests staying two nights or more receive free use of public transportation—including buses and trams—connecting Innsbruck city center and the surrounding region, along with discounts on tourist facilities such as guided hiking tours, e-bike tours, and indoor swimming pools. For guests staying three nights or more, these benefits are supplemented by free access to the major mountain railways and cable cars in the surrounding area. The inclusion of mountain railways, which would ordinarily involve considerable expense, creates a straightforward incentive—"stay one more night and go up the mountain free of charge"—designed to encourage guests to extend their length of stay.

The card is available in summer and winter versions, with benefits and partner facilities adjusted according to the season. In addition to a physical card, an electronic ticket is also available within a dedicated app.

It should be noted that Innsbruck also offers a separate paid city card, the "Innsbruck Card," which provides packages for day visitors and short-stay guests.

Funding and Technological Infrastructure

The primary funding source for the Welcome Card is the accommodation tax. Settlement payments to transportation operators and various facilities are made using accommodation tax revenue, making it "a system that works precisely because of the accommodation tax." In terms of technological infrastructure, an accommodation reservation and guest registration system provided by a major European tourism IT solutions company is integrated with the card issuance and authentication system. Accommodation providers enter guest information—including name, date of birth, and length of stay—at check-in (including pre-check-in) to issue and activate the Welcome Card. At the same time, this data entry process places a certain administrative burden on staff at accommodation facilities.

Card issuance also enables the accumulation of data on guest attributes—including gender, age, and country of origin—as well as which benefits are being used, when, and to what extent. The DMO aggregates and analyzes this data to understand behavioral patterns by country and region of origin, as well as trends in the popularity of specific mountain railways, cable cars, and activities. This data is used not only to refine marketing strategies, but also as a basis for fare settlement with public transportation operators and for future contract negotiations.

Figure 1 Overview Page of the Welcome Card

Free Guest Cards with Mobility Benefits, etc.

By simply staying at a partner accommodation facility, visitors can use public transportation in the city and the Innsbruck region free of charge, participate in guided active programs free of charge, and receive discounts at pools, lakes, and many other tourist attractions. In addition, visitors staying three nights or more receive the Welcome Card Plus, which allows free use of eligible lifts and cable cars up to four times.



3. St. Anton: Redesigning the "Summer Card" to Support Summer Visitor Stays

St. Anton is one of Austria's leading winter resorts, but in recent years it has also placed increasing emphasis on developing summer offerings such as hiking, mountain biking, and family-oriented activities. At the core of these efforts is the "Summer Card," available exclusively during the summer season.

Catering to Different Visitor Segments in Winter and Summer

In St. Anton, the visitor profile differs significantly between winter and summer. Winter visitors are predominantly higher-income guests whose primary purpose is skiing, while summer visitors tend to be more price-sensitive, visiting primarily for hiking or to escape the heat. To improve satisfaction among summer visitors and encourage them to explore the wider area, the "Summer Active Card" was introduced in 2006, marking the origin of the present-day Summer Card.

Redesigning the Card with a Free Benefits Card and a Paid Premium Option

In line with the objectives described above, the Summer Card is offered only during the summer season. Under the current system, guests staying one night or more are first automatically provided with a free "Mobility Card." This card provides free use of local bus routes around St. Anton, as well as free access to certain smaller facilities, such as the local heritage museum and traditional Tyrolean shows. It is positioned as a baseline service for all summer guests, guaranteeing "a minimum level of mobility and an opportunity to engage with local culture." In addition, a separate paid option, the "Summer Card Premium," is available. This card offers unlimited use of cable cars and gondolas within a specified period, along with comprehensive access to a wide range of high-value activities, including wellness facilities, golf, yoga, and archery experiences.

Furthermore, since 2025, certain accommodation facilities partnered with the DMO have introduced a model in which guests who pay an additional €9 per night are automatically granted benefits equivalent to the Summer Card Premium upon check-in. This "all-inclusive" model was also trialed in 2008, but at that time it was abandoned at an early stage because businesses did not fully accept the additional amount added to accommodation rates. The current attempt represents a redesign based on lessons learned from that earlier experience, with adjustments made to pricing and to how the scheme is explained to participating businesses and guests. It has produced a certain degree of positive results from its first year.

It should also be noted that, up to the 2024 season, the Summer Card was designed to expand free services according to length of stay, with no provision for an "additional charge." Under this model, however, the DMO bore almost the entire cost of cable car and facility usage, and maintaining the system became increasingly difficult, particularly in the context of inflation. The current approach therefore reflects a shift in

thinking: accommodation tax revenue is used by the DMO to fund the creation of benefits and services, such as purchasing buses and developing hiking trails, while the additional charge paid by guests is positioned as covering the cost of accessing and using those benefits.

Funding and Technological Infrastructure

The Summer Card in St. Anton is funded primarily through the accommodation tax paid by overnight guests, together with a “tourism business tax” paid by tourism businesses for the purpose of regional management. Its technological infrastructure uses services equivalent to those employed for the Welcome Card in Innsbruck. As in Innsbruck, this creates a certain administrative burden at the operational level; in return, however, it makes it possible to capture guest attribute information, such as gender, age, and country of origin, as well as card usage data. The email addresses and other information obtained are also used for purposes such as distributing newsletters and conducting campaigns to encourage repeat visits.

Figure 2 Summer Card Overview Page (Using the browser’s Japanese translation function)

St. Anton Mobility Card

Experience a wonderful summer up close!

This card offers many opportunities to explore the unique area around St. Anton am Arlberg. From your first overnight stay, you can receive the St. Anton Mobility Card free of charge.

Valid until the day of departure, the card allows you to enjoy a variety of activities in the region.

The Mobility Card includes the following services:

Free from the first overnight stay

- Free use of bus routes operating between Landeck and St. Christoph am Arlberg, including local buses, hiking buses, the Verwall bus, and regular bus routes from St. Christoph to Landeck
- 40% discount on e-bike rentals
- One free admission to the St. Anton am Arlberg Museum
- One free admission to the Gand exhibition mine
- One free admission to a Tyrolean evening
- One participation in a torchlight hike
- One guided tour according to the weekly program
- Children's childcare from Monday to Friday
- One guided hike

Subject to change.

4. Engadin: “Mountain Railways Included” Positioned Within a Digital Customer Journey (DCJ) Strategy

The Engadin region in the canton of Graubünden in southeastern Switzerland is a world-renowned luxury mountain resort centered on St. Moritz, with a concentration of 12 mountain transport systems, including cable cars, ropeways, rack railways, and chairlifts. In this region, a guest card known as “Mountain Railways Included” has been offered to guests staying two nights or more, funded by sources such as the accommodation tax, and providing free use of buses and mountain railways.

From a Traditional Guest Card to a “DCJ Strategy”

In recent years, however, Engadin Tourism AG, the DMO for the Engadin region, has begun repositioning this guest card not merely as a benefits tool, but as the core of a destination-wide Digital Customer Journey (DCJ) strategy. The vision articulated by Engadin Tourism AG explicitly calls for the DMO to shift from a traditional organization centered on advertising and promotion toward becoming an “experience designer,” responsible for shaping the entire travel journey, from awareness and booking through the pre-departure and on-site stages to the post-trip period. Underlying this shift is the presence of platform operators such as Airbnb and GetYourGuide, which control parts of the travel process and monopolize customer data. The document refers to these players as “SUPER DISRUPTORS,” reflecting a shared sense of urgency that unless the DMO itself secures direct touchpoints with customers and access to the associated data, the destination risks losing strategic autonomy.

Integration of the Official Booking Site and the Guest Card

The engine of this DCJ strategy is the “Experience Shop,” an integrated booking site operated by the tourism board itself. It is the official online platform through which accommodation facilities, mountain railways, various activities, and other services within the region can be booked and paid for on a one-stop basis, and it is positioned as a regionally based e-commerce site that does not depend on OTAs.

A distinctive feature of the Engadin model is the close integration between the Experience Shop and the guest card. In many regions, such as Innsbruck and St. Anton, it is common for guests to receive their cards for the first time at check-in. In addition, because front-desk staff at accommodation facilities must enter guest information into the system each time, resulting in the issuance of the guest card, a certain administrative burden at the operational level has been a common challenge.

In response to these challenges, Engadin reorganized its card system through its DCJ strategy. First, travelers book their accommodation through the Experience Shop before departure. At this point, information such as stay dates, number of guests, and email addresses is incorporated into the tourism board’s system. As the stay dates approach, eligible guests automatically receive, by email, a guest card in the form of a digital ticket that includes benefits such as a free public transportation pass and access to mountain transport services.

In other words, the guest card issuance process is largely completed at the point when the booking is finalized, eliminating the need for accommodation providers to enter individual guest records into the system at each check-in. Guests can also save the ticket in a smartphone wallet format and begin using the benefits immediately upon arrival at the destination. In this way, the guest card has been transformed from something handed to guests after check-in into something already in their possession before arrival.

Figure 3 Experience Shop Accommodation Booking Page (Benefit details are indicated by icons)

5. Conclusion

In my earlier article in *Tourism Culture* No. 266, I identified several social and institutional conditions underlying the widespread adoption of guest cards at European mountain resorts: highly autonomous local communities, the existence of statutory DMOs with clear mandates, and well-established funding models such as accommodation taxes and tourism business taxes. The present field visit has not substantially altered this understanding: these conditions have elevated the guest card to the status of “standard equipment” for a destination.

What this visit brought into sharper focus, however, is that the discussion of guest cards ultimately comes down to a question of stay design: what kinds of experiences a destination wants its visitors to have. Innsbruck has shaped its card around extending stays and promoting regional touring; St. Anton has redesigned its summer offering; and Engadin has used digital tools to reduce operational burdens and bring data collection forward in the customer journey. Each destination has adapted the form of its card to its own particular challenges.

Designing a guest card is not simply a matter of bundling benefits together. It means simultaneously designing visitor behavior during a stay, determining who bears the costs and how, and deciding what data will be accumulated in the process. The latest developments at European mountain resorts point to a more fundamental challenge for destination management in Japan as well: how to envision a form of stay that reflects the distinctive character of each destination, and how to design the institutions and systems that can support it.



Guest Card for the Engadin Region
"Mountain Railways included"



Guest Card for the Innsbruck Region "Welcome Card"



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Overview of the Field Visit and Strengthening the Foundations of Destination Management

Tourism Research Department, Senior Researcher

Kentaro Goto

1. Introduction: Overview of the Destinations Visited

This paper examines the destination management underlying the implementation of guest cards discussed in the preceding article, Feature Article 3-1. Implementing the institutions and systems that support what Ezaki, in the same special feature, describes as “a form of stay that reflects the distinctive character of each destination,” and continuing to invest in and improve them over time, requires strengthening the operational foundation that sustains such efforts. The field visit to mountain resorts in Austria and Switzerland yielded two main insights for Japan in terms of destination management, although it should be noted in advance that these do not necessarily apply uniformly across all of the destinations visited.

Theme 1: The Statutory Establishment of Organizations and Its Connection to Independent Funding Mechanisms

Theme 2: The Formation of Tourism Commons Through the Shared Use and Co-Creation of Public Goods with Visitors

Before turning to these themes, this section provides an overview of the destinations visited. Austria and Switzerland are both federal states, and while the degree of decentralization differs between them, both are characterized by strong autonomy at the level of the cantons or states and municipalities. Although their land areas are smaller than that of Japan, each country has more than 2,000 municipalities [Figure 1]. The destinations visited on this occasion were three areas: Innsbruck



Photo 1: Old Town and the Townscape along the Inn River

and St. Anton in Austria, and the Engadin region, primarily St. Moritz and Pontresina, in Switzerland. All three are well known as leading mountain resorts in Europe.

In the Innsbruck area, Innsbruck Tourism is responsible for the city of Innsbruck, the capital of Tyrol, and the surrounding region of 40 municipalities. The target area has a population of approximately 300,000 and records around 3.5 million overnight stays per year, with winter skiers and summer hikers accounting for the majority of visitors. Among its principal tourist attractions are the Golden Roof and streetscapes along the Inn River in the old town [Photo 1], the spectacular Alpine views from the Nordkette viewpoint, and the cluster of sports facilities, including ski jumps, associated with the city's history as a host of the Winter Olympics. As a city combining cultural heritage with natural scenery, Innsbruck Tourism promotes urban tourism and mountain resort tourism in an integrated manner.

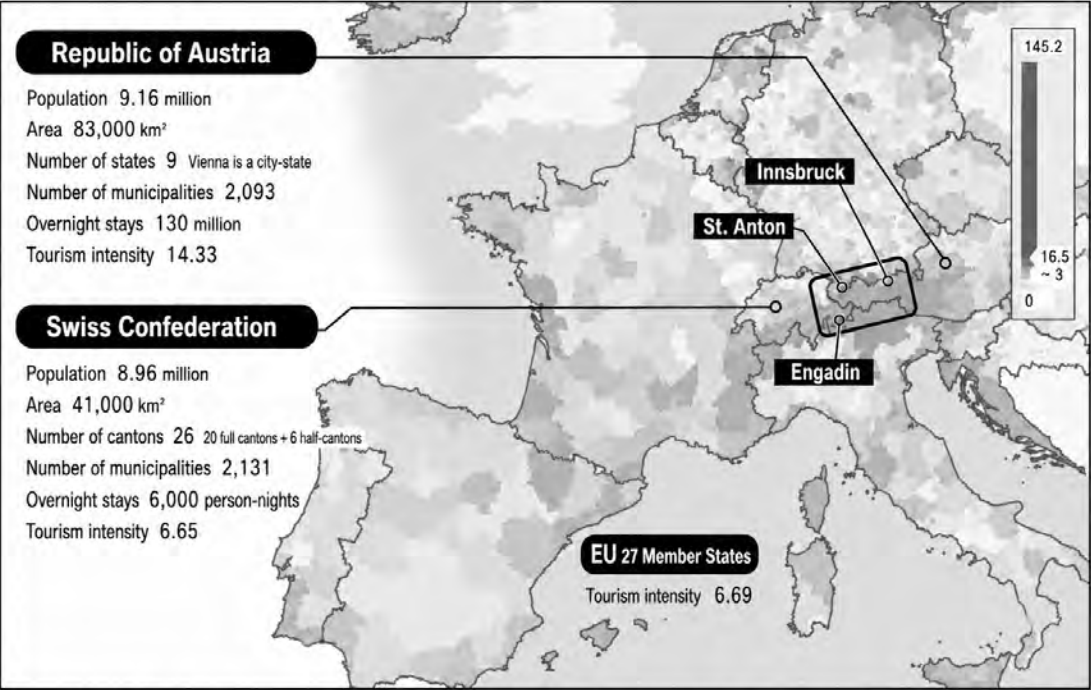
In the St. Anton area, the St. Anton am Arlberg Tourism Association is responsible for the area centered on the village of St. Anton in Tyrol. The region records approximately 1.4 million overnight stays per year and attracts international visitors in winter as one of Europe's leading ski areas. With more than 300 km of slopes and a wide variety of runs, it has hosted the Alpine Skiing World Championships. Also known as the birthplace of alpine skiing, the area serves as a base for mountaineering and trekking in summer.

In the Engadin region, in the canton of Graubünden, Engadin Tourism AG is primarily responsible for branding, the development and delivery of tourism services, and digital initiatives. For many years, the region operated under a single organization, Engadin St. Moritz Tourism AG, pursuing a dual-brand strategy¹, an approach of managing and operating two regional brands in parallel. Since 2024, however, St. Moritz has become organizationally independent as St. Moritz Tourism AG, while continuing to collaborate with Engadin Tourism AG on certain initiatives. The principal areas within the Engadin region are St. Moritz and Pontresina. St. Moritz has a population of approximately 5,200 and records around 750,000 overnight stays per year. Known as one of Switzerland's leading international luxury resorts, it attracts visitors from both within Switzerland and abroad. With a history of hosting the Winter Olympics, its lakeside townscape and cluster of luxury hotels have established a strong international brand identity. The area offers a diverse range of tourism resources throughout the year, including skiing and snowboarding in winter and hiking, sailing, and cultural events in summer. Pontresina, located near St. Moritz, has a population of approximately 1,900 and records around 550,000 overnight stays per year. It is known as a gateway for visiting the Bernina massif and its glaciers. Tourism in the area is handled by Pontresina Tourism. Overnight stays during the summer season have been increasing, and the proportion of summer stays within annual totals has risen compared to previous years.

According to the EU Tourism Dashboard, tourism intensity, measured as overnight stays per resident, is relatively high in all of these destinations [Figure 1, Table

1]. The following sections provide an overview of destination management in these areas, focusing on the two themes outlined above.

Figure 1 Basic Information and Tourism Intensity: Austria and Switzerland (Tourism intensity)



Source: Compiled by the author based on Eurostat, statistical data of the European Union (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/>) and the EU Tourism Dashboard of the European Commission (<https://tourism-dashboard.ec.europa.eu/?lng=en&ctx=tourism>), among other sources.

Table 1 Tourism Intensity of Field Visit Destinations (2024)

	Target Area	Tourism Intensity
Austria	State of Tyrol	50.64
	Innsbruck region (including the City of Innsbruck)	20.03
	Tyrol Oberland region (including St. Anton)	113.43
Switzerland	Canton of Graubünden (including the Engadin region)	42.95

Source: Compiled by the author based on the EU Tourism Dashboard of the European Commission

2. The Statutory Establishment of Organizations and Its Connection to Independent Funding Mechanisms

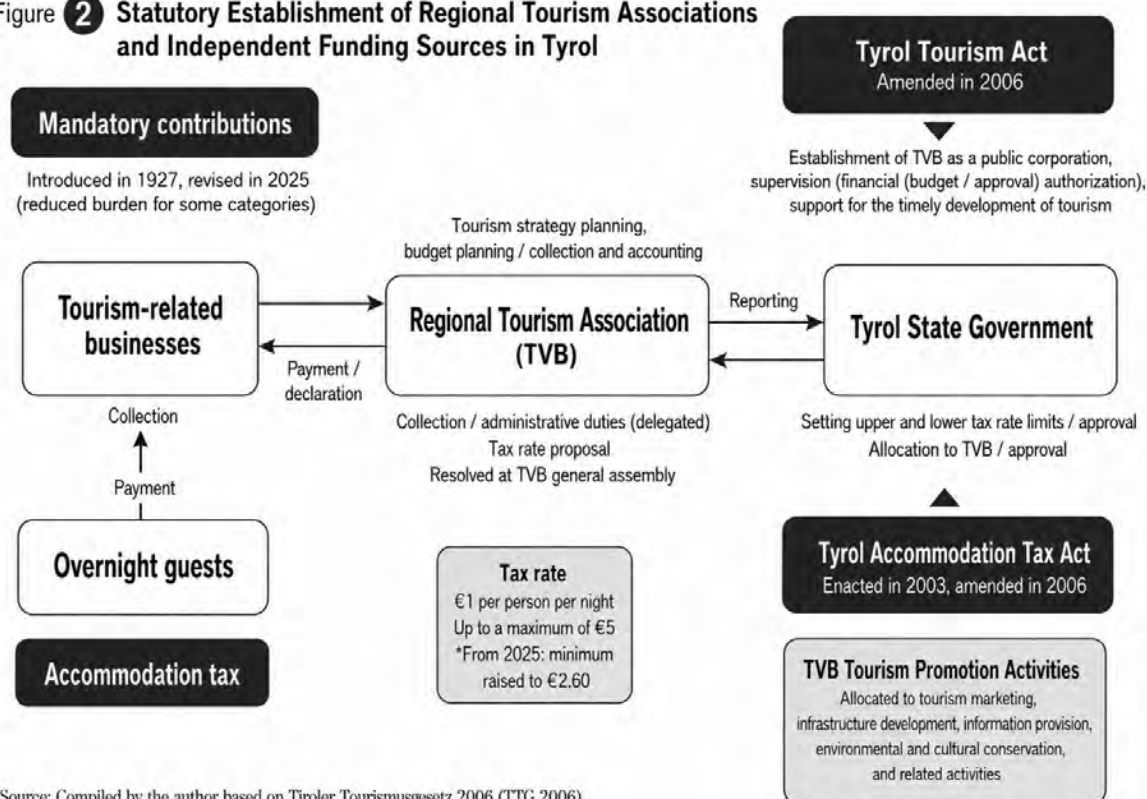
To support destination management on a sustainable basis, it is important to secure independent funding sources and to establish an institutional framework capable of

making effective use of them. This section provides an overview of the mechanisms in place in Austria, with a primary focus on the state of Tyrol. Mechanisms for securing tourism funding vary by state in Austria, and several regions are currently in a period of transition. For the tourism tax system in Vorarlberg, home to the village of Lech, a luxury ski resort near St. Anton, readers are referred to Ezaki (2024b).

• Tyrol

In the state of Tyrol, the Tourism Act and the Accommodation Tax Act operate in an integrated manner, establishing a framework in which Regional Tourism Associations (TVBs) can directly collect and manage funding and plan and implement their own initiatives [Figure 2].

Figure 2 Statutory Establishment of Regional Tourism Associations and Independent Funding Sources in Tyrol



Source: Compiled by the author based on Tiroler Tourismusgesetz 2006 (TTG 2006) and Tiroler Aufenthaltsabgabegesetz 2003 (T-AAG 2003)

The Tourism Act establishes TVBs as public-law corporations and provides for a system under which mandatory contributions are levied on tourism-related businesses within their areas of operation. This contribution system was introduced in 1927 and includes tiered rates based on the degree to which a business benefits from tourism. The Accommodation Tax Act sets a permissible range for the per-person, per-night tax rate, between €1 and €5, within which each TVB proposes a rate suited to local conditions, subject to approval by the state government. Accommodation tax revenue collected from guests is paid to the TVB, in the same manner as the mandatory contributions, and is managed by the TVB. Each year, the TVB reports its annual accommodation tax revenue

to the state government, which formally approves the reported amount as the allocated sum. This institutional framework enables TVBs to pursue strategic tourism investment. In its “Master Plan 2024–2030,” the City of Innsbruck explicitly calls on Innsbruck Tourism, as the relevant TVB, to increase the accommodation tax in order to expand investment in culture and mobility. In practice, the rate in the Innsbruck region is set to rise in stages, from €2 to €3 per night in 2025, and then to €4 in 2026, while in the St. Anton region the rate was raised to the upper limit of €5 in 2023. Across Tyrol as a whole, a decision was made in 2024 to raise the minimum rate from €1 to €2.60, with the change implemented in each region following a six-month transition period. These rate adjustments were intended to establish a robust financial foundation, enabling strategic investment that supports sustained value creation and enhanced competitiveness.

3. The Formation of Tourism Commons Through the Shared Use and Co-Creation of Public Goods with Visitors

Amid continued growth in visitor numbers, the sustainable coexistence of visitors and local communities has become an important challenge. As shown in Table 1, the destinations visited in this field visit exhibit relatively high tourism intensity; however, overtourism has not yet become a manifest issue in these areas. What can be glimpsed through their initiatives is not an approach that primarily frames visitors as a source of constraints or burdens on the living environment, but rather one that places emphasis on “co-creation” between guests and local communities. This approach is premised not on framing the needs of visitors and residents as a zero-sum, adversarial relationship, but on building a mutually beneficial relationship in which both parties can benefit. More concretely, transportation, leisure, and wellness-related infrastructure and facilities developed with visitors in mind also function as “positive externalities of tourism” that enhance residents’ quality of life, thereby creating, in effect, a kind of “commons.” Through the shared use and co-creation of public goods, efforts are being made to form a “tourism commons” in which both tourism and local communities can flourish together. Strategic investment with the potential to translate tourism growth into prosperity for local communities represents an important perspective in contemporary destination management. For a discussion of the appropriate uses of funding collected through the institutional mechanisms described above, readers are referred to Ezaki (2024a).

• Innsbruck: Building the Region as a Shared Space

In its recently formulated Mission (2023) and Tourism Strategy 2030 (2024), Innsbruck Tourism has clearly broadened its focus to include local residents. The vision underlying the new strategy, “Region Innsbruck erlebenswert,” expresses the aim of “creating a

place worth living in by enhancing the region's experiential value.”² Underlying this is a firm conviction that “tourism has the power to make a region better.”

The previous Strategy 2017–2022, formulated in 2016, had aimed to build a comprehensive “Innsbruck brand” across the city and its surrounding region, with a primary focus on visitors. This approach was based on the idea that a dense concentration of experiences surrounding a destination with an already strong position would lead to longer stays. While the current strategy continues to treat the enhancement of experiential value as a core focus, it is evident that the center of gravity has shifted toward local residents. As one regional manager at Innsbruck Tourism put it, “The Innsbruck region is a shared space for development for everyone who lives, works, and visits here” (Lomsky, 2025).

This shift is not unique to Innsbruck and has also been observed in other cities, such as Linz and Vienna. One article describes the underlying shift in values in urban tourism as follows: “A clear paradigm shift along similar lines can be observed in all three cities.

The distinction between tourists and residents is outdated; the focus is now on harmonious coexistence within a shared living space and on improving its quality. Ultimately, public acceptance of tourism is a key precondition for stability and growth” (Rendl, 2025).

To translate its mission and strategy into concrete action, Innsbruck Tourism has reorganized the entire region into six experience-based zones, each developing value based on its own distinctive character. In each zone, a “signature hike” is being developed as a flagship product, aimed at ensuring the sustainable protection of the natural environment alongside improvements in the quality of the visitor experience. Over the next ten years, a total of €25 million will be invested in these quality-enhancement initiatives. In collaboration with the state and local municipalities, Innsbruck Tourism is also working to create leisure and wellness spaces that are attractive to both residents and visitors alike. By developing facilities that can be used by both residents and visitors, such as new cable cars, hiking trail signage, and swimming pools, the region is enhancing residents' quality of life and developing tourism into a shared source of value with the local community.

• Pontresina: Shared Value in the Tourism Commons and the Tourism Community

Pontresina is one of the destinations that has long worked toward the coexistence of visitors and residents [Photo 2]. The Managing Director of Pontresina Tourism,³ who took office in 2019, has stated:

“The main task of a municipality's tourism department [...] is **the active development of tourism services and public spaces, referred to here as ‘tourism commons’**” (Maissen, 2019).

In Pontresina, a branding strategy was launched in 2010 by the municipality together with representatives of the tourism, trade, and commerce sectors, in collaboration with service partners and residents. A distinctive feature of this strategy

was its strongly inward-facing approach, aimed at genuinely harnessing the region's appeal from within. The strategy first set out "refined, high-quality Alpine pleasure" as a "shared value of the tourism community," to be communicated to both guests and local residents alike. Based on the idea that the high-quality experience enjoyed by visitors should simultaneously contribute to the convenience, prosperity, and pride of residents' daily lives, Pontresina has implemented initiatives such as accommodation experience campaigns for residents and the development of an employer brand. The aim of these initiatives is to ensure that local people and service providers themselves take an interest in the region's branding strategy and can personally experience "refined, high-quality Alpine pleasure."

At the same time, the concept of a "tourism commons" has emerged in Pontresina against the backdrop of new challenges in providing a high-quality resort experience. Partly as a result of the federal Second Homes Act, which came into force in 2016 and was amended in 2024, and cantonal spatial planning policies, the details of which are beyond the scope of this paper, housing for residents and employees has become increasingly difficult to secure, placing strain on the social foundations of the community.

To address this issue, the municipality has conducted detailed housing surveys and has taken concrete action, including a decision in 2024 to purchase a plot in the town center for the construction of apartments for residents. In parallel, a new housing foundation was established in 2023 to help resolve the issue. The chairman of this foundation has stated:

"This issue is having a serious impact on the village. School classes are shrinking, families are decreasing in number, and the economy is stagnating. **If employees cannot find housing, job vacancies remain unfilled, businesses are forced to turn down orders, and service providers are forced to scale back what they offer**" (Flury, 2025).

Based on the recognition that delivering "refined, high-quality Alpine pleasure" to visitors depends on ensuring that the local residents and employees who provide these services can themselves live stable and prosperous lives in the region, Pontresina is advancing efforts to build the foundations needed for the sustainable coexistence of tourism and the local community.



Photo 2: Pontresina's Public Space

Note: The building on the right is Hotel Maistra 160, which opened in 2023. The hotel operates on the principle that "employee satisfaction equals guest satisfaction," and has independently established staff accommodation at the edge of the town center.

4. Mechanisms for Self-Sustaining Growth That Connect Tourism Growth to the Prosperity of Local Communities

Through this field visit and the accompanying literature review, two foundational pillars of destination management have come into focus.

The first is the establishment of a long-term, stable institutional foundation, centered on the statutory establishment of regional tourism organizations and the securing of independent funding sources. As in the case of Tyrol, the integrated operation of the Tourism Act and the Accommodation Tax Act, clearly defining the funding and authority that enable regional tourism associations to fulfill their mandates, can be understood as a precondition for the self-sustaining development of a destination. It is precisely because the institutional framework is stable and funding is secured on an ongoing basis that regions are able to undertake long-term business investment and design more sophisticated tourism strategies.

The second is a recent trend toward the formation of a “tourism commons,” in which visitors and local communities jointly enjoy and cultivate public goods. Rather than viewing visitors merely as a source of demand or a burden, European mountain resorts are increasingly treating them as partners in enhancing the value of the region, and are developing services and infrastructure that benefit both guests and residents. This reflects an emerging paradigm in destination management, one that simultaneously pursues the enrichment of the visitor experience and the improvement of residents’ quality of life.

These two perspectives are by no means separate from one another. It is only on the long-term foundation provided by institutions and funding that the practices of “stay design,” a form of stay that reflects the distinctive character of each destination, and “co-creation” can take root in a sustainable way. Tourism can serve as a shared means not only of driving local economic growth, but also of sustaining culture and the environment, and of fostering residents’ pride and sense of well-being. The strategies observed at European mountain resorts suggest that destination management centered on the coexistence and co-creation of visitors and residents, as a form of community-building, is becoming “the next standard.”

Japan’s tourism destinations are now at a point where they should reconceive tourism as something that contributes to co-creation in enhancing the value of local communities, and rebuild their approach to tourism on the basis of a long-term regional vision, with “strengthening institutional foundations” and “co-creative initiatives” as its two complementary pillars. As a first step, it is important to calmly reflect on the period during the pandemic when visitors disappeared, and to renew recognition of the role tourism has played in sustaining local public services and cultural facilities, as well as the public significance of tourism associations as institutions. What is now required is to recognize the value that has been built and enjoyed through co-creation, and to envision, from a long-term perspective, what a sustainable tourism community might look like.

Notes

1: The tourism associations of 11 municipalities in the Upper Engadine region were merged to establish Engadin St. Moritz Tourism. In 2017, Engadin St. Moritz Tourism AG was newly established as a joint-stock company. Under this company's tourism strategy, the two brands, St. Moritz and Engadin, are managed separately, with separate departments, staff, and marketing activities.

For Engadin, the previous positioning, "the high valley," was replaced with "the most inspiring place of longing in the Swiss mountains," reflecting the value of "longing" (Sehnsucht).

For St. Moritz, the previous positioning, "an Alpine destination/holiday resort," was replaced with "the most luxurious urban lifestyle destination in the mountains," reflecting the value of "luxury."

2: This term combines the following words: Erleben, meaning "to experience"; Leben, meaning "life" or "living"; and -wert, meaning "worthy of" or "worth."

3: In addition to Pontresina Tourism (Pontresina Tourismus), the municipal tourism department, there is also a separate Pontresina Tourism Association (Tourismusverein Pontresina).

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IV. Destination Management in European Cities Confronting Overtourism: Barcelona



Feature Article IV-1

Overview of the Barcelona Field Visit and Tourism Governance That Fosters Civic Pride

Feature Article IV-2

Addressing Tourism Gentrification in Barcelona

Feature Article IV-3

The Current State of Cultural Heritage Protection and Its Use in Tourism in Barcelona

Feature Article IV-4

Data Utilization and Regional Dispersal Initiatives in Barcelona's Tourism Management



Field Visit Itinerary

2025

DATE	ACTIVITIES	OVERNIGHT STAY
Sat, Oct 4	Arrival in Spain	Barcelona
Sun, Oct 5	Field visit: Gothic Quarter and El Born District / Tortosa	Tortosa
Mon, Oct 6	Field visit / Interview: Ebro Delta Natural Park / Penedès / Tortosa city center / Encants Market	Barcelona
Tue, Oct 7	Field visit: Modernisme Route, Casa Batlló, Sagrada Família / Passeig de Gràcia area	Barcelona
Wed, Oct 8	Field visit / Interview: Ciutat Vella District / Glòries District / Barcelona Hotel Association / short-term rental owner	Barcelona
Thu, Oct 9	Field visit / Interview: Barceloneta District / Montjuïc Hill / Catalan Tourist Board / University of Barcelona	Barcelona
Fri, Oct 10	Field visit / Interview: Park Güell / Old City / University of Barcelona School of Hotel Management and Tourism	Barcelona
Sat, Oct 11	Departure from Spain / Return to Japan on Sunday, Oct 12	—

Overview of the Barcelona Field Visit and Tourism Governance That Fosters Civic Pride

Tourism Research Department, Senior Researcher

Kaori Fukunaga

1. Background and Purpose of the Field Visit

With the subsiding of the COVID-19 pandemic, international tourist mobility has begun to recover. In response, some regions within Japan have begun to see the reemergence of issues that had already been a concern before the pandemic, namely those arising from a sharp increase in visitor numbers.

Against this backdrop, the Foundation has been conducting ongoing research into policy developments in major European cities that confronted the problem of overtourism earlier than Japan. Last year, as part of the overseas field visit program launched in fiscal year 2023, Amsterdam and Venice were selected as study sites, and the findings were compiled in Tourism Culture No. 264. In addition, Tourism Culture No. 265 featured a special issue titled “Rebalancing Strategies Under Overtourism,” for which researchers contributed perspectives on the current state of overtourism in Europe, including Venice and Barcelona, and on the latest countermeasures and rebalancing strategies being adopted.

In Barcelona, resident protests against tourism are often reported in the media as emblematic of the city’s situation; however, behind this, a rapid succession of measures aimed at achieving coexistence between tourism and residents’ daily lives is being implemented, something that receives far less media attention. Viewed from Japan, these efforts appear to be sincere and multifaceted, but what is the reality on the ground? With this question in mind, Barcelona was selected as this year’s field visit destination, and an eight-day program of site visits and interviews was conducted.

Fukunaga focused on resident-oriented initiatives in Barcelona aimed at fostering civic pride; Yamamoto and Ikechi examined Barcelona’s response to tourism-driven gentrification; Ogawa looked at the current state of cultural heritage protection and its use in tourism; and Iwano focused on the use of data in Barcelona’s tourism management and on efforts toward regional dispersal.

Figure 1: Trends in Barcelona's Population and Number of Overnight Guests (Actual Number of Hotel Guests Only)

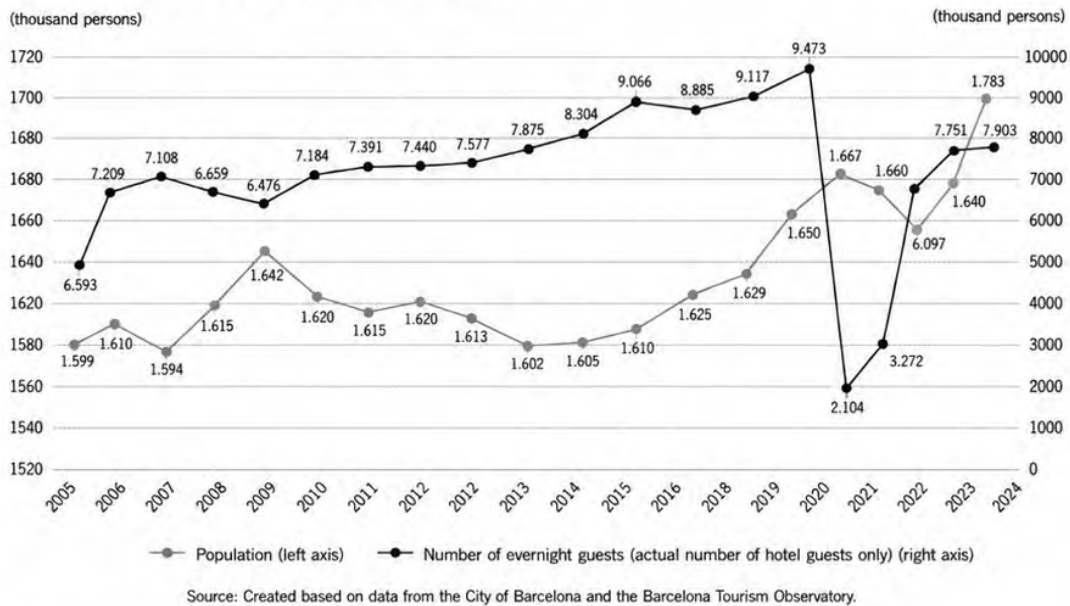


Figure 2: Attitudes Toward Attracting Tourists (Resident Attitudes Toward Tourism)

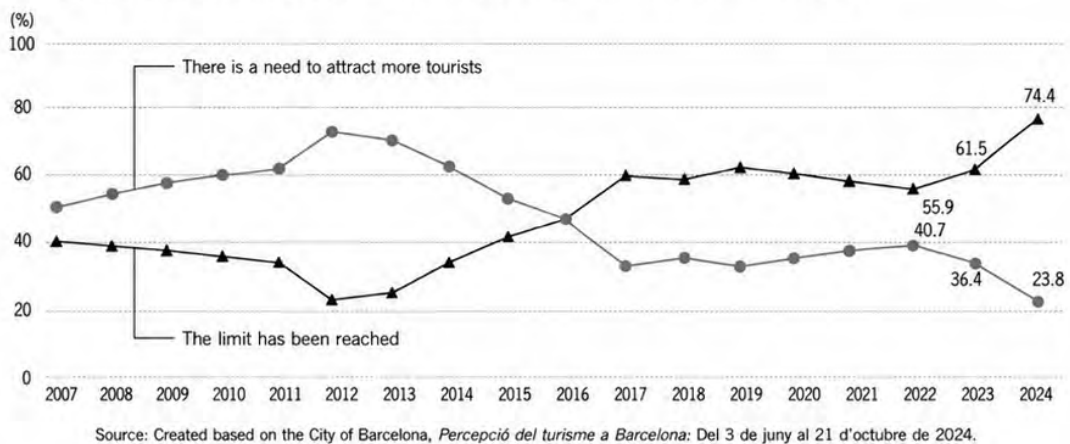
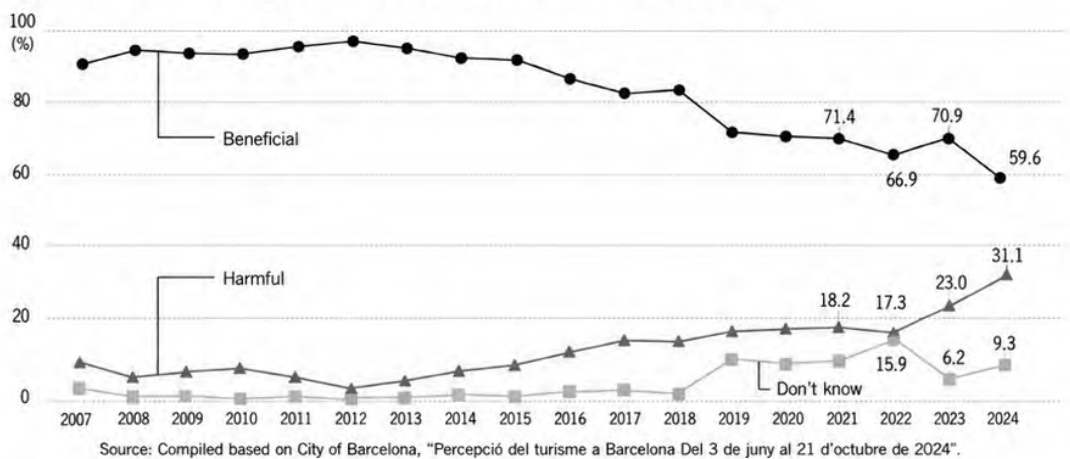


Figure 3: Resident Perceptions of Whether Tourism is Beneficial for Barcelona



2. A Turning Point for Tourism in Barcelona

Barcelona was once an industrial city dependent on manufacturing and port-related industries, but in the latter half of the twentieth century it entered a period of economic stagnation, marked by aging urban infrastructure and serious environmental pollution along the coast. The turning point came with the Barcelona Olympic Games, held in 1992. The city positioned the Games not merely as a sporting event, but as a large-scale project aimed at urban regeneration and a strategic transformation of its international image, carrying out intensive redevelopment of the port district and coastline, along with a comprehensive overhaul of transport infrastructure.

In 1993, Turisme de Barcelona was established, and a strategy focused on culture and the arts, centered on the architectural works of Antoni Gaudí, among others, was pursued. This strategy proved highly successful, and as visitor numbers grew steadily, the relationship between tourism and residents began to shift (Figures 2-3). Indeed, in the resident perception survey conducted annually by the city, the proportion of residents who felt that the city had reached its limit in attracting tourists exceeded the proportion of those who did not for the first time in 2016, and by 2024 had risen to 74.4%. Similarly, the proportion of residents who consider tourism beneficial for Barcelona has been declining year by year.

It was against this backdrop that Ada Colau became mayor in 2015. In the late 2000s, amid the housing crisis brought on by Spain's economic downturn, Colau had been a social activist leading protests on housing issues, and as mayor she pursued a range of policies emphasizing social justice and resident participation. Among the policies distinctive to Barcelona are PEUAT, the Special Urban Plan for Tourist Accommodation, which restricts the opening or expansion of hotels and tourist apartments by area, and initiatives that identify zones of high visitor concentration (EGA: Espais de Gran Afluència) and prioritize the restoration of quality of life in these areas. At the core of these approaches lies the recognition that “the city and tourism are inseparably linked,” together with a focus on how to improve residents' quality of life. For further details, see Tourism Culture No. 265, Special Feature 3, “From a ‘Tourist City’ to a ‘City That Lives with Tourism.’”

At the same time, as Kumagai, Borg, and Sano also point out in Tourism Culture No. 265, residents are by no means a homogeneous group: they benefit from tourism in different ways and hold widely differing views. Existing research has likewise pointed to the need for a multifaceted approach tailored to the diverse motivations of residents.¹ How, then, does Barcelona engage with its residents amid this complex situation? The following sections explore this question by examining resident-oriented initiatives in greater depth.

Table1: Major tourism-related policies in Barcelona

Year	Organizations / Meetings / Funding	Plans / Declarations / Legislation	Other Measures
1992		Barcelona Olympic Games held	
1993	○ Establishment of Barcelona Tourism Board "Turisme de Barcelona"	○ Catalan Cultural Heritage Act "Ley del Patrimonio Cultural Catalán"	
1997	○ Establishment of the Municipal Institute of Urban Landscape and Quality of Life "Institut Municipal del Paisaje Urbano y la Calidad de Vida"		○ Launch of the Modernisme Route "Ruta del Modernisme de Barcelona"
2000			○ Establishment of the European Route of Modernisme "Ruta Europea del Modernismo"
2012	○ Introduction of the Catalan accommodation tax "IET: Impost sobre les estades en establiments turístics"		
2014			○ Launch of the resident benefit program "Gaudir Més"
2015	○ Establishment of the Assembly of Neighborhoods for Sustainable Tourism ("Asamblea de Barris por un Turismo Sostenible"; currently renamed "Asamblea de Barrios por el Decrecimiento Turístico")		○ Launch of civic agents "Agents Cívics" ○ Suspension of new short-term rental license issuance
2016	○ Establishment of the Council on Tourism and the City "Consell de Turisme i Ciutat"	○ Special Urban Plan for the Protection and Enhancement of Urban Quality "PEPQ: Pla Especial urbanístic de Protecció i potenciació de la Qualitat Urbana"	○ Launch of participatory digital platform "decidim.barcelona"
2017	○ Establishment of the Barcelona Tourism Observatory "Observatori del Turisme a Barcelona"	○ Launch of the Special Urban Plan for Tourist Accommodation "PEUAT: Pla Especial Urbanístic d'Allotjaments Turístics" ○ Publication of the Tourism Strategic Plan 2020 "Plan Estratégico de Turismo 2020"	
2018		○ Formulation of the Ciutat Vella Land Use Plan 2018 "Pla d'Usos de Ciutat Vella 2018"	○ Launch of visitor campaign "Barcelona's our home. And yours."
2021	○ Introduction of Barcelona's own additional accommodation tax on top of the Catalan accommodation tax		
2022			○ Announcement of "Barcelona, Heritage City" ("Barcelona, ciudad patrimonio")
2023	○ Launch of the Tourism Citizens' Return Fund "Fons ReCiutaT"	○ Adoption of the Barcelona Declaration on the Preservation and Promotion of Emblematic Commercial Establishments ("Declaració de Barcelona sobre la preservació i la promoció dels establiments comercials emblemàtics") ○ Emergency Decree 3/2023, dated November 7, 2023, establishing emergency measures relating to the urban planning regulations governing tourist-use housing ○ Publication of the Barcelona Urban Improvement Plan "Pla Endreça Barcelona"	○ Announcement of High Visitor Concentration Areas "EGA: Espais de Gran Afluència" ○ Launch of "DecidimKids"
2024		○ Publication of the Government Measure for Tourism Management 2024–2027 "Mesura de Govern per a la Gestió Turística 2024–2027"	
2025		○ Publication of the Tourism Sustainability Plan for Barcelona as a Destination "Pla de Sostenibilitat Turística Destinació Barcelona" ○ Initial approval of the Ciutat Vella Land Use Plan 2025 ("Pla d'Usos de Ciutat Vella 2025")	

3. Dialogue and Communication with Residents

Amid the emergence of various issues, communication with residents has been treated as a priority. Barcelona has conducted an annual resident perception survey on tourism for 15 years, and the indicators shown in Figures 2 and 3, covering attitudes toward attracting tourists and views on whether tourism is beneficial for Barcelona, are included in this survey, allowing the city to continuously monitor resident sentiment.

In 2016, the city launched a participatory digital platform called “decidim.barcelona.” More than 150,000 residents, roughly one in ten of the city’s population, have registered and taken part to date. The platform allows users not only to access information on tourism, but also on municipal administration more broadly and the content of discussions held at various meetings, as well as to participate in debates and submit policy proposals. Resident input gathered through Decidim was incorporated into the Strategic Tourism Plan 2020 (Plan Estratégico de Turismo 2020), formulated in 2017 as the city’s roadmap for tourism policy. More recently, the city has introduced a participatory budgeting process across ten districts, under which €30 million, approximately ¥5.03 billion in total for the period 2024–2027, is allocated to projects directly proposed and selected by residents. Examples of such proposals include making beaches and the sea accessible to people with physical disabilities, and restoring greenery and shade at Plaça Ibèria in Sants-Montjuïc; the progress of approved projects can be tracked at any time. In addition, “DecidimKids,” launched in 2023, allows not only adults but also children aged 8 to 13 to take part, giving them the opportunity to learn about policy, express their own views, and vote on which initiatives should be prioritized. At first glance, the issues discussed on Decidim may appear to have little direct connection to tourism. However, by introducing such processes, comfortable spaces are created throughout the city from residents’ perspectives, and this, in turn, may also make the city more attractive to visitors.

Alongside these bottom-up initiatives, the Council on Tourism and the City (CTiC: Consell de Turisme i Ciutat), formed in May 2016, serves as an advisory body composed of representatives from each district, industry associations from sectors such as accommodation and food service, labor unions, environmental groups, and experts. The council regularly conducts research and evaluation of policies and proposes improvements. Although its recommendations are not legally binding, they serve as a basis for policy decisions and provide an opportunity for the views of a wide range of actors, including residents, to be incorporated into tourism governance.

4. Protecting Residents’ Rights and Returning the Benefits of Tourism

“Gaudir Més”: The Resident Benefit Program

The right to enjoy the city belongs first and foremost to its residents, yet this right can be eroded by the congestion brought about by growing visitor numbers and by rising admission fees. Against this backdrop, the resident benefit program “Gaudir Més” was established in 2014. Any resident aged 16 or over can register for the program, while those under 16 can receive the same benefits when accompanied by a responsible adult. Registered residents can access museums, art galleries, tourist attractions, and other facilities throughout the city free of charge or at a discount. Park Güell is among the facilities covered by this program. As the balance between tourist use and resident use

had been disrupted, the “Park Güell Strategic Plan 2017–2022” was formulated. In response to the fact that only 1% of the park’s annual opening hours had been allocated to activities for residents, the city introduced dedicated time slots reserved exclusively for residents, from 7:00 to 9:30 a.m. and from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m., with these hours adjusted seasonally. It also made improvements to the system underlying “Gaudir Més” to enhance its usability. Since 2013, Park Güell has operated under an advance reservation system, charging admission fees that vary depending on the date and time of visit in order to manage congestion and improve the quality of the visitor experience. Residents, however, can visit free of charge at any time.

At the Boqueria Market, too, where the market’s increasing orientation toward tourism had distanced local residents from using it, measures have been introduced, including restrictions on group visits in terms of group size and days of the week, as well as rules governing the composition of goods sold by each stall. See Feature Article 4-2.

“Fons ReCiutaT”: The Tourism Citizens’ Return Fund

In 2023, “Fons ReCiutaT” (the Tourism Citizens’ Return Fund) was established as a mechanism for returning tourism revenue to the city’s residents. The accommodation tax (IEET), which the Government of Catalonia has levied since 2012, had its scope expanded under a 2020 amendment to regional law, so that its proceeds could be used not only for tourism promotion, as before, but also for improving residents’ quality of life. Based on this legal amendment, the City of Barcelona began, from June 2021, collecting its own additional accommodation tax on top of the IEET. As of October 2025, this surcharge stands at €4 per person per night, in principle for up to a maximum of seven nights, with exemptions for those aged 16 and under, having reached its current level through a series of incremental increases.

The announced use of “Fons ReCiutaT” is the installation of air-conditioning systems in 170 schools and educational institutions across the city, reflecting concern over the impact of climate change, particularly heatwaves, on schools. The tourism industry, however, has

expressed the view that the funds should instead be used for purposes such as urban cleaning, public safety, and improvements to tourism infrastructure.

Table 2: Accommodation Tax in Barcelona

Type of Accommodation	Catalan Accommodation Tax	City of Barcelona Accommodation Tax	Total (per person per night)
5-star hotels, luxury hotels, luxury campsites, etc.	€3.50	€4.00	€7.50
4-star hotels, 4-star superior hotels, etc.	€1.70	€4.00	€5.70
Other accommodation facilities	€1.00	€4.00	€5.00
Short-term rentals	€2.25	€4.00	€6.25
Cruise ships (12 hours or more)	€2.00	€4.00	€6.00
Cruise ships (under 12 hours)	€3.00	€4.00	€7.00

As of October 1, 2025

"Bicing": The Residents-Only Bicycle-Sharing Service

"Bicing" is a bike-sharing service available only to residents of Barcelona. Launched by the City of Barcelona in 2007 with the aim of improving residents' everyday mobility and reducing environmental impact, the service is operated by an outsourced provider. Approximately 8,000 bicycles are deployed across more than 500 bike stations throughout the city, and availability can be checked and reservations made through the smartphone app "SMOU." Thanks to its low annual subscription fee, many residents reportedly use it for commuting. In addition, in 2023 the Barcelona Metropolitan Transport Authority launched "AMBici," an electric bike-sharing service that enables travel across a wider area, including locations outside the city of Barcelona.

When considering measures to ease congestion on public transportation, the typical approach is to try to control visitor use. In Barcelona's case, however, by offering a service that residents themselves want to use, the city is encouraging behavioral change among residents while also contributing to improved public health and reduced congestion on trains and buses.



"Agents Cívics": Maintaining Order in the City

"Agents Cívics" are civic agents who patrol the city with the aim of making Barcelona a safe and orderly space, providing information to visitors, communicating expected codes of conduct, and mediating minor disputes between visitors and residents. Issues identified in 2024 included traffic violations and disruptive behavior by tour groups, as well as nudism and unlicensed touting. Although the agents are not police officers and therefore have no authority to impose fines, they play an important role in sharing information about incidents occurring in the city with the municipal government and the police, and in preventing problems before they escalate through dialogue. In the summer of 2024, around 70 agents were deployed at key locations across the city, with additional agents assigned to districts designated as EGAs. For residents, the mere presence of these agents appears to contribute to a sense of security. In addition to these on-the-ground patrols, monitoring is also carried out online.

5. Conclusion

Recognizing Paradigm Shifts and Embracing Initiatives Without Fear of Criticism

In Japan recently, the term “overtourism” is often used without a clear grasp of the underlying nature of the problems at hand. Biased media coverage may be partly responsible for this tendency, but as Goto (2025)² puts it, what is needed is “not merely addressing surface-level symptoms, but digging deeper into the problem to examine its background and causes—and, beyond simply identifying and decomposing the phenomenon into individual elements, applying systems thinking that comprehensively understands how those elements interact with and affect one another.”

That said, the work of defining and identifying a problem requires careful judgment and consideration of multiple perspectives, and it is understandable that this is not an easy task for local governments.

What can be learned from Barcelona’s approach is its willingness to announce and implement policies on the assumption that criticism will follow. No policy is perfect from the outset; what matters is to move forward while listening to stakeholders and making course corrections along the way. Creating opportunities for mutual communication, such as through Decidim, may help build a foundation for constructive and meaningful dialogue, one that aligns understanding among residents with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. The future of the children who have participated in DecidimKids, in particular, is something to look forward to.

The second point is the sheer number of initiatives that focus on residents. While encouraging behavioral change among visitors is also necessary, guaranteeing residents’ rights, and making those rights visible, is considered to contribute to fostering civic pride.

The third point is the existence of funding sources that make these initiatives possible. In Japan as well, the introduction of tourism funding mechanisms is progressing. As Barcelona’s case shows, it is essential to secure funding that can be used at the city’s own discretion, even while drawing on external sources such as EU funding, and to operate such mechanisms appropriately. At sites such as Park Güell and Casa Batlló, high admission fees are charged, but explanations are provided to encourage understanding that these fees serve as funding to preserve the sites for the future.

While some paradigm shifts, such as that brought about by COVID-19, are shared globally, each region faces its own distinct turning points. What is being asked of regions is whether they can grasp the core of the problem and approach it with genuine resolve.

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Where Research and Practice Meet: CETT Barcelona School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy

CETT Barcelona School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy, established in 1969, has operated as an affiliated institution of the University of Barcelona since 1997, advancing education and research in the fields of tourism, hospitality, hotel management, and gastronomy. With a history of nearly 60 years, it is a private institution that carries a public mission of contributing to the development of Spain's tourism industry. CETT's most important mission is to monitor the human resource needs of the tourism industry on an ongoing basis and to produce graduates suited to those needs, while maintaining the quality of education backed by its ranking as first in Spain and 184th in the world, as well as by government accreditation.

The foundation of CETT's education lies in the integration of theory and practice through faculty with practice-based experience. Faculty members maintain career paths that move between industry and academia, and the institution places great importance on remaining constantly connected to society rather than confining itself to pure research. The curriculum ranges from a two-year specialist program to a four-year undergraduate program covering tourism, international hotel management, digital business and innovation, marketing, events, and entertainment, as well as master's programs in five areas including tourism business management and hospitality management, with more than 1,600 students enrolled. Classes are conducted in both Spanish and English, with approximately 60% of students coming from abroad (around 73 countries). Exchange programs with overseas universities, including the University of Hawaii, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the University of Central Florida, and Hokkaido University, are also well established, and the institution is committed to developing internationally oriented human resources.

A particularly noteworthy feature is the institution's distinctive facilities strategy. The hotels and restaurants owned by the university function less as student learning environments in the conventional sense, and more as spaces for the practical application of research findings and social experimentation. Here, the verification of service flow designs and sustainable operating models is carried out, with the results fed back to the industry. Opportunities for collaboration with the wider community are also numerous: for example, the institution works with regional municipalities around Barcelona to support strategies for dispersing tourist flows, the discovery and development of resources and content in areas not yet heavily visited by tourists, and the formulation of wide-area tourism plans aimed at fostering inter-municipal collaboration.

Industry collaboration is also systematically implemented. An external board of directors, composed of senior figures from major companies in Catalonia, meets twice a year to directly gather the needs of industry. Because the challenge of students not necessarily entering the tourism industry is shared with universities in Japan, the institution actively uses these board meetings to strongly advocate for improvements in compensation and working conditions in the tourism sector, and to engage in dialogue on the sustainability of human resource supply and education.

As in Japan, the shortage of human resources in the tourism industry is a serious issue in Spain. In recent years, the job-offer-to-applicant ratio has exceeded two, meaning that each student receives on average two job offers. This creates a strong incentive for students to enter the workforce early rather than continuing their studies, which in turn tends to reduce concentration on academic work and motivation for learning—a significant educational challenge.

At the same time, the institution also implements recurrent education programs for the general public, with support from the Government of Catalonia. These programs are designed around 180 to 200 hours of coursework per year, and at peak times attract more than 1,000 participants. As the values of young people with regard to work and marriage diversify, and as AI continues to enhance convenience and productivity, fostering the ability to think independently has been identified as an increasingly important challenge.



Left: Hotel Alimara, operated by the CETT School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy. It is also frequently used by Japanese guests.

Right: Mr. David Peguero, Senior Executive and Head of Hotel Consulting at CETT Barcelona School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy, University of Barcelona, together with Visiting Associate Professor Mr. Yusuke Ishiguro.

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Addressing Tourism Gentrification in Barcelona

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1. Introduction

The expansion of tourism has brought many positive effects to local communities. Tourism stimulates local economies, creates new employment opportunities, and encourages the reappraisal of local culture and traditions. For example, tourism has often served as a catalyst for the revitalization of vacant houses and underused facilities, and for the continuation of local food culture and festivals in new forms.

At the same time, when the expansion of tourism becomes excessively concentrated in particular areas or seasons, this situation is sometimes referred to as “overtourism.” Visible problems such as congestion are factors that degrade the local living environment and generate friction between residents and visitors.

A more fundamentally challenging issue, however, lies in the structural effects underlying these changes. While the expansion of tourism brings new value and opportunities to a community, the same forces can also drive changes in land use and the living environment, potentially undermining the social foundations of the area. In other words, the “revitalization of a community” brought about by tourism and the “transformation of a community” caused by tourism are often two sides of the same coin, and how to control the balance and pace of this process has become one of the key challenges in tourism policy today.

For example, residential properties may be converted into accommodation facilities, including short-term rentals, driving up land prices and rents to the point where it becomes difficult for local residents to continue living there. Alternatively, shops that have long supported daily life in a shopping district may disappear, replaced by stores catering to tourists. At first glance, such changes may be viewed as signs of economic revitalization, but if taken too far, they carry the risk of disrupting the balance of the local community.

This phenomenon, in which the economic and social balance of an area shifts and existing residents and businesses are gradually displaced, is known as “gentrification.” The concept began to be discussed in the 1970s, alongside urban redevelopment in

cities such as London and New York, and the geographer Neil Smith explained the underlying mechanism through his “rent gap” theory. According to this theory, when the gap widens between the rent generated by a property’s “current use” (actual rent) and the rent that could potentially be generated by a “more profitable use” (potential rent), this gap attracts investment aimed at closing it, ultimately driving the reorganization of urban space.

Tourism acts as a factor that rapidly drives up this “potential rent.” Because tourists generally tend to have higher income levels than local residents, in popular destinations a surge in demand for accommodation and tourist-oriented commercial facilities makes these uses highly profitable, attracting concentrated investment capital. This in turn pushes up rents and land prices, creating a situation in which long-term residents are effectively forced to leave the area.

In response to the challenges of this kind of “tourism-driven gentrification,” Barcelona has pursued institutional responses from an early stage. Since the 2010s, Barcelona, where soaring housing prices driven in part by the rapid expansion of tourism have given rise to social conflict, has sought to integrate and rebuild its urban and tourism policies, exploring new mechanisms to restore balance in the use of urban space.

This paper examines the policy initiatives implemented by Barcelona, with a focus on the housing and commercial sectors, and considers their implications for the challenges now facing tourism destinations in Japan.

2. Policy Responses to Housing-Related Gentrification

Turning first to the housing sector, the outflow of residents due to soaring housing prices has become a major issue in Barcelona. This problem began to attract significant attention around 2014. While various factors lay behind it, several were particularly influential at the time:

- Following the global financial crisis of 2008, the housing bubble that had been building in Spain collapsed. In the recovery that followed, Spanish housing assets, relatively inexpensive compared with other countries’ markets, became attractive investment targets for wealthy individuals worldwide.
- As tourism expanded, residential properties increasingly came to be converted into accommodation facilities such as hotels and short-term rentals. This trend, particularly in the case of short-term rentals, accelerated markedly from around 2010 onward.
- High-income foreign residents, including digital nomads able to work from anywhere, were drawn to Barcelona’s lifestyle and relocated to the city, contributing to its population growth.

As a result of these factors, housing prices in Barcelona rose sharply, leaving long-standing residents unable to afford rent and forced to move elsewhere. Alarmed by this situation, residents established the Assembly of Neighborhoods for Sustainable Tourism (Asamblea de Barrios por un Turismo Sostenible, now renamed Asamblea de Barrios por el Decrecimiento Turístico) in November 2015, advocating for a reduction in tourist numbers and for residents' right to housing.

Against this backdrop, under Ada Colau, who became mayor in May 2015, the city began implementing policies aimed at securing an adequate supply of housing for residents and ensuring a comfortable living environment. At the core of these policies are measures to control the location and number of accommodation facilities. More specifically, these can be divided into two categories: ① the management of the overall distribution of accommodation facilities across the city, promoted through PEUAT, discussed below; and ② regulatory controls focused specifically on a particular form of accommodation, namely short-term rentals. Each of these will be explained in turn.

2-1. Managing the Distribution of Accommodation Facilities Across the City

The first major measure, introduced in 2017, is PEUAT, the Special Urban Plan for Tourist Accommodation, which divides Barcelona into a number of zones and sets restrictions on the establishment of new accommodation facilities of all types within each zone, thereby controlling the overall number of such facilities. The boundaries of these zones are determined based on factors such as the intensity of existing accommodation supply, the ratio of accommodation facilities to the resident population, the level of saturation of public space, and the existing urban form—essentially, an assessment of each zone's remaining capacity to accommodate new tourism facilities. The zone boundaries are also revised periodically, every few years, to reflect changing conditions.

The specific restrictions applied within each zone are explained in detail in Tourism Culture No. 265, Special Feature 3, and readers are referred there for further information. The intent behind this policy is likewise explained in the same issue, as quoted below:

“Through the regulation of accommodation locations, the aim is to promote a mix of uses, preserve everyday life in neighborhood public spaces while minimizing the impact of tourism on them, and enable the development of sustainable economic activity. Above all, the central objective is to guarantee citizens' right to housing.”

- Daisuke Abe, “From a ‘Tourist City’ to a ‘City That Lives with Tourism’: The Front Line of Overtourism Countermeasures in Barcelona”, Tourism Culture No. 265.

In other words, this policy is designed to prevent profit-generating accommodation facilities from becoming concentrated in particular districts, thereby protecting public space and, as a result, ensuring a comfortable living environment for residents. At the same time, by bringing hotel development under control and

preventing disorderly development, the policy also serves to preserve Barcelona's identity as a high-quality tourist destination.

2-2. Regulation of Short-Term Rentals

Turning next to the management of short-term rentals, an even stricter approach has been taken here than under PEUAT. In 2015, ahead of the formulation of PEUAT, the issuance of new licenses for short-term rentals was suspended. The number of short-term rental properties had increased dramatically over a short period, from 632 in 2009 to 9,606 in 2014, but this growth came to a halt from 2015 onward. Subsequently, the "Barcelona Tourism Strategic Plan 2020" stated that the city would strengthen agreements with private platforms such as Airbnb, crack down on illegal listings, and reinforce self-regulatory mechanisms within the industry, while PEUAT, enacted in 2017, explicitly stipulated zero growth for short-term rentals.

An even more significant regulatory measure followed with Emergency Decree 3/2023. Drawn up by the Government of Catalonia, this decree requires prior urban planning approval from the municipality for residential properties rented out for tourism purposes, and grants municipalities the authority to set limits on the number of licenses issued and the number of days such properties may be rented out. Although Barcelona had already been regulating short-term rentals on its own initiative, this decree provided a legal basis for doing so at a later stage.

Building on this, the "Government Measures for Tourism Management," drawn up in 2024, set out a plan aimed at achieving a better balance between tourism activity and the daily lives of Barcelona's residents. Under this plan, applying Emergency Decree 3/2023, it was decided that all short-term rentals in the city would be abolished, with all 10,101 currently existing short-term rental units, registered as *Habitatge d'Ús Turístic* (HUT), set to lose their licenses by 2028.

This series of regulations on short-term rentals aims to "convert flats within the city from tourist use back to residential use, thereby increasing the housing stock" (Tourism Culture No. 265). Compared with PEUAT, which applies to all types of accommodation, this approach takes a stricter stance focused specifically on short-term rentals in order to achieve this goal.

Unsurprisingly, the complete abolition of short-term rentals has provoked strong opposition from those involved in the industry. As most short-term rental operators are small and medium-sized businesses, the Barcelona Tourist Apartments Association (APARTUR) functions as an organization representing the sector. Made up of owners and management companies operating short-term rentals legally, APARTUR aims to protect the interests of the short-term rental business. It has opposed the city's plan to abolish licenses, while also proposing alternatives and seeking compensation. To support its position, APARTUR has produced reports arguing that short-term rentals are not a major driver of rising housing prices, and, in order to increase and protect the number of legally operating businesses, has also created an information-sharing

platform for its members, supported certification efforts, and operated its own system for monitoring illegal short-term rentals.

At present, short-term rentals already account for roughly 40% of Barcelona's total accommodation bed capacity. Given that there is demand, such as from large families or groups of students, that conventional hotels often struggle to accommodate, many have argued that the complete abolition of short-term rentals is unrealistic. The city, for its part, plans to implement vocational training and other support measures for those who lose their jobs as a result of the policy, while proceeding with the full abolition of short-term rentals. The future course of these developments will be worth following closely.

Table 1 Housing Gentrification-Related Policies and Developments in the City of Barcelona

Year	Related Policies and Developments
2015	○ Establishment of residents' organization ABTS (later renamed ABDT) ○ Ada Colau takes office as Mayor ○ Suspension of new short-term rental license issuance
2017	○ Publication of Tourism Strategic Plan 2020 (including provisions for strengthening the crackdown on illegal short-term rentals) ○ Launch of PEUAT (management of the number of accommodation facilities by zone)
2022	○ Barcelona Hotel Association files lawsuit
2023	○ Issue of Emergency Decree 3/2023 (legally recognizing municipal authority to regulate short-term rentals)
2024	○ Announcement of Government Measure for Tourism Management (explicitly stating the complete abolition of short-term rentals within the city)
2028	○ All short-term rental licenses within the city scheduled to expire

2-3. New Challenges Emerging

As a result of these accommodation management measures, it can be said that the uncontrolled proliferation of accommodation facilities, particularly in strictly regulated central areas, has been brought under a certain degree of control. At the same time, however, these measures have also generated negative side effects. Examples include a sharp rise in prices at existing hotels and barriers to the entry of new hotels. As hotel prices have risen, it has been pointed out that an increasing number of visitors now stay at cheaper hotels in the suburbs and visit Barcelona only as day-trippers, potentially reducing daytime spending within the city. In addition, as a result of the difficulty of entering the market, branded hotels have in recent years increasingly concentrated their new openings in Madrid rather than Barcelona. In response to this situation, the Barcelona Hotel Association filed a lawsuit in 2022, seeking to allow the opening of new hotels in cases involving historic or distinctive properties.

Rental prices, meanwhile, have continued to rise, reaching a record high in 2025. Other policies have also influenced this trend. In 2019, the authorities effectively

extended the duration of rental contracts through an amendment to the Urban Leases Act (LAU), and in 2024 they introduced caps on the rents that large-scale landlords could charge for new contracts in “stressed areas.” While these measures were intended to support long-term rentals for residents, the result has been that landlords have withdrawn from the long-term rental market aimed at residents and shifted instead toward seasonal rentals, typically six to eleven months, targeting high-income foreign residents such as digital nomads.

This situation can be understood precisely through the lens of rent gap theory: the rent that could potentially be generated by “a more profitable use,” that is, seasonal rentals, came to exceed the rent generated by the “current use,” namely long-term rentals. As a result, the overall supply of long-term rentals available to residents has not increased, and rental prices have continued to rise.

As described above, Barcelona has implemented a wide range of policies to address housing-related gentrification. While many of these have been positively evaluated, in some cases policy interventions have given rise to new challenges that in turn require further responses. Precisely because these policies have had a significant impact, they have also produced substantial side effects, and it can be said that Barcelona continues to advance its management approach through an ongoing process of trial and error.



3. Policy Responses to Commercial Gentrification

The expansion of tourism has affected not only the housing market but also the commercial structure of local communities. In Barcelona, particularly in the old town (Ciutat Vella), the rapid increase in tourist numbers has been accompanied by a marked decline in shops that have traditionally supported residents' daily lives, and their place has increasingly been taken by souvenir shops, restaurants, and other establishments catering to tourists.

Barcelona has framed this change not merely as an economic phenomenon, but as an issue affecting the area's identity. A city press release dated July 3, 2025, states that one of the objectives of the Ciutat Vella Land Use Plan 2025 (Pla d'Usos de Ciutat Vella 2025) is "to promote cultural offerings and high-quality economic activity that contributes to the community, while avoiding the commercial monoculture that has taken hold in parts of the district." Rather than uniformly suppressing tourism, the plan is guided by the principle of achieving a sustainable urban economy while preserving the diversity of the local community.

This principle runs as a common policy thread across multiple fields, including urban planning, commercial policy, and the management of public space. The following sections introduce several of Barcelona's initiatives in relation to commercial spaces.



Photo 1:
Concentration of tourist-oriented shops in the old town area

3-1. Designing for Diversity Through Urban Planning

To prevent the excessive concentration of tourism-related businesses in the old town and the resulting commercial monoculture, Barcelona has made use of special land-use plans, an urban planning instrument. Regulation of commercial activity through such use plans began in the early 1990s, was revised in 2010 and 2013, and was reformed into its current framework, the "Ciutat Vella Land Use Plan 2018," in 2018.

The original plan was aimed primarily at maintaining order in public spaces, addressing issues such as late-night venues, but as tourism expanded and began to affect the living environment of local residents, the focus of the policy shifted from "managing public order" to "the coexistence of residence and tourism."

The 2018 revision established a framework focused not simply on restricting the operation of specific types of businesses, but on adjusting how urban space is used more broadly, with the aim of coordinating uses within urban space and ensuring the coexistence of diverse urban functions, including residential, commercial, tourism-related, and cultural functions.

As part of this framework, the 2018 revision newly introduced “commercial density restrictions.” Under this mechanism, new businesses are not permitted to open in areas where the concentration of certain categories of business, namely “food and beverage establishments,” “entertainment and late-night venues” such as discos, music bars, and dining establishments with shows, and “tourism service businesses” such as bicycle rental shops, tourist information offices, travel agencies, and souvenir shops, exceeds a certain threshold. Specifically, for each type of business, a defined radius of 50 to 100 meters is established, and if the total floor area occupied by businesses of the same category within that radius exceeds a set limit, no new operating license will be granted. A distinctive feature of this system is that the calculation is based not on city blocks, but on a radius measured from the frontage of each individual establishment, with the resulting overlapping zones forming the basis for regulation. These restrictions are also applied more strictly in areas adjacent to residential properties and educational or medical facilities.

The Ciutat Vella Land Use Plan 2025, which received initial approval in July 2025, extends this approach further, suspending the issuance of new operating licenses for low-value-added, short-term-profit-oriented businesses such as nail salons, CBD product shops, and phone case and accessory stores. The city cites, as the reason for this measure, the fact that such businesses have become excessively concentrated in parts of the old town, undermining the area’s commercial diversity.

These use plans represent an attempt by the municipal government to intervene through policy in order to preserve the diversity of commercial space, in response to the tendency of market forces to produce commercial monoculture. In other words, they can be understood as an effort by the authorities to use a regulatory framework to protect commercial diversity against the kind of one-directional shift in land use, driven by rising potential returns, that rent gap theory describes.

3-2. New Governance for the Boqueria Market

To prevent the public character of shared spaces from being eroded by tourism, the City of Barcelona is also exploring new approaches to managing spaces such as markets and squares. A prominent example is the Boqueria Market (Mercat de la Boqueria), located in the old town. For many years, the Boqueria has served as “the kitchen of local residents,” supporting the daily lives of local people. Since the 2000s, however, an increasing number of stalls selling tourist-oriented food-to-go items have appeared, while shops selling traditional fresh foods have declined, leading many local residents to report that everyday shopping at the market has become increasingly difficult.

To address this issue, the city and the market's traders' association jointly developed a new set of rules, including a "50:50 rule" governing the composition of goods sold, which was approved in September 2025 with the support of more than 90% of association members. Under the new rule, at least 50% of all stalls in the market must be dedicated to the sale of traditional fresh foods, such as meat, fish, fruit, and vegetables, while the sale of processed or prepared foods, including items intended for immediate consumption such as food-to-go items, is limited to a maximum of 50%. The aim of this rule is to prevent an excessive shift toward tourist-oriented businesses and to preserve the market's fundamental character as a food market for the local community.

In exchange for accepting these regulations, the municipal authorities have decided to invest more than €12 million in the market as part of a major renovation project. This project includes a complete overhaul of the aging roof, the renewal of facilities and equipment, improvements to restrooms and air conditioning, and the development of access routes from outside the market. By combining these hardware-related support measures with the new regulations, the city has been able to offer market traders sufficient incentives to accept the restrictions on tourist-oriented sales.

This model of market management, combining regulation with support, aims to preserve the market's function as a shared community resource while maintaining the economic benefits generated by tourism. In other words, this initiative, too, can be understood as an effort by the authorities to protect the diversity of commercial space through a regulatory framework.



Photo 2: Sale of Street Food Items at the Boqueria Market

3-3. Commercial Monoculture and the Challenge of Preserving Urban Character

These policies in Barcelona are not aimed at eliminating businesses catering to tourists. Rather, recognizing that excessive commercial monoculture can erode the everyday life and distinctive culture of a community, and in doing so ultimately undermine the very appeal that attracts tourists in the first place, the city acknowledges tourism as an

important component of its economy while seeking to preserve the diversity of local commerce.

This way of thinking is also shared by other European tourist cities experiencing rapid growth in tourism, such as Amsterdam and Venice. In Amsterdam, policies have been introduced in the historic city center to restrict the conversion of properties into tourist-oriented businesses and to support the survival of shops that sustain the daily lives of local residents. As in Barcelona, Amsterdam's approach does not reject tourism; rather, it represents an institutional intervention designed to prevent excessive "touristification" from eroding the city's distinct character, and can be understood as an attempt to integrate tourism into the local community in a sustainable manner.

Underlying these policies is a shared understanding: that while a city may gain economic benefits from tourism, if much of its locally rooted commerce is lost in the process, the very foundation of the city's appeal will be lost along with it. This holds true for Japan as well. The coexistence of a diverse range of shops and business types may be precisely what shapes a city's cultural identity, and in turn what underpins the sustainability of tourism itself.

4. Toward an Era in Which Tourism Shapes the City

Barcelona's experience demonstrates that tourism has expanded to the point where it can reshape the very structure of a city. Faced with this reality, the City of Barcelona has not sought to "exclude tourism," but has instead placed at the center of its policy agenda the question of how to build "a city that lives with tourism." What PEUAT and the Ciutat Vella Land Use Plan have in common is a recognition that, if left entirely to market forces, residents' livability and the diversity of local commerce could be lost, potentially undermining the long-term sustainability of the community—and, on this basis, a stance in which the municipal government seeks to address these externalities of the market.

That said, such interventions inevitably raise questions about how to balance regulation with the freedom of economic activity. Restrictions on the location of accommodation facilities and on the use of buildings cannot avoid coming into conflict with the freedom to conduct business and property rights. Indeed, several of these policies have been challenged in court in Barcelona, and in some cases certain provisions have been ruled unlawful.

Each time this has happened, the city has revisited the design of its institutions and reasserted the legitimacy of its regulations. Enabling tourism and the diverse activities of the local community to coexist requires a kind of political craft: one that keeps market forces in check, embeds resident participation within the institutional framework itself, and continually renews the legitimacy of policy. Despite facing litigation and conflict along the way, Barcelona can be said to be in the process of establishing this kind of governance capacity within its administration.

This holds important implications for tourism-oriented community development in Japan as well. To redefine tourism not merely as a tool for economic growth, but as an element that supports the long-term sustainability of local communities, requires policy coordination across domains such as housing, commerce, culture, and public space. How to manage the tensions that arise between the market and the public realm, and between the economic and the cultural, may well be one of the central questions for tourism policy and regional management going forward.

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The Current State of Cultural Heritage Protection and Its Use in Tourism in Barcelona

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1. Introduction

Barcelona is a city rich in historically significant buildings and urban spaces that reflect the history and culture of Catalonia, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites such as the works of Antoni Gaudí, the Palau de la Música Catalana, and the Hospital de Sant Pau. While this wealth of cultural heritage serves as a tourism resource that attracts large numbers of visitors, the city also faces challenges, including the impact on the living environment caused by the concentration of tourists in certain areas.

The author is currently affiliated with the Kyoto Office, the JTBF Kyoto Tourism Resilience Research Center, and has previously worked in the field of urban planning on the preservation of historic landscapes and cultural properties. Through this experience, the author has come to recognize the challenges surrounding the protection of cultural properties in Japan, while also recognizing the need to create new value by making use of attractive local tourism resources, including historical assets.

Against this background, this paper focuses on heritage-based tourism in Barcelona. It first outlines the cultural heritage protection policies of the Government of Catalonia and the City of Barcelona, then summarizes the findings of an on-site visit to the Barcelona Modernisme Route, an initiative that makes use of cultural heritage, and finally considers the potential for developing tourism in Japan based on historical and cultural resources.

2. Cultural Heritage Protection Policies in Catalonia and Barcelona

As a foundation for understanding heritage-based tourism in Barcelona, this section reviews the historical development of cultural heritage protection policy in Catalonia and Barcelona, and outlines current initiatives in this field.

The Development of Cultural Heritage Protection Policy in Catalonia

The foundation for current policy was laid by the Land Act (*Ley del Suelo*), enacted in 1956 as Spain's first modern urban planning law. This law required municipalities to approve lists of buildings considered to have artistic, archaeological, or traditional value and therefore not permitted to be demolished, and is notable as an early institutional mechanism linking urban planning with cultural heritage protection. In Barcelona, the "Catalogue of Buildings and Monuments of Artistic, Historical, Archaeological, Typical, or Traditional Interest" (*Catálogo de Edificios y Monumentos de Interés Artístico, Histórico, Arqueológico, Típico o Tradicional de Barcelona*) was compiled in 1962 under this Land Act. However, since the Land Act at the time functioned merely as part of broader urban land-use planning measures, the catalogue ended up being used primarily as a list for the purpose of granting demolition permits, and it has been pointed out that it did not function adequately as a means of protecting cultural property.

In 1979, Barcelona's "Catalogue of the Historical and Artistic Heritage of the City of Barcelona" (*Catálogo de Patrimonio Histórico Artístico de la Ciudad de Barcelona*) was approved, marking a shift from the mere documentation of cultural properties toward a legally binding system of protection, with the scope of protection also expanded. However, properties could still be delisted and demolished when a project serving the public interest was envisaged, and the underlying tension between urban planning and cultural heritage protection therefore remained unresolved.

The Catalan Cultural Heritage Act (1993) and the Catalan Cultural Heritage Inventory

In the 1980s, efforts to protect cultural heritage gained broader recognition, leading the Government of Catalonia to enact the Catalan Cultural Heritage Act (Law 9/1993) (*Ley del Patrimonio Cultural Catalán*) in 1993. This law is based on a broad conception of Catalonia's cultural heritage, with the aims of protecting, preserving, researching, disseminating, and promoting it.

Under the Catalan Cultural Heritage Act, cultural heritage is classified into four categories. The most significant category is "Cultural Property of National Interest" (BCIN, *Bien Cultural de Interés Nacional*), designated by the Government of Catalonia and subject to mandatory registration in the National Register of Cultural Property of National Interest. The second category is "Cultural Property of Local Interest" (BCIL, *Bien Cultural de Interés Local*), which comprises properties that do not meet the criteria for national designation but are instead designated—by the municipal council in municipalities with a population of 5,000 or more, or by the county council in municipalities with fewer than 5,000 residents—and registered in the Catalan Cultural Heritage Inventory (*Inventario del Patrimonio Arquitectónico de Cataluña*) by the Department of Culture of the Government of Catalonia. Properties that were already included in the existing heritage catalogues at the time the Catalan Cultural Heritage Act came into force are also treated as falling under this category. The third category

consists of "the remaining assets forming part of Catalan cultural heritage" (Los restantes bienes integrantes del patrimonio cultural catalán)—properties that, while not qualifying as either BCIN or BCIL, possess sufficient artistic, architectural, or historical value to be included in the Catalan Cultural Heritage Inventory—and these are protected under the responsibility of the relevant municipality. A fourth category, "Emblematic Establishments" (Establecimientos emblemáticos), was added through a 2022 amendment to the law.

For the first three categories, the maintenance of the buildings concerned is mandatory and demolition is not permitted. For the fourth category, "Emblematic Establishments," demolition may be permitted only after the submission and approval of a survey report. In addition, the Catalan Cultural Heritage Inventory—established for the purpose of recording cultural heritage and ensuring its systematic compilation, study, and dissemination—has been in operation since 1982. Following the enactment of the Catalan Cultural Heritage Act in 1993, the compilation of the inventory was incorporated into the legal framework, and cultural heritage assets classified as BCIN or BCIL, among others, are registered in it. The Government of Catalonia is obligated to compile and maintain the inventory, and public access to its data is guaranteed for citizens.

Cultural Heritage Protection Policy in Barcelona

In April 2022, the City of Barcelona announced the "Barcelona, Heritage City" (Barcelona, ciudad patrimonio) initiative. This policy sets out six basic objectives: ① making the value of heritage visible through the development and improvement of inventories; ② promoting new regulatory tools for protection and preservation; ③ establishing programs for intervention in and improvement of heritage assets; ④ strengthening specialist teams; ⑤ fostering dialogue and collaboration between citizens and the administration; and ⑥ building new mechanisms to promote the city's culture and sustainable tourism. Through these objectives, the city aims to establish itself as a leading international city in the field of cultural heritage policy.

In September of the same year, an amendment to the "Ordinance Regulating Municipal Intervention Procedures for Construction Works" (ORPIMO, La Ordenanza Reguladora de los Procedimientos de Intervención Municipales en las Obras) was approved. This amendment is expected to enable the reassessment of historic buildings that had previously been demolished without adequate evaluation, and to curb uncontrolled redevelopment. Whereas demolition had previously been possible simply through a notification procedure, it now requires prior authorization, and if a survey report determines that a building is of significant value, the application for a demolition permit may be rejected.

3. Overview of the Barcelona Modernisme Route

In Barcelona, efforts to make use of cultural heritage for tourism include developing historic buildings and traditional events as tourism resources, as well as measures to manage congestion, such as introducing reservation systems at buildings designed by Antoni Gaudí and encouraging the dispersal of visitors toward cultural heritage sites in outlying areas. Among these initiatives, this paper focuses on the “Barcelona Modernisme Route” (Ruta del Modernismo de Barcelona, hereafter the “Modernisme Route”), a tourist route covering buildings associated with Catalan Modernisme, an artistic and architectural movement that flourished in Catalonia from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, and reports on the findings of an on-site visit.

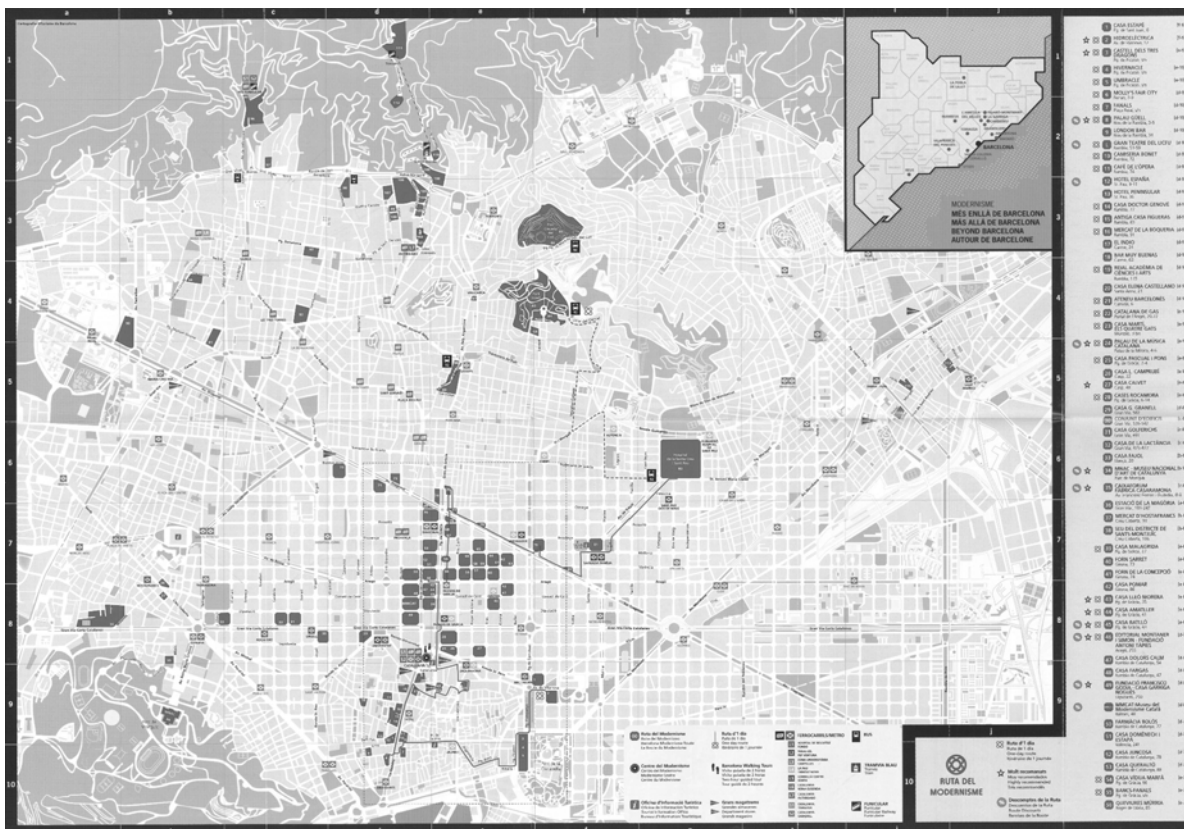


Photo 1: Barcelona Modernisme Route Guide Map (areas shaded in darker colors indicate city blocks where buildings selected for the Modernisme Route are located)

Since 1997, the Modernisme Route has been operated by the Municipal Institute of Urban Landscape and Quality of Life (Institut Municipal del Paisaje Urbano y la Calidad de Vida, hereafter the “Urban Landscape Institute”), an organization under the City of Barcelona, as part of its efforts to protect, raise awareness of, maintain, and improve the city’s urban landscape. Among the buildings registered in the Catalan Cultural Heritage Inventory, approximately 120 buildings, including public buildings, schools, churches, and factories, have been selected for inclusion in the Modernisme

Route. As the route also includes many buildings by architects other than Gaudí, it also serves as a measure to disperse Barcelona's tourism beyond the works of Gaudí.

The buildings that make up the Modernisme Route, along with maps showing their locations, are presented in the Modernisme Route guidebook. All proceeds from the sale of this guidebook, available at the Urban Landscape Institute's office, the Modernisme Centre, which is currently temporarily closed, and online, are allocated to the protection and use of cultural heritage. While no single route covering all of the constituent buildings has been established, a recommended one-day itinerary is presented, starting from the Arc de Triomf and passing through the old town and major buildings such as Gaudí's works, including Casa Batlló, Casa Milà, and the Sagrada Família, as well as the Hospital de Sant Pau. An officially endorsed guided tour by Turisme de Barcelona, covering the main buildings in two hours, is also available for purchase.

Furthermore, the Barcelona Modernisme Route extends beyond the city itself, having been expanded, through agreements, to include certain cultural heritage sites elsewhere in Catalonia. In 2000, building on the Barcelona Modernisme Route, the "European Route of Modernisme" (Ruta Europea del Modernismo), an international network connecting Modernisme cities across Europe, was established with Barcelona at its center. As of 2022, the European Route of Modernisme includes 81 cities and 76 institutions both within and outside Europe, and, like the Barcelona Modernisme Route, it is operated by the Urban Landscape Institute.



Photo 2: The Arc de Triomf in Barcelona, the starting point of the one-day Barcelona Modernisme Route itinerary, and a plaque indicating the European Route of Modernisme.



Photo 3: A plaque embedded in the pavement in front of a building selected for the Barcelona Modernisme Route.

4. Initiatives of the Operating Organization: The Municipal Institute of Urban Landscape and Quality of Life

The Modernisme Route is operated by the Municipal Institute of Urban Landscape and Quality of Life, with support from the “Honorary Council of the Barcelona Modernisme Route” (Consejo de Honor de la Ruta del Modernismo de Barcelona), which is made up of the city, honorary sponsors, the owners and managers of the buildings concerned, and corporate partners.

One of the initiatives undertaken by the Urban Landscape Institute, which is responsible for shaping the landscape of public spaces among other roles, is the “Make Barcelona Beautiful” program (Barcelona ponte guapa). This program supports the repair and protection of buildings selected for the Modernisme Route, with the Urban Landscape Institute providing technical advice and financial assistance to owners and managers. According to a report by the City of Barcelona, in 2023 the Urban Landscape Institute spent approximately €1.86 million on the restoration of 26 buildings. The Urban Landscape Institute’s operating costs are funded through sources including proceeds from sales of the



Examples of buildings selected for the Barcelona Modernisme Route (all have undergone restoration with support from the Urban Landscape Institute). Left: Photo 4: Cases Roca — cleaning of natural stone, restoration and maintenance of the dome, reinforcement of handrails, etc. (2005, 2007). Top Right: Photo 5: Editorial Montaner i Simon (now the Antoni Tàpies Museum) — cleaning of the facade (2010). Bottom Right: Photo 6: “Forever Beautiful” plaque.

guidebook mentioned above, budget allocations from the City of Barcelona, and revenue from the leasing of public spaces.

In addition, an initiative to award “Forever Beautiful” (Guapos per sempre) plaques to commercial establishments that have continuously operated at the same location for more than half a century has been in place since 1993. The initiative is now operated by the Urban Landscape Institute, and the awarded plaques are embedded in the pavement in front of each recognized establishment.

5. Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the cultural heritage protection systems of Catalonia and the City of Barcelona, as well as the Barcelona Modernisme Route and the initiatives of the Urban Landscape Institute, the organization responsible for its operation, as part of its discussion of heritage-based tourism.

The Modernisme Route is characterized by three notable features. First, it is closely linked to the Catalan Cultural Heritage Inventory, Catalonia’s cultural heritage protection mechanism, and seeks to balance the protection and use of cultural heritage. Second, it is worth highlighting that proceeds from the sale of the guidebook are allocated to the restoration of cultural heritage, creating a mechanism that contributes to heritage protection. Third, it is also notable that the Modernisme Route’s initiatives are not confined to the City of Barcelona, but extend across Catalonia and, indeed, throughout Europe.

The Modernisme Route appears to offer a highly useful reference for tourism destination development in Japan, including Kyoto, given the shared challenges of balancing the protection of cultural properties with their use in tourism, and of dispersing visitors away from areas where tourists are concentrated. At the same time, during the field visit, it was observed that visitors remained heavily concentrated at certain buildings, including some of Gaudí’s works, suggesting a continuing need for further measures to alleviate congestion. Such measures would be necessary not only to reduce the impact on nearby residents, but also to enhance visitor satisfaction. With these tourism-related challenges in mind, the author intends to continue closely following Barcelona’s ongoing initiatives.

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Data Utilization and Regional Dispersal Initiatives in Barcelona's Tourism Management

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1. Introduction

As Japan confronts fundamental challenges such as the concentration of tourists in specific areas and time periods and economic leakage from tourism, growing attention is being paid to the policy shift undertaken by the City of Barcelona, Spain, as an advanced case study.

Barcelona has come to regard tourism not merely as an economic activity, but as a critical, citywide policy issue essential to securing the public interest of the city, and has accordingly shifted its approach from “tourism management” toward “managing the city together with tourism.” At the heart of this policy shift lies a strategic commitment to the thorough use of data and to regional dispersal as a core policy foundation for extending the benefits of tourism more widely.

This report is based on the findings of a field visit conducted in the City of Barcelona and its surrounding region. Through a comparison of these findings with those from previously visited regions, it seeks to convey the overall picture and structure of Barcelona's advanced initiatives in promoting sustainable tourism.

2. The Emergence of Negative Impacts from Visitor Concentration and the Resulting Policy Shift

Tourism in Barcelona grew rapidly following the 1992 Olympic Games, with annual visitor numbers reaching approximately 9.3 times the city's resident population by 2024. This growth has concentrated the negative effects of tourism within the city, giving rise to serious social costs.

In response to this critical situation, Barcelona shifted its policy approach away from ad hoc responses and toward decision-making grounded in objective data. Guided by the principles of “residents first” and “sustainability,” the city moved beyond mere regulation toward the data-driven management of visitor flows. This shift reflects a

broader understanding of tourism—not as a purely economic activity, but as a policy issue concerning the governance of the city as a whole, encompassing urban planning, governance structures, and the securing of the public interest.

It is within this context—grounded in data integration and public-sector leadership—that the Barcelona Tourism Observatory (OTB) was established as the foundation for this new approach to tourism management.

3. Data Strategy: The Role and Governance Structure of the Barcelona Tourism Observatory (OTB)

To support its shift in tourism policy and address fundamental challenges, the City of Barcelona established the Barcelona Tourism Observatory (Observatori del Turisme a Barcelona, OTB), an integrated tourism data platform. Grounded in the city’s new policy philosophy of “securing the public interest,” the OTB serves as the core of the governance structure that underpins the promotion of sustainable tourism.

The OTB’s Function as a Foundation for Policy Discussion

To enable policymakers to make objective decisions, the OTB integrates a wide range of data sources, including real-time data from IoT sensors, economic statistics, and survey results. Building on this integrated data, it continuously measures and analyzes visitor satisfaction, economic impact, and social and environmental impacts.

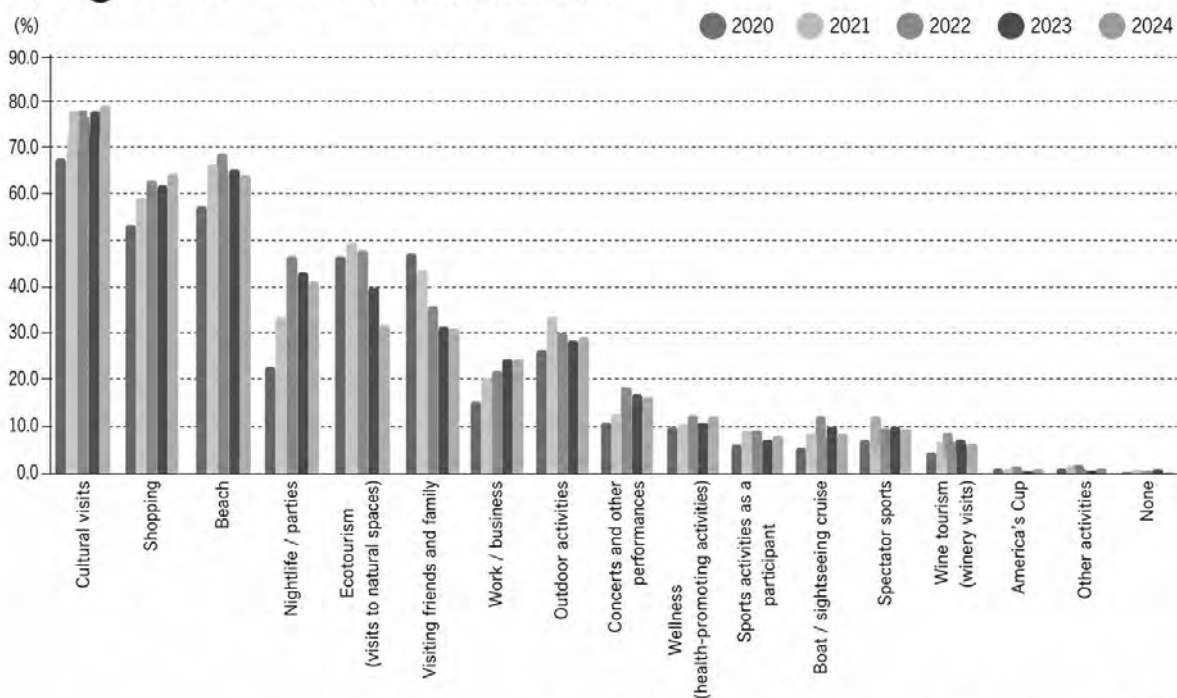
By making the results of this analysis publicly available, the OTB ensures transparency in tourism policy, enabling the management and adjustment of trade-offs—such as those between optimizing visitor flows and minimizing impacts on local communities—on the basis of scientific evaluation rather than emotional argument. Furthermore, by ensuring that all stakeholders, including policymakers, tourism industry representatives, residents, and international organizations, have access to this data, the OTB safeguards the quality of policy discussion by ensuring universal accessibility.

Managing Challenges Through Data Use and the Regional Dispersal Strategy

The OTB’s data analysis plays a critical role in managing the city’s social carrying capacity, supporting the “optimization of visitor flows” in a way that balances the sustainability of local communities with economic benefits.

For example, data on activities undertaken within Barcelona (Figure 1) shows that, in addition to traditional activities such as cultural visits and trips to the beach, ecotourism also accounts for a significant share. This provides the city with concrete grounds for redirecting visitor interest from the city center toward outlying areas and natural spaces. The data generated by the OTB thus serves as a powerful foundation supporting the shift toward a sustainable, regionally dispersed model of tourism.

Figure 1 Activities Undertaken Within the City of Barcelona



Source: Compiled by the author based on "Informe de resultats perfil i hàbits dels turistes a Barcelona ciutat 2024," p. 73

4. Regional Dispersal and Management

In Barcelona's "Government Measure for Tourism Management 2024–2027," regional dispersal is positioned as a key area of action, both as one of the principal solutions to the challenges caused by visitor concentration and as an essential element in achieving a sustainable tourism model. The strategy sets out to incorporate new cultural, sporting, gastronomic, and educational experiences into tourism offerings, with the aim of promoting regional dispersal and the diversification of tourism activities and advancing a polycentric approach.

The Evolution of the Regional Dispersal Approach and the Management of Carrying Capacity

Barcelona's new tourism dispersal strategy reflects a shift away from earlier approaches, which carried the risk of creating new areas of overcrowding, toward an approach that gives careful consideration to the distinctive characteristics and visitor carrying capacity of each area. This strategy is closely linked to the concept of optimal social carrying capacity, and, through data-driven reassessment of major tourist routes and tailor-made measures to ease congestion, aims to prioritize visitor activities while safeguarding the overall well-being of the destination, with the goal of achieving sustainable destination management.

Regional Dispersal and the Maintenance of Citywide Vitality Through Wider-Area Collaboration

Barcelona's regional dispersal strategy is grounded not merely in the reduction of tourism pressure, but in a broader shift in policy thinking aimed at securing the public interest of the city while sustaining the vitality of tourism across the city as a whole.

To make this strategy effective, collaboration extending beyond the city's administrative boundaries is essential, and the strategy is characterized by "wide-area collaboration and regional dispersal" with the whole of Catalonia in view.

Specifically, the city is advancing the development of a multilayered governance structure that seeks to expand the territorial scale of tourism destinations across multiple levels and to institutionalize cooperative relationships with the regional government of Catalonia and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona).

Table 1 Day Trips Taken Outside the City (%)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
None	89.8	89.6	89.9	90.5	90.9
Greater Barcelona area (metropolitan region)	7.8	7.8	7.6	7.5	7.2
Other areas of Catalonia	2.6	2.8	2.6	2.6	1.8
Other areas of Spain	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2
Countries other than Spain	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
Do not remember the area (municipality)	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1
No response	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.3

Source: Compiled by the author based on "Informe de resultats perfil i hàbits dels turistes a Barcelona ciutat 2024", p. 85

Table 2 Activities Undertaken Outdoors or in Natural Spaces Within the City of Barcelona (%) n=802

	2024
Hiking / trekking	65.0
Picnicking	11.0
Cycling	10.6
Walking	10.0
Other	6.1
Not applicable	8.2

Source: Compiled by the author based on "Informe de resultats perfil i hàbits dels turistes a Barcelona ciutat 2024", p. 79

5. Potential for Regional Dispersal: Field Visit Cases Along the Day-Trip and Overnight-Stay Axis

9.6% of visitors to Barcelona take day trips outside the city (Table 1), and this level of demand points to significant potential for regional dispersal. To explore the possibilities for directing visitors toward destinations beyond the city, field visits were conducted to two areas, selected along the axes of travel time and type of stay, that is, day trip versus overnight stay.

One destination was Tortosa, a historic city in southern Catalonia located approximately two hours by car from Barcelona. The other was Penedès, a wine-producing region situated along the route to Tortosa.

Tortosa: Stay-Based Regional Dispersal Combining History, Culture, and Ecotourism

Tortosa offers a combination of historical and cultural tourism resources, including a Parador, a state-run heritage hotel housed in a historic fortress, together with ecotourism resources centered on the Ebro Delta Natural Park. By combining these two assets, the city appears well placed to redirect visitors from urban destinations such as Barcelona toward a more diverse range of themes, thereby contributing to regional dispersal.

This multifaceted dispersal approach is built on positioning the Parador, set within the historic fortress, as the core of stay-based tourism, with the natural park serving as a destination for ecotourism. Tortosa is thus able to effectively attract visitors seeking to avoid urban congestion and to explore historical and cultural heritage and rich natural environments in greater depth. As a result, this approach has the potential to optimize the flow of visitors and contribute to regional dispersal.

Data from 2024 show that 65% of visitors to Barcelona expressed strong demand for activities in natural settings, such as hiking and trekking (Table 2), suggesting that directing visitors toward ecotourism aligns well with existing market demand.

At the Ebro Delta Natural Park, local administrative bodies, including the city council, the county, and 18 municipalities, work together to address the environmental burden caused by visitor concentration, implementing concrete visitor management measures such as zoning, the installation of fencing, and a system of fines for overnight parking.

In terms of regional governance, a collaborative framework involving public institutions, businesses, and the local community functions on the basis of certification under the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST). By establishing “environmental conservation” as a shared goal, this framework encourages the participation of a diverse range of stakeholders. In addition, the region has adopted a place-first principle that emphasizes local entrepreneurship and sustainability, putting

into practice an autonomous policy approach that prioritizes the well-being of the local community and the conservation of the environment above all else.

Penedès: Day-Trip-Based Regional Dispersal Through Wine Tourism

Penedès, a leading production area for Cava, a Spanish sparkling wine, has been promoting wine tourism and contributing to the diversification of day-trip demand from Barcelona. However, the current share of visitors engaging in wine tourism remains at only 7.3%, suggesting that the region still holds considerable untapped potential for regional dispersal.

Beyond regional dispersal itself, directing visitors toward rural areas also aims to diversify demand and generate ripple effects for the local economy. Existing research has confirmed certain economic growth effects resulting from Spain's wine route projects, but has also pointed to an important challenge: whether the benefits generated by tourism are distributed equitably across the region as a whole. For regional dispersal to be sustainable, it is essential not merely to direct visitors toward rural areas, but also to establish mechanisms that ensure an equitable distribution of benefits within the region.

What the case of Barcelona illustrates is that the success of regional dispersal lies not simply in moving visitors from one place to another, but in the strategic diversification of themes and types of stay. The contrast between Tortosa, suited to overnight stays and medium- to long-distance travel, and Penedès, suited to day trips and short-distance travel, offers concrete insights relevant to the strategic focus that regions in Japan might consider adopting, namely whether to specialize in day-trip tourism or in overnight-stay tourism.



Photo 1: The Town of Tortosa and Its Parador



Photo 2: The wide and expansive Ebro River, viewed from an observation point within the Ebro Delta Natural Park

6. Conclusion

The case of the City of Barcelona offers several strategic implications for tourism destination management in Japan, particularly from the perspective of regional dispersal. To draw out the strategic significance of Barcelona's approach, the findings of this field visit are compared below with the problem-solving approaches observed in two regions previously studied by the author: Christchurch, New Zealand, and Hawaii, United States.

Comparison with Christchurch: Earthquake Recovery and the Concept of “Related Population”

Christchurch, visited last year, was working to overcome the external shock of earthquake recovery by transforming visitors into a “related population” (*kankei jinko*)—that is, into stakeholders who actively support the region—thereby drawing in support from beyond the local area. Barcelona, by contrast, has been responding to an internally generated shock, namely the crisis facing residents' daily lives caused by visitor concentration, by placing the highest priority on maintaining residents' quality of life and building mechanisms that prioritize the protection of local resources. While the two regions began from different starting points, their approaches converge on a common direction: rather than simply increasing visitor numbers, both aim to cultivate visitors with a deeper engagement with the region—in other words, to shift tourism from quantity to quality in pursuit of sustainability.

Comparison with Hawaii: Market Fluctuations and Consumption Trends

Hawaii, visited the year before last, placed emphasis on a demand-side response—analyzing and adapting to changes on the demand side, such as the effects of yen depreciation and rising prices, particularly with regard to Japanese travelers. Barcelona, in contrast, has been responding to the internally generated crisis of visitor concentration by advancing reforms to the foundations of “supply-side urban management,” encompassing visitor dispersal and regulation as well as data-driven policymaking. In particular, Barcelona's data utilization strategy offers a more advanced perspective on urban management that goes beyond Hawaii's demand-side approach, and it is significant in that it seeks to secure both qualitative improvement in tourism and its long-term sustainability.

What the case of Barcelona suggests is that, in order to succeed in regional dispersal in Japan's tourism destination management, what is required goes beyond strengthening promotional efforts or simply following market demand trends—it calls for a more sophisticated perspective on urban management. The dispersal of visitors to regional areas should be understood as part of “urban and regional management for maintaining residents' quality of life and protecting local resources.” An approach that, like Barcelona's, develops measures based on detailed data and through both regulation

and guidance may provide a new model for achieving sustainable growth, both for regions struggling with the negative impacts of tourism and for those facing difficulties in attracting visitors.

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What Shapes Tourism Policy: Reflections on Three Years

Director of Tourism Research Department, General Manager

Yuichi Yamada

Introduction

In fiscal year 2023, the Foundation began conducting organized overseas field visits and publishing the findings in its journal, *Tourism Culture*.

This was a time when the COVID-19 pandemic had subsided and both domestic travel and inbound travel to Japan were recovering strongly. At the same time, as set out in *Tourism Culture* No. 257, “Outbound Travel Rebooting in the Post-COVID Era,” it had also become clear that the recovery of outbound travel was lagging significantly, and that, structurally, a return to the vitality seen before the pandemic would be difficult to achieve.

Given that tourism inherently involves movement between an origin and a destination, and that such movement is influenced by relative differences in economic strength, it follows naturally that inbound travel to Japan would come to exceed outbound travel from Japan. Put simply, this reflects a decline in Japan’s economic strength.

At the same time, a shrinking outbound travel market means fewer opportunities for Japanese people to learn about the world beyond their borders. Even as Japan becomes a society receiving large numbers of visitors from abroad, it is not a desirable situation for Japanese people themselves to have increasingly limited opportunities to learn about and experience other countries. Visitors to Japan, after all, also travel domestically within their own countries and to countries other than Japan. This means that those visiting Japan are knowledgeable about regions beyond Japan, while those receiving them may know only about Japan itself.

Furthermore, as reflected in the now-everyday use of terms such as “DMO” and “MICE” in Japan, the promotion of tourism has become a global issue. Advancing tourism policy without understanding the realities on the ground and the measures being implemented in other countries risks what might be called “reinventing the wheel.”

Against this backdrop, the Foundation launched the “World Tourism Dynamics” series, with the aim of having those of us engaged in tourism research experience and reflect on tourism around the world firsthand, and of disseminating the insights gained to society.

What the Fiscal Year 2025 Field Visits Revealed

This year’s field visits covered four destinations: the United States, Austria/Switzerland, Spain, and Thailand.

Special Features 1 and 2 of Tourism Culture No. 268—covering the United States and Austria/Switzerland, respectively—are based on field visits conducted with the aim of examining the tourism policy systems underlying DMOs in each destination. In Japan, the introduction of accommodation taxes is steadily progressing; globally, however, accommodation taxes tend to be common in the highly decentralized systems of Europe and North America, while examples of their introduction remain scarce in the more centralized countries of Asia.

In other words, accommodation tax revenue exists as a means for local governments to develop autonomous tourism policies without relying on the central government. This understanding holds true in Japan as well, but because Japan has only a short history of independent local funding sources, there remains considerable ambiguity over what an “autonomous regional tourism policy” actually entails in the first place. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that, more than a decade after the introduction of the DMO policy, discussions about what a DMO—fundamentally a regional actor—actually is continue to take place not at the regional level, but at the national level.

The Foundation has continuously conducted research on tourism funding and destination management (see, for example, Tourism Culture Nos. 234, 238, 245, and 261). This year’s field visits represent an extension of that research, aimed at understanding the autonomous systems for tourism promotion that have been established in regions that have led the way in this area.

Having now conducted field research across multiple countries and regions, three common threads have emerged.

Firstly, tourism promotion is firmly embedded within policy at the local government level. Secondly, against the backdrop of this policy framework, the authority and responsibilities of DMOs are clearly defined, and DMOs serve as the core around which social capital related to tourism promotion is built. Thirdly, in order to realize these structures as an ongoing process, evidence-based decision-making (EBDM) is being implemented on the basis of quantitative data.

The way in which tourism policy is positioned is perhaps most clearly summarized in Special Feature 2-2 of Tourism Culture No. 268. At the state level, a

policy framework has been established that sets out how local governments should secure funding, that is, accommodation tax revenue, if they choose to pursue tourism promotion, and local governments introduce accommodation taxes in accordance with this framework. What is particularly noteworthy is that DMOs, referred to as TVBs in Figure 2, are positioned within this funding framework as implementing bodies. In other words, while local governments hold autonomous taxation authority and are therefore able to introduce an accommodation tax, they are not free to set tax rates or determine the use of revenue entirely at their own discretion. From a Japanese perspective, this may seem to allow relatively little autonomy; however, by operating within a defined set of parameters, the framework makes it possible to advance tourism promotion with considerable force. Although the strength of such institutional frameworks varies, a similar structure can also be found in the United States. It is the existence of this kind of foundational framework that shapes the second and third characteristics discussed below.

Although this policy framework is discretionary, once a local government chooses to adopt it, tourism promotion becomes an established, ongoing policy area for that government, complete with a designated funding source and governance scheme. Tourism then naturally becomes something the region is expected to pursue, and the policy continues to be implemented five or ten years into the future. Once a policy becomes not a temporary measure, nor one subject to significant year-to-year fluctuation, but rather a stable and consistently implemented undertaking, both government and the private sector come to develop role divisions and organizational capacity suited to that policy. For example, the shortage of human resources involved in tourism promotion has long been pointed out. In Europe and North America too, talented personnel are a scarce resource; yet the reason skilled individuals remain within DMOs and government bodies is presumably that stable positions exist there. The sustained presence of such personnel and organizations strengthens the connections among people, and this in turn contributes to the formation of social capital. In Japan as well, regions that have succeeded in tourism-based community development have built up social capital over the course of five or ten years; what is being described here is essentially the same process taking place as an institutionalized system across a larger number of regions.

And it is data-driven EBDM that keeps this system functioning on an ongoing basis. EBDM is examined in detail in Tourism Culture No. 266, and it represents an important approach to decision-making today, not only in tourism but more broadly. While awareness of this is also spreading in Japan, the problem lies in the difficulty of obtaining the data necessary for EBDM. By contrast, as discussed in Special Features 1-2 and 2-1 of Tourism Culture No. 268, leading regions in Europe and North America have built systems in which local stakeholders recognize the importance of data and work collaboratively to collect, analyze, and share it. The ability to build such systems is likely

also attributable to the existence of a robust, legally grounded framework for tourism promotion.

Spain, examined in Special Feature 4 of Tourism Culture No. 268, presents a contrasting case. Within the EU, it is a country with relatively weak economic strength, and it has pursued tourism promotion as a matter of national policy. Spain has succeeded in transforming distinctive regional resources into tourism attractions and attracting large numbers of visitors. At the same time, however, it also shares much in common with Japan's tourism policy challenges, most notably in the fact that Barcelona has become emblematic of overtourism.

Spain's experience can also be seen as overlapping with that of Japan in another respect: marked historically by political conflict and economic instability, without the strong private-sector actors present in the United States, and without the highly autonomous communities found in places such as Switzerland, Spain has instead sought to enhance sustainability by strengthening governance. At the same time, this approach has also given rise to problems similar to those facing Japan's tourism policy. Barcelona, for example, is widely publicized as a city grappling with overtourism, yet in the author's personal impression, the pressure generated by visitors actually feels greater in Kyoto. Nevertheless, Barcelona's tourism issues tend to attract greater international attention, and this seems to be partly because, having become a political issue within the city itself, related information is more readily disseminated. During interviews conducted on site, it was confirmed that while anti-tourism protests and graffiti, the kind reported even in Japan, do exist, these activities are limited to a small minority. Indeed, during a week-long stay, the author was able to find only a handful of instances of anti-tourism graffiti. What was far more prevalent throughout the city, by contrast, was graffiti condemning the situation in Palestine, with shops bearing American brands in particular becoming targets of intense attacks.

Spain, although today a member state of the EU, has a history marked by considerable upheaval: in 1931 it transitioned from monarchy to republic, but this was followed by a brutal civil war. The Francoist dictatorship that was subsequently established in 1939 lasted until 1975, yet within a decade of its collapse, Spain joined the European Community, now the EU, in 1986, and went on to host the Barcelona Olympics in 1992—reflecting a rapid path toward democratization. In 2004, the Socialist Party (PSOE) came to power, pursuing social democratic policies that emphasize the fair redistribution of wealth, equality of opportunity, and the protection of vulnerable groups, while endorsing a degree of state involvement in economic activity. Even so, Spain remains one of the EU member states with relatively low GDP per capita. Tourism demand tends to be highly responsive to relative differences in economic strength. While this works to Spain's advantage in attracting visitors, the more successful tourism promotion becomes, the more readily it gives rise to the kind of gentrification problems discussed in Feature Article 4-2. This sits uneasily with the values of social democracy, prompting the kind of public-sector-led control measures

examined in Feature Article 4-1. The fact that Catalonia, the region to which Barcelona belongs, is an area where calls for independence from Spain periodically resurface—and where a strong sense of regional identity persists—may also be contributing to the strengthening of such efforts.

Although Spain is a European country, its relationship with tourism differs from that of countries such as the United States and Switzerland, and it should be recognized that Europe and North America cannot simply be treated as a single, homogeneous category.

Thailand, examined in Special Feature 3 of Tourism Culture No. 268,, is one of Asia's major countries and has also been an advanced tourism nation, having actively pursued tourism development since the latter half of the twentieth century. As a centralized state, Thailand has developed tourism as a national policy aimed primarily at earning foreign currency and promoting economic development, with the state itself acting as the principal driver. This structure is examined in detail in Special Feature 3-2 of Tourism Culture No. 268. From an era when tourism had not yet attracted the level of global attention it does today, the central government pursued vigorous destination development—including the development of transportation infrastructure and regional development—and through this process Thailand grew into a globally recognized destination. Other Southeast Asian countries have also pursued tourism development to varying degrees, but it is likely precisely because of this strong, centrally led system that Thailand has achieved what can fairly be called the most successful outcome among them.

It is also worth noting that Thailand, having succeeded in establishing a strong tourism destination brand, is now implementing measures aimed at ensuring that tourism spending generates broader economic benefits within local economies. This reflects the recognition that, in an era of increasingly internationalized tourism capital, growth in visitor numbers and spending does not automatically translate into growth in the local economy. As discussed in Tourism Culture No. 267, “high added value” is becoming a keyword in Japan as well; what is needed, however, is not simply the creation of higher-priced products, but initiatives designed with an awareness of how to circulate the resulting economic benefits within the local area. The case examined in Special Feature 3-4 of Tourism Culture No. 268 is one example within this context, and it is characteristic of Thailand that national government bodies are directly involved even in initiatives of this kind at the regional level. In any case, the focus on economic effects that can be tangibly felt at the regional level—rather than on macroeconomic ripple effects in the aggregate—is something from which Japan, too, should draw lessons.

It is also worth noting, as shown in Special Feature 3-2 of Tourism Culture No. 268, that Thailand's tourism policy—originally centered on inbound tourism as a means of earning foreign currency—has come to be extended to encompass domestic tourism demand as well. This shift reflects the fact that, as Thailand has achieved economic growth, its own citizens have increasingly come to enjoy travel; by dispersing this

domestic demand, the country is seeking to build a complementary relationship with inbound demand. Controlling and dispersing tourism demand is also a challenge in Japan, but because people decide when and where to travel according to their own personal values, this is, in a sense, an even more difficult undertaking than stimulating demand itself. For this reason, it is not yet possible to foresee whether this initiative will succeed, but for Japan, which faces the same challenge, it is one that deserves continued close attention.

Looking Back on Three Years

Finally, let me offer some reflections looking back over the past three years.

In the wake of the pandemic, global demand for tourism recovered, though not in particularly favorable conditions, given the combination of worldwide inflation and ongoing political instability. Even so, the fact that demand was able to recover to levels exceeding those seen before the pandemic, including domestic tourism, speaks to the strength of people's underlying desire to travel.

At the same time, the growth of international tourism has also given rise to new problems. Overtourism and gentrification are prime examples, alongside ongoing challenges such as labor shortages and climate change. What stands out is that, regardless of the country or region in question, the phenomena observed are remarkably similar. The issues raised here are occurring, to varying degrees, in virtually every destination currently attracting significant attention. Given that the growth in international tourism demand has been driven largely by emerging economies, particularly in Asia, and that this demand is, in a sense, the common "cause," it follows naturally that the problems and challenges arising from it would also be similar in nature.

However, the fact that the problems and challenges are similar does not mean that the solutions to them are the same.

For example, in the course of these field visits to Amsterdam, Venice, and Barcelona—European cities widely described as suffering from overtourism—the measures adopted in each city differ considerably. Amsterdam has pursued an approach that seeks to curb disorderly behavior and the conduct of large tour groups, while at the same time directing visitors as broadly as possible across the entire city. Venice, by contrast, operating within a much more limited urban area, has taken measures such as separating water bus transport for tourists from that used by residents, and introducing an access fee on days when crowding is anticipated, in order to make congestion levels visible. What Amsterdam and Venice share, however, is the underlying premise that "as popular destinations, their visitor numbers will inevitably rise as international tourism demand grows." Gentrification has also occurred in both cities, and in response, both have tightened restrictions on the location of accommodation facilities in an effort to

prevent it. As a result, however, accommodation demand has shifted to the outskirts, increasing the number of day-trippers and placing greater strain on transportation—an experience both cities referred to as the “waterbed effect.” Drawing on this experience, both have now shifted their approach away from simply curbing volume and toward promoting dispersal instead. Barcelona, by contrast, remains firmly committed to strengthening regulation of accommodation facilities, including short-term rentals. Even though, as in other cities, restrictions on the location of accommodation in Barcelona have led to a similar tendency for accommodation to shift toward the city’s outer areas, the city continues to enforce strict regulation of short-term rentals because of its concern over soaring housing prices within the urban core. What was once one of the city’s attractions—affordability—has, through the effects of gentrification, fed back into rising real estate prices, and this appears to be pushing the city toward a greater aversion to tourism activity itself. Although it is not described in terms of “overtourism,” the State of Hawaii—which, after the pandemic, embraced the banners of responsible tourism and regenerative tourism—finds itself in a structurally similar position.

By contrast, in mainland U.S. destinations such as Las Vegas and Napa Valley, or in Switzerland and Austria, the concept of overtourism is far less salient, and problems resembling gentrification are rarely reported. In each of these cases, there appears to be a clear, deliberate policy commitment to pursuing regional development through the hospitality industry, with the community itself accepting this direction and engaging in a co-creative relationship around it. Because the regional character of these places is so clearly defined, there is also an element of self-selection at work: those who find this character unappealing are unlikely to settle there in the first place.

On the other hand, what about countries where tourism policy is led primarily by the national government? Thailand, operating under a highly centralized system, has succeeded in building highly competitive destinations. Australia, too, originally developed destinations such as the Gold Coast and, although not visited as part of this project, Cairns with the aim of earning foreign currency, while New Zealand has likewise succeeded in developing the South Island—a destination considerably less accessible—into a major tourist draw. In each case, central government leadership has enabled a scale of tourism “development” that would be unattainable at the level of a single region alone. This reflects a distinct advantage of national governments, which possess not only financial resources but also the authority to coordinate infrastructure development and to grant the various permits and approvals required. Because these destinations are strongly designed around tourism, they also tend, much like Las Vegas, to give rise to communities that take tourism promotion as a given, accepted premise.

At the same time, sustaining national government involvement through to the operational phase also presents difficulties. Thailand has continued to provide ongoing support, but in Australia, operational responsibility has increasingly shifted to the state level, and as the country’s economic strength has grown, the priority once placed on destination development as a means of earning foreign currency has correspondingly

declined. As a result, the national government's attention has shifted toward urban centers, and signs of aging have become increasingly noticeable in resort areas. In New Zealand, the situation is even more pronounced: Christchurch, the gateway city of the South Island, has yet to fully recover from the 2011 earthquake—a stark contrast to Thailand's relatively swift recovery of Phuket following the tsunami.

In other words, while tourism promotion led by the national government can be highly effective, it also carries the risk that, should national policy priorities shift, regions may find themselves, so to speak, having the ladder pulled out from under them.

These cases illustrate that the policies adopted are shaped by a range of factors: where the authority to formulate tourism policy resides—whether with the national government or with local governments—what values that government or legislature prioritizes, what policies it is pursuing, and how tourism is positioned within that broader policy context. We tend to focus our attention on the specific measures being implemented, but unless we understand, as part of a complete system, the values and decision-making processes through which those measures emerged, we cannot truly grasp their meaning, nor can we treat them as useful reference points for Japan. Put simply, even if overseas policy examples are simply copied, they are unlikely to function effectively in Japan, where the underlying system differs.

Learning from overseas cases is important for broadening our perspective, expanding the range of options available to us, and enabling more rational decision-making. At the same time, it should be recognized that translating such examples into policies suited to Japan requires giving careful consideration to the differences between the Japanese and overseas systems, and adapting and applying the lessons learned accordingly.

To do this effectively, it is essential to develop a deeper understanding of the regions visited. In the course of conducting overseas field visits, however, one comment sometimes encountered from host organizations is: “Are you from Japan again?” Over the course of these three years of field visits, several destinations have offered similar remarks.

Even when hosts initially share their interest and goodwill, it is hardly surprising that, after being visited repeatedly by Japanese delegations asking similar questions, they might begin to wonder, “Don't you share this information among yourselves back home?”

To begin with, the information that can be gained from an hour-long interview is inherently limited. When conducted through an interpreter, the substantive content effectively amounts to no more than about thirty minutes. It is therefore essential to thoroughly gather available information in advance, including material accessible online, and, wherever possible, to understand the relevant political and organizational structures beforehand, so that questions can be framed accordingly. Seeing is believing, and there is real value in visiting and experiencing a place firsthand. At the same time, however, it is important to recognize the burden placed on those being interviewed, and

to ensure that we respond in a manner befitting the sincerity and goodwill they extend to us.

It is hoped that the findings accumulated by the Foundation over these three years will serve as useful reference material for others undertaking similar field visits in the future.

Future Developments from the Next Fiscal Year Onward

The Foundation has now completed three years of organized overseas field visits. From the next fiscal year onward, we plan to place greater emphasis on first establishing specific research themes and then visiting destinations that are directly relevant to those themes.

In line with this shift, the Foundation plans to establish and operate new research groups organized around these themes. We would be grateful for your continued interest in our future research and investigative activities.



Gold Coast (Australia), with its cluster of high-rise buildings



About Us

This Foundation initially began in 1912 as the Japan Tourist Bureau tasked with attracting foreign visitors

to Japan, and became focused on research and surveys in 1963 with the separation of the sales division (the current JTB Corp). The organization was subsequently restructured as a Public Interest Incorporated Foundation in 2012, and received designation as an academic research institution from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2016. As one of the few think tanks and consulting agencies in Japan specializing in tourism, this Foundation accepts commissions for a variety of tasks from the national government, local public organizations, and public institutions to help promote tourism in Japan and at the national and local level. Furthermore, our non-profit projects include the hosting of seminars and symposiums and the publication of books on research results, centering on the promotion of independent research on travel and tourism from a variety of perspectives, as well as the operation of the Library of Tourism Culture, a library on travel and tourism containing over 60,000 volumes. As a Public Interest Incorporated Foundation tasked with the promotion of tourism culture, we contribute to the realization of an abundant society through tourism by conducting a variety of surveys and research programs.

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