1. BASIC INFORMATION

Course	Ecotourism and Sustainability
Degree program	Tourism & Leisure Management
School	Social Sciences
Year	Fourth
ECTS	6
Credit type	Mandatory
Language(s)	English
Delivery mode	On campus
Semester	First
Academic year	2025-2026
Coordinating professor	Issa Torres Martínez

2. PRESENTATION

Sustainability is transversal and can be applied to any sector, but it is highly needed in tourism development, as a destination relies heavily on its natural and cultural resources. While many tourism niches can and should be done in a sustainable manner, ecotourism is by definition a sustainable type of tourism as it places local communities and biodiversity conservation at its core.

The aim of this course is to have an understanding of ecotourism, its potential demand and issues, as well as the factors and elements that are required to successfully plan ecotourism activities in a destination. By exploring different cases and good practices from destinations worldwide, students will be able to acquire specific tools and methodologies to conceptualise a sustainable destination management plan. Furthermore, how to measure sustainability in tourism will be analysed and students will be encouraged to research and apply sustainability aspects in a diverse set of tourism areas.

These topics will be explored through the use of reading and audio-visual materials, case studies, field visits and practical exercises. Students will be encouraged to take a pro-active learning approach by further researching issues, actively engaging in class discussions, conducting individual and team work, and presenting results.

3. COMPETENCIES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Core competencies

- CB3: Students have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues.

- CB4: Students are able to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

- CB5: Students have developed those learning skills necessary to undertake further studies with a high degree of autonomy.

Cross-curricular competencies

- CT01 - Ethical values: Ability to think and act according to universal principles based on the value of the person that are aimed at their full development and that entails commitment to certain social values.

- CT06 - Adaptation to change: Being able to accept, value and integrate different positions, adapting one's own approach as the situation requires, as well as working effectively in situations of ambiguity.

- CT08 - Entrepreneurial spirit: Ability to take on and carry out activities that generate new opportunities, anticipate problems or involve improvements.

- CT09 - Global mindset: Being able to show interest in and understand other standards and cultures, recognise one's own predispositions and work effectively in a global community.

Specific competencies

- CE4: Ability to qualitatively analyse the positive and negative impacts of tourism and leisure activities on the territory.

- CE6 - Ability to identify the technical planning needs of tourist infrastructures and facilities.

- CE8 - Ability to carry out measurement techniques to interpret data and analyse the impacts generated by tourism and leisure activities.

- CE14 - Ability to evaluate the tourism potential of a territory.

- CE35 - Ability to manage the tourist territory in accordance with the principles of sustainability established by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (CETS).

Below are the learning outcomes that will be achieved at the end of the semester:

Learning outcomes:

1. To understand the definition of ecotourism and analyse the existing problems to identify the specific demand for this modality.

2. To identify the main territorial, social and economic benefits and disadvantages derived from ecotourism.

3. To recognise the mechanisms for planning, management and control of the impacts generated by ecotourism.

4. To propose the basic guidelines and directives for the conception, design and development of ecotourism products.

5. Identify good practices for an adequate promotion and marketing of ecotourism products and destinations.

6. Value the capacity and diversity of practices and activities involved in ecotourism based on examples of destinations around the world.

The following table shows the relationship between the competencies developed during the course and the learning outcomes pursued:

Competencies	Learning outcomes
CB3, CT1, CE4,	RA1: To understand the definition of ecotourism and analyse the existing problems to identify the specific demand for this modality.
CB3, CB4, CB5, CE4,	RA2: To identify the main territorial, social and economic benefits and disadvantages derived from ecotourism.
CB3, CT6, CE6, CE8,	RA3: To recognise the mechanisms for planning, management and control of the impacts generated by ecotourism.
CB4, CT8, CE14,	RA4: To propose the basic guidelines and directives for the conception, design and development of ecotourism products.
CB5, CT8, CT9, CE14	RA5: Identify good practices for an adequate promotion and marketing of ecotourism products and destinations.

CB3, CB5, CT9, CE35	RA6: Value the capacity and diversity of practices and activities involved in ecotourism based on examples of destinations around the world.

4. CONTENT

These will be the contents of the course:

- Tourism intelligence
- Theoretical foundations of ecology, sustainability, and ecotourism
- The emergence of alternative tourism and its evolution
- Biomes, ecosystems, landscape, and biodiversity for ecotourism
- Environmental impact of tourism
- Need for planning and regulation of ecotourism
- Tools for sustainable tourism management
- Main ecotourism destinations
- Main ecotourism markets
- Types of ecotourists
- Activities and environmental education

5. TEACHING-LEARNING METHODOLOGIES

The types of teaching-learning methodologies used are indicated below:
- Lectures / Web conference
- Case method
- Cooperative learning
- Problem-based learning
- Project-based learning
- Field experiences

6. LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Listed below are the types of learning activities and the number of hours the student will spend on each one:

Campus-based mode:

Learning activity	Number of hours
Tutoring	10 h
Lectures	15 h
Asynchronous lectures	15 h
Independent work	20 h

Oral presentations	15 h
Case analysis and problem solving	15 h
Field visits	15 h
Group participatory activities	20 h
Assignments / projects	20 h
Knowledge tests	5 h
TOTAL	**150 h**

7. ASSESSMENT

Listed below are the assessment systems used and the weight each one carries towards the final course grade:

Assessment system	Weight
Knowledge test	30%
Case analysis and problem-solving	25%
Oral presentation	10%
Assignments / projects	35%
TOTAL	**100%**

When you access the course on the *Canvas*, you will find a description of the assessment activities you have to complete, as well as the delivery deadline and assessment procedure for each one.

7.1. First exam period

To pass the subject in the ordinary examination, you must obtain a grade greater than or equal to 5.0 out of 10.0 in the final grade (weighted average) of the subject. All assessment activities are mandatory to be submitted and should reach a score of at least 5 out of 10 in order to pass the course.

7.2. Second exam period

To pass the subject in the extraordinary examination, you must obtain a grade greater than or equal to 5.0 out of 10.0 in the final grade (weighted average) of the subject.

In any case, it will be necessary for you to obtain a grade greater than or equal to 5.0 in the final exam so that it can be averaged with the rest of the activities.

Uncompleted activities from the ordinary examination must be submitted after receiving the corresponding corrections from the teacher, or those that were not submitted.

In this exam period, those activities that involve group work and active participation in class cannot be recovered. Therefore, the following evaluation will be applied:

Assessment system	Weight
Individual exercise – Destination Sustainability Plan	50%
Written and oral final exercise	50%
TOTAL	**100%**

8. SCHEDULE

This table shows the delivery deadline for each assessable activity in the course:

Assessable activities	Deadline
Knowledge test	January 2026
Case analysis and problem-solving	November-December 2025
Oral presentation	December 2025
Assignments / projects	December 2025

This schedule may be subject to changes for logistical reasons relating to the activities. The student will be notified of any change as and when appropriate.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

The majority of readings will be in the form of books, published conference papers, and case study materials. The following list presents essential reading related to topics covered, as well as recommended relevant textbooks and articles.

Essential reading:

Dimitriou, C. (2017) "From theory to practice of ecotourism: major obstacles that stand in the way and best practices that lead to success", *European Journal of Tourism Hospitality and Recreation* 8(1). DOI:10.1515/ejthr-2017-0004

McKercher, B. and Prideaux, B. (2020) *Tourism Theories, Concepts and Models*. Goodfellow Publishers. ISBN: 9781911635352

Sharpley, R. (2009) *Tourism Development and the Environment: Beyond Sustainability?* Earthscan. ISBN: PB 978-1-84407-733-5

Spenceley, A. (ed.) (2021) *Handbook for Sustainable Tourism Practitioners*. Edward Elgar. eISBN: 978 1 83910 089 5

Wondirad, A., Tolkach, D., & King, B. (2019). NGOs in ecotourism: patrons of sustainability or neo-colonial agents? Evidence from Africa. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 45(2), 144–160. https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2019.1675269

World Bank (2020) *Tools and Resources for Nature-Based Tourism*. World Bank, Washington, DC. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34433

World Tourism Organization (2021) *Recommendations for the Transition to a Green Travel and Tourism Economy*, UNWTO, Madrid, DOI: https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284422814.

10. EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION UNIT

From the Educational Guidance, Diversity and Inclusion Unit we offer support to our students throughout their university life to help them reach their academic achievements. Other main actions are the students inclusions with specific educational needs, universal accessibility on the different campuses of the university and equal opportunities.

From this unit we offer to our students:

1. Accompaniment and follow-up by means of counselling and personalized plans for students who need to improve their academic performance.
2. In terms of attention to diversity, non-significant curricular adjustments are made in terms of methodology and assessment for those students with specific educational needs, pursuing an equal opportunities for all students.
3. We offer students different extracurricular resources to develop different competences that will encourage their personal and professional development.
4. Vocational guidance through the provision of tools and counselling to students with vocational doubts or who believe they have made a mistake in their choice of degree.

Students in need of educational support can write to us at:
orientacioneducativa.uev@universidadeuropea.es

11. ONLINE SURVEYS

Your opinion matters!

The Universidad Europea encourages you to participate in several surveys which help identify the strengths and areas we need to improve regarding professors, degree programs and the teaching-learning process.

The surveys will be made available in the "surveys" section in virtual campus or via e-mail.

Your assessment is necessary for us to improve.

Thank you very much for your participation.