

Resilient and sustainable tourism development in the Samaná Province, Dominican Republic



Building resilience in tourism destinations

Tourism is a major source of income for numerous communities worldwide, particularly in regions with difficult accessibility, remoteness from economic markets, and limited industry. However, many tourism destinations face complex and interconnected risks such as climate change, pandemics, ecosystem degradation, loss of nature and biodiversity (UNDRR, 2022). These issues are particularly demanding in a cross-cutting industry such as tourism which is highly dependent on intact ecosystems, global business activity and socio-cultural experiences. In the face of growing uncertainty and occurrence of disasters in tourism destina-

tions, resilience has evolved as a key concept for dealing with these challenges.

However, approaches for putting it to practice in a destination are still scarce. The Samaná Province in the Dominican Republic set out to change this by pioneering an innovative methodology to analyse and build destination resilience. This brochure outlines Samaná Province as a tourism destination, identifies hazards and risk for tourism activity in the region and compiles options for action to build resilience including implications for their implementation.

How to build destination resilience?



Involving tourism stakeholders

Tourism is a people's business. It involves a variety of stakeholders from different backgrounds and centres around creating exchange between tourists and the host country. This includes institutional actors (government, ministries), destination management organisations, tourism businesses (e.g., accommodation providers, tour operators, transport services), local communities and visitors. Naturally, all these actors have a stake in resilience building which is why

they need to form part of a destination resilience analysis. Therefore, the project employed a variety of participatory formats to capture input and ideas from those planning and carrying out tourism activities as well as those ultimately affected by tourism development. Among these formats were quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches such as interviews, focus groups and workshops with the stakeholders from the Samaná Province.

STEP 1



SAMANÁ PROVINCE, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

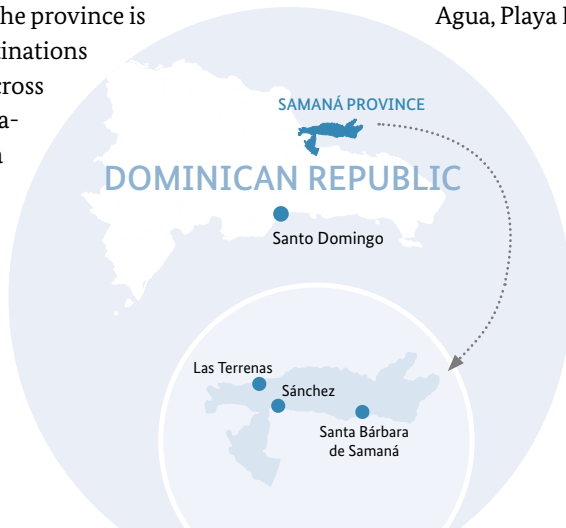
The peninsula Samaná in the Cibao Nordeste region is internationally renowned for its cultural heritage, biodiversity and scenic beauty. The province is made up of three municipalities (Sanchez, Santa Bárbara de Samaná and Las Terrenas) and three municipal districts (Las Galeras, El Limón and Arroyo Barril). The province is one of the main tourist destinations of the country but comes across as different from the internationally famous Punta Cana and its all-inclusive hotels. Samaná is known for nature-based and adventure tourism with activities centring around activities in the national parks, snorkelling, whale observation and classic sun and

beach tourism. The destination is particularly popular among individual travelers.

Size: 862.82 km²

Urban centers: Santa Bárbara de Samaná and Las Terrenas

Key attractions: Cordillera Samaná, Cayo Levantado, Las Galeras, Cuevas de Agua, Playa Rincón



STEP 2



KEY RISKS FOR TOURISM IN SAMANÁ PROVINCE

During the project, key risks for tourism in the Samaná Province were identified. These include sudden shock events and slow-onset stressors. The potential negative impacts of these risks include adverse consequences for human lives, the

economy, the environment, destination image, or community well-being. Below, the key risks in Samaná Province as well as underlying risk drivers which were identified during the participatory workshops and interviews are summarized.

TYPE OF RISK	IDENTIFIED RISKS / KEY RISKS
Hydrological/geological risk	Hurricanes and tropical storms; Earthquakes
Coastal risk	Extreme precipitation events and floods; Beach erosion
Biological risk	Vector-borne diseases / HIV / AIDS
Environmental risk	Biodiversity loss; Pollution and solid waste issues; Water contamination
	Overexploitation and mismanagement of natural resources
Political risk	Road and infrastructure safety; Political instability in the border region
Societal risk	Theft / harassment / crime; Sex trade / lack of child protection
Financial risk	Overdependence on tourism; Informal business activity
	Inflation / currency fluctuation

STEP 3



OPTIONS FOR ACTIONS TO ADDRESS RISKS

There is no solely valid pathway to reach destination resilience. Each key risk can be addressed with a number of different actions which must be carefully evaluated to check if their implementation is feasible, realistic and in line with other goals of sustainable development. It is therefore advisable to develop a variety of options for action that correspond to the identified risks. During the project, a multitude of differentiated options for action to tackle key risks for tourism in the Samaná Province were identified.





GENERAL PRINCIPLES THAT ENABLE RESILIENCE

There are common aspects that encourage the development of resilience pathways in tourism. We call them **Resilience Principles for Tourism**. These principles are applicable in most destinations and guide the development of concrete action for strengthening resilience and promoting sustainability. Examples include:

- ▶ **Diversity and Redundancy:** e.g., diversification of tourism products and activities to avoid overdependency
- ▶ **Social Networks:** e.g., build and strengthen cooperation among all stakeholders in the destination
- ▶ **Reflexivity and Awareness:** e.g., workshops and trainings to raise awareness on different risks in the destination; reflect contributions of tourism to economic growth and improving tourism satellite accounting
- ▶ **Flexibility, Adaptability and Learning:** e.g., create knowledge on how to manage risks; address skills gap in tourism industry
- ▶ **Participation and Collective Action:** e.g., establishment of easily accessible tourism funds and stimulus packages; define responsibilities and coordinate action across at all levels and in partnership with communities.



CREATING OWNERSHIP THROUGH TRAININGS

In order to increase long term resilience of tourism destinations in Samaná, there is a need to raise awareness for risks through training and capacity enhancement of local tourism stakeholders on sustainability and resilience. Therefore, the local project team organized training programs to address risk, resilience and sustainability in the tourism industry in Samaná.



For further insights on the successful implementation of this project in Samaná Province (incl. key risks for tourism, methods and options for action to build resilience) please find more information in the *Destination Risk and Resilience Manual for Samaná Province, Dominican Republic*.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

A research cooperation between KATE Umwelt & Entwicklung, Transtur and the Dominican Institute of Integral Development (IDDI) has partnered with the German Committee for Disaster Reduction and Futouris as part of the project 'Destination Resilience'. The international project promotes resilience in tourism destinations in Sri Lanka, Namibia, and the Dominican Republic. The project aims to assess destination resilience and provides support to tourism actors to build resilience and strengthen sustainable tourism development.

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