

Unlocking Potential, Preserving the Environment - Contributions of Underwater Cultural Heritage to Engage Smart and Sustainable Tourism

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Session Description

The oceans and underwater realm play a central role in attracting tourists between different geographies, generating a massive movement of people all over the globe. Natural environments, animals, landscapes and ecosystems are of the utmost importance for the development of regional tourism contributing for a significant share of the local economies. On the other hand, underwater archaeological sites fascinate the public, especially shipwrecks, often associated with historical events that shaped current societies and which often justify tourist movements with significant economic impact.

In addition, underwater cultural sites are often located in areas with geological features of major value and preserve great biodiversity, in some instances exceeding that found in the surrounding area, because they can become artificial reefs supporting fish, invertebrates and algae. The integrated management of the cultural and natural assets is therefore beneficial to archaeology and marine planners.

In the scope of the project ecoRoute: Multidimensional and integrated approach fostering smart underwater cultural and nature tourism offer in Outermost Regions, we argue that there is a large potential in combining the management and promotion of underwater cultural heritage with natural tourism. Through the exploration of worldwide

cases studies and experiences, in this session we aim to discuss the contribution of underwater and coastal heritage for the development of a more smart, sustainable and ecological tourism, fostering the protection of ecosystems and environments and shaping new relationships with the ocean. Likewise, we expect to debate about the role of underwater cultural heritage in engaging communities with their maritime heritages, fostering emotional connections between them and the oceans.

Keywords

Underwater Natural And Cultural Heritage; Smart Tourism; Sustainable Tourism; Maritime Heritage