
Blue Economy Tourism Leadership: Shoreline Destinations and Marine Protected Areas Course

6 – 10 September 2027
Milan





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Programme Summary

Blue economy tourism leadership for shoreline destinations and marine protected areas is a one-week training course for tourism authority, destination and marine park leaders at advanced level, culminating in a coastal and marine destination management plan for a site they influence. Coastal destinations attract investment quickly, yet reefs, beaches and communities can be degraded faster than plans are updated. The approach moves from blue economy markets and coastal zone planning to visitor limits, marine protection, cruise and waterfront development, and climate risk. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in coastal and marine tourism management.

The Business Case

Coastal tourism depends on natural assets that cannot be rebuilt once lost. When developments, cruise calls and dive operators grow without agreed limits, reefs are damaged and resident support weakens, reducing visitor appeal and investment value. Leaders who plan land and sea together and manage visitor pressure protect both the environment and long-term destination revenue.

- Visitor Yield per Site: Rises as capacity, pricing and seasonality are managed rather than volume pursued alone.
- Marine Habitat Condition: Is protected as zoning, permits and monitoring are tied to agreed limits.
- Investment and Climate Risk Exposure: Falls as shoreline change and extreme events are planned for before construction.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Integrated Coastal Zone Management ICZM: Planning land, sea and stakeholders together structures Session 1.
- Limits of Acceptable Change: This framework sets visitor indicators and thresholds in Session 2.
- IUCN Protected Area Management Categories: These categories frame zoning and permitted uses in marine protected areas in Session 3.
- GSTC Destination Criteria: The Global Sustainable Tourism Council criteria guide community benefit measures in Session 5.

Intended Participants

- Leaders who set tourism and development policy for coastal and island destinations.
- Developers and operators planning resorts, marinas and waterfront projects.
- Managers responsible for marine parks, reefs and dive and snorkel sites.
- Port and cruise leaders who manage passenger flows and shore excursions.



The programme serves tourism authorities, real estate and resort developers, marine conservation bodies and port authorities.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to evaluate blue economy tourism markets and their fit with a coastal destination.
2. Participants will be able to construct an integrated coastal zone plan that aligns tourism, conservation and community uses.
3. Participants will be able to diagnose visitor pressure using carrying capacity and Limits of Acceptable Change indicators.
4. Participants will be able to design zoning, permit and monitoring arrangements for marine protected areas.
5. Participants will be able to justify cruise, marina and waterfront development choices against climate and coastal risk.
6. Participants will be able to prioritise sustainability and community benefit actions for a coastal destination.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Blue Economy Tourism and Coastal Zone Planning

What role should tourism play in the wider coastal economy?

- Blue Economy Sectors and Coastal Tourism Market Segments
- Integrated Coastal Zone Management Principles and Process
- Coastal Stakeholder Mapping: Fisheries, Ports, Residents and Investors
- Destination Governance Models for Coasts and Islands
- Coastal Destination Baseline Assessment

Day 2: Carrying Capacity and Visitor Management

How many visitors can a beach, island or reef receive without lasting harm?

- Physical, Ecological and Social Carrying Capacity
- Limits of Acceptable Change Indicators and Thresholds
- Visitor Flow Design, Timed Entry and Booking Controls
- Pricing, Fees and Seasonality as Demand Tools
- Visitor Monitoring Data and Adaptive Management

Day 3: Marine Protected Areas and Reef and Dive Tourism

How can marine sites earn tourism value while remaining protected?



- IUCN Protected Area Categories and Marine Zoning
- Dive, Snorkel and Boat Operator Permits and Codes of Conduct
- Coral Reef Health Monitoring and Incident Response
- User Fees and Sustainable Financing of Marine Parks
- Partnerships With Operators, Scientists and Communities

Day 4: Cruise, Marina and Waterfront Development and Coastal Risk

Which developments strengthen the destination, and which create risk?

- Cruise Call Planning, Port Capacity and Shore Excursions
- Marina and Yacht Tourism Business Models
- Resort and Waterfront Siting, Setbacks and Design Controls
- Coastal Erosion, Sea-Level Rise and Extreme Weather Risk
- Environmental Impact Assessment for Coastal Projects

Day 5: Applying Blue Economy Tourism Leadership to a Destination

Is the coastal and marine destination plan balanced, financed and ready to govern?

- GSTC Destination Criteria and Community Benefit Measures
- Linking Day 2 Visitor Limits to Day 4 Development Decisions
- Funding Day 3 Marine Protection Through Tourism Revenue
- Governance and Monitoring Arrangements From Day 1
- Coastal and Marine Destination Management Plan Completion

Methodology

The programme uses case analysis of island resorts, reef parks, cruise ports and waterfronts. Each session pairs a short briefing with group work on a destination chosen by participants, using maps, visitor data and development proposals.

- Suggested activity: Setting Limits of Acceptable Change indicators for a popular reef site.
- Suggested activity: Zoning a marine protected area for diving, fishing and conservation.
- Suggested activity: Assessing a waterfront resort proposal against coastal risk and setback rules.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a coastal and marine destination management plan for a site they influence or a case destination. It contains the coastal zone plan, visitor limits, marine protection arrangements, development and risk guidance, and a governance and funding model.



Frequently Asked Questions

Is blue economy tourism training suitable for developers as well as public officials?

Yes. It is set at advanced level for public and private leaders shaping coastal destinations, and assumes experience in tourism, development or environment.

Which frameworks does the blue economy tourism course rest on?

It rests on integrated coastal zone management, the Limits of Acceptable Change framework, IUCN protected area management categories and the GSTC Destination Criteria.

How is the coastal and marine destination management plan from blue economy tourism training used at work?

You can use it to guide development approvals, set visitor limits and agree funding for marine protection with partners.