

# The reality and prospects for the advancement and development of eco-tourism in Algeria - an analytical study of the Potential and Prospects

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**Abstract:** Tourism is considered one of the most important sectors that significantly contributes to driving development forward. It is a topic of importance and relevance that requires research, study, contemplation, and the provision of the comfort it offers. Environmental tourism is defined as linking investment and productive projects with the protection of the environment, biodiversity, and cultural aspects of touristic places according to a sustainable development model. This research paper aims to address the foundations of environmental tourism in Algeria, as well as how to promote it and the various strategies implemented by Algeria. In addition, it attempts to analyze and provide a prospective view of the future of environmental tourism in Algeria.

**Keywords:** environmental tourism, foundations, strategies, Algeria.

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## 1- Introduction:

Throughout the twentieth century, most countries have experienced significant development in various fields, with tourism taking the forefront of interest for planners and decision-makers in these countries. Tourism is considered one of the most important economic and social phenomena, occupying a significant position in the economies of both advanced and developing nations. It serves as a pillar in most economies due to its effective contribution to national income, improvement of balance of payments, a source of hard currency, employment opportunities, and a goal to achieve development programs. Algeria, like other countries, has directed its efforts towards the development and focus on tourism in general, and environmental tourism in particular (not causing harm to it and not affecting its balance). It has allocated significant budgets compared to previous years to actively promote this sensitive and crucial sector. In addition, the state has implemented short-term and long-term strategies to develop the services provided.

### 1. Problem Statement:

According to the previous introduction, the following problem statement can be posed:

What are the key strategies implemented by Algeria to develop and promote environmental tourism?

## 1.2. Sub-questions:

Through the main question, the following sub-questions can be raised:

- What is the importance of adopting an effective strategy to promote environmental tourism from an environmental perspective?
- What is the main guiding plan for environmental tourism in Algeria?
- What are the key factors that encourage the development of environmental tourism in Algeria?

## 1.3. Hypotheses:

The study's hypotheses can be summarized as follows:

- **Hypothesis 1:** The environmental significance of environmental tourism lies in achieving environmental security by avoiding environmental harm and preserving ecological balance.
- **Hypothesis 2:** The Tourism Development Guiding Plan 2025 serves as the strategic framework for tourism policy in Algeria.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Algeria possesses several resources that contribute to the promotion of environmental tourism, including natural resources (vast and diverse geographical area), historical and cultural resources, financial resources, religious resources, etc.

## 1.4. Study Objectives:

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Provide an overview of the concept, characteristics, and elements of environmental tourism.
- Identify the key resources that support Algeria in promoting environmental tourism.
- Assess the current state of environmental tourism in Algeria by examining the key strategies adopted by the country to promote it.
- Study and analyze the requirements for the development of environmental tourism in Algeria.

## 1.5. Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in the fact that tourism is the backbone of the economic life of many countries. The topic of environmental tourism is considered a global issue that has gained and continues to gain significant importance in the contemporary international community. This is particularly relevant with the increasing environmental problems and their threat to the right to a healthy, clean, and balanced environment. One of the main reasons for this is the growth of tourism as an important source of income and the close relationship between tourism and the environment. The emergence of environmental tourism as an alternative to traditional tourism highlights the importance of studying and promoting environmentally-friendly tourism practices.

## 1.6. Methodology:

In order to achieve the study objectives and test the hypotheses, the following methodology will be employed:

- **Descriptive Method:** This method will be used to present the theoretical aspects of the study.
- **Analytical Method:** The analytical method will be employed to analyze the information presented in the theoretical part of the study.
- **Case Study:** A case study approach will be utilized to study the specific context of Algeria.

## 1.7. Study Structure:

To familiarize ourselves with the study background, it has been divided into the following sections:

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- Nature of Environmental Tourism
- Current State of Environmental Tourism in Algeria and Development Strategies.

### 1.8-Previous Studies:

Among the previous studies that have addressed this topic, we find:

Ahssan Al-Ayyab, Aboud Zarkine (2016): Marketing of Environmental Tourism Programs and Its Development Prospects. Journal of Baghdad College of Economic Sciences, Issue 48, College of Economic and Commercial Sciences and Management Sciences, Abbas Laghrour University, Khenchela, Algeria. This study aims to analyze the elements of the environmental tourism marketing mix and highlight the role of environmental tourism marketing in promoting environmental awareness and the importance of preserving natural resources. Its development requires the interaction of the government and private sectors, as well as the local community, on three functional, geographical, and content levels, to benefit all and ensure the sustainability of the environmental tourist destination.

Laksi, Fawzia (2021): Environmental Tourism as a Strategy for Achieving Sustainable Development: Presentation of Experiences in Some Arab Countries. Journal of Economy and Environment, Volume 4, Issue 1, Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem, Algeria. The study aims to highlight the importance of environmental tourism as one of the key strategies for achieving sustainable development, focusing on the experiences of some Arab countries, particularly the Algerian experience. It examines the various mechanisms implemented by Algeria to protect the environment and support environmental tourism, considering its natural resources including diverse landscapes and ecosystems. The research concludes that environmental tourism plays an effective and distinctive role in promoting sustainable development, particularly in terms of the environmental dimension. However, there are certain factors and obstacles that hinder the realization of this potential. The study also provides a set of proposals and recommendations that could contribute to the advancement of this type of tourism.

## 2- Nature of Environmental Tourism:

### 2.1 Definition of Environmental Tourism:

There are several definitions of environmental tourism, including:

- According to Kimmel (1992), environmental tourism is seen as a process of environmental education, awareness, and upbringing, particularly for children and youth<sup>1</sup>.
- The International Ecotourism Society (1991) provided a definition of environmental tourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people."<sup>2</sup>
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defined it in 1996 as "environmentally responsible travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas to enjoy the scenery and cultural aspects of these

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<sup>1</sup> Mustafa Youssef Kafi, Hamza Abdel Halim Dradka, and others, (2014): Environmental Tourism, First Edition, Dar Al-Isaar Al-Ilmi for Publishing, Amman, Jordan, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Zeina Marmoul, (2018): Social Media Sites and Environmental Tourism: A Descriptive Analytical Study on a Sample of Facebook Users in Setif City, Master's Thesis in Communication Sciences, specializing in Environmental Communication, Faculty of Information and Communication Sciences, University of Algeria 3, Algeria, p. 50

areas, while promoting the protection of the environment with minimal negative impact and involving active and beneficial participation of local communities.<sup>3</sup>"

- According to the Global Environment Facility, environmental tourism is defined as: "Travel to natural areas that are free from pollution and have not experienced any disruption to their natural balance, for the purpose of enjoying their landscapes, flora, and wildlife. This type of tourism is particularly important for developing countries as it represents a source of income, in addition to its role in preserving the environment and promoting a culture of sustainable development practices<sup>4</sup>."

## 2.2 Benefits of Environmental Tourism:

The benefits offered by environmental tourism can be summarized in the following points<sup>5</sup>:

- Environmental tourism relies on the mutual relationship between livelihood activities and conservation. It has been identified as a means to improve the livelihoods of people living around natural and protected areas.
- Environmental tourism serves as a sustainable alternative to the economic exploitation of natural resources and plays a vital role in enhancing the well-being and quality of the environment.

## 2.3 Characteristics and Elements of Environmental Tourism

### 2.3.1 Characteristics of Environmental Tourism:

Among the key characteristics of environmental tourism, we find the following<sup>6</sup>:

- Environmental tourism is a responsible activity.
- Environmental tourism is democratic and participatory as it requires the involvement of all participants based on shared codes of conduct.
- Environmental tourism utilizes and relies on natural and social environments.

### 2.3.2 Elements of Environmental Tourism:

Environmental tourism consists of agreed-upon fundamental elements, which can be summarized as follows<sup>7</sup>:

- Environmental tourism is a human activity practiced by individuals according to governing regulations and controlled rules that protect and preserve natural biodiversity.

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<sup>3</sup> Halima Vogali, (2022): Environmental Tourism between Development Requirements and the Necessities of Protecting the Right to a Clean Environment, PhD Thesis in Law, specializing in Environmental Law, Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Batna 1, El-Hadj Lakhdar, Algeria, pp. 30-31.

<sup>4</sup> Barkane Dila, Belghlam Nou, Chemcham Hafiza, (2020): Environmental Tourism as a Fundamental Factor for Achieving Sustainable Tourism Development: "Biskra Province as a Model," Namaa Journal of Economics and Commerce, Volume 4, Issue 2, Algeria, p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> María Cristina Sosa (2018): Community Strategic Planning for the Integration of Ecotourism Objectives. Case: Tourist Cooperatives of Riviera Nayarit, Doctorate in Tourism Management, Universidad Autónoma de Occidente, Mazatlán - Sinaloa, Mexico, November P...

<sup>6</sup> Licda. Monica Marcela Moncada Mendoza (2020): Ecotourism as a Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Municipality of Jinotega, 1st Semester 2019, Master's in Management and Public Administration, National Autonomous University of Nicaragua UNAN - MANAGUA, P...

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- Environmental tourism preserves species diversity and protects organisms from extinction. It is an activity that yields tangible or intangible returns.
- Environmental tourism combines authenticity in its natural cultural heritage with modernity in its ethical and moral civilization.

### 2.4 Importance of Emphasizing Environmental Tourism

The importance of environmental tourism can be summarized in the following points:

- **Environmental Importance:** The environmental significance of environmental tourism lies in achieving environmental security by avoiding harm to the environment and preserving ecological balance through the protection of terrestrial, marine, and atmospheric wildlife from pollution<sup>8</sup>.
- **Political Importance of Environmental Tourism:** The significance of environmental tourism lies in achieving environmental security by preventing disruptions to countries due to individuals' dissatisfaction with pollution or environmental damage, which can be rectified through environmental tourism<sup>9</sup>.
- **Social Importance of Environmental Tourism:** Environmental tourism is considered community-friendly tourism as it maximizes the utilization of available resources within the community, contributing to the process of community development and improvement<sup>10</sup>.
- **Economic Importance of Environmental Tourism:** The economic significance of environmental tourism is derived from the fact that environmental tourism destinations are among the most scarce resources in the world. Therefore, the scarcity element can be utilized to achieve sustainable development. Additionally, environmental tourism can generate financial returns, create new job opportunities, diversify economic revenue, and consequently increase government revenue<sup>11</sup>.

### 2.5 Types of Environmental Tourism

Environmental tourism is directly centered around nature and is often linked to the cultural and historical heritage of communities. Therefore, its manifestations vary and diversify based on the diverse attractions in these locations. Some of the important types include<sup>12</sup>:

- ✓ Ecotourism: Tourism focused on natural reserves and often referred to as nature-based tourism.
- ✓ Agritourism and Green Tourism: Tourism in farms, meadows, forests, parks, and zoos.
- ✓ Underwater Tourism: Diving, water sports, coral reef exploration, beach strolling, studying marine plants, sailing trips, and floating hotels.
- ✓ Desert Tourism: Tranquility, observing birds, insects, reptiles, and sand skiing.

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<sup>8</sup> Ahlam Khan, Souriya Zawi (2010): Environmental Tourism and its Impact on Development in Rural Areas, Journal of Economic and Administrative Research, Volume 4, Issue 1, University of Biskra, Algeria, p. 230.

<sup>9</sup> Abia Gharbi (2018): Environmental Tourism and its Impact on the Development of the Local Community in the Constantine Governorate: A Field Study in Tourism Agencies, PhD Thesis in Sociology, specializing in Environmental Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Constantine 2 - Abdelhamid Mehri, Algeria, p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> Yassin Bouzeraa (2019): The Reality of Tourism Activity and its Relationship with the Environment in Algeria, PhD Thesis in Environmental Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Constantine 2 - Abdelhamid Mehri, Algeria, p. 88.

<sup>11</sup> Nazha Latarsh (2018): The Importance of Hosting Sports Events with a Touristic Character in Activating Environmental Tourism in Algeria: A Case Study of the National Center for Sports and Entertainment in Tikjda, PhD Thesis in the Field of Science and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities, Branch: Sports Management and Administration, specializing in Human Resources Management and Sports Facilities Management, Institute of Physical Education and Sports, Dalila Ibrahim, University of Algiers 3, Algeria, pp. 110-111.

<sup>12</sup> Ahsan Al-Ayeb, Aboud Zerqin (2016): Marketing Environmental Tourism Programs and Ways of Developing Them, Journal of Baghdad College of Economics, Issue 48, College of Economic, Commercial and Management Sciences, Abbas Laghrour University, Khencela, Algeria, p. 149.

### 3- The current status of environmental tourism in Algeria and its development strategies:

**3.1 Tourism Potential in Algeria:** Algeria possesses numerous potentials that could qualify it to become one of the world's tourist destinations. Some of these potentials include<sup>13</sup>:

- Vast land area: Algeria is one of the largest countries in Africa, with an area exceeding 2,381,741 square kilometers. It possesses significant material and spiritual qualifications, a rich and diverse heritage, and unique potential. Its vast territory extends from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the depths of the Sahara Desert in the south. It is abundant with diverse tourist destinations.
- Diversity of natural landscapes: Due to its vast land area, Algeria offers a variety of natural landscapes. The combination of mountains, dense forests, and coastal regions enhances the natural beauty of the country, providing diverse and captivating scenery.
- Available financial resources: Algeria's abundant financial resources, mainly derived from petroleum reserves, can contribute to significant tourism development in the country. Investment in infrastructure, such as road networks in the deserts, mountains, and rugged areas, is crucial for the success of tourism in these regions.
- Historical and archaeological potential: Algeria possesses numerous archaeological sites that can serve as significant tourist attractions, such as the ruins found in Timgad and Tipaza.

### 3.2 Key projects for environmental tourism in Algeria:

As known, Algeria stretches from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the depths of the Sahara Desert in the south, covering an area of 2,381,741 square kilometers. It has a coastal strip of 1,200 kilometers from east to west, with important coastal cities like Oran, Algiers, Annaba, Skikda, and El Kala. The country extends from north to south, encompassing four distinct terrains. In the north, there are plains like the Mitidja Plain, Oran, and Annaba. Following that is the mountain range of the Aurès in the east, with a height of 2,328 meters, and the Djurdjura Mountains in the Greater Kabylie region, reaching a height of 2,308 meters. These mountains, along with others, offer tourist attractions such as forests and snow-capped peaks, like Mount Chr ea in Blida, Tikjda in Bouira, and T ag it in Tizi Ouzou. Furthermore, these mountains and other areas are dotted with water springs, rare animals, and birds. In the south, the Algerian Sahara covers 80% of the country's territory, characterized by numerous oases, sand dunes, and rocky plains. Some notable regions in the Sahara include Biskra, Ghardaia, Adrar, and El-Ouad<sup>14</sup>. Examples of these projects include:

#### 3.2.1 The Model Project for Ecotourism in the Taza-Guelma National Park:

The Model Project for Ecotourism in the Taza-Guelma National Park aims to develop sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean Basin. This project was initiated by the World Wide Fund for Nature in the Mediterranean (WWF-MED) in 2014 to support protected marine areas in the south and east of the Mediterranean Sea. In Algeria, this project focuses on the development of sustainable economic activities in the marine reserve adjacent to the Taza-Guelma National Park<sup>15</sup>. The project lasted for 37 months, from April 1, 2014, to April 30, 2017, with financial support from the European Commission and the French Global Environment Facility

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<sup>13</sup> Khaled Gashi (2013): Tourism in Algeria: Available Opportunities and Development Challenges, *Al-Iqtisad Al-Jadid Journal*, Issue 08, University of Blida, Algeria, pp. 242-243.

<sup>14</sup> Khadija Azzouzi (2015): Sustainable Tourism Development: Potentials and Perspectives - A Case Study of the Guelma Province, PhD Thesis, Faculty of Economic Sciences and Management Sciences, 8 May 1945 University - Guelma, Algeria, p. 191.

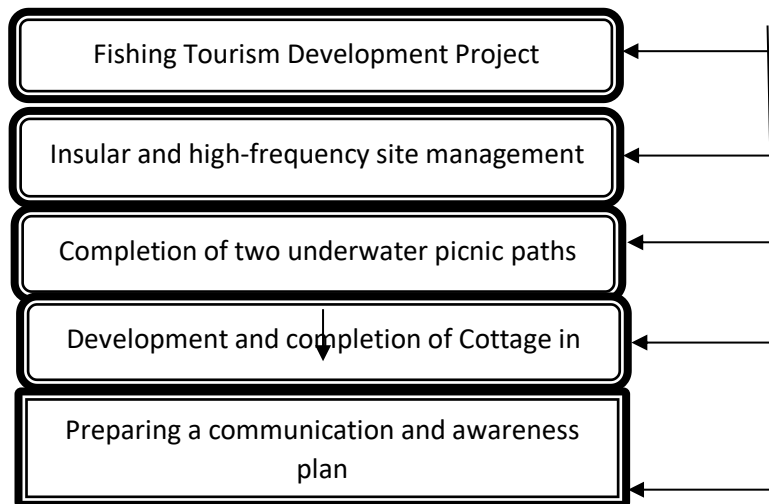
<sup>15</sup> The same reference, pp. 192-193.

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(FFEM), with a total cost of 269,958 euros. The Taza-Guelma National Park contributed 174,296 euros, while the World Wide Fund for Nature in the Mediterranean (WWF-MED) provided 95,662 euros<sup>16</sup>.

The project aimed to achieve a series of environmental initiatives in the Taza-Guelma National Park, which can be summarized in the following outline<sup>17</sup>:

Figure (01): Practical plan for the development of ecotourism in the National Park of Taza.



Source: Yassin Bouzeraa (2019): The Status of Tourism Activity and its Relationship with the Environment in Algeria, PhD Thesis in Environmental Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Abdelhamid Mehri University of Constantine 2, Algeria, p. 141.

This plan was prepared and framed through the coordination of all stakeholders involved in the ecotourism project. A group of key stakeholders and actors work together to ensure the smooth progress of the project.

2- The project aims to achieve several objectives, which can be summarized as follows<sup>18</sup>:

1. **Managing traditional mass tourism and excessive beach and island visits:** The project seeks to address the excessive and unsustainable tourism activities observed in the western region of Jijel Province. It aims to redirect this tourism movement by attracting tourists towards mountain tourism.
2. **Developing new alternative activities** that generate revenue while contributing to both development and environmental conservation. One of these projects in the region is fisheries tourism, which aims to provide benefits to fishermen through tourist visits to those areas.
3. **Improving fish stocks** through the preservation of the region's natural resources.

3.3. The strategy implemented by Algeria to promote ecotourism includes the following key aspect:

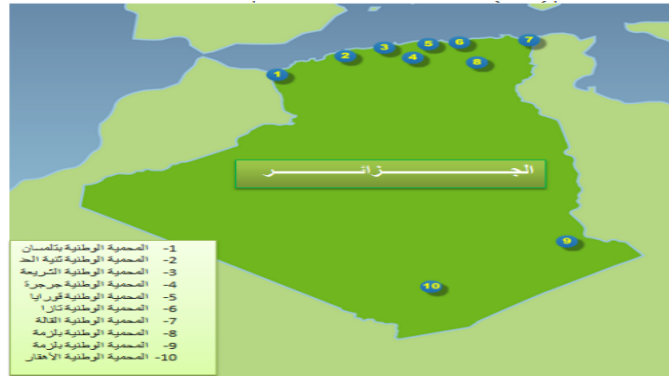
<sup>16</sup> Khadija Azzouzi (2015): Sustainable Tourism Development: Potentials and Perspectives - A Case Study of the Guelma Province, PhD Thesis, Faculty of Economic Sciences and Management Sciences, 8 May 1945 University - Guelma, Algeria, p. 191. The same reference, pp. 192-193.

<sup>17</sup> Yassin Bouzeraa, same reference as mentioned above, p. 140.

<sup>18</sup> Yassin Bouzeraa, same reference as mentioned above, p. 143.

3.3.1 Natural Reserves in Algeria as a Key Strategy for Environmental Tourism Protection: Algeria is home to numerous and diverse national parks and nature reserves, which serve as the cornerstone and foundation of ecotourism compared to other countries worldwide, considering its vast territory. This is evident in the accompanying map<sup>19</sup>.

Figure 02: Algeria's map of the most important nature reserves.



Source: El Alja Mbatush (2022): Strategy for the Development of Environmental Tourism in Algeria (Case Study: Natural Reserves), Arab Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Archaeology Sciences, Volume 3, Issue 4, Ahmed Ben Yahia University of Tissemsilt, Algeria, p. 132.

A significant number of national reserves remain eligible to become world heritage sites due to their fulfillment of a range of criteria, such as possessing a unique ecosystem, the presence of a considerable number of rare species, and the diversity of vegetation cover and climate.

**3.3.2 The promotion of environmental tourism in Algeria:** it is carried out within the framework of promoting nature tourism, as there is currently no specific national strategy for promoting environmental tourism. Algeria aims, through its national strategy for the development of the tourism sector by 2025, which is an integral part of the national plan for regional development, to create opportunities. In this context, massive tourism projects with international standards have been initiated to accommodate the expected influx of tourists, revitalize domestic and national tourism. The national plan for regional development by 2025 serves as the main working platform for tourism development in Algeria, similar to other sectors. This plan encompasses the strategic and reference framework for implementing the tourism policy in Algeria until 2025<sup>20</sup>.

**3.3.3** The new strategy for tourism development is outlined in the Strategic Tourism Development Plan 2025 (SDAT2025). This plan serves as the strategic and reference framework for tourism policy in Algeria. Under this plan, the state aims to<sup>21</sup>:

<sup>19</sup> El Alja Mbatush (2022): Strategy for the Development of Environmental Tourism in Algeria (Case Study: Natural Reserves), Arab Journal of Tourism, Hospitality, and Archaeology Sciences, Volume 3, Issue 4, Ahmed Ben Yahia University of Tissemsilt, Algeria, p. 131.

<sup>20</sup> Lakssi Fawzia (2021): Ecotourism as a Strategy for Sustainable Development: Presentation of Experiences from Some Arab Countries, Journal of Economy and Environment, Volume 4, Issue 1, Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem, Algeria, pp. 155-156.

<sup>21</sup> Rokia Mellahi (2013): The Effects of Ecotourism on Sustainable Development in Algeria, Journal of Strategy and Development, Volume 3, Issue 5, University of Mostaganem, Algeria, pp. 104-105.



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- ✓ The announcement of its vision for national tourism development in various horizons, in the short term 2009, the medium term 2015, and the long term 2025, is part of sustainable development, aiming for Algeria to become a recipient country with any future. It identifies tools for its implementation, clarifying the conditions for achieving this:
- ✓ The Strategic Tourism Development Plan 2025 becomes a tool that translates the state's will to valorize the natural, cultural, and historical capacities of the country and put them at the service of Algerian tourism to elevate it to the rank of distinguished destinations in the Mediterranean region. The Strategic Tourism Development Plan serves as the strategic and reference framework for tourism policy in Algeria, reflecting the state's vision for national tourism development in various horizons - short term 2010, medium term 2015, and long term 2025 and 2030. It should be consistent with the latter, as it illustrates how the state intends to ensure the balance of social justice, economic efficiency, and ecological support within the framework of sustainable development at the national level for the next 20 years<sup>22</sup>.

The Strategic Tourism Development Plan also aims to achieve a range of objectives:

- ✓ Positioning tourism as a driver of economic growth and an alternative to the fossil fuel sector, while ensuring the harmonization between tourism development and the environment.
- ✓ Ensuring the involvement of other sectors such as public works, agriculture, and culture.
- ✓ Permanently enhancing the image of Algeria<sup>23</sup>.

### Conclusion

Tourism is considered one of the most important sectors relied upon by countries for economic development and diversification. In fact, it serves as a cornerstone for the economies of some nations. It is one of the fastest-growing industries, providing a source of foreign currency and offering significant employment opportunities, thus contributing to increased national income.

Among the key global tourism trends, we find what is known as ecotourism, which encompasses the process of learning, culture, and education about environmental components. It serves as a means to introduce tourists to the environment and engage them in its conservation. Ecotourism has gained significant popularity in recent years, with many global protected areas and reserves transforming into tourist attractions, attracting a growing demand from international travelers.

### Study Findings

The study has yielded a set of results which can be summarized as follows:

- Ecotourism is a form of alternative tourism based on nature. It differs in content from the traditional concept of tourism because it contributes to the preservation of the right to a clean environment.
- Ecotourism is one of the forms of sustainable tourism, but it is not automatically sustainable unless it adopts the principles of sustainable tourism, in order to become sustainable ecotourism.

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<sup>22</sup> Baaba Ilham, Ferdji Karima (2022): The Role of Tourism Development Plan and Tourism Development Guide in Promoting and Directing Tourism Investment, *Journal of Real Estate Law*, Volume 9, Issue 1, Algeria, p. 38.

<sup>23</sup> Yacoub Marwa (2023): The Reality of the Tourism Sector in Algeria (Evaluation of the Implementation of the Tourism Development Guide), *Dafater Bouadex Journal*, Volume 12, Issue 1, Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Algeria, p. 32.

- Algeria possesses significant tourism potential that can qualify it to become a prominent tourist destination, especially concerning its natural resources.

#### Recommendations:

Based on this study and the obtained results, several suggestions can be made, which can be summarized as follows:

- It is essential for tourism development to proceed hand in hand with social and environmental progress. Additionally, there should be a focus on infrastructure that aligns with environmental conditions.
- It is important to monitor and implement organized measures for environmental tourism and work towards its support and promotion.

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