



**For more information please contact:**

Angelika Pullen, IUCN Media Relations, m +61 413 829 402, [angelika.pullen@iucn.org](mailto:angelika.pullen@iucn.org)  
Ewa Magiera, IUCN Media Relations, m +61 434 025 278, [ewa.magiera@iucn.org](mailto:ewa.magiera@iucn.org)

**For immediate release**

## **Sustainable tourism in protected areas can be critical for their survival, says new IUCN report**

**Sydney, Australia, 14 November 2014 (IUCN) – Increasing the number of visitors to protected areas can be an effective tool for conservation and community development, provided well-functioning management systems are in place, according to a new report unveiled today at the IUCN World Parks Congress taking place in Sydney, Australia.**

Highlighting a global collection of case studies from Machu Picchu in Peru to the Damaraland Camp in Namibia, the IUCN report, *Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Sustainability*, includes contributions from more than 50 experts from 23 countries and territories, and examples from over 45 countries around the world. *“Unlike other industries and human-driven activities, tourism in protected areas can be a strong positive force – increasing a sense of stewardship and revenues that are vital for the long-term protection of these important conservation areas,”* said **Dr. Yu-Fai Leung, the chief editor of the report and member of the IUCN WCPA Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group.** *“By contrast, reduced visitor numbers to protected areas can signal a lack of political interest or public support. The guidelines provided in this report are intended to strengthen current visitor management systems, including measures on how best to protect these key natural and cultural assets.”*

International tourism is a trillion-dollar business, accounting for up to 9% of global GDP. The World Tourism Organization estimates that tourism is expected to continue to grow by 3.3% annually through 2030, generating one in twelve jobs globally. Protected areas, including National Parks and World Heritage Sites, are consistently the primary attraction for tourists interested in exploring natural areas and its wildlife across the world.

Governments, protected area agencies, tour operators, retailers and members of the local community can all benefit from tourism revenues and in some cases tourism enterprises directly support the protection or rehabilitation of key habitat areas.

For example, payments made by Wilderness Safaris – a private sector ecotourism company – for annual concession fees for ecotourism camps in Africa in 2014 totalled over USD 4.4 million, a substantial contribution to financing protected areas through tourism.

In contrast, the report finds that where visits to protected areas have dropped, such as in Canada, Japan and the United States, the parks have suffered from reduced political support and funding. For example, between 1994 and 2012, there was a 28.7% decrease in the number of visitors to

national parks in Canada, which may have contributed to the government's 2012 decision to cut budget and staff to national parks.

The report recognizes that protected area managers are grappling with a number of challenges, including climate change, illegal wildlife trade, inadequate infrastructure and competing interests for natural resources. However, with proper management systems in place, an increase in visitors can generate much needed revenues from entrance fees, guided tours, accommodation and concessions, which in turn can be invested in conservation activities.

The report highlights the need to identify and evaluate the true costs and impacts of tourism in protected areas, in order to have a clear understanding of the opportunities and challenges related to the development of tourism in these areas.

*“With international travel expected to rise, protected areas managers need to mitigate any negative impacts as a result of increased visits, but also identify new opportunities stemming from this potential demand that can provide revenue for conservation and the local economies. Innovative approaches and partnerships with the local communities, private enterprises and government are needed to help strike the balance in securing long-term support for these critical areas,”* concluded **Anna Spenceley, co-editor of the report and Chair of the IUCN WCPA Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group.**

----- ENDS -----

**For more information or to set up interviews, please contact:**

Angelika Pullen, IUCN Media Relations, m +61 413 829 402, [angelika.pullen@iucn.org](mailto:angelika.pullen@iucn.org)

Ewa Magiera, IUCN Media and Communications Officer, m +61 434 025 278, [ewa.magiera@iucn.org](mailto:ewa.magiera@iucn.org)

**Editor's notes:**

The report contains the following guidelines for promoting positive economic, social and environmental impacts in protected areas, regardless of their governance structure:

- Clearly identifying and linking biodiversity benefits (for example the reintroduction of species or habitat management, etc.) which can support better monitoring and evaluation. This will in turn help build a case for future conservation efforts.
- Proactively engaging tourism stakeholders in local legislation and the development of policy frameworks that affect protected areas can enhance the sharing of information and decision-making, as well as any economic benefits.
- Increasing the number of visitors, the length of stay and concession opportunities can increase economic opportunities for local employment, community enterprises and the private sector, provided the right fee structures and management systems are in place.
- Assisting in the education and capacity building of local people to support tourism not only helps ensure a more positive experience for the visitor but can build a deeper affinity for conserving the protected area.
- Using tourism revenues to enhance facilities for local communities, such as for education, healthcare and infrastructure.
- Ensuring revenue from tourism goes back into paying for conservation management and mitigating any negative tourism impacts in the area.

- Encouraging collaboration and partnerships between protected area authorities and the private sector, as well as the local community, can stimulate and help secure long-term support for habitat and biodiversity conservation.

***National Geographic, Reuters and Deutsche Welle are the official IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 media partners.***

**About the report**

*Tourism and Visitor Management in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Sustainability* was coordinated by Yu-Fai Leung, Anna Spenceley, Glen Hvenegaard and Ralf Buckley of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas' Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group. The report includes contributions from 54 experts from 23 countries and territories, and examples from 44 countries around the world. The report builds on existing literature, incorporating new research, theoretical frameworks, planning management strategies, case studies and recommendations. Project URL: <http://iucn.oscar.ncsu.edu>

**About the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014**

Conserving the earth's most valuable natural places and promoting nature's solutions to global challenges is the focus of the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 taking place in Sydney, Australia from 12 to 19 November. The world's more than 200,000 protected areas, covering around 15% of land and 3% of the oceans, conserve threatened wildlife, boost our food, water and climate security, and help people reconnect with nature. With its theme "Parks, people, planet: inspiring solutions", the Congress will bring together people from all walks of life to showcase protected areas as the best investment in our planet's – and our own – future. [www.worldparkscongress.org](http://www.worldparkscongress.org)

**About IUCN**

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. IUCN's work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development. IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world, and brings governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,200 government and NGO Members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 45 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world. [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)