

Pilot Roadmap

Tourism



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Introduction

Located in southeastern Trentino, Valsugana is a diverse alpine valley defined by the dramatic contrast between the wild, granite peaks of the Lagorai mountain range and the tranquil waters of Lakes Levico and Caldonazzo, both recurring Blue Flag recipients for their environmental quality. As **Italy's first GSTC-certified destination**, it serves as a living laboratory for sustainability, where pristine forests and high-altitude glacial lakes meet the fertile valley floor of the Brenta River. This natural heritage is further enriched by unique geological features, such as its rare ferruginous thermal springs, and the Arte Sella open-air museum, where contemporary art integrates seamlessly into the woodland, embodying the destination's commitment to a "Nature Positive" balance between human activity and ecological preservation.

The **Valsugana case study**, as framed within the **GoNaturePositive!** project, highlights the transition of a tourism destination from "sustainable tourism" to a **Nature Positive (NP)** approach. This evolution is based on the principle that the net result of all tourism activities should lead to an absolute increase in nature toward its full recovery.

The Destination Management Organization (DMO) for the area is Azienda per il Turismo (ApT) Valsugana Lagorai. As a DMO, its role extends far beyond traditional marketing; it acts as a territorial laboratory for sustainable governance. While traditional DMOs focus on "Arrivals and Overnights," ApT Valsugana has pioneered a Stewardship Model. Its mission is to coordinate, promote, and develop the territorial tourist offer by prioritizing the well-being of the local community and the health of the ecosystem.

Vision

By 2050, Valsugana has established itself as a global gold standard for a Nature-Positive Economy that takes a balanced approach, where tourism is no longer a standalone industry but a vital and harmonious function of the local community.



Baseline

During the Baseline workshop, the stakeholders have identified different challenges. For each one, they provided details on the state-of-the-art of the challenge, giving an overview of the baseline (policy, technology, social adaptation, finance, etc.). Here below each challenge is reported.

1. Visitor Flow Management

- Need to manage, at strategic level, the distribution of tourists in space and time to mitigate the impact of overcrowding and promote sustainability.
- Decentralisation to be promoted also through iconic projects that can incentivise tourists to explore side valleys and less-frequented areas.
- Pressure from day trippers, with high impacts on roads and traffic as well as human footprint on main lakes. Need to think of other intermodal transportation options to connect the different tourist areas.
- Increase seasonal redistribution and slow tourism.

2. Impacts of events

- Promotion of rigid plastic-free event protocol and transform environmental goals into a standardised operational method at regional level.
- Need to go beyond recycling and monitor waste production at events.
- Ensure large influxes of day trippers do not result in environmental degradation, effectively mandating sustainable practices for all public gatherings.

3. Balance between tourism and community

- Involvement of residents and entrepreneurs to actively co-design the destination's future, ensuring that visitor management protects the local quality of life.
- Preserve and promote local employment to also preserve cultural authenticity.
- Financial mechanisms to direct tourism revenues towards farmers and other local actors that are stewards of the territory and the landscape. Prioritisation of renovation of buildings instead of new constructions.

4. Quality of living

- The region is currently addressing the housing crisis through a de-incentivisation and social revitalisation model that prioritises long-term residency over speculative tourism.
- 2-Property Role, which imposes a professional business status and higher tax burdens on owners of three or more units to curb the growth of “mini-hotel” empires.

5. Accessibility for all

- The region is currently transforming into a universal destination by integrating physical, sensory, and economic accessibility into its core infrastructure.
- Need for sensory and cognitive inclusion, featuring LIS-supported cultural sites, “quiet hour” protocols for neurodivergent visitors at major events, and poetic audio-descriptions for visual impairments to be developed across the destination.
- Need for developing socially inclusive workforce that integrates people with disabilities into specific programs and grant system designed to eliminate communicative barriers.
- By providing technical audits and “OPEN” certifications for private businesses, the Tourist Board aims that the entire hospitality chain moves beyond mere legal compliance to offer a truly autonomous and dignified experience for every visitor.

6. Enhancement of cultural heritage

- Need to manage the trade-off between preservation of the “soul” of the valley and the physical integrity of its landscape.
- Through the Ecomuseo del Lagorai, intangible traditions—such as historical agricultural techniques and the role of women in mountain life—can be transformed into intergenerational educational tools rather than static exhibits.
- Strategy to effectively filters for a more contemplative visitor profile, ensuring that the valley’s cultural legacy remains a pristine, functional resource for future generations. Promote “slow” tourism, pedestrian and respectful.

7. Conservation of Biodiversity

- Evolve the region’s current biodiversity strategy into a regenerative ecotourism model that transforms visitors from passive observers into active stewards of the landscape. Through “Citizen Science” initiatives like Bio-Blitz events and the digital monitoring of Natura 2000 sites, tourists can work alongside biologists to catalogue rare species, providing essential data for local conservation policies.
- Promotion of “Adopt a Cow” project, which explicitly links traditional grazing to the preservation of high-altitude meadow biodiversity.
- Enforcing “Lakeside Silence Zones” and promoting low-impact infrastructure like the Valsugana Cycle Path, the region actively reduces sensory and chemical pollution in sensitive habitats.
- Increase awareness of every visitor to understand their role in protecting the fragile alpine equilibrium of alpine valleys.

8. Balance between tourism and nature

- The region has established itself as a “living school of sustainability,” where climate resilience and stakeholder education are integrated into the destination’s operational DNA.
- Promotion of the GSTC framework and certification at Destination level. Increase the empowerment of operators in adopting sustainable practices and toolkits to transition toward carbon-neutral, plastic-free, and energy-efficient business models.
- Promotion of responsible behaviours and participation of visitors in conservation-linked activities (regenerative tourism – “nudge” strategy).
- The transition to climate-resilient infrastructure needs to be realized by increasing renewable energy use and implements adaptive resource management protocols. By prioritizing intermodal mobility and precise water monitoring, Valsugana ensures that its tourism “machine” remains functional and respectful of local ecological limits, even in the face of escalating climatic pressures.

9. Actions for sustainable mobility

- The region’s mobility strategy to be centred on a seamless intermodal “spine” that integrates the 80km Valsugana Cycle Path with a modernized, electrified railway line. This system should allow for fluid “Train + Bike” transit, supported by specialized “Bici-Bus” trailers to ensure continuous service.
- To protect fragile ecosystems, Valsugana needs to actively regulates access to GoNaturePositive! “hotspots” like Val di Sella and the lakes through Limited Traffic Zones (ZTL), smart parking monitoring, and digital “nudges” via the Trentino Guest Card app.
- This transition to a low-impact destination needs to be further reinforced by a valley-wide e-bike sharing network and an expanded EV charging infrastructure, all powered by local hydroelectric energy.



Pathways

The identification of the challenges has helped the participants to also identify possible solutions to overcome the existing barriers. Solutions have been clustered according to the Target Group mostly responsible or suitable for carrying out the activities proposed. Furthermore, a prioritisation exercise has been conducted, considering feasibility and impact, which has led to the identification of one solution for each TG. Solutions have then been analysed in detail, identifying objective, current state, scope of the initiative, expected outcomes, key activities necessary to reach the objective, milestones by 2030 and 2050, indicators, and risks and mitigation strategy. While details are reported in the Annex 6¹ here are reported the main initiatives for reaching the vision.



1. Visitor Flow Management

Objective

To improve tourist flow management by distributing visitors across the region and seasons, with a focus on daily trippers.

Expected Outcome

Achieve a balanced tourism ecosystem characterised by a reduction in peak season congestion at primary lakeside hubs and an increase in visitor engagement within rural upland areas and sustainable transport networks.

Plans

- By 2030: full operational status of passage counters/traffic light systems in key congestion areas to understand car usage rates; implementation of a pre-booking system for parking spaces; development of guidelines to be provided to guests regarding the use of the mountain; strengthening public or private transport services for tourist hotspot.
- By 2050: activation of studies on carrying capacity and implementation of the related management measures identified; at least 5 major events/activities successfully extended into the “off-seasons”.

1. Annex 6 of Deliverable 2.2: Nature-Positive Economy (NPE) Pilot Roadmaps, published in July 2026, available at gonaturepositive.eu/resources

2. Study of the positive impact of events

Objective

To monitor socio-economic and environmental impact of events at the destination and implement actions to ensure they maximise benefits for the local area and reduce negative environmental impacts.

Expected Outcome

Data-driven event ecosystem established, where major regional events adhere to the 'Plastic-Free' Protocol, resulting in a reduction in event-related waste.

Plans

- Promotion of sustainable transport such as shuttle services and attention to waste management.
- Establish an online registration system and advertising dissemination.
- Actively involve local communities in the planning and organisation of events, encouraging the participation of residents as volunteers, service providers, or content creators (artists, artisans, etc.).
- Definition of shared metrics to evaluate the sustainability of events based on their environmental and socio-economic impact (e.g. waste management, use of eco-friendly materials, emissions compensation, promotion of sustainable transport, use of local products, integration of the local community in the organisation).
- Promote events that highlight local traditions, culture, and typical products, generating income opportunities for small local businesses.
- Establishment of a shuttle service for events from Sella to Borgo.



3. Balance between tourism and community

Objective

To create a strong and positive bond between the local community and the regional tourism system, promoting tourism services and experiences that also benefit the community, through the opportunity to enjoy cultural, educational, and social initiatives, the promotion of the local and responsible supply chain, and active and collaborative involvement.

Expected Outcome

Resilient and integrated tourism-community ecosystem where residents report high satisfaction with the 'living quality' of the valley.

Plans

- Rising awareness among public administration regarding the valorisation of spaces with financial interventions and support in the GSTC certification.
- Raise awareness among relevant bodies in allocating resources to the cause.
- Facilitation of access to credit for interventions on the topic.
- Apps and websites with health and wellness-oriented programs.
- Design of voluntourism experiences dedicated to tourists, residents, and company employees and promote them in the destination's activities calendar.
- Launching a "Local Ambassadors" program where some residents are trained to act as ambassadors of the area, guiding tourists on experiences.
- Development of concessions dedicated to residents with a focus on certain particularly attractive goods/services (not managed by DMO).
- Organise moments of 'giving back' to the territory aimed at demonstrating the multiplier effect and "positive community" of tourism with data and perspectives on tourism projects.
- Creation and dissemination of a toolkit to guide businesses in adopting sustainable practices, with a particular focus on introducing and promoting local products (food and non-food) into their offerings, and preferring responsible local organisations.
- Promotion of local producers (agricultural supply chain, milk supply chain, meat supply chain, fish supply chain) and catering companies that are attentive to the valorisation of the local supply chain and the seasonality of products and who are committed to preserving the healthiness of the territory with organic and/or sustainable cultivations.
- Organization of workshops aimed at spreading knowledge of local products among operators, with guidelines on how to introduce them into their offerings (e.g., guided tours, tastings, educational programs).
- Promote the launch of collaborations between tourism operators and local producers to facilitate the purchase of products (e.g. GAS, a portal for matching supply and demand) and the provision of experiences to tourists at agricultural companies.
- Redevelopment of the Roncegno park area to promote wellness through forest medicine: well-being and health as attractors.

4. Quality of living

Objective

To reduce the negative impact of short-term rentals in popular tourist areas by ensuring equitable housing access for residents.

Expected Outcome

Restored housing market equilibrium in high-demand areas by capping short-term rental density and incentivising the conversion of tourist accommodations back to primary residences, ensuring that available housing stock remains affordable and accessible for local workers and families.

Plans

By 2050:

- Launch of a dedicated working group in consultation with the Province for more stringent regulations on short-term rentals, particularly in hotspot areas (e.g., with respect to rent limits).
- Intervene on state legislation and housing law.

5. Accessibility for all

Objective

To make the tourist destination inclusive and accessible to all, ensuring quality hospitality for people with various types of disabilities and disadvantaged conditions.

Expected Outcome

Valsugana established as a “Destination for All” by achieving certified accessibility across primary tourist hubs and public transport, resulting in an increase in visits from travellers with specific access requirements.

Plans

By 2030:

- Training for operators in welcoming people with various types of disabilities, involving local stakeholders.
- Mapping and updating accessible services, sites, and experiences.
- Collaboration with local associations to develop accessible experiences.
- Creation of specialised centres for disabilities and specific research centres.
- Improve the sensitivity and sentiment of those who welcome, starting with people with difficulties in schools.

6. Enhancement of cultural heritage

Objective

To promote and enhance local tangible and intangible cultural heritage, ensuring its integrity for future generations and promoting sustainable and respectful use by residents and visitors.

Expected Outcome

Increase in resident-led heritage initiatives and the successful preservation of intangible traditions.

Plans

- Positive evaluation and consideration of the objective.
- Interventions to support and enhance excellence and specificities.
- Multimedia tools to raise awareness of the specificities of the heritage.
- Increase appreciation of the territory.
- Promotion of a plan of training and information activities aimed at hospitality operators and business owners, students, and researchers.
- Innovation of the cultural product also through integration with the outdoors.
- Guides to the territory and its excellences and host training.
- Census of heritage sites.

7. Conservation of Biodiversity

Objective

To promote and consolidate the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, creating an ecotourism model based on active visitor engagement and awareness, bringing them closer to nature and its protection.

Expected Outcome

Established a regenerative ecotourism model where the region's protected alpine habitats are managed through 'Active Engagement' protocols, resulting in an increase in local biodiversity health indicators and a documented shift in visitor behaviour from consumption to conservation advocacy.

Plans

- Activate collaboration with parks and protected areas to develop experiences that promote awareness and protection of biodiversity, such as guided excursions, workshops, and citizen science activities.
- Valorisation of local reserves by defining management methods.
- Limit/eliminate support for activities that are not in harmony with the environment (Levico-Vetriolo).
- Raising awareness among new generations through schools.
- Raising awareness among the elderly population.
- Promotion of biodiversity storytelling initiatives.
- Conferences, seminars, and international collaborations promoted by third-party entities dedicated to biodiversity are also open to residents.
- Definition of a structured offering of immersive ecotourism experiences.
- Greater promotion of environmental tourism offerings through platforms
- Specific training for local administrators.



8. Balance between tourism and nature

Objective

To educate visitors and operators on sustainability issues affecting the destination, making them responsible for the role they can play in caring for them and providing support in the adoption of more sustainable practices, with the ultimate goal of reducing the negative impact of tourism on the use of natural resources and pollution. To support the transition to a climate-resilient tourism by actively engaging operators, administrations, and visitors.

Expected Outcome

Accelerated the transition to a climate-resilient destination where operators have implemented resource-reduction plans and visitors actively choose low-impact travel options.

Plans

- Promote gentle mobility with distribution throughout the year.
- Promote tax breaks for eco-friendly structures.
- Use tools to facilitate parking reservations.
- "Development of a multi-channel campaign for the adoption of responsible behaviour by guests and residents.
- Dissemination of information to raise visitor awareness on energy and water conservation, reduction of soil, air, and water pollution, and proper waste management.
- Encourage green solutions by increasing vegetation (trees) e.g. Treeticket.
- Support for third-party certification of accommodation facilities with materials only (possibly provincial economic funds) and related promotion.
- Publication of training content for operators on energy efficiency (including renewable energy) and water efficiency, waste reduction and pollution of soil, air, and water bodies, food waste, the circular economy, and adaptation actions.
- Promotion of opportunities for both visitors and operators to offset their emissions and projects with a positive impact, based on the characteristics of their trip (use of car, type of accommodation, experiences, etc.) or their structure.
- Planning at least one waste collection campaign per year or supporting similar activities already promoted by local associations.

9. Actions for sustainable mobility

Objective

To develop and enhance a sustainable mobility system that efficiently connects the various regions, improving accessibility and the visitor experience through intermodal connections, cycling infrastructure, and low-impact public and private transport services. To manage, monitor, and, where necessary, regulate access to side valleys and tourist hotspots.

Expected Outcome

Reduction in private vehicle traffic at key hotspots achieved.

Plans

- Propose an improvement in intermodal transportation and the offer of journeys on the Trento-Borgo line, in particular an evening journey departing from Trento after 10pm.
- Improve the involvement and awareness of those who practice agriculture in solutions that can impact slow mobility.
- Encourage the use of the Guest Card in accommodation facilities.
- Implementation of intermodal solutions through the creation of interchanges between different means of transport, such as the possibility of transporting bicycles on public transport and park-and-ride facilities.
- Encourage the experimentation of closing some streets to traffic with initiatives that liven them up (regular or for events) to also accustom residents.
- Promotion of slow mobility routes.
- Promote car-free tourism through the development of tourist packages that include the use of sustainable means of transport, such as bicycles, public transport, and electric vehicles.
- Create a permanent table for sustainable mobility that includes tourist area, students, young people, families, commuters, public bodies, associations, other subjects active in sustainability.

Summary

The roadmapping process for the Valsugana pilot represents a strategic transition from traditional sustainability to a Nature Positive Economy (NPE), structured through two participatory workshops designed to co-create a long-term vision for 2050. The first workshop was held online on January 27th with 10 participants through the interactive tool Mural. The second one was held in presence in Borgo Valsugana on February 12th through a facilitation methodology and 24 participants.

A "whole-of-society" approach defined the stakeholder engagement strategy, bringing together a diverse ecosystem that includes municipal administrators, tourism operators, and young "territorial ambassadors." This inclusive governance has fostered significant positive feedback, with the transition to a stewardship model being described as a "happy intuition" that has successfully shifted the destination's brand from simple promotion to active landscape management. This collaborative spirit has enhanced the DMO role as a local steward.

Despite this progress, the roadmapping journey has highlighted critical challenges, particularly the technical complexity of measuring direct biodiversity impacts and the risk of stakeholder fatigue among smaller operators.

To mitigate these "criticalities," it is suggested to adopt a pragmatic "small steps" approach, balancing ambitious long-term restoration targets with incremental, actionable goals that provide immediate value to the local supply chain.

In addition, it has emerged as a need the "translation" of complex, high-level theoretical concepts into concrete, relatable actions for the local community. While global frameworks like the Nature Positive Economy (NPE) provide essential scientific rigor, they often remain too abstract for local farmers, hoteliers, and residents whose primary focus is the day-to-day management of their activities.



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