

POPAYÁN DECLARATION ON INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

PREAMBLE

We, the Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean, gathered at the First Indigenous Tourism Summit of Latin America and the Caribbean (CTILAC 2025), held in the City of Popayán, Department of Cauca, Colombia, recognizing our Indigenous knowledge systems, practices, worldviews, ancestral customs and traditions, as well as the territories and the natural environment of which we are a part, affirm our right to develop, define, and manage our own tourism in harmony with Mother Earth and in accordance with our systems of life, cultural identity, and spiritual values.

Indigenous Tourism is tourism undertaken by Indigenous Peoples from their own worldview, through which culture, knowledge, ancestral practices, spirituality, and the harmonious relationship with nature are valued and upheld. There are various categories and forms of tourism, including ecotourism, agritourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, rural tourism, community tourism, and community-based rural tourism, among others.

However, when these activities are conceived, managed, and led directly by Indigenous Peoples, within their territories and in accordance with their values, they must be recognized as Indigenous Tourism, regardless of the tourism modality, management model, context, or type of tourism they represent. It is equally important to recognize that Indigenous Tourism may be developed in both rural and urban settings and may be managed collectively, through associations, by families, or individually, provided that it preserves the essence of self-determination, cultural authenticity, spiritual connection, and the identity of the Indigenous People to which it belongs.

Indigenous Tourism is not defined by the activity itself, but by who carries it out, from which worldview, and for what purpose. As such, it constitutes an expression of cultural, economic, and territorial self-determination that seeks to strengthen Indigenous identity, revitalize Indigenous languages, spirituality, and traditions, and contribute to the Buen Vivir (Good Living) of Indigenous Peoples and communities.

We recognize that tourism, when it originates from our Indigenous territories, constitutes a living instrument for cultural revitalization, enhances the value of our heritage, promotes social cohesion and the stewardship of nature, and reaffirms restoration, vindication, social justice, and respect for Mother Earth, while also serving as a process of reconciliation for individuals and societies. We demand that any policy, program, or initiative related to tourism in Indigenous territories be developed with our Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and with full respect for our self-determination, our community governance structures, and our collective rights.

We reaffirm that tourism is not separate from the global challenges of biodiversity loss, climate change, and sustainable development, and that Indigenous Peoples, as guardians of nature, contribute solutions and play an essential role in the care and protection of nature and in safeguarding the future of humanity as a whole. We uphold the legal framework and the rights enshrined in:

- International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169.
- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007).
- The American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (OAS, 2016).
- The Convention on Biological Diversity and its Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022).
- The Paris Agreement (2015) and the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism (2023).
- The Escazú Agreement (2018), the first environmental treaty in Latin America and the Caribbean, which guarantees access to information, public participation, and environmental justice, while protecting those who defend Indigenous territories and rights.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda (2015).
- The Larrakia Declaration (2012), the first international declaration on Indigenous tourism, founded upon the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007).
- UN Tourism Recommendations on the Development of Indigenous Tourism (2018).
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1981).
- United Nations Resolution A/RES/74/135 proclaiming the period 2022–2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Furthermore, we acknowledge and value the foundations, declarations, and collective efforts undertaken by Indigenous Peoples, governments, international organizations, academia, and civil society, which for nearly three decades have advanced Indigenous tourism as an alternative and complementary economic practice, a space for intercultural dialogue, and an expression of harmonious coexistence with nature.

WE CALL FOR:

1. The Recognition and Strengthening of Indigenous Culture:

- Promote Indigenous Tourism as a vehicle for the revitalization of our Indigenous languages, ceremonies, oral traditions, knowledge systems, wisdom, and spiritual practices.
- Reaffirm our right to autonomy in the management of our tourism experiences, in accordance with our own legal systems, worldviews, cultural values, and governance structures.
- Respect our Indigenous cultural expressions and eradicate all forms of misappropriation or distortion of our identities.
- Establish joint governance mechanisms between Indigenous Peoples and States, guaranteeing full participation, respect for territorial rights, and the equitable distribution of the benefits derived from tourism.

2. Guaranteeing Rights and Participation:

- Reaffirm our right to Consultation and to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in tourism development processes involving our territories.
- Reaffirm the need for every tourism initiative undertaken within Indigenous territories to be consistent with our identity, our vision, and our life plans.
- Strengthen Indigenous governance through the recognition of Indigenous Peoples and their territories, ensuring adequate resources, autonomy, and permanent mechanisms for institutional coordination.
- Affirm the right of Indigenous Peoples to participate in the development of specific legislation on Indigenous Tourism, and in strengthening tourism planning, land-use planning, development, and promotion processes in all their dimensions. The development of culturally appropriate legal frameworks, with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, is essential to ensure respect for collective rights, sustainability, and the shared governance of tourism within our territories.

3. Indigenous Economies for Buen Vivir (Good Living)

- Promote community-based and solidarity economy models founded on reciprocity, collective work, and Buen Vivir (Good Living).
- Promote Indigenous Tourism as a source of fair income, employment generation, and the development and management of Indigenous enterprises and businesses, with the active participation of women, youth, and Elders.

- Recognize the contributions of Indigenous Tourism to national economies, ensuring that the revenues and taxes generated by tourism activities are reinvested directly in Indigenous territories without intermediaries.
- Establish Indigenous Tourism certification processes managed by Indigenous Peoples themselves, in coordination with international Indigenous Tourism and sustainable tourism certification systems.

4. The Protection of Indigenous Territories and Territoriality

- Protect ecosystems and biodiversity as collective and sacred spaces that are essential to the life and identity of our Peoples.
- Recognize that a significant proportion of the protected areas and the most important tourism destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean are located within ancestral Indigenous territories.
- Call upon governments to guarantee co-governance mechanisms and direct Indigenous administration of tourism in protected areas, recognizing the role of Indigenous Peoples in biodiversity management and conservation.
- Advocate for the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge systems and practices into environmental and tourism management as fundamental contributions to biodiversity conservation and climate action.
- Strengthen Indigenous Tourism as a tool for the resilience, defense, and restoration of our territories in the face of extractive activities, environmental degradation, and threats to our heritage.
- Urge States and the tourism sector to recognize and implement Indigenous regulatory frameworks for tourism promotion at both the national and international levels, ensuring the governance of Indigenous Peoples as rights holders.

5. The Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems:

- Promote the inclusion of Indigenous Tourism within professional, technical, and Indigenous education systems developed through participatory processes and with the active involvement of Indigenous Peoples.
- Uphold Indigenous knowledge systems as a foundation for social innovation and territorial resilience.
- Recognize Indigenous researchers, Knowledge Holders, and Elders as co-authors and co-producers of knowledge, ensuring their effective participation, fair financial compensation where appropriate, and formal recognition in the publications and outcomes arising from such processes, as an integral part of Indigenous intellectual property.
- Contribute to strengthening local capacities and to the development of indicators and evidence based on Indigenous perspectives and cultural contexts.

- Ensure the inclusion of appropriate methodologies to measure and recognize the economic contributions of Indigenous Tourism within national accounting systems through Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as well as through Indigenous-defined indicators centered on Buen Vivir (Good Living).
- Develop decolonizing relationships and methodological protocols for research and cooperation, ensuring the co-creation of knowledge from the very beginning of research processes.

6. Regional Integration and International Cooperation:

- Promote the establishment and consolidation of the Indigenous Tourism Network of Latin America and the Caribbean (RTILAC) as a platform for coordination, cooperation, and capacity strengthening among the Indigenous Peoples of the region. RTILAC is conceived as a continental space for dialogue, representation, and coordination that promotes unity, self-determination, and intercultural collaboration among Indigenous tourism stakeholders, thereby contributing to the strengthening of Indigenous economies, cultural revitalization, and the protection of Indigenous territories.
- Recognize the role and commitment of international partner organizations that promote Indigenous Tourism as a global movement, including UN Tourism, Destination Original Indigenous Tourism (DO-IT), the World Indigenous Tourism Alliance (WINTA), and the Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean (FILAC), as well as other cooperation organizations and regional networks that foster dialogue, regional integration, and the promotion of authentic, sustainable, and culturally appropriate tourism experiences developed by the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

7. Promoting Indigenous Food Systems and Agritourism:

- Recognize Indigenous cuisine as a living expression of our cultural identity, spirituality, and relationship with the land, intrinsically connected to the ancestral agricultural practices and food systems that sustain life within our territories.
- Recognize the value of Indigenous agritourism as a form of tourism that strengthens the relationship between food production, culture, and territory, enabling visitors to understand and experience natural cycles, traditional farming systems, native seeds, and the agroecological knowledge that sustains our communities.
- Promote the integration of Indigenous gastronomic tourism and agritourism as complementary strategies that contribute to food sovereignty, resilience, Indigenous economies, and biocultural conservation, positioning Indigenous foods and products as expressions of knowledge and cultural pride.

8. Promoting Indigenous Tourism Marketing Systems:

- Reaffirm that the communication, promotion, and marketing of Indigenous Tourism must be led by Indigenous Peoples themselves, ensuring the authenticity of the messages, respect for cultural symbols, and the prevention of the appropriation of Indigenous identities, while avoiding the use of stereotypes or folklorized representations.
- Urge national and international public and private tourism organizations, government agencies, and tourism enterprises to work directly with Indigenous organizational structures in the design, promotion, and commercialization of Indigenous Tourism experiences.
- Restrict the use by the tourism industry of Indigenous images, designs, figures, symbols, words, and other cultural assets without the consent of Indigenous Peoples.
- Promote the development of ethical and collaborative strategies that strengthen the presence of Indigenous Tourism in national and international markets under the principles of equity, authenticity, and shared benefits.
- Encourage the media and digital platforms to serve as allies in amplifying contemporary Indigenous narratives, making our stories visible through truth, dignity, and cultural diversity.

WE CALL UPON:

National and local governments, academia, the tourism industry, international cooperation agencies, and multilateral organizations to:

- Recognize and respect the right of Indigenous Peoples to develop their own tourism, based on their own worldviews and exercised through self-determination.
- Incorporate Indigenous Tourism into national sustainable development agendas and into climate action, biodiversity, and cultural plans as an integral component of strategies for sustainable transformation and territorial justice.
- Ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in all decision-making, planning, and monitoring processes related to Indigenous Tourism at the local, national, regional, and international levels.
- Promote intercultural education and culturally appropriate research, ensuring the recognition of traditional knowledge and Indigenous systems of learning.
- Respect the principles of non-appropriation of culture, economic equity, and the fair redistribution of benefits, consistent with collective rights and community practices.

- Work directly with grassroots organizations and Indigenous tourism networks that are genuinely representative in each country, ensuring that tourism development processes are built from the territories and with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, while avoiding the symbolic, superficial, or merely decorative inclusion of Indigenous representatives without granting them genuine decision-making authority or meaningful recognition of their knowledge, leadership, and collective rights.
- Encourage international cooperation organizations, multilateral agencies, supranational institutions, governments, and other stakeholders to allocate resources and direct funding to strengthen Indigenous Tourism managed by the grassroots organizations that comprise the Indigenous Tourism Network of Latin America and the Caribbean (RTILAC), ensuring their full participation in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of cooperation programs.
- Call upon States to guarantee the effective participation of Indigenous women in decisions concerning the lands, territories, and natural resources used for tourism. This includes ensuring that Indigenous women have control over access to, management of, and benefits derived from tourism development within their communities, guaranteeing that they are neither excluded from decision-making processes nor adversely affected by the exploitation of their territories.

WE COMMIT TO:

- Strengthen collaboration among Indigenous Peoples, governments, and civil society to build a shared vision for Indigenous Tourism.
- Consolidate regional cooperation mechanisms guided by the principles of unity, reciprocity, and respect for cultural diversity.
- Actively contribute to global efforts for biodiversity conservation and climate action, demonstrating that Indigenous Tourism is a pathway toward sustainable transformation.
- Promote the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and the equitable participation of women, youth, and Elders.
- Through Indigenous Tourism networks, contribute in a spirit of solidarity and unity to the harmonious development of processes, the advancement of Indigenous rights, and the Buen Vivir (Good Living) of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.



Popayán, Colombia, October 22, 2025

We, the undersigned, hereby endorse this Declaration on the basis of the human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples enshrined in international instruments, national constitutions, laws and regulations, as well as Indigenous customary law and legal systems. Nothing contained in this Declaration shall be interpreted as diminishing or limiting the rights already recognized and secured by Indigenous Peoples in each country of the region.

- Indigenous Tourism Network of Mexico (RITA).
- National Indigenous Tourism Network of Peru (REDNATI).
- Indigenous Tourism Network of Panama (REDTURI).
- Plurinational Federation of Community Tourism of Ecuador (FEPTCE).
- Community Solidarity Tourism Network – Red Tusoco, Bolivia.
- Mapuche Tourism Society, Chile.
- National Indigenous Tourism Association of Colombia (ASONTIC).
- Tarapacá Indigenous Tourism Trade Association (TITA A.G.), Chile.
- Aymara Women's Tourism Corporation of the Province of Tamarugal (CORMOENTUR), Chile.
- Caribbean Amerindian Development Organization (CADO).
- National Indigenous Roundtable of Costa Rica (MNICR).
- Abya Yala Indigenous Forum (FIAY).
- Destination Original Indigenous Tourism (DO-IT).
- Traditional Indigenous Authorities of Colombia – Gobierno Mayor.
- National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC).
- National Organization of the Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC).
- Indigenous Authorities of the Southwest (AISO).
- Tairona Indigenous Confederation (CIT).
- Indigenous Authorities of Colombia – AICO por la Pachamama.
- Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC).