
Beer Tourism

A Distinct Driver of Sustainable, Regional and Experience-Based Tourism in Europe

A contribution by The Brewers of Europe to the preparation of the European Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Executive Summary

Beer Tourism: creating value for destinations across Europe

Europe's forthcoming Sustainable Tourism Strategy seeks to promote tourism that strengthens destinations, supports local communities, preserves cultural heritage and contributes to a more resilient and competitive European tourism economy. Beer tourism already delivers many of these objectives.

Across Europe, breweries, historic brewing sites, festivals, beer trails, museums, hospitality businesses and agricultural landscapes are creating authentic visitor experiences that encourage travellers to discover Europe's regions beyond its best-known destinations. They support local businesses, generate year-round economic activity and strengthen the distinctive identities that make Europe's destinations unique.

The European Parliament has already recognised this growing trend. In its 2026 Resolution on European tourism, Parliament explicitly identified beer tourism as one of the specialised forms of tourism that is increasingly contributing to Europe's tourism offer. The forthcoming Sustainable Tourism Strategy provides an opportunity to build upon this recognition by highlighting beer tourism as a practical example of sustainable, place-based and experience-led tourism.

Beer tourism should not simply be viewed as a subset of gastronomic tourism. It represents a distinctive tourism ecosystem that connects agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality, cultural heritage and local communities into authentic visitor experiences. From barley fields and hop gardens to breweries, local restaurants, festivals and regional trails, beer tourism tells a uniquely European story of place, craftsmanship and tradition.

Beer tourism delivers the objectives of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Supporting regional competitiveness

Europe is home to more than 10,000 breweries, many located far beyond traditional tourism hotspots. Brewery visitor experiences create additional demand for accommodation, restaurants, retail, transport and cultural attractions, helping diversify local economies while strengthening regional competitiveness.

Unlike many tourism attractions, breweries are already embedded within local communities. Beer tourism therefore builds upon existing assets rather than requiring significant new tourism infrastructure.

Strengthening rural communities

Beer tourism begins long before visitors enter a brewery. Hop-growing regions, barley production, traditional farming landscapes and local food producers all contribute to visitor experiences that celebrate regional identity and strengthen rural economies.

By linking agriculture, brewing and hospitality, beer tourism helps distribute tourism revenues throughout local value chains while encouraging visitors to explore lesser-known destinations.

Encouraging slower, more sustainable tourism

Beer tourism naturally promotes slower travel. Rather than concentrating visitors within major urban centres, brewery trails, walking routes, cycling itineraries, festivals and regional food experiences encourage visitors to spend more time exploring regions and travelling between destinations.

Many brewery visitor centres and museums also provide year-round attractions that help reduce seasonality and strengthen tourism outside peak holiday periods.

Supporting SMEs and local value chains

Beer tourism is fundamentally local. Across Europe, family breweries, independent brewers, cafés, restaurants, hotels, guides, transport operators and local food producers all benefit from visitor expenditure generated through brewery visits, festivals and regional beer experiences.

This creates economic value that remains within local communities while strengthening Europe's hospitality ecosystem.

Preserving Europe's cultural heritage

Few products are as closely connected with Europe's cultural identity as beer. Historic breweries, monastery brewing traditions, regional beer styles, industrial heritage sites and internationally recognised festivals preserve centuries of brewing history while continually adapting it for new generations of visitors.

Belgium's UNESCO recognition of its beer culture demonstrates how brewing heritage can become a major tourism asset that simultaneously protects cultural traditions and strengthens regional destinations.

Europe's "Grain-to-Glass" Visitor Economy

Beer tourism offers something few tourism experiences can: a complete visitor journey connecting multiple sectors of the European economy.

Visitors experience the journey from agricultural production and hop-growing landscapes through brewing, hospitality, gastronomy, festivals and cultural heritage before returning home with a deeper understanding of Europe's regions and traditions. This "Grain-to-Glass" visitor economy illustrates how sustainable tourism can create value simultaneously for visitors, destinations and local communities and supports:-

- regional competitiveness;
- rural development;
- cultural heritage;
- SMEs and family businesses;
- year-round tourism;
- visitor dispersal beyond traditional tourism hotspots;
- authentic, place-based experiences.

A growing European tourism ecosystem

Beer tourism is already operating at significant scale across Europe.

Preliminary research undertaken by PwC for The Brewers of Europe has identified more than **2,000 beer festivals** across thirty European countries, attracting an estimated **72 million visitors annually**, alongside more than **1,300 breweries offering visitor experiences**, together welcoming almost **20 million visitors each year**. While these figures continue to be refined, they demonstrate that beer tourism already represents a substantial and growing component of Europe's visitor economy.

The examples presented in this paper illustrate only part of this wider European landscape.

They demonstrate the diversity of beer tourism already flourishing across Europe—from internationally recognised heritage attractions and brewery museums to regional beer trails, hop-growing regions, monastery routes, festivals, brewery visitor centres and cross-border tourism initiatives.

Taken together, they show that beer tourism is not a niche activity confined to a small number of destinations, but an established and evolving tourism ecosystem with considerable potential to support the ambitions of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Recommendations

The Brewers of Europe encourages the European Commission to:

- ***recognise beer tourism as a distinct contributor to sustainable, regional and experience-based tourism within the Sustainable Tourism Strategy;***
- ***highlight beer tourism within the accompanying Commission Staff Working Document as a practical example of how tourism can strengthen local communities, disperse visitor flows and support regional competitiveness;***
- ***encourage cooperation between tourism authorities, regional destinations, breweries and hospitality businesses in developing integrated tourism experiences rooted in local identity and cultural heritage;***
- ***promote beer tourism as part of Europe's wider cultural, gastronomic and industrial heritage, recognising its contribution to rural development, SMEs and regional value chains.***

Beer Tourism as a Model for Sustainable Destination Development

Europe's tourism sector is undergoing profound change. While international tourism continues to grow, destinations increasingly face the challenge of balancing economic opportunities with environmental sustainability, social acceptance and the quality of the visitor experience. The future competitiveness of European tourism will depend not simply on attracting more visitors, but on creating greater value for destinations and the communities that host them.

Increasingly, successful tourism is characterised by authenticity, local identity and experiences that encourage visitors to spend more time discovering places beyond Europe's most familiar attractions. Visitors are seeking meaningful experiences that connect them with local culture, heritage, gastronomy and communities rather than simply visiting iconic landmarks.

Beer tourism responds naturally to these changing expectations. Rather than representing a single attraction, beer tourism forms an interconnected ecosystem of experiences that combine agriculture, manufacturing, cultural heritage, hospitality and gastronomy. It allows visitors to discover Europe through local stories that have often evolved over centuries while generating economic benefits that remain largely within regional economies.

Unlike tourism products that require significant new infrastructure or investment, beer tourism builds upon assets that already exist across Europe. Historic breweries, modern brewing facilities, hop-growing landscapes, museums, village cafés, regional festivals and local food traditions already attract visitors throughout the year. The opportunity is therefore not to create an entirely new tourism product, but to better connect, promote and develop an existing ecosystem that contributes directly to the objectives of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Beer tourism demonstrates that sustainability is not simply about reducing environmental impacts. It is equally about creating resilient destinations where tourism strengthens local communities, supports small businesses, preserves cultural heritage and generates economic opportunities throughout the year.

1. Creating Value for Destinations Rather than Concentrating Visitors

One of the principal objectives of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy is to encourage a more balanced distribution of tourism across Europe. Many destinations face increasing pressure from concentrated visitor numbers during peak seasons, while rural regions and smaller towns struggle to benefit from tourism despite possessing rich cultural and natural assets.

Beer tourism offers a practical example of how tourism can help address this imbalance. Breweries are located not only in Europe's major cities but also in thousands of towns and villages across every Member State. They therefore provide natural anchors for regional tourism that encourage visitors to travel beyond traditional destinations and discover places that might otherwise remain outside established tourism circuits.

Across Europe, brewery trails, festivals and visitor experiences increasingly connect multiple destinations into coherent tourism itineraries rather than isolated attractions.

Belgium provides particularly strong examples of this approach. Belgian Beer World in Brussels introduces visitors to Belgium's brewing culture before encouraging them to discover

breweries and beer regions across the country. Similarly, the Toer de Geuze initiative attracts thousands of visitors into the rural Pajottenland and Zenne Valley, generating overnight stays while supporting local breweries, hospitality businesses and transport providers. The Trappist Trail connects abbeys, villages and regional hospitality across the Ardennes through walking and cycling experiences that encourage multi-day travel.

Spain has adopted a similar philosophy through its national Beer Passport, encouraging visitors to travel across multiple provinces to discover smaller breweries and less-visited regions. Rather than concentrating tourism in established coastal destinations, the initiative actively promotes regional exploration and longer journeys across the country.

These examples demonstrate that beer tourism is not simply about brewery visits. It is about connecting destinations through shared cultural experiences that encourage visitors to explore regions more deeply and spend more time within local communities.

2. Beer Tourism Supports the Transition towards Slower Tourism

Across Europe there is growing recognition that tourism should be measured not only by visitor numbers but also by the quality of visitor experiences and the value generated for destinations.

Beer tourism naturally lends itself to slower forms of travel. Visitors rarely travel to experience a single brewery in isolation. Instead, brewery visits are frequently combined with local gastronomy, accommodation, walking and cycling routes, cultural attractions, agricultural landscapes and regional festivals. This creates itineraries that encourage visitors to remain in destinations for longer periods while engaging more deeply with local communities.

Many brewery experiences also operate throughout the year, providing destinations with attractive indoor visitor experiences during periods when outdoor tourism is less active. Brewery museums, guided tours, tasting experiences and cultural events therefore contribute to reducing tourism seasonality while supporting local hospitality businesses beyond the traditional summer season.

The diversity of beer tourism experiences also enables destinations to appeal to a wide range of visitor groups, including families, cultural tourists, food enthusiasts, cyclists, walkers and international visitors seeking authentic regional experiences. Beer tourism therefore complements, rather than competes with, existing tourism products. It adds depth to destination offers while strengthening their resilience.

3. A Tourism Ecosystem Rooted in Local Communities

Perhaps the greatest strength of beer tourism lies in its capacity to generate economic value that remains within local communities. Unlike tourism models centred around a single attraction, beer tourism depends upon a broad network of interconnected local businesses and organisations.

Breweries work alongside hotels, cafés, restaurants, local food producers, transport providers, museums, guides, tourism organisations and cultural institutions to create integrated visitor experiences. This collaborative approach generates benefits that extend well beyond the brewery itself.

Local accommodation providers benefit from overnight stays generated by festivals and brewery trails. Restaurants and cafés showcase regional cuisine alongside local beers. Farmers supplying barley and hops become part of the visitor story. Museums, heritage organisations and tourism offices collaborate in promoting regional identities built around brewing traditions.

Luxembourg's Brasserie Nationale illustrates this integrated approach particularly well. Brewery experiences have become an important attraction for the Minett region, developed in partnership with tourism organisations, hotels and hospitality businesses. The planned International Beer Experience further demonstrates how brewing heritage can become the catalyst for wider destination development, encouraging visitors to explore southern Luxembourg and neighbouring regions across national borders.

Similarly, Austria demonstrates how national tourism promotion can integrate beer experiences within wider destination marketing, connecting regional festivals, brewery visits and cultural traditions into broader tourism offers that benefit multiple regions and local businesses.

These examples illustrate that beer tourism succeeds because it is rooted in communities rather than built around standalone attractions.

4. Beer Tourism as an Opportunity for Europe

Europe already possesses one of the world's richest brewing cultures. From monastery breweries and historic city breweries to innovative craft producers and internationally recognised festivals, brewing heritage forms part of the identity of thousands of European communities. What remains is the opportunity to connect these assets more systematically within Europe's tourism offer.

The examples presented in this paper demonstrate that beer tourism is already contributing to sustainable destination development across Europe. They also suggest considerable potential for further growth. As destinations increasingly seek tourism models that create value locally, encourage longer stays, strengthen regional identities and support year-round economic activity, beer tourism offers a practical example of how these objectives can be achieved simultaneously.

The following case studies illustrate this diversity of approaches across Europe. While they represent only a selection of existing initiatives, they demonstrate the breadth of experiences already contributing to sustainable tourism and provide practical examples that may inform the implementation of the European Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Annex: Illustrative Examples of Beer Tourism Supporting Sustainable Destination Development

Introduction

Beer tourism ranges from internationally recognised heritage attractions and brewery visitor centres to rural beer trails, hop-growing landscapes, mountain destinations, monastery routes, festivals, industrial heritage and cross-border tourism initiatives.

The examples presented below are intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive. They demonstrate the diversity of beer tourism initiatives already contributing to sustainable destination development and show how different destinations are using brewing culture to strengthen local economies, preserve cultural heritage and create authentic visitor experiences. Taken together, they illustrate the considerable potential for beer tourism to contribute to the objectives of the European Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

1. Strengthening Destination Identity through Brewing Heritage

One of Europe's greatest tourism assets is the authenticity of its regions. Beer tourism enables destinations to celebrate their own distinctive history, traditions and brewing culture while creating visitor experiences that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere. Historic breweries, monastery brewing traditions, museums and visitor centres preserve centuries of craftsmanship while making cultural heritage accessible to new audiences. The following examples illustrate:-

✓ Cultural heritage ✓ Urban regeneration ✓ Year-round tourism ✓ Regional branding

Belgian Beer World – Brussels (Belgium) - Located in the restored Brussels Stock Exchange building, Belgian Beer World introduces visitors to the diversity of Belgian brewing through an immersive experience developed together with more than one hundred breweries. Beyond showcasing Belgium's UNESCO-recognised beer culture, the centre encourages visitors to discover breweries and beer regions throughout the country, acting as a gateway to wider regional tourism. Around 130,000 visitors were welcomed in 2025.

Brewery De Halve Maan – Bruges (Belgium) - The last active historic brewery in Bruges demonstrates how industrial heritage can remain a living part of a city's identity. Brewery visits, combined with innovative infrastructure such as the underground beer pipeline, have created one of Bruges' leading year-round attractions while preserving brewing activity in the historic centre.

Brasserie Meteor – Hochfelden, Alsace (France) - France's oldest independent family brewery welcomes visitors throughout the year to discover its historic brewery, brewing process and Alsatian brewing traditions. Combining industrial heritage with modern production, the visitor experience celebrates regional craftsmanship while encouraging visitors to explore the wider Alsace Beer Route and surrounding rural communities. Located outside the main tourist circuits centred on Strasbourg, the brewery attracts approximately 25,000 visitors annually and contributes to the local hospitality economy, demonstrating how brewing heritage can strengthen smaller regional destinations.

MEGA – Mundo Estrella Galicia – A Coruña (Spain) - Spain's first beer museum combines brewing history, interactive exhibitions and brewery experiences to position Galicia as a destination for year-round beer tourism. It illustrates how brewing heritage can contribute to urban regeneration and regional tourism beyond Spain's traditional coastal destinations.

2. Encouraging Visitors to Explore Europe's Regions

Beer tourism naturally encourages visitors to travel beyond Europe's best-known destinations. Regional brewery trails, themed routes and brewery passports create itineraries that link multiple communities and encourage longer stays. The following examples illustrate:-

✓ Visitor dispersal ✓ Rural tourism ✓ Cross-regional itineraries ✓ Slow tourism

Toer de Geuze – Flemish Brabant (Belgium) - Every two years, fourteen traditional lambic breweries open their doors across the Pajottenland and Zenne Valley. The initiative attracts approximately 30,000 visitors and encourages overnight stays, cycling and public transport while supporting rural hospitality and small family breweries. More than 40% of visitors come from abroad.

Pasaporte Cervezero (Spain) - The national Beer Passport encourages visitors to discover breweries across at least five provinces through an interactive digital map and reward programme. By directing visitors towards smaller breweries and rural destinations, it demonstrates how digital tools can support more balanced regional tourism. More than 5,000 passports have already been issued and almost 100 breweries participate.

Brasserie des 3 Monts – Saint-Sylvestre-Cappel (France) - Located in the heart of French Flanders, Brasserie des 3 Monts offers visitors an experience centred on traditional Flemish brewing, regional ingredients and the close relationship between agriculture and brewing. The brewery attracts visitors from both France and Belgium and forms part of wider tourism routes across the border, illustrating how brewing culture can connect neighbouring regions while promoting local hop production, short supply chains and rural tourism. It provides an excellent example of a "grain-to-glass" visitor experience rooted in local identity.

Beer Experiences promoted by Austria Tourism - Austria's national tourism agency actively promotes brewery visits, beer gardens, beer hotels and regional beer experiences alongside wider destination marketing. This demonstrates how beer tourism can become an integral component of national tourism promotion rather than a standalone attraction.

3. Supporting Rural Communities and Local Economies

Beer tourism creates opportunities for communities that lie beyond Europe's principal tourism destinations. It strengthens local hospitality, agriculture and small businesses while encouraging visitors to discover authentic regional experiences. The following examples illustrate:-

✓ Rural development ✓ SME support ✓ Local value chains ✓ Agricultural heritage

Hop Region – West Flanders (Belgium) - Belgium's historic hop-growing region combines brewery experiences, hop museums, agricultural tourism and cycling routes to create a

destination rooted in local identity. Visitors explore breweries, hop farms and regional gastronomy while supporting local accommodation providers and rural businesses.

Brasserie de la Choulette – Hordain, Hauts-de-France (France) - Since opening its visitor experience in 2024, Brasserie de la Choulette has introduced visitors to the traditions of bière de garde brewing in northern France. Combining brewery visits with regional gastronomy and local events, it contributes to the attractiveness of a rural area undergoing economic transition while generating business for local restaurants, accommodation providers and community events. The brewery demonstrates how brewing heritage can become a driver of rural regeneration and local identity.

Trappist Trail – Ardennes (Belgium) - A network linking three internationally renowned Trappist breweries encourages visitors to explore the Ardennes on foot or by bicycle over several days. The initiative supports village hospitality, accommodation providers and regional producers while demonstrating how beer tourism can anchor rural destination development.

De BrauAtelier – Brasserie Nationale (Luxembourg) - Guided brewery tours, brewing workshops and visitor experiences have transformed Brasserie Nationale into a significant attraction for southern Luxembourg. Visitor numbers have more than tripled since 2022, supported by partnerships with regional tourism organisations and local hospitality businesses.

Brasserie Castelain – Bénifontaine, Hauts-de-France (France) - Home of the well-known Ch'ti beers, Brasserie Castelain offers visitors an immersive experience showcasing brewing, fermentation and regional traditions. Located near Lens, the brewery contributes to the continued diversification of tourism following the area's industrial transition, complementing attractions such as the Louvre-Lens Museum while strengthening the surrounding hospitality ecosystem. It illustrates how brewing can support the regeneration of former industrial regions through authentic visitor experiences rooted in local identity.

4. Creating Year-Round Tourism

Many beer tourism experiences operate throughout the year, helping destinations reduce seasonality while strengthening local hospitality businesses beyond peak visitor periods. The following examples illustrate:-

✓Year-round tourism ✓Cultural events ✓Cross-border visitors ✓Local hospitality

Belgian Beer Weekend – Brussels (Belgium) - Held annually at the beginning of September, Belgian Beer Weekend extends the tourism season beyond the summer peak while showcasing more than fifty breweries from across Belgium. Around three-quarters of visitors travel from abroad, making it both a tourism attraction and a gateway to regional brewery visits.

Vienna Beer Festival (Austria) - Held over four days in the centre of Vienna, the festival brings together approximately thirty breweries from across Austria, enabling visitors to discover the country's brewing diversity while supporting local hospitality and cultural programming.

Villacher Kirchtag (Austria) - The traditional city festival in Villach attracts around 50,000 visitors annually and demonstrates how brewing culture can reinforce regional traditions while drawing visitors from neighbouring countries.

Brasserie du Mont Blanc – Savoie (France) - Located in the French Alps, Brasserie du Mont Blanc offers visitors an insight into the production of award-winning craft beers brewed using water from Alpine glaciers. The brewery complements mountain tourism by attracting visitors throughout the year, helping diversify the tourism offer beyond the winter ski season. Combined with hiking, gastronomy and wellness tourism, it demonstrates how brewery experiences can extend visitor stays and strengthen year-round destination attractiveness in mountain regions.

5. Investing in the Destinations of Tomorrow

Beer tourism continues to evolve through new investments that combine brewing heritage, education, sustainability and visitor experiences. The following examples illustrate:-

✓ *Destination investment* ✓ *Innovation* ✓ *Cross-border cooperation*
✓ *Long-term regional development*

International Beer Experience – Luxembourg - The planned International Beer Experience will combine a brewery tour, museum, microbrewery, educational experiences and conference facilities within a single destination. Located close to the borders with Belgium, France and Germany, the project aims to strengthen cross-border tourism while encouraging longer stays in southern Luxembourg.

Emerging Brewery Experience Centres across Europe - Recent investments in Belgium and Spain illustrate how destinations increasingly view brewery visitor experiences as catalysts for wider tourism development. These projects combine heritage, gastronomy, culture and hospitality within integrated visitor attractions that generate benefits extending well beyond the brewery itself.

Concluding observations

The examples presented in this paper represent only a selection of the many beer tourism initiatives already operating across Europe. Collectively, they demonstrate that beer tourism is far more than brewery visits. It is an integrated tourism ecosystem that connects agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality, gastronomy, culture and local communities to create authentic visitor experiences rooted in place.

While every destination has developed its own approach, the underlying principles remain remarkably consistent. Beer tourism encourages visitors to explore beyond established destinations, supports local businesses, strengthens regional identity, extends tourism throughout the year and preserves Europe's rich brewing heritage.

As Europe seeks to develop a tourism model that creates greater value for destinations rather than simply increasing visitor numbers, these examples demonstrate that beer tourism already offers a practical and scalable contribution to many of the objectives of the European Sustainable Tourism Strategy.