



Beyond the Horizon: Tourism as an Engine for Inclusive Prosperity

Economic Impact, Job Creation, and Poverty Eradication in Vietnam & ASEAN (2026 Outlook)

Pham Hong Long, VNU USSH Hanoi, longph@vnu.edu.vn, +84914914989

The Macro Context: ASEAN Tourism in 2026

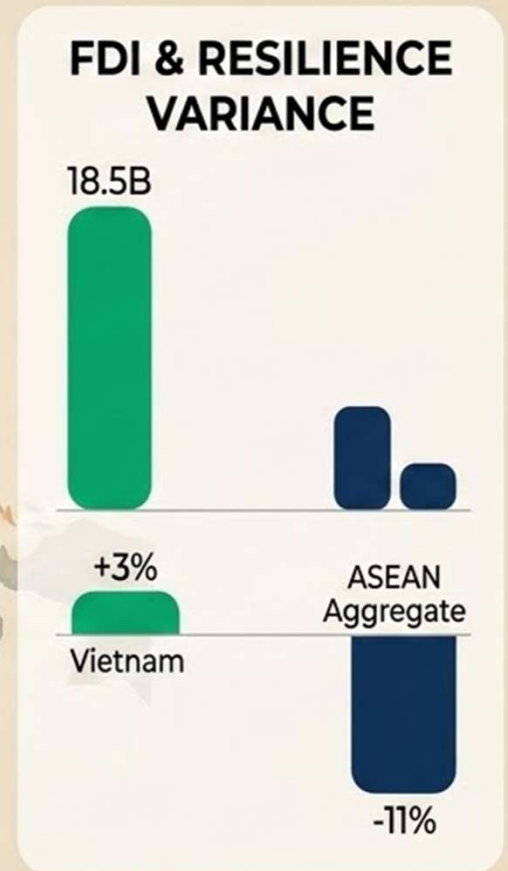


Far from a leisure-only sector, tourism is a primary systemic driver of regional economic integration and post-pandemic resilience.

(ASEAN Secretariat, 2026; World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2026)

ECONOMIC TRAJECTORY: VIETNAM VS. ASEAN AVERAGES

	Vietnam	ASEAN Aggregate
Projected Economic Growth (to 2030)	+5.0% per year (High Growth Tier)	+4.3% per year (Average)
Foreign Direct Investment (2023)	USD 18.50 Billion (Leading investment destination)	Highly varied (e.g., Cambodia 3.96B, Thailand 3.09B)
Pre-to-Post Pandemic Resilience (2024 Receipts)	+3% real change from 2019 (Full Recovery)	-11% real change from 2019 (Ongoing Recovery)



(Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change, 2026; UN Tourism, 2025)

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THE SOCIAL FOOTPRINT: DEMOGRAPHICS OF TOURISM EMPLOYMENT

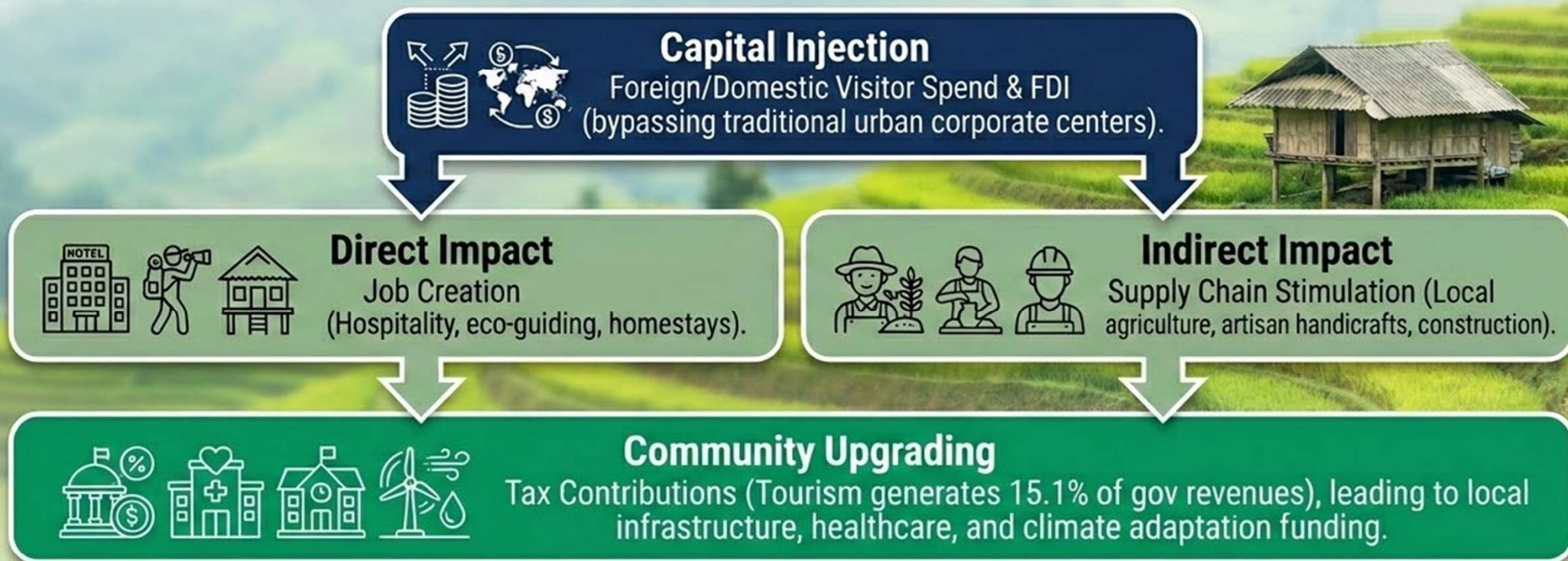


Tourism is inherently people-centered. It acts as a structural mechanism for localized wealth generation, preventing rural-to-urban migration by empowering local youth and women.

(World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2026)

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THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT: MECHANISMS OF POVERTY REDUCTION



The result is a structural lift in the coastal and rural poverty line, linking environmental stewardship directly to household income.

(ASEAN & ERIA, 2026; WTTC, 2026)

Case Study 1: Vietnam — Rural Homestays & Heritage



📍 **Model:** Community-Based Tourism (CBT) integrated with UNESCO heritage preservation.

📍 **Economic Impact:** Adapts service models to inject foreign spending directly into rural households. Mitigates the economic disparity caused by major “over-tourism” hotspots.

Poverty & Social Impact:

- + • Empowered local families to maintain sustainable income during and post-pandemic.
- + • Prevents youth out-migration by creating viable rural micro-businesses.
- + • Transitions locals into active stewards of traditional living culture.

(Ngo & Creutz, 2022; Quang et al., 2023)

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Case Study 2: Malaysia – Ecotourism & Indigenous Empowerment



Malaysian Borneo

- **Model:** Nature-based ecotourism aligned with the ASEAN CBT Standard (Over 30 active initiatives).
- **Economic Impact:** Diversifies national tourism revenue away from urban centers (Kuala Lumpur), capturing high-value, sustainable rural experiences.
- **Poverty & Social Impact:**
 -  Creates sustainable jobs in conservation, eco-guiding, and hospitality.
 -  Directly links the livelihood of indigenous communities with the protection of biodiversity.
 -  Provides market credibility and visibility through ASEAN Tourism Awards integration.

(ASEAN Secretariat, 2022; Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change, 2026)

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Case Study 3: Indonesia — Marine Ecotourism & Local Stewardship



Indonesian Archipelago
(Bali/Komodo)



(Diah, 2025; Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change, 2026)



MODEL: Marine Ecotourism balancing mass tourism demands with strict ecological boundaries.



ECONOMIC IMPACT: Drives a portion of Indonesia's massive **USD 22.09 Billion** tourism FDI, shifting investment focus from crowded hubs to emerging marine zones.



POVERTY & SOCIAL IMPACT:



Successfully transitions coastal communities from extractive fishing to lucrative eco-tourism.



Elevates coastal poverty lines by generating sustainable micro-businesses (boat operators, dive guides).



Mitigates ecological degradation while preserving local welfare.

Strategic Policy Directions (2026–2030)



Pillar 1: Climate & Green Finance

Integrate rural MSMEs into national climate adaptation funds (blended finance, matching grants) to protect highly vulnerable destinations from ecological shocks.



Pillar 2: Smart Tourism & Digital Inclusion

Leverage regional data-sharing platforms to market rural CBT destinations globally, ensuring local communities capture the digital value chain without intermediary leakage.



Pillar 3: Public-Private-Community Partnerships (PPCP)

Universally implement the ASEAN CBT Standards to ensure rigorous auditing, targeted capacity building, and equitable profit-sharing across the region.

(ASEAN & ERIA, 2026; WTTC, 2026)

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Conclusion: The Dual Mandate of ASEAN Tourism

- ✓ **A Catalyst for Integration:** Tourism in Vietnam and the broader ASEAN region is fundamentally an engine for social cohesion and rural integration, far exceeding its role in pure GDP growth.
- ✓ **Eradicating Poverty through Stewardship:** By prioritizing Community-Based Tourism, the region achieves a vital dual mandate: permanently lifting rural communities out of poverty while transforming them into active stewards of their ecological and cultural heritage.

(Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change, 2026)

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