

Ecotourism in Algeria and the Contribution of Government Support Agencies to Its Development

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Abstract: This study aims to identify ecotourism in terms of its concept and importance, and to examine the various government support agencies in Algeria that provide significant incentives aimed at developing and promoting it as part of the government strategy for economic diversification beyond the hydrocarbon sector. The study also aims to analyze tourism activity indicators in Algeria, particularly in the field of ecotourism, in order to clarify the actual contribution of government support agencies to its development. To achieve the objectives of the study, the descriptive approach was adopted in the theoretical part by addressing the various concepts, while the analytical approach was used in the empirical part of the study through the analysis of various ecotourism indicators in Algeria. The study concluded that Algeria has significant potential in the field of ecotourism and that government support agencies have a significant role in developing ecotourism.

Keywords: Tourism; Ecotourism; Government Support Agencies.

Introduction

The tourism sector is considered one of the most important sectors in all countries, given its effective contribution to generating stable and even increasing revenues. Many countries build their economies by focusing on the tourism sector, perhaps because of the tourism potential they possess, which attracts both domestic and foreign tourists, as well as the growing demand for tourism products, which have become an essential service in the modern era that is difficult to dispense with.

In line with global trends, particularly the trend towards achieving sustainable development through building strong economies while preserving the environment to ensure the continuity of human life and

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the availability of resources for future generations, the concept of ecotourism has emerged as an embodiment of this vital orientation. On the one hand, countries can achieve economic development by focusing on the tourism sector, while on the other hand, they can achieve the objectives of sustainable development.

Research Problem

Based on the foregoing, there is an urgent need to study the issue of ecotourism in Algeria, given Algeria's orientation towards an economic diversification strategy beyond the hydrocarbon sector and the tourism potential that the country possesses in terms of its various resources and components. This has prompted Algeria to support and promote ecotourism by providing numerous incentives for investment in this vital sector. Accordingly, the research problem can be formulated through the following question:

- What is the role of government support agencies in promoting ecotourism in Algeria?

Research Hypothesis

In order to answer the research questions, the study will proceed from the following hypothesis:

Algeria has paid attention to the tourism sector, particularly ecotourism, by providing the necessary support through government support agencies established by the State.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Addressing the conceptual framework of ecotourism and highlighting its importance;
- Identifying the various government support agencies for tourism and highlighting the most important advantages and incentives they provide.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is reflected in its scientific importance, which lies in shedding light on one of the emerging topics, namely ecotourism, given its contribution to human life by ensuring its continuity. The practical significance of the study is also reflected in highlighting the most important incentives and advantages available in the field of ecotourism in Algeria and provided by government support agencies.

Research Methodology

From a methodological perspective, the study will rely on the descriptive approach to present the theoretical framework and the analytical approach to present the case study. From a conceptual perspective, the study will adopt the hypothetical-deductive approach, as initial hypotheses will be formulated and subsequently tested.

Structure of the Study

The study will be divided into the following sections:

- An introduction to tourism and ecotourism;
- Government support agencies and their contribution to promoting ecotourism.

1. Introduction to Tourism and Ecotourism

1-1 Definition of Tourism

There are many definitions of tourism, as it is viewed from both an economic and social perspective as follows (Makhzoumi et al., 2020, p. 57):

“A productive sector that plays an important role in increasing national income, improving the balance of payments, serving as a source of foreign currency, and providing an important opportunity for employing the workforce in order to achieve development programs.”

“A bridge for communication between different cultures, traditions, and customs of various countries and nations, as a result of the development of tourist societies and the improvement of the standard of living of individuals and society.”

The World Tourism Organization “OMT” has defined tourism as “a set of activities undertaken by individuals while travelling and moving to places outside their usual environment, for the purpose of leisure or other purposes” (Ghazlan, 2017, p. 06).

Based on the foregoing, tourism refers to a set of activities related to individuals’ travel, whether domestic or local. Accordingly, it has several aspects, including:

- The availability of travel, which involves moving from one place to another;
- Discovering cultures, traditions, and customs;
- Recreation and leisure;
- Contributing to national income.

1-2 Components of Tourism

For the tourism sector to operate in any country, the following components must be available (Habbal & Harrouche, 2019, pp. 275–276):

- **Transportation:** Transportation is considered the main artery of tourism. Tourism essentially involves movement or travel, which can only take place when transportation is available to tourists. It includes land transportation, maritime transportation, and air transportation.
- **Accommodation:** Accommodation refers to the availability of places for tourists to stay. It is the first thing tourists usually look for, particularly upon arrival. Accommodation may include hotels, apartments, campsites, and others.
- **Tourism Program:** The tourism program is related to the availability of tourist attractions of various types. Tourists organize a schedule to manage their time, such as visiting museums, leisure, recreation and entertainment facilities, religious and natural sites, shopping areas, gardens, parks, and others.
- **Tourism Infrastructure:** For tourism to succeed, infrastructure capable of attracting tourists from different places must be available. It includes various services that can gain tourists’ confidence, such as electricity, gas, water, Internet access, markets, and parking facilities.
- **Tourism Superstructure:** This refers to a set of projects and facilities that facilitate and promote tourism, including travel agencies, tourism and travel companies, rental offices for cars or apartments, cinemas, cultural facilities, theaters, and others. These facilities differ from one country to another depending on the level of advancement and development of each country.

1-3 Concept of Ecotourism

Many definitions of ecotourism have emerged due to the recent development of the concept on the one hand and its connection with the concept of sustainable development on the other. Among the most prominent definitions are the following:

- “Ecotourism refers to all tourism activities that take into consideration the environmental dimension and the preservation of human beings and nature within the framework of sustainable development” (Charaf, 2019, p. 163).

According to the United Nations Tourism Organization, the concept of ecotourism revolves around the following (UN Tourism, www.untourism.int/sustainable-development):

- All forms of tourism that are based on nature, where the motivation is to enjoy and appreciate natural landscapes, in addition to discovering traditional cultures in natural areas;
- The inclusion of educational and interpretive elements;
- Being usually, but not always, organized by specialized agencies offering trips for small groups;
- Working to minimize negative impacts on the natural, social, and cultural environment;
- Promoting the conservation of natural areas.

1-4 Importance of Ecotourism

Ecotourism has several objectives, which can be summarized as follows (UN Tourism, 2013):

- Generating income;
- Creating employment opportunities;
- Preserving biodiversity;
- Protecting natural areas;
- Encouraging individuals to preserve and respect natural and cultural heritage.

2. Government Support Agencies and Their Contribution to Promoting Ecotourism

2-1 Algerian Agency for Investment Promotion

• Definition of the Agency:

According to Article 2 of Executive Decree No. 22-298, the Algerian Agency for Investment Promotion is defined as a public institution of an administrative nature, endowed with legal personality and financial autonomy.

• Functions of the Agency:

According to Article 4 of Executive Decree No. 22-298, the functions of this agency include the following (Official Gazette, 2022, p. 7):

- In the field of information:
 - Receiving and informing investors about all matters necessary for investment;
 - Identifying legislation and regulations related to investment, processing and disseminating them through appropriate means;

- Establishing various information systems that facilitate investors' access to the necessary data;
- Establishing a database, in coordination with the relevant administrations and bodies, concerning the availability of land designated for investment.
- In the field of facilitation:
 - Establishing and managing a digital platform for investors;
 - Assessing the investment climate and proposing various measures that contribute to its improvement;
 - Providing all information concerning investment opportunities in Algeria and the procedures related to them.
- In the field of investment promotion:
 - Initiating cooperation with various public and private bodies in Algeria and abroad to promote investment in Algeria;
 - Developing proposals and plans for investment promotion at both the national and international levels;
 - Providing services that guarantee the establishment of business relations and facilitate communication between different investors in order to strengthen business and partnership opportunities and establish cooperation relations with various foreign bodies.
- In the field of investor support:
 - Organizing a service for guiding and assisting investors;
 - Resorting to external expertise through the provision of consultancy services;
 - Assisting investors when dealing with other administrations.
- In the field of managing incentives:
 - Issuing investment registration certificates;
 - Identifying various structured projects;
 - Verifying investors' eligibility to benefit from incentives;
 - Issuing decisions withdrawing incentives, reports confirming entry into the operating phase, and managing the transfer process;
 - Preparing certificates of exemption from Value Added Tax (VAT).
- In the field of monitoring:
 - Ensuring, in coordination with various administrations and bodies, compliance with investors' obligations;
 - Handling various complaints submitted by investors;
 - Developing various services related to monitoring, listening, and follow-up.

2-2 National Agency for Tourism Land

- **Definition of the Agency:**

According to Article 2 of Executive Decree No. 23-489, this agency is defined as “a public institution of an industrial and commercial nature, endowed with legal personality and financial autonomy.”

– **Functions of the Agency:**

According to Article 5 of Executive Decree No. 23-489 (Official Gazette, 2023, p. 30), its functions include:

- Carrying out, on behalf of the State, the development and internal connection of tourism land belonging to the State’s private domain, located within tourism expansion zones and tourist sites and designated for the implementation of investment projects, to roads and various networks;
- Ensuring the external connection of tourism expansion zones and tourist sites to roads and various networks, in coordination with the sectors concerned and in accordance with the regulations in force;
- Preparing various urban planning instruments related to tourism development;
- Determining and demarcating the boundaries of tourism expansion zones and tourist sites in coordination with the Algerian Agency for Investment Promotion and upgrading them;
- Managing, operating, monitoring, and maintaining the common areas of tourism expansion zones and tourist sites, in accordance with the regulations in force;
- Maintaining and updating the database relating to tourism land and the economic operators established within tourism expansion zones and tourist sites;
- Protecting and preserving the tourism land for which it is responsible for managing its common areas.

2-3 Contribution of Government Support Agencies to Promoting the Tourism Sector in Algeria

2-3-1 Incentives Provided by Support Agencies to Attract Investment in the Tourism Sector

Tax Incentives: These consist of tax reductions or exemptions, as follows (Official Gazette, 2022):

– **Sector-Based Regime:**

This is an incentive regime specifically designed for investment in priority sectors, including mining and quarrying, agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries, industry, food, pharmaceutical and petrochemical industries, services and tourism, new and renewable energies, the knowledge economy, and information and communication technologies.

The tourism sector is among the investments benefiting from tax incentives, particularly under the sector-based regime, which provides several important tax advantages, including:

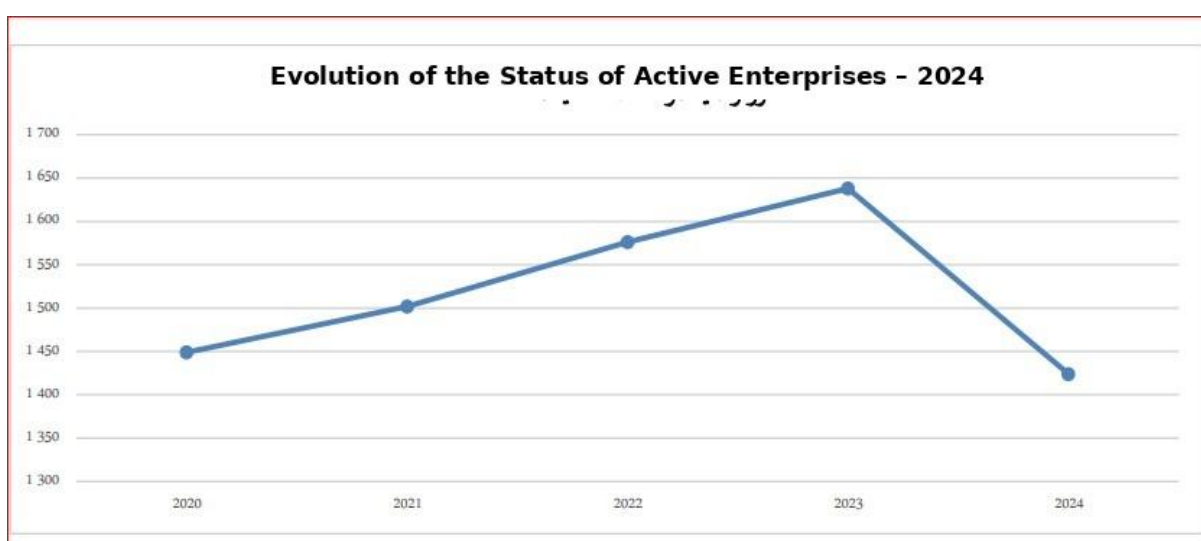
- **Implementation Phase:** Investors benefit from the following incentives:
- Exemption from customs duties on imported goods that are used in the implementation of the investment;
- Exemption from Value Added Tax (VAT) on imported or locally acquired goods and services used in the implementation of the investment;
- Exemption from payment of property transfer duties and land registration advertising tax on all real estate acquisitions incorporated into the investment;

- Exemption from registration duties relating to incorporation agreements and capital increases;
- Exemption from registration duties and land registration advertising tax;
- Exemption from property tax on real estate properties included within the investment framework for a period of 10 years.
- **Operating Phase:** The duration of the incentives ranges from 3 to 5 years, during which investors benefit from:
 - Exemption from Corporate Income Tax (CIT);
 - Exemption from the Tax on Professional Activity (TAP)

2-3-2 Indicators of Ecotourism Development in Response to Government Support

- **Hotel Establishments**

Figure 01: Evolution of Hotel Establishments during 2020–2024



Source: Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts (2025).

The preceding figure shows that Algeria has good potential in terms of the number of hotel establishments, which constitute a fundamental pillar for the development of ecotourism. The number of hotel establishments reached 1,449 in 2020, with an accommodation capacity of 127,614 beds. In 2023, the sector experienced a significant increase, with the number of establishments reaching approximately 1,638 and an accommodation capacity of 151,052 beds. This reflects the considerable attention paid by the Algerian State to developing this sector and making it an effective contributor to the economic diversification strategy. The following presents the main indicators of the evolution of accommodation capacity in Algeria over the same period:

Table 01: Accommodation Capacity in Algeria, 2020–2023

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
Accommodation capacity	127614	132266	145526	151052

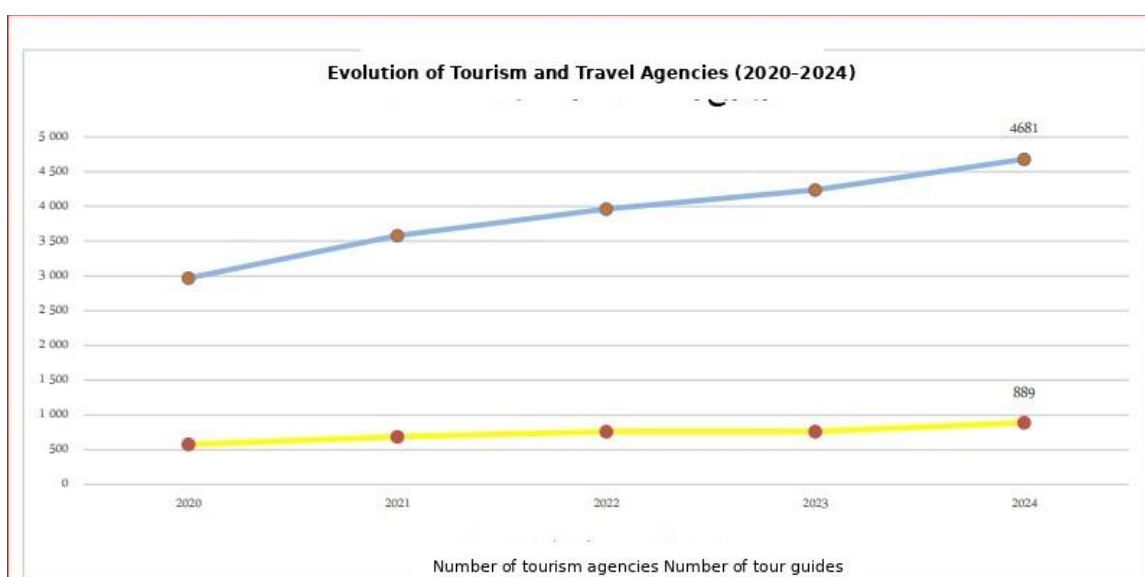
Source: Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts (2025).

The above indicators show that Algeria has considerable capacities and potential in terms of hotel establishments, which places it in a strong position in this field and enables it to achieve a qualitative leap in the tourism sector, particularly in ecotourism.

• Development of Tourism and Travel Agencies in Algeria

To ensure the development of tourism as a whole, and ecotourism in particular, a sufficient number of tourism agencies is required to promote ecotourism and provide the various services associated with tourism, including booking and transportation, in order to ensure tourists' comfort. The following figure illustrates the development of tourism and travel agencies:

Figure 02: Evolution of Tourism and Travel Agencies, 2020–2024



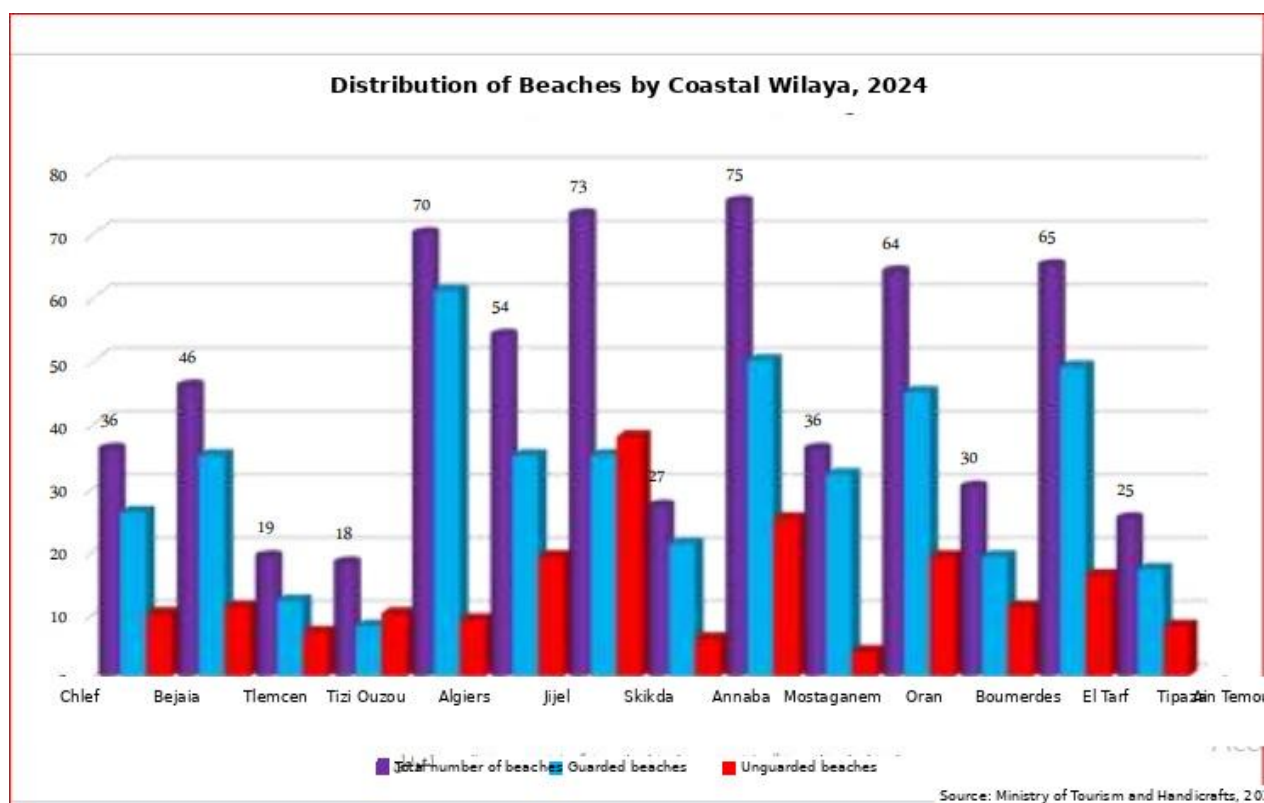
Source: Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts (2025).

The preceding figure shows the substantial growth in the number of tourism agencies. In 2020, there were 3546 active agencies, while in 2024 the number reached 5570, representing an increase of 2024 agencies. This demonstrates the high level of activity in Algeria's tourism sector, which has experienced considerable growth year after year as a result of Algeria's orientation toward economic diversification. Consequently, there is a need to rely on this sector as a key pillar of economic development, which has effectively been supported through the government's support policy for the sector. To ensure the proper functioning of these tourism agencies, the government has encouraged the accreditation of tour guides, who are indispensable to the tourism process, particularly in relation to foreign visitors. In 2024, approximately 242 tour guides were accredited, including 151 local guides and 91 national guides.

• Distribution of Beaches in Algeria

Algeria has an extensive coastline stretching from east to west, from El Tarf Wilaya to Tlemcen Wilaya. This has had a positive impact on the number of beaches in the coastal wilayas, qualifying the country to become a distinguished tourist destination and a strong competitor internationally. The following presents the distribution of beaches in Algeria:

Figure 03: Distribution of Beaches in Algeria by Coastal Wilaya, 2024



Source: Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts (2025).

Mostaganem Wilaya ranked first nationally, with a total of 75 guarded and unguarded beaches, followed by Skikda with 73 beaches, and then Algiers. This indicates the diversity of beaches across the eastern, western, and central regions. It is also noteworthy that the lowest number of beaches is 18, which is still a considerable number when compared with other countries. This demonstrates that Algeria possesses the necessary assets to provide suitable tourism opportunities for different categories of tourists.

- **Tourism Expansion Zones in Algeria**

Table 02: Tourism Expansion Zones in Algeria, 2018–2024

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2024
Number of tourism expansion zones	225	225	224	224	249	249
Area of tourism expansion zones (ha)	-	-	-	-	57872.20	57829.2802

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts (2025).

The above table indicates that tourism expansion zones in Algeria have developed over time. The number of zones was approximately 225 in 2018, reached 224 in 2020, and approximately 249 in 2024, representing an increase of 24 tourism zones. This confirms the previously mentioned orientation of

Algeria toward supporting this sector so that it can become an important and leading sector in achieving economic development.

- **Natural and Protected Areas in Algeria**

Algeria has significant environmental assets that make it a leading country in this field. It possesses exceptional natural features, which have contributed to the development of ecotourism. Accordingly, many of these sites have been incorporated into a national network known as “protected areas,” as illustrated in the following table:

Table 03: Indicators of Natural and Protected Areas in Algeria

Category	Number	Examples of Environmental Values
National parks	12	Cedar forests, Barbary macaques, Atlas slopes and scrubland
Strict nature reserves	18	Rare caves, endemic plants
Natural parks	2	Mountain ecosystems and landscapes
Natural sites	1	Coastal and dune ecosystems
Biological corridors	1	Connectivity between natural habitats
Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar)	50	Migratory birds, aquatic plants and threatened species
Cultural parks	5	Desert landscapes, rock heritage and ancient oases

Source: Ministry of Environment and Quality of Life, <https://www.me.gov.dz/>

- **Forest and Ecosystem Systems in Algeria**

Algeria has a diverse and attractive forest and ecosystem system, concentrated mainly in the northern part of the country. This makes Algeria an ecotourism destination capable of attracting many tourists. The following table presents the forest and ecosystem system:

Table 04: Forest Species Areas in Algeria

Forest type	Area (hectares)
Aleppo pine (Pin d'Alep)	880000
Cork oak (Chêne-liège)	230000
Zeen oak and Afares oak (Chênes zeen et Chênes afares)	48000
Cedar (Cèdre)	16000
Natural maritime pine (Pin maritime naturel)	32000
Holm oak, thuya and juniper (Chêne vert, thuya et genévrier)	219000
Maquis and scrubland (Maquis et Broussailles)	1876000
Protective reforestation (Reboisements de protection)	727000
Introduced eucalyptus trees in the north-east of the country	43000
Total (hectares)	4,071,000

Source: National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016–2030, <https://www.me.gov.dz/wp-content/uploads>.

- **Number of Arrivals through Algeria's Borders as an Indicator of Ecotourism Development**

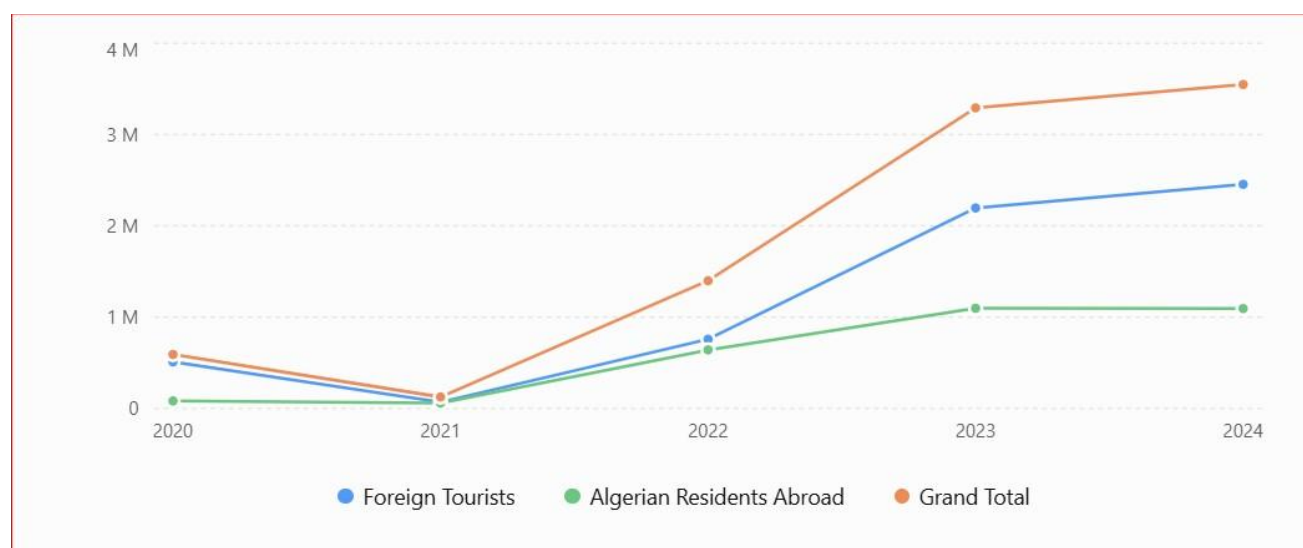
Table05: Evolution of the Number of Tourist Arrivals through Algeria's Borders, 2020–2024

Indicator	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Foreign Tourists	509736	66995	757380	2195519	2454706
Growth Rate	—	-86.86%	1030.50%	189.88%	11.81%
Algerians Residing Abroad	81295	58243	640668	1096989	1093699
Growth Rate	—	-28.36%	999.99%	71.23%	-0.30%
Grand Total	591031	125238	1398048	3292,508	3548405
Growth Rate	—	-78.81%	1016.31%	135.51%	7.77%

Source: Algerian Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts, <https://www.mta.gov.dz/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Flux-touristiques-Ann%C3%A9-2024>

The preceding table shows substantial growth in the number of arrivals over the years. The number was approximately 591031 in 2020, rising to 139048 in 2022 and reaching approximately 3548405 in 2024, including both foreign tourists and Algerians residing abroad. This reflects the effective strategy adopted by Algeria in the tourism field. Algeria has increasingly become a prominent tourist destination due to its considerable capacities and potential, as well as the efforts made by the State to develop this activity, which is considered a key pillar of economic diversification. For greater clarity, this development can be illustrated through the following figure:

Figure 04: Evolution of the Number of Tourist Arrivals through Algeria's Borders, 2020–2024



Source: Prepared by the researchers based on <https://www.mta.gov.dz/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Flux-touristiques-Ann%C3%A9-2024>

Conclusion

Ecotourism is an important resource that enhances the potential for economic growth within the framework of sustainable development. On the one hand, it generates numerous development benefits, foremost among them increased income and the creation of employment opportunities for individuals and small businesses. On the other hand, it encourages strategies aimed at conserving the environment and natural resources so that life can be sustained and equity can be achieved between present and future generations.

Accordingly, countries increasingly rely on this form of tourism because of its significant economic, social, cultural, and environmental importance, as well as the growing need to orient policies and strategies toward sustainable ecotourism. Algeria has worked in this direction by establishing government bodies that support investment in ecotourism and by providing investors with a range of incentives.

Study Results

- Tourism encompasses all activities related to the travel of individuals, whether domestically or internationally, for purposes of relaxation, recreation, enjoyment, and the discovery of customs and traditions across tourist destinations;
- Tourism has several essential components: transportation, accommodation, tourism programmes, infrastructure, and superstructure. Consequently, the success of countries in the tourism sector depends on the availability of these components;
- Ecotourism is defined as all tourism activities undertaken within the framework of achieving sustainable development objectives and, consequently, protecting the environment from pollution risks;
- Among the main national bodies supporting investment in the tourism sector are the Algerian Agency for Investment Promotion and the National Agency for Tourism Land;
- Through various decrees governing tourism investment, Algeria has granted investors in this sector a number of incentives;
- Through the substantial support provided by these government bodies, the tourism sector, particularly ecotourism, has experienced significant development, with most tourism indicators showing an upward trend. This reflects the sound policy pursued by the Algerian State.

Study Recommendations

- Introduce university programmes and specializations related to tourism;
- Encourage the creation of start-ups in the tourism sector, particularly in ecotourism;
- Develop mechanisms for integration and coordination between universities, the Ministry responsible for Start-ups, and the Ministry of Tourism;
- Promote digital tourism in Algeria.

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