

Newsletter ^{Nº 5}

**Unlocking potential, preserving the Environment:
Fostering growth of outermost regions through
smart UW Cultural & Nature Tourism**

In this newsletter, we are excited to share the latest updates and milestones of the ecoRoute project, an EU co-funded initiative aimed at transforming outermost regions into smart underwater cultural and nature tourism (UCNT) destinations. By leveraging their rich underwater cultural heritage and natural assets, we aim to create sustainable and innovative tourism offerings that benefit both residents and visitors.



About the project



Co-funded by the European Union



Acronym & Title : ecoRoute

Multidimensional and integrated approach fostering smart underwater cultural and nature tourism offer in Outermost Regions

Call: EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP-5-OR

Duration: 1/10/2023 - 31/3/2026

Budget: 1.176.466 €

Partners and countries involved:

9 partners from Greece, France, Portugal, Azores, Madeira and Martinique

Outermost regions have an exceptionally high cultural, natural and biodiversity value, with tourism contributing to a significant share of their economy. However, there is still an untapped potential to reinforce tourism flows in these Regions, by combining their underwater (UW) cultural heritage with natural assets and biodiversity.

Motivated from the above, ecoRoute proposes to design and implement a multidimensional and integrated approach fostering smart **UW Cultural & Nature Tourism (UCNT)** offer in the participating Outermost Regions, enabling their transformation to smart UCNT Destinations, with a new ecological focus that draws on natural and cultural resources, diversifying and developing smart UCNT services for the benefit of both residents and visitors. Our work spans across multiple dimensions seamlessly integrated, particularly:



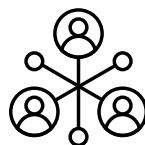
Strategic

in terms of smart and sustainable Strategies and Action Plans.



Policymaking & financing

in terms of applicable policy pathways and investment/financing facilitation



Capacity building

in terms of bottom-up stakeholders' engagement and management of conflicting interests



Local Interventions

in terms of campaigns and measures supporting smart UCNT integrated in green/circular economy

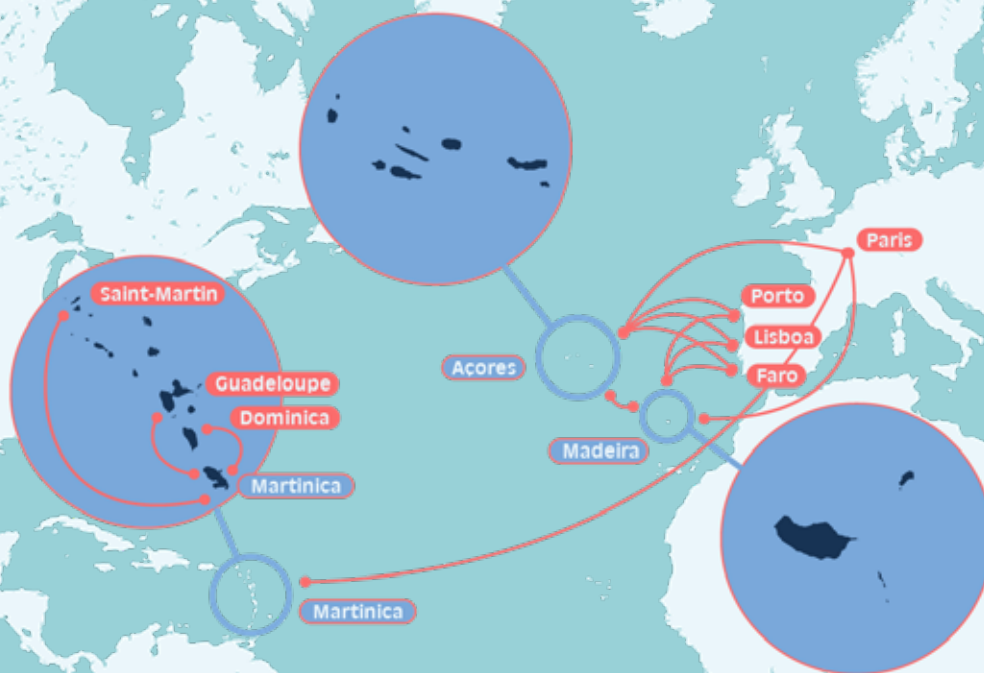


Smart eco-tourism packages

in terms of

addressing seasonality challenges and promoting unique assets of the participating Regions linked under a Route brand, through a multi-destination eco-tourism product.

Know the sites



ecoRoute regions:

Azores

[Read more](#)

Madeira

[Read more](#)

Martinique North

[Read more](#)

Martinique South

[Read more](#)



Project update and progress!

Dear readers, lovers of the sea and its heritage,

Here is the fifth newsletter from the ecoRoute project, dedicated to the visit by our partners, Aix-Marseille University, Atlantis Consulting, and the Association for Sustainable Tourism of Faial, who were hosted by our northern Martinique partner, the Archaeological Association of the Lesser Antilles, and our southern partner, the Deep Turtle Plongée diving center.

This event was rich in exchanges and shared experiences, with the goal of discovering Martinique's cultural and natural heritage through various activities. It also marked a key milestone for the ecoRoute project, thanks to a two-day seminar that allowed for the planning and organization of the project's next objectives.

The project was also showcased to Martinican partners through a conference organized by the project stakeholders, which provided an opportunity to present Martinique and highlight its potential within ecoRoute.

We warmly thank all the partners for traveling to Martinique, as well as those who welcomed them. Finally, this visit highlighted Martinique's two interpretation centers, which the partners were able to preview.

Explore the ecoRoute Diamond Rock site and meet ecoRoute partners



[Between cannons and marine life: a dive into Rocher du Diamant](#)

On Sunday, March 8, the Deep Turtle dive center welcomed European partners for a dive at one of the ecoRoute project's iconic sites: Rocher du Diamant.

After a tour of the center's facilities, the participants went diving in the afternoon, reaching depths of up to 20 meters.

A true landmark of Martinique, Rocher du Diamant exemplifies the island's rich natural and historical heritage. In particular, it stands as a striking testament to the British occupation in the 19th century, remnants of which still remain, such as cannons approximately 4 meters long. This exploration also allowed the partners to discover remarkable marine biodiversity: black triggerfish, parrotfish hidden beneath the rock formations, as well as the famous Fissure du Diamant, a spectacular underwater passage stretching over 15 meters.

[Read more here.](#)

Meeting between ecoRoute partners



[Route Azores – Linking Underwater Heritage, Science and Community for Regenerative Tourism](#)

The mornings of Monday, March 9, and Tuesday, March 10, were devoted to two partner meetings held in Fort-de-France. These meetings provided an opportunity to review the progress of the work, share the results achieved, and define the next objectives of the ecoRoute project. About twenty participants attended, both in person and via videoconference.

Among the highlights was the presentation of the BluePEF calculator, an online tool developed to help tourism businesses, particularly dive centers and marine operators, better understand and reduce their environmental impact.

The European “SUNBIO” project was also presented. It promotes sustainable offshore energy while contributing to the protection and monitoring of marine biodiversity, with concrete solutions to balance innovation and ecosystem conservation.

[Read more here.](#)

ecoRoute Conference



Revealing the Richness of Underwater Natural and Cultural Heritage

On March 10, some 40 participants—including local stakeholders, political representatives, associations, and members of the French Navy—gathered in the conference room of the Martinique Territorial Archives in Fort-de-France to discuss the ecoRoute project.

On this occasion, Kalliopi Baika, from Aix-Marseille University, presented the ecoRoute project and its main objectives.

The Martinique-based partners then highlighted the routes developed in the region:

- the Northern Route, presented by Jean-Sébastien Guibert of the Association Archéologie Petites Antilles;
- the Southern Route, presented by Eloïne Alexandre of Deep Turtle Plongée.

These presentations helped highlight the identified sites as well as the awareness-raising initiatives focused on underwater natural and cultural heritage.

Following the presentations, participants were able to take part in immersive workshops:

- an introduction to the 3D modeling of the Biscaye wreck;
- screenings of exploration dives conducted in the northern and southern zones;
- a virtual reality immersion into the heart of the Biscaye wreck.

[Read more here.](#)

ecoRoute in Martinique



Presentation of the KAC Nord and Exploration of the Amélie Wreck

From virtual immersion to real-world exploration, ecoRoute continues to reveal Martinique’s underwater heritage.

On March 11, the AAPA presented the Knowledge Awareness Centre (KAC) North, located at the Martinique Regional Nature Park Visitor Center in Saint-Pierre, in the presence of local representatives, project partners, and a journalist from France-Antilles.

The visit included:

- A presentation of the ecoRoute project and the underwater heritage of Saint-Pierre Bay
- A screening of images from dives conducted at the project sites
- A virtual reality dive into the Biscaye wreck

The afternoon was devoted to exploring the Amélie wreck, located at Le Carbet.

Built in 1863 and later converted into a three-masted ship, the Amélie ran aground in 1902. Today, its remains lie at a depth of 6 to 12 meters and remain accessible to divers. An iconic site of Martinique’s underwater heritage, the wreck is also home to a rich biodiversity.

[Read more here.](#)

Exploring the Southern Martinique



Where Citizen Science Meets Marine Exploration.

On Thursday, March 12, DTP welcomed its partners from the ecoRoute project for an exploration of the heart of Martinique's Southern Route.

The day began with a presentation by Coline, a representative of AQUASEARCH, a Martinique-based consulting firm specializing in environmental and oceanographic expertise. She introduced the INA-SCUBA program, to which DTP has been contributing for four years alongside several diving centers on the island. This participatory initiative feeds a database

dedicated to monitoring sea turtles and rays, thanks to daily observations made during dives.

The partners then explored the Knowledge Awareness Center, located on the rooftop terrace of DTP's offices. This educational space offers an unobstructed view of the sea and showcases various informational displays: the Nahoon shipwreck, the Rocher du Diamant, the biodiversity of Abricot Cove, as well as local initiatives for managing and repurposing plastic waste. On this occasion, DTP also presented a range of items made from recycled

plastic, using a shredder and a 3D printer.

The day concluded with a snorkeling session in the seagrass beds of Anses d'Arlet, allowing participants to observe sea turtles in their natural feeding grounds.

[Read more here.](#)

GREECE



ATLANTIS RESEARCH is a key EcoRoute partner with over 30 years of experience in sustainable tourism, ICT, and innovative financing. They collaborate with public and private sectors to develop blue economy policies and engage local communities.

[Learn more here.](#)



EnaliaTec, a spin-off from CERTH, specializes in underwater technology solutions for global diving research, including autonomous vehicles and 3D mapping. They support various marine-related entities.

[Learn more here.](#)

FRANCE



Aix-Marseille University, the largest multidisciplinary French-speaking university, specializes in maritime and underwater archaeology and offers France's only Master's program in this field. They will host an international workshop and the project's final event.

[Learn more here.](#)

PORTUGAL



Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, a top-ranked university, hosts the UNESCO Chair in The Oceans Cultural Heritage. EcoRoute is supported by NOVA FCSH, focusing on Archaeology and Landscapes.

[Learn more here.](#)

Region of Madeira



CEAM in Madeira studies and preserves modern and contemporary archaeological heritage. They create AR & VR content to make underwater heritage accessible and develop sustainable tourism strategies. [Learn more here.](#)

Region of Martinique



DEEP TURTLE PLONGEE is a leading diving center in South Martinique, involved in marine biodiversity protection and professional diver training. They lead EcoRoute's dissemination and sustainability efforts. [Learn more here.](#)

Who are the 9 partners

involved in ecoRoute project ?

Region of Azores



The Sea Observatory of the Azores promotes marine science and environmental education from its base on Faial Island. It is part of the Regional Networks of Science Centers of the Azores and raises public awareness of the region's heritage. [Learn more here.](#)



Founded in 2018, this association promotes sustainable tourism in Faial, preserving nature and culture. They design eco-tourism packages and coordinate the UCNH Route. [Learn more here.](#)



Founded in 2010, AAPA promotes scientific archaeology in the Lesser Antilles, focusing on coastal and maritime research, public heritage promotion, and biodiversity preservation. [Learn more here.](#)

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