

# HOMESTAYS: A community-based tourism model that works for people and planet

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# What is a homestay?

Homestays are an accessible community-based accommodation that allow visitors the opportunity to experience the daily life of their host family. This often includes community-led tourist activities that offer an authentic insight into local knowledge, culture, and customs. We believe homestays can have an

impact beyond the sum of their parts – becoming a catalyst for an ecosystem of small community-based businesses, building community resilience and providing a direct link between the health of the ocean and the people who rely on and want to visit it.





# The wide-ranging benefits of homestays and community-based tourism

**For the community** - When managed with a community-wide approach that is fair, open and transparent, homestays can bring communities together, amplifying local voices and serving as a multiplier in the community economy and diversifying livelihoods. To complement homestays, community based tourism creates opportunities for local people to provide a range of products and services, including the supply of traditional construction materials, transport, fresh produce, traditional cuisine and crafts, as well as leading activities such as diving and snorkelling, trekking and birdwatching.

**For families** - Running a family business, such as a homestay, can be an effective route towards financial independence, releasing funds for education and helping families build the confidence and capacity to safeguard their futures.

“The main benefit of the homestays is that it allows us to take care of our family and all the income stays in the community.” *Alfonso, Homestay Owner - Atauro Island, Timor-Leste.*

**For the environment** - Developing tourism-focused livelihoods not only reduces reliance on natural resources in the community but stimulates pride of place, environmental interest, and shared passions. At Blue Ventures we've witnessed firsthand the impact community ambassadors can have in leading new environmental initiatives from beach cleans and recycling projects to leading habitat surveying and fisheries monitoring. This can act as a catalyst in promoting further long-term interest in locally led marine management initiatives.

**For tourists** - Homestays offer tourists the opportunity to experience remote areas of outstanding natural beauty, often far removed from the typical tourist trail, in an authentic and meaningful cultural exchange. These models are initiated and run by the communities, who are proud to introduce new people to their way of life and share their knowledge. In addition to this, tourists know that their money is going directly to the community and contributing to safeguarding the protection of livelihoods and the surrounding ecosystems.

At Blue Ventures we develop innovative and transformative approaches for nurturing and sustaining locally led marine conservation. We work with under-served communities to build resilience in the face of growing global emergencies and utilise our experience in building adaptive models that meet community needs, diversify income opportunities and promote sustainable practises that benefit people and nature alike.

"In small-scale fishing communities, homestays have proven to be an inclusive and rewarding community initiative that provides reliable income for families that are amongst some of the most vulnerable to our changing climate, public health emergencies and diminishing fish stocks. Homestays can act as a catalyst to diversifying local livelihoods, building new opportunities, and developing sustained community led marine protection."

***Ryan Lewis - Technical Advisor of Ecotourism Business Development and Marketing, Blue Ventures.***





# The six pillars to an effective community homestay model

**Community-led** - The premise and identity of any homestay association must come from the needs and desires of the community. Facilitation from an NGO can significantly aid this process and provide efficiency and effectiveness, but full community ownership is imperative to successful community-based tourism.

**Entrepreneurship** - Through engaging tools and training, community members are able to nurture business intuition and development – skills and knowledge which they can then pass onto future generations, building a culture of entrepreneurship within the community.

**Access to markets** - Enhancing reach and engagement will increase the likelihood of sustained demand for tourism services. Accessing the international tourism market can be a challenge for remote coastal communities - market research and digital communications training can help identify the most suitable access points, whether through bespoke booking platforms, aggregator listing sites, or social media.

**Collaborative self governance** - A structure that supports the shared vision and values of the community, builds trust, and creates shared responsibilities. A mutual understanding that setting high-standards across all tourism activities improves livelihoods and protects natural resources for everyone in the community.

**Supporting local products and services** - Often located in rural and remote areas, homestays can not work effectively without supporting products and services that further diversification and sustain community togetherness. Services such as tours, activities and catering not only strengthen the wider community input but build on the visitor experience.

**Sustainability** - To ensure long-term success business models must prove to be sustainable and able to run independent of external funding. This can take time but needs to be the end goal of any effective alternative livelihood and ensures dependency on external factors is minimised.



"Being a homestay host is a good job. It requires less than being a fisherman and has opportunities for growth in the future. Homestays also benefit the entire community as well as other villages, not just the host families.

For example, we use part of our income to buy fruits and vegetables for the guests to eat. This brings income to other community members and other communities."

***Estevao, Homestay Owner, Atauro Island, Timor-Leste.***





# Learning through shared experiences

Although every community-based tourism model should be tailored to that community, there are a number of shared challenges and learning opportunities. Community exchanges, both national and international, have proved to be a highly effective tool in developing homestay standards, identifying areas for improvement, and building confidence through training and shared learning.

First inspired by a set of exchange visits over 2017 and 2018 between community representatives from Raja Ampat (Indonesia), Atauro Island (Timor-Leste) and Tun Mustapha Park (Malaysia) and funded by WWF, Blue Ventures has co-created a [homestay and community-based tourism manual](#) jointly authored by Seventy Three, Blue Ventures, Yayasan Barunastra, and WWF Malaysia.

This homestay toolkit sets out a number of key strategic considerations that local communities, and their partners in government and civil society, might wish to take into account when deciding whether and how to develop a community-based tourism venture.

Get access to Blue Ventures new [HOMESTAY TOOLKIT](#).  
[Watch a short video](#) documenting the successful 2018 homestay exchange.

For more information contact [info@blueventures.org](mailto:info@blueventures.org)





# blue ventures

beyond conservation

Blue Ventures,  
The Old Library, Trinity Road,  
Bristol, BS2 0NW, UK

Email: [info@blueventures.org](mailto:info@blueventures.org)  
[www.blueventures.org](http://www.blueventures.org)