
What is ecotourism?

- An introduction -



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Banja Vrujci
13-11-2005**

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1. History

- 1980s: increasing criticism on the negative impacts of tourism
- Consequence: the concept of “soft” tourism was developed
- **Rio 1992**
 - the concept of sustainable development completes contents of “soft” tourism
- **“eco-boom” in tourism**
 - through increasing environmental awareness in society
- **“ecotourism”**
 - term becomes popular for promoting destinations
 - mostly without trying to implement basic principles
 - Still no officially recognized, standardized definition

2. Definition

- Today: one of the most popular definitions by TIES (The International Ecotourism Society):

"...responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people."

- Generally Ecotourism refers to two criteria:
 - environmentally responsible and
 - socially and culturally sound

3. What is Ecotourism?

Ecotourism...

- "...is environmentally responsible travel and
- visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas,
- in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any cultural features)
- that promotes conservation,
- has low negative visitor impact,
- and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations."

(IUCN, 1996)

Facts

- Under the right circumstances, one of the most effective means to finance conservation and alternative livelihoods
- Natural beauty is an important asset in tourism promotion
- “Greenwashing”

Critical issues

- Different definitions
- Local communities are not involved
- Multinational corporations interested, but profits not equitably distributed
- Not everything which is called “eco” also contains “eco”!
- Misuse of the term

4. Principles of ecotourism

Minimize negative impacts:

- Preservation of ecological carrying capacity and ecological balance
- Ensuring acceptance of tourism development
- Environmental friendly transport alternatives



Involvement of local stakeholders in all processes:

- Include local communities
- Just and human working opportunities for local people

4. Principles of ecotourism

Benefits for local communities and nature conservation:

- Economic benefits, alternative employment, income opportunities
- Directing revenues to conservation and management of natural and protected areas

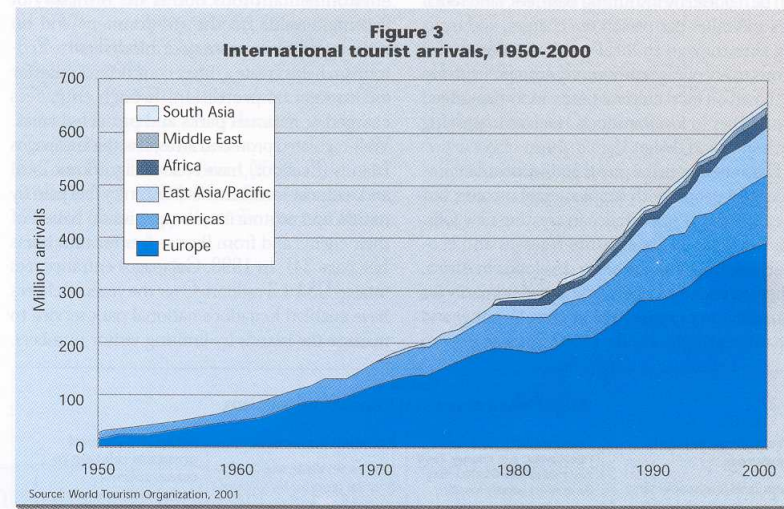
Public awareness and Education:

- Increasing awareness towards conservation of natural and cultural assets
- Education of local people and stakeholders on the importance of conservation



5. Facts and figures

- Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries
- WTO: receipts from international tourism grew almost 10 % per year (1985-2000)



Source: WTO 2003

- **Nature tourism:**
 - 50 % of all international tourism
 - Increases 10-30% per year
 - Global spendings on ecotourism increase by 20 % per year
 - Increase of environmental consciousness worldwide

Tourism economy

- Major economic force
- Poorly managed tourism growth can degrade the resources it aimed to provide access to
- If sensitively designed and carefully implemented
 - sustainable economic flows
 - with less impact on the environment

Tourism related activities

- Make up the world's largest economic sector
- Provide over 200 million jobs
- Both domestic and international tourism have important direct and indirect impacts on many other economic sectors

6. Ecotourism and sustainable tourism

- Ecotourism can be considered as a subset of sustainable tourism and nature tourism because it represents a sustainable way of travelling in natural areas.



Nature tourism

- Often used as a synonym to ecotourism
- Does not have to fulfill the principles and criteria of sustainability
- Does not necessarily have to be ecologically oriented

Ecotourism

- Is considered as community based tourism
 - generates benefits for local people
 - contributes to the conservation of natural and cultural areas
- Includes voyages which are ecologically, economically and socially sustainable

Sustainable tourism

- Includes all types of tourism
- Long-term perspective
- Ethically/socially just and culturally appropriate
- Environmentally/ecologically sustainable
- Economically profitable and feasible

According to international processes, ecotourism should be replaced by the term sustainable tourism

Follows the **“Concept of sustainable development”**

Built on **4 dimensions:**

- ❖ Ecological Dimension
- ❖ Social/Cultural Dimension
- ❖ Economic Dimension
- ❖ Political/Administrative Dimension

Sustainable tourism in international processes

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):**
 - International Guidelines for Biodiversity and Tourism Development
 - Tool for future planning and management of tourism
- **The Quebec Declaration:**
 - implemented by the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)
 - contribution to bring the different views of NGOs and the tourism industry into line in accordance with sustainable tourism
- **Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD)**
 - CSD 7: Adoption of Decision 7/3 on Tourism and Sustainable Development
 - International work programme
 - Invitation to the CBD (development of international guidelines)

7. Tourism and biodiversity

- Tourism plays a vital role in the discussion of biodiversity
 - depending on offers and activities in nature potential and natural features
- **Ambivalent relationship of nature and tourism:**
 - Nature forms the basis of tourism development
 - But: tourist activities endanger biodiversity
- **Minimizing this danger:**
 - Concept of sustainability
 - Protected areas



These matters and principles of ecotourism, if properly understood and implemented, can transform the way of travelling.

Thank you!