

ECOLOGICAL TOURISM: DEVELOPMENT, ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

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This article is dedicated to ecological tourism, discovering its history and showing development from the earlier days up to anon. Also, it refers to its its benefits and faults, its impact on the economy and nature. It includes information about development of the above mentioned form of tourism not only in the European Union countries but additionally refers to the destinations like Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya and Costa Rica. The required conclusion is made summing up all mentioned in the article.

Keywords: *ecological tourism, ecotourism, sustainable travel, responsible travel.*

Relevance. Today's globalized world has an over-production of goods and services. The tourism sector offers multiple destinations, tours and attractions. In consequence, this has caused major environmental problems, i. e., sewage, garbage, land use, reduction in forest cover, coastal modification, habitat loss for many species, etc. Today, ecotourism has provided a better way to manage resources and offers an environmentally-based ideology. Also, it proposes important links between conservation and restoration.

Goals. To explore the essence of ecotourism and unveil its history, pinpointing its current impact on the different spheres of life based on these studies:

- to look into the history of ecotourism and learn about its development;
- to emphasize the benefits of ecotourism;
- to emphasize negative impacts of ecotourism;
- to analyze the development of ecotourism in different countries.

Research results.

In recent years, the growth of interest in responsible travel has has outpaced that of leisure tourism by an increasingly wide margin [1].

Some experts estimate that ecotourism now represents 11.4% of all consumer spending [1].

Part of the confusion surrounding sustainable travel is the plethora of names being used for it within the industry [1].

Ecotourism, a movement that began to take shape

back in the 1980s, is the oldest and most commonly used word for it. More recent industry buzzwords include sustainable tourism, green tourism, nature tourism, responsible tourism, ethical tourism, mindful travel, conscious travel, pro-poor tourism, and many others. Regardless of its' name, the central concepts that these philosophies share in common are that the travel industry as a whole should adopt more environmentally friendly practices, protect the natural and cultural heritage of a destination, and support local communities [1].

One mistake many people make is assuming that ecotourism is all about conserving nature and wildlife by any means necessary. But if a destination or business' tourism development strategy does not actively provide concrete financial benefits for the indigenous people, it's not truly ecotourism [1].

According to The Oxford English Dictionary, the word "ecotour" was first recorded in 1973, followed by "ecotourism" in 1982 [1].

There, the word is defined as, "Tourism to areas of ecological interest (typically exotic and often threatened natural environments), especially to support conservation efforts and observe wildlife; special access to an endangered environment controlled so as to have the least possible adverse effect [1].

Now the director of the International Sustainable Tourism Initiative at Harvard, Epler Wood's original definition was more simple and to the point. She de-

scribed ecotourism as, “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people” [1].

In simple words, the meaning of ecotourism is travel that makes a positive impact on both the ECOlogy and ECONomy of a given destination [1].

Other non-governmental organizations, such as The Center for Responsible Travel have since expanded on Epler Wood’s concept to provide more in-depth definitions of ecotourism [1].

The Center for Responsible Travel currently defines ecotourism as, “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, socially and economically sustains the well-being of local people, and creates knowledge and understanding through interpretation and education of all involved (including staff, travelers, and community residents)” [1].

Ecotourism’s earliest origins arguably began with the Sierra Club’s Outing program. Launched in 1901, these annual expeditions took hikers into the Sierra Nevada’s backcountry in order to show members natural wonders, “so that those persons could become active workers for the preservation of the forests” [1].

The modern movement began to take root in the environmental activism of the 1970s. Some sources suggest that the term ecotourism was originally coined by Mexican architect-turned-environmentalist Héctor Ceballos-Lascuráin. He used the word to describe traveling to undisturbed areas in order to enjoy their natural beauty and culture [1].

In 1981 Ceballos-Lascuráin became the founding president of the Mexican Association for the Conservation of Nature, the most influential Mexican non-governmental organization in the conservation arena. In 1984 he founded the first Mexican ecotourism agency, ECOTOURS [1].

His 315-page book on Tourism, Ecotourism, and Protected Areas was published in 1996 by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). He served for many years as an Ecotourism Advisor to both the IUCN and United Nations World Tourism Organization [1].

Megan Epler Wood was another one of the ecotourism movement’s earliest adopters. She was a young wildlife biologist hired by World Wildlife Fund founder Russell Train right out of grad school in the early ’80s. [1].

Their all-star team at the time also included Russell Mittermeier (now President of Conservation International) and Thomas Lovejoy, who’s known as the “godfather of biodiversity” [1].

After she returned home in 1988, Epler Wood went on to produce *The Environmental Tourist* for public broadcasting service. She started pitching conservation non-governmental organisations a documentary on ecotourism that would be “the very first global investigation of how tourism could contribute to conservation of natural resources and local well-being” [1].

When that project lost its funding, she tapped into her contacts and started The International Ecotourism Society. The organization’s goal was to contribute to the development of ecotourism as a viable tool for conservation, protection of bio-cultural diversity, and sustainable community development [1].

Epler Wood left The International Ecotourism Society in 2002 to start her own consulting firm [1].

There have been countless other ecotourism icons over the past 30 years, from Jonathan Tourtellot (NatGeo’s Destination Stewardship Center) and Jeff Greenwald (founder of Ethical Traveler) to eco-design authority Hitesh Meta [1].

Now ecotourism is considered one of the fastest-growing sectors in the travel industry (about 5% annually), accounting for around 6% of the world’s gross domestic product. Even as the market for traditional tourism grew stagnant, the global forecast of United Nations World Tourism Organization projected rapid growth in the ecotourism industry over the next decade [1].

The demand for nature and ecotourism is high and will continue to grow. For some years now tourists have become more aware of leaving a positive impact on the destinations that they visit. According to the UK’s Travel Foundation, 75% of British travellers wanted a more responsible vacation in 2012. Forum for the Futures, also in 2012, estimated that 66% of travellers wanted an easier way to identify a green holiday. In a 2018 Booking.com survey, 87% of global travellers said they wanted to travel sustainably. Euronews even suggests an ecotravel boom in Europe [4].

It is not only the type of holiday that shows signs of change, but accommodation types as well. According to Booking.com, interest in an sustainable accommodation increased from 62% in 2016, to 65% in 2017 and 68% in 2018; meanwhile, the proportion of travellers who have not considered eco-friendly stays because they were unaware of their existence declined from 39% in 2016, to 38% in 2017, to 31% in 2018. These studies’ results are in line with the outcomes of a survey among the readers of Condé Nast Traveler, which showed that 58% said they choose a hotel based on whether the hotel gives back to local people and the planet [4].

Emphasizing the principles of ecotourism, it needs to be said that it is essentially all about bringing nature/wildlife conservationists, local communities, and the responsible travel industry together to ensure development focused on long-term sustainability rather than short-term profits [3].

Travel companies have recently noticed an increase in the number of trips that involve trekking and hiking. For example, the number of trekking and hiking trips booked at Jacada Travel doubled between 2015 and 2016, and again between 2016 and 2017 [4].

Based on these developments, Virtuoso considers sustainable tourism part of a global travel transformation rather than a passing trend. SKIFT suggests that sustainability will be the mark of luxury in the years to come. Tourism New South Wales considers ecotourists the early adopters of personal values which many other market segments with potentially larger visitor numbers will follow [4].

The goal is to develop tourist accommodations, activities, and attractions that benefit everyone involved—the local flora/fauna, the local people, travel industry stakeholders, and travelers alike [3].

With this mission in mind, the ecotourism industry has collectively developed a number of core guiding principles over the past few decades. Although international regulation and accreditation have remained elusive, these guidelines provide a general blueprint for responsible tourism development [1].

Many of these principles align with those of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, which developed an extensive list of criteria for sustainable destinations, hotels, and tour operators [1].

Education is a key aspect of ecotourism initiatives, for locals and visitors alike. Most of these efforts are focused on improving awareness, sensitizing people to environmental issues, and encouraging them to be conscious of their impact on the places they visit [1].

Immersive interactions with local cultures are also becoming increasingly common. These experiences often emphasize interaction rather than a typical performer-audience relationship with visitors [1].

The focus is all about sustainability, minimizing the negative carbon footprint travel often leaves on the environment. But these days the big picture goal is to create positive, rather than merely neutral impact [1].

From using alternative energy sources and ensuring all building materials are locally sourced to limiting eco tour group sizes, conscious consideration should be made to ensure low impact at every stage, from development to implementation [1].

Although ecotourism is broadly believed to have the potential to enhance the well-being of host local people users and also healthy ecosystem, it's been met with major criticism from some scholars and/or businesses. Merg (1999), to illustrate, has argued that while ecotourism carries on to supply useful solutions for financial advancement of many crafting economies in Africa, it is additionally coming with a few different harmful impacts around the environmental established up for the continent. For Merg, the natural surroundings are usually singled out as being the serious community mainly afflicted through the negative impacts, in particular the destruction of biodiversity, of tourism and its other forms like as, ecotourism.

Critics have similarly pointed out that some ecotourism initiatives have created more problems for local people than they solve. Poorly managed programs can lead to conflicts over land and resources, unfair profit distribution, and cultural exploitation [11].

This is what happens when the phenomenon known as greenwashing—the disinformation disseminated by an organization so as to present an environmentally responsible public image—rears its ugly head [11].

True ecotourism must provide financial benefits to local people, whether through direct (tours, admission fees, and donations) or indirect means (such as taxes on travel or accommodation). It generally works best when there is smaller scale, slower growth, and greater involvement by local communities in all steps of the tourism development process [11].

Ecotourism initiatives should always strive to support human rights, economic empowerment, and democratic movements in a given destination [11].

In addition to increasing awareness about sociopolitical and environmental issues facing a given destination, ecotourism initiatives should support local businesses and the rights of indigenous inhabitants to control their land and assets [11].

A whole lot more importantly, it has been argued that not all endeavours that bill themselves as ecotourism are favorable to your purely natural surroundings. McLaren (1998) notes that: “At its worst, eco-travel is environmentally damaging, economically exploitative, culturally insensitive, ‘green washed’ travel”. This for these reasons means that ecotourism seriously isn't a magic pill while using the capacity to often completely transform economies of crafting nations around the world for the more beneficial since it is absolutely not very easy to strike a harmony between preservation and advancement.

To see how ecotourism benefits nature and wildlife, it is advisable to take a look at endangered species such as African Elephants. Ivory from Elephant tusks is worth \$1500 a pound on the black market, which has led to a dramatic increase in poaching [11].

But Elephants are worth 76 times more alive than dead. The revenue from wildlife photography tours, luxury safari camps, and other ecotourism offerings, a single Elephant is worth \$1.3 million over the course of its lifetime! [11].

Other heavily poached species, such as lions and rhinos have shown to be similarly valuable alive. Ecotourism offers a long-term alternative to exploitation, generating sustainable revenue and ensuring better overall health of the ecosystem [11].

The revenue that ecotourism provides can help replace profits from exploitative practices such as mining or slash 'n' burn agriculture. It can also help ensure the long-term financial viability of the area [11].

There has been a substantial amount of study dedicated to the position of ecotourism in enhancing the financial status of host and native communities in developing international locations in Africa and beyond. It is always arguably valid that ecotourism is probably the swiftest rising sub-segments in the tourism community which has stamped its authority in today's earth overall economy. Honey and Gilpin (2009), for instance, confirmed the notion that tourism often is the fourth largest sized business from the worldwide marketplace.

When managed properly, ecotourism can offer locals alternative revenue streams. In wildlife-rich countries such as Rwanda, former poachers are often employed as guides or trackers, capitalizing on their knowledge of the animals and their habitat [11].

African international locations like Zimbabwe, South Africa and Kenya which can be endowed with wide and varied unparalleled all-natural and man-made vacationer sights, have taken up ecotourism.

In Costa Rica, unemployment has fallen to less than 10% since the country started building its ecotourism infrastructure in the 1970s. The country now enjoys the highest standard of living in Central America [11].

Ecotourism in Costa Rica is a robust industry because the country was one of the earliest adopters of connecting nature/wildlife conservation with responsible travel [2].

Costa Rica has been ranked among the world's best ecotourism destinations on more than one occasion, and became the first country in the Americas to ban hunting in 2012. As a result, its biodiversity is virtually unparalleled [2].

Costa Rica boasts 26 national parks, 58 wildlife refuges, 32 protected zones, 15 wetland areas, 11 forest reserves, and 8 biological reserves. Over 25% of the country's 19,730 square miles is protected from future development [2].

Ecotourism in Costa Rica encompasses a diverse array of ecosystems, from cloud forests and rainforests to wetlands and coastal marine areas [2].

Involving local communities in tourism management empowers them by ensuring that more revenue is reinvested locally. Ecotourism also offers indigenous peoples an opportunity to remain on ancestral land, conserve it, and preserve traditional culture [11].

Ecotourism has a tendency to stimulate the event of multiple-use infrastructure, for instance, roads and fitness services this sort of as clinics, that many advantages the local community/regions. Ecotourism necessitates the monitoring of all its pursuits and interactions aided by the natural setting, it happens to be however sensitive to aquatic, wildlife life within the universe. Ecotourism generates a micro-climate that makes a region distinctive from most of the other bordering areas.

The event of tourism could also deliver advantageous influences by supplying an alternate livelihood to preceding unsustainable all natural useful resource utilization such as farming, hunting and mining. Tourism has the possible to lead to the two conservation and enhancement (Ross and Wall 1999) and it requires the development of positive synergetic associations involving tourism, biodiversity and local women and men through the appliance of applicable administration strategies.

Commonly talking, host communities and national governments of numerous countries often anticipate profitable ecotourism to get a favourable effect for the organic ecosystem and therefore the well-being of host group users.

It's been argued that ecotourism really is a flourishing global industry with all the electric power to form economies of growing international locations, if exploited inside of a way that seeks to reinforce the well-being of nearest and host communities and preserve the all-natural surroundings. If accordingly adopted, planned and executed, the industry will go a lengthy process to economically empower host and local communities by improving their ecosystem.

A wide array of products falls into the category of nature and ecotourism, including consumptive and adventurous as well as non-consumptive and contemplative activities. Examples include:

- nature tours, observation of flora and fauna, cultural and local heritage tourism, volcano tourism;
- fishing tourism, cycling tourism, bird watching tourism, kayaking tourism, bush walking, hiking tourism, hunting;
- visiting parks, scenic driving, photography tourism, camping [4].

One specific example is the trend of dark sky tourism to remote areas with a clear view of the night sky, away from artificial light pollution. This could include stargazing, watching an eclipse, watching the Northern or Southern Lights, visiting observatories, and attending guided tours, stargazing sessions, and astronomy tours. Dark sky tourism could be facilitated by a stay in a nature accommodation, such as a yurt, connecting with the local culture, specific stargazing hotels, or even dedicated cruises [4].

Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Poland and the Czech Republic have the biggest share of outbound trips with nature as the primary motive. These six countries are considered the most relevant nature and ecotourism markets in Europe, with Germany standing out [4].

The target market for nature and ecotourism is large. Probably the first studies conducted into the ecotourism market were the 2001 and 2002 UNWTO studies in the UK, Germany, Spain, France and Italy, which have not been updated. In a 2016 TNS study, respondents in the following countries mentioned 'nature' as the main reason for their holiday: Czech Republic (26%), Netherlands (25%), Bulgaria (23%), Romania (20%), Belgium (19%), and Poland (19%) [4].

As a travel destination Germany is becoming more and more popular among international tourists — in addition to cities, nature parks and biosphere reserves are attractive destinations [5].

According to a survey conducted by the German National Tourist Board the top international visitor attractions include classics such as Neuschwanstein Castle and Cologne Cathedral. The numerous UNESCO World Heritage sites, among them Sanssouci Palace in Potsdam and Classical Weimar, are also popular. In addition, events such as the Oktoberfest in Munich, with around 6 million visitors the world's biggest public festival, also attract visitors. A football stadium is also on the list of tourist magnets: the Allianz Arena, a masterpiece by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron [5].

Like culture, movement in general plays a big role in Germany's appeal. Around 200,000 kilometres long, the network of hiking trails alone offers extremely

good conditions and magnificent views, for example on routes through the national parks or against the backdrop of the magnificent Alps. On top of this there are more than 200 well-established long-distance cycle trails covering 70,000 kilometres, for example the Iron Curtain Trail (1,131 kilometres) or the 818-kilometre-long German Limes Cycle Route. Those looking for a cheap night's accommodation will find plenty of opportunities, for example in one of the 500 youth hostels, 130 of which are family youth hostels, or on one of the 2,919 campsites [5].

Among the most visited countries in the world, France is also a pioneering country when it comes to nature-friendly holidays. Many of its regions have put strategies in place for sustainable travel, to preserve the environment and promote the local crafts and heritage. The country has a very rich history and offers a variety of landscapes. Very easy to visit by train, France is a great country for ecotourism, which is not only reserved to tropical countries [6].

Pioneering region for sustainable tourism in France, Brittany is a destination of choice for nature lovers. The region, which has more than 20 green stations and 34 blue flag beaches, was listed among the 100 most sustainable destinations in the world in 2012. As for landscapes, Brittany is a region that suits all desires. With more than 1,700 km of coastline, three regional natural parks and exceptional heritage, the area offers a multitude of opportunities. [6].

For a relatively small country, the Netherlands boasts a rich variety of nature. The largest national park is De Hoge Veluwe, which is best explored on one of its thousand free-to-use white bikes. The Wadden Sea is the largest coastal tidal wetland in Europe and on the World Heritage List. You can walk across the sea floor with a guided tour. However, the beaches of Zeeland, the hills of Limburg, the Brabant Sahara (Loonse and Drunense Dunes), Venice of the Lowlands (Weerribben-Wieden) and other nature reserves will also take your breath away [7].

In an attempt to improve its slow economic growth, Belgium has been steadily promoting itself as an ecotourism as well as medical tourism destination. The country attracts a large number of medical tourists due to low-cost treatments and advanced technology and infrastructure. In regards to eco-tourism, a large number of initiatives have been taken to develop and promote its countryside, like the Viroinval National Park in south-west Belgium is among the European Tourist Destinations of Excellence [8].

The Czech Republic is promoting Ecotourism with programs that minimize the negative aspects of conventional tourism on the environment such as conservation of biological diversity, promotion of energy efficiency, recycling and water conservation [9].

Several interesting Czech eco hotels support these missions. Chateau Mcely is only the second five-star hotel to earn the right to use the European Union's Eco Label. The hotel, which belongs to the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, is situated in the Czech Republic's legendary St. George Forest located just one hour outside of Prague. The resort is also a great place for weddings and honeymoons [9].

Hotel Adalbert is an eco hotel near the Brevnov monastery in Prague. The newly reconstructed baroque building provides comfortable accommodation in an eco-friendly environment. MaMaison Residence Belgicka has been awarded the European Union Eco label. The hotel offers accommodation in several Art Nouveau buildings in the trendy Vinohrady district. It consists of 30 elegantly furnished apartments in contemporary style. Hotel Adria Praha has been striving to be environmentally friendly for several years. Adria is a first four-star hotel in Prague holding the EU Eco label. In Pilsen, tourists will find eco-friendly Hotel Irida; Sporthotel Zaton is close to the UNESCO World Heritage town Cesky Krumlov [9].

The more that we know about a place, our love and admiration grows and inspires us to protect it. Tour guides and hosts are educated on a deeper level in order to share knowledge with visitors while tourists come to appreciate the beauty of new surroundings. Adding to the visual appeal is the new perspective that comes with learning the historical and environmental significance of unfamiliar lands and buildings. As we explore unknown places with a spirit of curiosity and kindness, we begin important discussions with locals and other visitors. Through their stories, we have an inside view of what the needs and desires of the people are [10].

Conclusion

In recent years, the level of interest in responsible tourism has significantly increased and surpassed the level of interest in other types of tourism as a form of recreation. Some experts believe that ecotourism now accounts for 11.4% of all consumer spending.

Part of the confusion surrounding sustainable tourism is the abundance of names used in the industry to refer to it.

Ecotourism, a movement that began to develop in the 1980s, is the oldest and most common word for it.

More modern industrial fashion terms include sustainable tourism, green tourism, nature tourism, responsible tourism, ethical tourism, informed travel, Pro-poor tourism, and many others. Regardless of its name, the main idea is that these philosophies share the view of maintaining the tourism industry's environmentally friendly activities, protecting the natural and cultural heritage of the destination, and supporting the local population.

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Экологический туризм: развитие, достоинства и недостатки

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Экологический туризм, как быстро развивающееся направление туристической индустрии представляет научный интерес. В статье показана история с ранних дней и по сей день. Автор затрагивает достоинства и недостатки экотуризма, его влияние на экономику и природу. Описано развитие экотуризма не только в Европейском Союзе, но в таких местах как Зимбабве, Южная Африка, Кения и Коста Рика. Экологический туризм даёт возможность не только познания мира, но и способствует развитию экономики стран.

Ключевые слова: *экологический туризм, экотуризм, устойчивое путешествие, ответственное путешествие.*

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