What is ecotourism?
- An introduction -

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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)

**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

Source: WTO 2003
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

Ecological Tourism in Europe, 13.11.2005
**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!