

# CGG30 Unit 4: Tourism and the Environment

## Activity 2: Sustainable Tourism in Canada and the World

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### Overview

In this activity you will discover what sustainable tourism is and all that it encompasses. You will also learn about a new kind of tourism called ethical tourism. Looking at examples from around the world, we will discuss what some countries have to offer to eco-tourists. You will read a Case study to check your understanding about ethical tourism and discuss your opinion as to which type of sustainable tourism is the most and least damaging to the natural environment.

### Lesson

Recent trends indicated that **alternative tourism** is becoming much more popular as the tourist tries to experience the local culture and environment through individualized activities. According to Cartwright, **sustainable tourism** is tourism that meets the needs of the current population today without compromising the environment or the needs of future generations of tourists. Sustainable tourism, which falls under alternative tourism, encompasses more specific types of tourism like eco-tourism, wilderness tourism and adventure tourism. Below is a table which helps to illustrate key differences between certain types of sustainable tourism. Most important to remember is that all types of sustainable tourism are also referred to as ecotourism, which is one of the fastest growing types of tourism today.

Type of Tourism	Goal of Tourist	Group Size/ Preference	Popularity?	Examples of Activities
<b>Wilderness Tourism</b>	Experience nature up-close and personal.	Small groups and often young males	This type of tourism is only growing slowly	Canoeing the French River, hiking in Kluane National Park, camping in a Provincial or National Park
<b>Adventure Tourism</b>	Likes the challenge of being able to overcome dangers that are found in hazardous environments and activities	Young and very active sports minded individuals -Eco races sometimes occur (people work in teams and compete at times)	This type of tourism falls in the middle in terms of growth (between wilderness and ecotourism)	White-water rafting in Algonquin Park, mountain climbing in South America
<b>Ecotourism</b>	Tourists want to learn about wild, natural environments, and believe it is necessary to preserve them.	All groups and ages represented, but they travel in small numbers.	This type of tourism is growing very rapidly and is becoming a large industry	Bird watching in Costa Rica, reef diving in Australia

More recently, Polly Pattullo, author of *The Ethical Travel Guide* (Earthscan, 2006), stated that the goal of **ethical tourism** is to make sure that vacationers “seek to minimize the negative impacts of tourism and maximize the potential economic and other benefits to host countries.”

**Ecotourism must also satisfy a set of criteria:**

- It must promote positive environmental ethics and foster environmentally conscious behaviour in its participants
- It concentrates on intrinsic rather than extrinsic values where facilities and services never become attractions in their own right
- It does not degrade the natural resource or interfere with natural environmental processes
- Ecotourism must benefit the wildlife and natural environment. The environment and ecological functions remain essentially undisturbed by the tourism
- Ecotourism provides a first-hand experience with the natural environment
- Ecotourism has the tourist gratified with education and/or appreciation rather than in thrill-seeking or physical achievement
- Ecotourism has a high knowledge-based and experience-based dimension
- Ecotourists enter the environment accepting it on its terms, not expecting it to be modified for their convenience.

Canada prides itself on offering thousands of ecotourism opportunities. An example from a typical Canadian website reads, “If you are looking to enjoy hiking, viewing the northern lights, wildlife photo tours, snowmobiling, skiing or just plain finding a place with total peace and serenity, then you will find it in Canada” (Northern Lights Multimedia). Canada has thousands of natural areas to visit (both inside and outside National and Provincial Parks) and hundreds of ways to get off the beaten path. Moreover, Canada has enormous ecotourism potential due to vast expanses of undisturbed land, a huge variety of ecosystems, good infrastructure and an excellent reputation worldwide.

***A Case Study on Eco-Tourism in Costa Rica***



Costa Rica is located in Central America and is bordered on the north by Nicaragua and on the south by Panama. The Pacific Ocean is to the west and the Caribbean Sea lies off its eastern coast. While the interior of the country has large forested mountains, both coasts have gorgeous plains. The country has two seasons –a rainy one, which lasts from May to November, and a dry one that attracts millions of tourists yearly.

The country has truly incredible potential for ecotourism. It has 1500 distinct species of trees, 205 species of mammals, 850 species of birds, 6000 types of flowering plants, including 1500 varieties of orchids. Moreover, it has a combination of mountains, beaches, volcanoes, waterfalls, plains, and rainforests –this is an incredible combination. The country has 12 percent of its land that has been

protected in parks and privately funded reserves.

In the early 1980’s Costa Rica was in great difficulty. The country was the most deforested of any country in Central America and it had a poor reputation worldwide. It was considered the Amazon of Central America. The country decided to launch an ambitious ecotourism program for a couple of reasons. First, tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in many Latin American economies. Second,

it was argued that eco-tourism would be a win-win situation for local inhabitants, the environment, as well as the economy in general benefit as the country moves toward more sustainable development. They started this initiative really with the belief that more money could be made from not cutting the trees than from cutting them down. About 33% of the country is still covered with tropical rain forest. It was believed that replacing industrial and agricultural exploitation with ecotourism would pay off for Costa Rica.

It has indeed been a landslide victory for Costa Rica. In the first eight years, visitor rates increased by 70%. A survey conducted by the World Wildlife Fund stated that ecotourism was the primary reason that tourists were visiting Costa Rica. Tourism has continued to grow in recent years as well and so has the economy.

Below is a table that illustrates the growth in tourism in Costa Rica.

<b>Tourists' Arrivals by Source Market (in thousand of visitors)</b>						
<b>Source Country</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>Canda</b>	37.03	42.10	45.57	52.70	52.66	49.17
<b>Europe</b>	126.71	129.57	141.33	151.39	150.80	157.99
<b>South America</b>	59.03	68.85	73.34	95.61	103.92	88.81
<b>USA</b>	285.36	347.44	392.56	429.73	429.09	422.22
<b>Mexico</b>	25.35	30.11	31.88	33.43	36.84	37.87
<b>Asia</b>	18.49	18.69	20.14	21.16	20.42	22.41
<b>Caribbean</b>	7.77	8.91	9.33	9.45	9.30	8.84
<b>Other Countries</b>	4.03	4.78	5.89	<7.35	7.26	4.55
<b>Africa</b>	.69	.75	.90	.79	.84	.90
<b>Central America</b>	247.04	293.81	310.66	286.47	320.28	320.62
<b>Total Arrivals</b>	811.49	944.93	1031.59	1088.08	1131.41	1113.36

Source: Costa Rican Tourist Board (ICT)

***The environment in Costa Rica has seen many advantages:***

1. They have found alternatives to environmentally damaging industries such as logging the rainforests. They have also been doing pharmaceutical research in Costa Rica’s rainforests. Moreover, as a result of Costa Rica being interested in conservation, half of their royalties from discovering new medicines go to Costa Rica’s National Park Fund
2. Conservation Efforts have been enhanced –as ecotourism is meant to –most tourists leave feeling educated by hiking in Monteverde’s Cloud Forest. People bird watch, take photos and read about the do’s and don’ts in an environmentally fragile habitat.

3. Ecotourism has led to small scale infrastructure Construction –unlike mass tourism, ecotourism brings in foreign exchange, without the huge exploitive companies and polluting factories that are often seen in poorer countries around the world. There are many ecolodges that have been constructed and many pay attention to reducing waste and utilities. For example, the construction of the Lapa Rios Resort necessitated the removal of only one tree, and the completed resort consists of only a main lodge and 14 private bungalows.

***However, there have also been some drawbacks to the environment in Costa Rica.***

1. Visitor Overcapacity –tourism has been increasing at a rapid rate, and it has been questioned whether this is sustainable or not over the long-term. For instance, one of Costa Rica's most popular parks, Manuel Antonio, takes in an average of 1,000 visitors a day during the high season. The unregulated flow of tourists through the park has taken a toll on its plant and animal life, and as the wildlife has grown accustomed to humans, local monkeys have been turned into garbage feeders. Another example is in Monteverde Cloud forest. This forest was intended for research and protection. It later became a tourist location with 400 visitors. During the eighties and nineties tourism increased from 36% yearly to 50% yearly. The increased entry fees are intended to act as a deterrent, but the numbers have only continued to increase. In the late 90's they placed a limit of 100 visitors at a time in the park and later changed this limit to 200.
2. Haphazard Adjacent Development –more tourists can bring more development of hotels, restaurants, Internet cafes etc.
3. Inadequate enforcement of protected park areas due to a lack of funding, poor management, and uncertain government support –water pollution, trail erosion and changes in wildlife behaviour have occurred in some of the more popular ecotourist destinations.
4. Some exploitation of the local work force has occurred. Some parks do not pay or train their personnel properly.
5. Too little research and sustainable measurement plans have been set in place to protect the natural environment.

## **Assignment**

1. Why did Costa Rica start an ambitious ecotourism plan? What sort of tourist growth happened during the first 8 years of the program?
2. What has been the most significant positive change to the environment since ecotourism began in Costa Rica?
3. What has been the most significant negative aspect of ecotourism on the natural environment in Costa Rica?
4. Should Costa Rica continue with its ecotourism program as it currently is? What sorts of changes might be made in order to adhere more to Butler's original criteria set out for ecotourism?