

CGG30 Unit 4: Tourism and the Environment

Activity 3: Trends in World Tourism

Overview

In this activity you will be introduced to several developing trends in the World Travel and Tourism Industry. You will discover why tourists are starting to demand more responsible tourism, ethical guides, and tour operators and why they are willing to spend more money for ecotourism. By examining typical tour destinations and you will learn about what makes a country a true leader in ecotourism.

Lesson

Mass tourism has become less popular in the last twenty years while ecotourism has been evolving. Many organizations have different definitions of ecotourism, but key principles remain the same. The focus is on conserving the natural environment, minimizing visitor impact, and benefiting the local population. Some organizations, however, try to spin-off and take advantage of ecotourism because of the good principles associated with it. A good organization that works to distinguish true ecotourism locations from less than perfect ones is called, The International Ecotourism Society (TIES). TIES has singled out some countries that have strong commitments to conservation and these include: Belize (for its Mayan sites), Brazil (national parks), Ecuador (Galapagos Islands and Amazonian rainforest), Tanzania (game reserves), Nepal (mountain trekking), Peru (bird watching), and South Africa (game and nature reserves) which all earn high marks for their efforts.

In the last activity we talked about one of the best-know tourist destinations, Costa Rica. With a vibrant tourism industry that centers on its turtles, cloud forests, volcanoes and beaches, Costa Rica has served as an inspiration and “poster child” for many Latin and South American countries like Peru, Ecuador, and Honduras. It is important, however, to also look at the environmental and social progress of a country when determining the best place to visit. According to Jeff Greenwald and Kiran Auerbacher, this is important because, while a country might have good values regarding ecotourism, it may be very careless with respect to broader human rights issues.

Jeff Greenwald and Kiran Auerbacher decided to research environmental and social development issues to see how countries really ranked ethically in terms of ecotourism. The environmental evaluation examined carbon dioxide emissions, energy efficiency, percentage of protected land, percentage of mammals under threat, the environmental sustainability index, and the number of major international environmental treaties ratified. Socially, they examined how ecotourism benefited the local population. They studied income distribution, health, and education. They also looked at crime, government corruption, and the status of women as well as international human rights and international labour rights treaties that had been ratified. With this complex mix came a list of countries (see destination choices in Table 1) that are truly good examples of ethical ecotourism destinations.

There are a number of growing trends developing with respect to the ecotourism industry. First, consumer demand for responsible tourism is growing. Second, 75% of tour operators surveyed said they are planning to produce a responsible tourism policy designed to educate tourists and/or set operating principles (Christian Hildebrand). Third, according to the National Geographic Traveler, consumers are willing to pay more for a pristine experience. In fact, most travelers stated they would pay up to 10%

more to responsible tour companies. Moreover, a survey of upscale Americans revealed that 70% would pay up to \$150 more for a two week stay in a hotel with a responsible environmental attitude (Travelbiz, 2002). Lastly, there is strong support for certification in the field of ecotourism. Today, the majority of tourists want to learn about social, cultural, and environmental issues while travelling. Tourists feel it is important that tourism itself not damage the environment.

According to the National Geographic Traveler and the Travel Industry Association of America, about 60% or 91 million US travelers support controlling access to, and/or more careful regulation of national parks in order to preserve and protect the environment. Another interesting statistic is that the majority of domestic German tourists (71%) and more than half of German tourists travelling outside of Germany (60%) stated that an environmental label for tourism is useful. They stated that they would use an eco-label if it were available.

Examine the comparison of the regular tourism industry with the ecotourism industry in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Tourism and Ecotourism Industry Statistics					
Categories	Growth Rate	Economic Output per Tourist	Economic Spending on Islands	% of Money to local economy	Destinations
Mass Tourism Industry	8.5% per year	\$400 per visitor	Cruise ship passengers spend little on islands visited	20% goes to local economy	Bahamas, China, India, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica,
Ecotourism Industry	27% per year	\$1000 per visitor	Spend 18 times more while visiting an island compared to cruise ships	87% of money goes to local economy	Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ecuador, Peru, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Tanzania, Uruguay

Assignment

1. What is ecotourism?
2. List 5 countries that are world leaders in ecotourism?
3. Why does mass tourism bring in less money than ecotourism?
4. Jeff Greenwald and Kiran Auerbacher decided to research environmental and social development issues to see how countries really ranked ethically in terms of ecotourism. What did they examine?
5. Explain 3 reasons why ecotourism is growing faster than mass tourism?
6. Explain why travelers are willing to pay more for ecotourism. Would you pay more? Explain.