

CGG30 Unit 4: Tourism and the Environment

Activity 4: The Impact of Natural Phenomenon on Tourism

Overview

In this activity you will become familiar with the definitions of hurricanes, avalanches, tornadoes, tsunamis, and earthquakes to better understand what these are. You will read about some of their impacts and read about examples where some of these natural disasters have occurred to see the impact they have on tourists and the local populations of the areas impacted. You will read a case study about disaster tourism and check your understanding.

Lesson



Natural phenomena like hurricanes, avalanches, tsunamis, earthquakes, and tornadoes occur frequently around the world and devastate local populations as well as tourism activities. Natural disasters cost the world billions of dollars every year, but the financial impact is only one aspect of the disaster. Local populations are very negatively impacted by these events. Not only do they often lose their homes, but they often lose loved ones and they also lose their livelihoods as well. The tourism industry is often a large part of their economy and thus the financial loss becomes mammoth. The 1998 ice storm is said to have resulted in a financial cost of over \$4 billion dollars.

Canada has seen its share of floods and avalanches as well. For example, Manitoba's Red River Flood, which occurred in 1997 created over \$2 billion dollars worth of damage and 3% of the population has moved as a result of the flood. Canada has also had many avalanches in the Rocky Mountains which have killed about 160 people over the last 15 years. One case we often hear about is the Michel Trudeau case, where the 23-year-old son of former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and Margaret Kemper was killed by an avalanche in British Columbia's Kokanee Glacier Park on November 13, 1998. This created havoc in the tourism industry for years following the incident where school groups no longer wanted to ski in the Rockies due to the fragile environment. However, tragedies can also enhance awareness, and as a result, there are avalanche foundations which provides up to date information on avalanche hazards in the form of an avalanche bulletin that can be pulled off the Internet by anybody looking to ski in the mountains. There is also a lot of technology that tourists and locals alike can bring with them to assist them should they want to ski in fragile, avalanche prone spots such as a slope meter, transceiver, portable shovel, collapsible probe, global positioning system and a cell phone. These things will not necessarily save you, but if people in your ski party have these items, they could certainly help.

Here are some definitions and photos to give you a sense of the physical devastation caused by some of the natural phenomenon that can impact locals and the tourist industry.

Hurricane: A severe tropical storm that begins over water and has wind speeds between 119-251km per hour. Usually they occur between the months of June through to the end of November. They can last up to two weeks.



Avalanche: An avalanche occurs when a build up of snow is released down a slope, and is one of the major dangers faced in the mountains during winter. An avalanche is an example of a gravity current consisting of granular material.

Earthquake: is a trembling or shaking of the ground, usually triggered by the release of underground stress along fault lines which causes movement in masses of rock and resulting shock waves.



Tsunami: An ocean wave produced by a sub-marine earthquake, landslide, or volcanic eruption. The waves may reach gigantic dimensions and have sufficient energy to travel across entire oceans.

Tornado: a local and very violent, destructive windstorm which occurs over land and is characterized by a funnel-shaped cloud extending toward the ground.

Assignment

1. Read the article titled, [Disaster Tourists Rush to Ogle the Devastation](#). Now write a 1-page response on what you think tourists should do in the event of a natural disaster. For example, is it ethical for tourists to stay and gawk and take photos? Should they have left Thailand as a result of the devastation? Justify your opinion.