

European
Yeti



INTRODUCTION TO ECOTOURISM

Aim: Understanding the place of ecotourism in the wider landscape of tourist services and activities; understanding how it came to be and what differentiates it from other types of tourism.

Objectives:



Understanding what mass tourism is and the damage it can do to local populations, the environment and the touristic sites themselves.



Understanding the emergence of sustainable tourism as a response to the threats of mass tourism; what sustainable tourism is, what its aims are, organizations that regulate or deal with sustainable tourism on a global level, European standards and regulations on the topic.



Understanding ecotourism as a branch of sustainable tourism that aims not just to be harmless to the environment and the local communities, but to be helpful; what it is, its principles, examples of ecotourism organizations, examples of ecotourism activities.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES



Tourism is a major branch of economy, able to bring in revenue, create jobs, and ensure cultural exchanges between visitors and locals.



With a global increase in income and leisure time, tourism is growing at a high rate.

International tourist arrivals:

1950 -> 25 million

1970 -> 166 million

1990 -> 435 million

2018 -> 1.442 billion

Projection for 2030 -> 1.8 billion

And this is only international tourism!

 [More info on www.theworldcounts.com](http://www.theworldcounts.com)



MASS TOURISM

It occurs when a very large number of tourists (hundreds of thousands or millions) visits the same destination. The numbers is defined in comparison with the surface of the touristic site and the density of the local population.



With the rise of mass tourism, the negative consequences of tourism become obvious.

Cost to the local population:

1

increase in the cost
of housing (rents,
home prices)

2

increase in the cost
of living

3

pressure on
infrastructure services
(transport, water and
sewage, garbage
collection)

4

uncomfortable
atmosphere for
locals

5

local business get to
compete with global
business at a
disadvantage

MASS TOURISM: Cost to the local population

In Venice (5,5 million tourist for a population of 50,000 in 2019), the population declined from 175,000 in 1950 to only 50,000 today. In 2019, organizations for the residents protested against tourism out of control.



More info on <https://allaboutvenice.com>

In Barcelona, one of Europe's most touristic cities (8 million tourists for a population of 1.6 million in 2016) the mayor Ada Colau won the race for Mayor by promising to curb tourism.



More info on <https://www.forbes.com>



Vulnerable populations are in even greater danger of being displaced to make room for tourist resorts

After the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, coastal communities in Thailand, Southern India and Sri Lanka were permanently relocated inland while their traditional lands were earmarked for tourism development.

Similar phenomena happened in: Australia, Argentina, Bali, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, Honduras, Jordan, Mexico, The Philippines, Namibia, Peru, Senegal, Tibet, Tanzania, Ghana, Honduras, Costa Rica, India, Burma.



More info on <https://travindy.com>

MASS TOURISM: Cost to the local population



Often the economic disparities between wealthy tourists and impoverished locals leads to economic apartheid

Mass tourism impacts local population in a negative way in cities, rural areas and nature reserves, in Europe as well as elsewhere!



Cost to the environment:

Depletion of natural resources, such as fresh water or building materials

* In India, a local uses 14 litres of water per day, while a tourist at a resort uses 1785 litres per day (flushing, pool, watering the lawn, golf course etc.)



More info on <https://www.ted.com>

* In Bali, in 2019, there were 6.3 million tourist arrivals for a population of 4,400 people. On the island there are over 5000 hotels and 730 Balinese villages, all competing for fresh water and energy.



More info on <https://www.ted.com>





Pollution

* In June 2019, Barcelona was named the number one most polluted port in Europe, with the highest amounts of sulphur oxide and carcinogenic nitrogen oxide coming from visiting cruise ships. Visiting cruise ships give off nearly five times as much sulphur oxide as all of Barcelona's cars.

More info on www.forbes.com



* Cars lead to 97% of the 417 Natural Parks in the US being affected by pollution

More info on cleantechnica.com



Waste

Due to the high number of tourists, the slopes of Mount Everest are littered with discarded empty oxygen canisters, abandoned tents, food containers, and even human faeces.



More info on <https://education.nationalgeographic.org>



Destruction of natural habitat

To make room for touristic facilities or building materials) puts more pressure on endangered species.



Cost to the touristic sites:



densification of constructions



overcrowding



noise pollution



various dangers that can affect the site



the disappearance of touristic sites

MASS TOURISM: Cost to the touristic sites

The aquatic ecosystem of the Phi Phi Islands in Thailand was threatened by the large number of tourists to the point it was closed.

Jaisalmer Fort in India has an outdated infrastructure that is unable to cope with the flow of tourists.



More info on <https://www.theguardian.com>



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

DEFINITIONS

The notion of sustainable tourism emerged as an attempt to counteract the negative effects of tourism.





Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities

UNEP & UNWTO, 2005: 11-12. Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers

“

Sustainable Tourism refers to sustainable practices in and by the tourism industry, it is an aspiration for the impacts of all forms of tourism - all forms of tourism should be sustainable

GSTC website



“

Sustainability principles refer to the **environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development**, and a suitable **balance** must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

UNEP & UNWTO, 2005: 11-12. Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers

“

Long-term sustainability requires a **balance** between **economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability**. The need to **reconcile economic growth and sustainable development** also has an **ethical dimension**.

EU Commission



To make **optimal use of environmental resources**, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to **conserve natural heritage and biodiversity**.



To respect the **socio-cultural authenticity of host communities**, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.



To ensure **viable, long-term economic operations**, **providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed**, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AIMS



Organizations that regulate or deal with sustainable tourism on a global level:

United Nation's World Tourism Organization
(UNWTO or WTO)

 <https://www.unwto.org/>



Global Sustainability Tourism Council (GSTC) –
independent, neutral, non-governmental, non-
profit organization registered in the US

 <https://www.gstccouncil.org/>



The Global Sustainability Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria

- They serve as the global baseline standards for sustainability in travel and tourism.
- They are the result of a worldwide effort to develop a common language about sustainability in tourism.



The Global Sustainability Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria

- They offer accreditation for 2 sets of criteria:
 - a. **Destination Criteria** for destination managers;
 - b. **Industry Criteria** for hotels
 - c. **Industry Criteria** for tour operators

- They consist of 4 pillars:
 1. Sustainable management;
 2. Socioeconomic impacts;
 3. Cultural impacts;
 4. Environmental impacts (including consumption of resources, reducing pollution, and conserving biodiversity and landscapes).



The Global Sustainability Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria

Example:

Sustainable practices and materials: use locally appropriate and sustainable practices and materials.



- Local materials, practices and crafts have been used in buildings and design where practicable and appropriate.
- Native and endemic plants obtained from sustainable sources have been used in landscaping and decoration, avoiding exotic and invasive species.
- Plants have been selected for their ability to tolerate prevailing or anticipated conditions eg drought tolerant plants
- Sustainable design, materials and construction practices have been used in buildings, with appropriate certification where possible.
- Waste from construction is sorted and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.

The Global Sustainability Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria

Example:

Access for all: provide access and information for persons with special needs, where appropriate.



- Sites, buildings and activities are accessible to persons with physical disabilities and other special needs, as appropriate to the nature of the operation.
- Clear and accurate information is provided on the level of accessibility.
- Accessibility is certified or checked with relevant experts/user bodies.



For all the GSTC Criteria for Industry go to

<https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/gstc-industry-criteria/>

Mission of the GSTC Criteria



- *Serve as basic guidelines for businesses of all sizes to become more sustainable, and help businesses choose sustainable tourism programs that fulfil these global criteria;*
- *Provide greater market access in the growing market for sustainable products, serving as guidance both for travellers and for travel agencies in choosing suppliers and sustainable tourism programmes;*
- *Help consumers identify sound sustainable tourism programs and businesses;*
- *Serve as a common denominator for information media to recognize sustainable tourism providers;*
- *Help certification and other voluntary programs ensure that their standards meet a broadly-accepted baseline;*
- *Offer governmental, non-governmental, and private sector programs a starting point for developing sustainable tourism requirements;*
- *Serve as basic guidelines for education and training bodies, such as hotel schools and universities.*

The Global Sustainability Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria



Since tourism destinations each have their own culture, environment, customs, and laws, the Criteria are designed to be adapted to local conditions and supplemented by additional criteria for the specific location and activity.



***The Criteria are the minimum,
not the maximum.***



The GSTC Criteria indicate what should be done, not how to do it or whether the goal has been achieved. This role is fulfilled by performance indicators, associated educational materials, and access to tools for implementation, all of which are an indispensable complement to the GSTC Criteria.

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) in Parks



- EU's own accreditation criteria
- 3 parts (reminiscent of the GSTC Criteria division):
 - 1. Sustainable Destinations**
 - 2. Sustainable local tourism businesses**
 - 3. Sustainable tour operators**

A wide range of actions by businesses can affect environmental impact, including:

- using environmentally friendly products;
- encouraging customers to respect the environment in their actions on the property and in nature;
- engaging in energy and water saving activities;
- reducing, recycling and managing waste.

Conclusions

Sustainability and business performance are related, and they both have a positive impact on each other!

Sustainability is seen as a business asset or a vehicle for competitive advantage!





Ecotourism

Is a segment of sustainable tourism.

It is more focused on the discovery of ecosystems and involves the active participation of local populations and tourists in the preservation of biodiversity. It is practised in nature, in small groups, within small structures.

According to UNWTO:

Ecotourism refers to forms of tourism which have the following characteristics:

- All nature-based forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas.
- It contains educational and interpretation features.
- It is generally, but not exclusively organised by specialised tour operators for small groups.
- Service provider partners at the destinations tend to be small, locally owned businesses.

More info on www.unwto.org



According to UNWTO:

Ecotourism refers to forms of tourism which have the following characteristics:

- It minimises negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment.
- It supports the maintenance of natural areas which are used as ecotourism attractions by:
 - Generating economic benefits for host communities, organisations and authorities managing natural areas with conservation purposes;
 - Providing alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities;
 - Increasing awareness towards the conservation of natural and cultural assets, both among locals and tourists.

More info on www.unwto.org





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Ecotourism is responsible travel to **natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education** for both visitors, staff and local communities.

According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES):



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A form of **responsible leisure and travel** that **values nature, heritage conservation, culture and education**, promoting **encounters and sharing human experiences**. It contributes to the **protection of the environment** and the **well-being of local populations.**”

**According to
Yeti Project:**

Industry consensus agrees ecotourism is more focused on ecological conservation and educating travellers on local environments and natural surroundings, whereas sustainable tourism focuses on travel that has minimal impact on the environment and local communities.

More plainly put, ecotourism unites:

1. nature conservation;
2. the well-being of local communities;
3. education;
4. sustainable travel.



ecotourism

Ecotourism Organisations

National Ecotourism Organizations: most countries have at least one!

Ecotourism Australia

- the first ecotourism society (founded 1991);
- their ECO Certification was the world's first national ecotourism certification program;
- their industry standards and recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).



<https://www.ecotourism.org.au>



Swedish Ecotourism Society



<https://naturesbestsweden.com>



THE
INTERNATIONAL
ecotourism
SOCIETY

The International Ecotourism Society



<https://ecotourism.org>

UNWTO & UNEP (UN Environmental Programme) & over 1,000 participants from 132 countries have come up with the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism

More info on <https://www.gdrc.org>



It has 6 sections addressed to

- governments at local, regional and national levels;
- the private sector;
- NGOs, academic and research institutions
- intergovernmental, international financial and development agencies
- local and indigenous communities
- the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD)



Focus on natural areas

- direct and personal experience of nature;
- it takes place in nature;
- based on harvesting its geomorphologic, biologic, physical, and cultural features.

The emphasis on the natural area is of the essence of planning, developing and managing ecotourism!



Interpretation of the ecotourism product



- ecotourism appeals to tourists who wish to interact with the natural environment and broaden their knowledge, understanding, consideration, and enjoyment of it
- those developing or coordinating ecotourism activities must provide an appropriate level of understanding of the natural and cultural values of the visited areas
- interpretation means more than just delivery of information, but providing an **experience** and an invitation to **reflect**

Interpretation of the ecotourism product



- the tourist must develop a **personal relationship with the natural and cultural landscape**
- the information provided must be correct
- create a memorable interpretative experiences that helps raise the level of sensitivity towards the environmental, social and cultural issues of the site and local communities
- it is important to grant the members of the local communities' access to the information and interpretation.

Environmental Sustainability

- ecotourism activities must comply with sustainability practices – this is the bare minimum!
- ecotourism activities, as well as their planning, must provide **the best tourism practices on natural environment conservation and sustainable development activities**
- tourism activities must be planned and run so that it has a reduced impact on the natural environment
- **ecotourism takes place in order to conserve and highlight the natural and cultural environment.**



Ecotourism assists in the preservation of nature



Ecotourism not only avoids damage, but positively assists in the preservation of natural areas (e.g. offering financial aid for the restoration of natural areas, gathering the waste left behind by tourists, contributing to nature preservation organizations etc.).

Ecotourism as constructive input in the development of local communities

- ecotourism provides a sustainable input in the development of local communities;
- local communities are often part of the ecotourism product;
- the benefits of ecotourism must largely come back to local communities (by using local guides, buying local goods and services, and using the local amenities etc.).
- the ecotourism activities and their planning must ensure a reduction of the negative impact on the respective local community and on their lifestyle;
- moreover, the activities must offer constructive and long-term input in these communities (ecotourism must also highlight the cultural component of the visited area and provide an input for its preservation).



Accessibility



Ecotourism should be designed to be available to people with different abilities (including disabilities).

ECOTOURISM ACTIVITIES



- hiking
- fauna watching (including observation of animal signs and tracks)
- flora observation
- bird watching
- cycling
- horse riding
- cultural tours
- water activities
- winter activities (cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, sledding)
- photo tours
- gastronomic and wine tours
- agritourism as long as the farms comply with sustainability and ecological practices etc.

ECOTOURISM ACTIVITIES



Other activities can be included as long as the negative impact on the natural or cultural environment is minimal.

Hunting or motorized off-road activities are not ecotourism.

CONCLUSIONS

Ecotourism refers to a wide range of activities based on **nature and local culture**.

The main motivation of the tourist is to **observe, understand, learn and enjoy nature and local customs**.

The purpose of ecotourism activities is to help conserve and protect natural environment.





Ecotourism:

- helps conserve and protect the natural environment
- offers education in respect to nature, raising awareness among tourists and local communities
- has a minimal negative impact on the natural and socio-cultural environment
- contribution to the well-being of local communities
- local ownership and local initiative
- small-scale businesses
- the use of local human resources

CONCLUSIONS

Plainly put, ecotourism is about

travel that leaves natural destinations better, not worse.

