The Ecotourism “Revolution”: Origins, Growth, Trends

Submitted by: Center for Responsible Travel (CREST)
The Ecotourism “Revolution”: Origins, Growth, Trends

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Ecotourism…
Who Owns Paradise?

1999
2008
Mid-19th century: Beginning of the Tourism Revolution
Railroads

Early 20th Century: The Tourism Revolution
Automobiles
Henry Ford & Model T
Family Vacations
20th Century: International Tourism Revolution

Passenger Ships

- Sailing Ships
- Titanic 1912
- Oasis of the Seas ~ 2009 (6,000 passengers)
- QE2 ~ 1969

Mid - 20th Century: International Tourism Revolution

Airplane

- Wright Brothers 1903
- DC-3 1935
- Dreamliner 2007
- Boeing 747 Jumbo Jet 1960s – 1970s
Growth in International Travel

International Arrivals (millions)

Late 20th Century:

**The Ecotourism Revolution:**
Based on a Concept, not Technology

- **1970s:** Emerged from global environmental movement
- **1990s:** Fastest growing sector of tourism industry ~ 20% – 34%/year
- **2000:** $156 billion in receipts
- **2002:** UN’s International Year of Ecotourism
- **Today:** Nearly every country involved in tourism, also promoting ecotourism
Definitions

- TOURISM: Travel undertaken for pleasure.
- NATURE TOURISM: Travel to unspoiled places to experience and enjoy nature.
- ADVENTURE TOURISM: Nature travel which involves physical skills, endurance & degree of risk-taking.
- ECOTOURISM: “Responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.”
  -- The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)
- SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: “Meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.”
  --“Our Common Future,” The Bruntland Report, 1987

Components of Ecotourism

“Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.”

Main principles:
- Minimize impact.
- Build environmental & cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
- Raise sensitivity to host countries’ political, environmental, and social climate.
3 Legs of Ecotourism

Conservation  Communities  Education

Geotourism: Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place, its environment, heritage, aesthetics, and culture and well-being of its residents. (National Geographic)

Pro-Poor Tourism: Tourism that results in increased net benefits for poor people. (South Africa)

Responsible Tourism: Tourism that maximizes the benefits to local communities, minimizes negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures & habitats or species. (UK)
Origins of Ecotourism:
Late 1970s

- Growth of global environmental movement.
- Increasing tourist dissatisfaction with mass tourism.
- Host countries finding few benefits from conventional tourism.
- World Bank & IDB close their tourism departments.
- Conservationists alarmed by destruction of rainforests and African wildlife.

Endangered Rainforest
Oil Drilling in Ecuador

Damaging Swaths of Rainforest
And Undermining Local Communities
Oil company officials meet with Indians in Ecuador

Kapawi Ecolodge & Reserve
Ecuador Amazon ~ The Achuar
East Africa: Endangered Wildlife

Illegal Ivory Seizure
Maasai Exploited for Tourism

Community-Owned Ecolodges

Il Ngwesi in Kenya

Photos by Hitesh Mehta
Basecamp Masai Mara, Kenya

Gorilla Safaris, Rwanda

Photo by Craig Sholley
Ecotourism
Measuring its Importance

- 1990s: fastest growing sector of tourism industry ~ 20% – 34%/year
- 2000: $156 billion in receipts
- 2002: UN’s International Year of Ecotourism
- Nearly every country promoting ecotourism

Ecotourism’s Global Spread

Costa Rica
Galapagos
Australia
Kenya
United States
Tanzania
Developing Countries: Marketing Nature & Culture

- **Belize**: "Mother Nature’s Best Kept Secret"
- **Costa Rica**: “No artificial ingredients”
- **Ecuador**: “Life at its purest”
- **Guatemala**: “Soul of the Earth”
- **Indonesia**: “Ultimate in Diversity”
- **Panama**: “The path less traveled”
- **Peru**: “Land of the Inkas”
- **Tanzania**: “The Land of Kilimanjaro and Zanzibar”
- **Thailand**: “Low Emission Tourism”

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**Trends in Ecotourism**

1. **Strong consumer demand**
2. **Deepening the Concept**
   - Travelers’ Philanthropy
3. **Transforming conventional tourism**
   - Emergence of “Sustainable Tourism” Revolution
4. **Setting standards**
   - Green certification
   - Sustainable financing
Trends in Ecotourism

1) Strong Consumer Demand & Out Performs Mass Tourism

Ecotourism remains strong…

despite natural & economic disasters & downturns in the industry

- Ecotourists are more independent, better educated for whom travel is important.
- Eco-businesses use local resources.
- Ecotourism has remained an innovative & dynamic field.
Consumer Demand for Ecotourism

- ¾ of tourists say their travel should not damage environment.
- Majority say they want to learn about customs, geography, culture.
- At least 1/3 say they are willing to pay more to companies that benefit local communities and conservation. (National Geographic and TIA Geotourism Survey)

Ecotourism/ Nature Tourism

Growing 3 times faster *

...than mass tourism

Could grow to 25% of market by 2012**

*UN World Tourism Organization/ 2004
**Travel Weekly/ 2007
Costa Rica’s Successful Ecotourism Model

In 2 decades:
- Arrivals increased 7 times
- Receipts increased 14 times
- Costa Rica doubled its earnings/tourist

Costa Rica’s Tourism Growth

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<td>Arrivals (thousands)</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>1,088</td>
<td>1,980</td>
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<td>Gross receipts (millions US$)</td>
<td>$133</td>
<td>$275</td>
<td>$718</td>
<td>$1,229</td>
<td>$1,895</td>
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By mid-1990s, ecotourism = top foreign exchange earner
- Costa Rica: Over 40% of tourist $ stays in the country. (INCAE)
- Cancun: less than 10% stays in Mexico

Sri Lanka: Ecolodge vs. Conventional Hotel

Ranweli Holiday Village
- Bungalows: local design & building material
  - Conveys “sense of place”
- Local & organic foods
- Activities: culture, crafts, viewing & beach
- Staff 100% Sri Lankan
- Leakage: under 10%

Hotel Chain Resort
- Cement box design
- Imported materials, furnishings & foods
- Foreign management contract
- Pre-packaged tours
- Activities: beach
- Leakage: 50% - 80%
Revenues Generated:
Ecotourism versus Standard Tourism

Ecotourism vs. Cruise Ship: Dominica, Caribbean

- Ecotourists spend 18 times more than cruise passengers.
Cruise vs. Overnight Tourism in Costa Rica

- **Arrivals (2005):**
  - Cruise Ship visitors: 280,017
  - Overnight visitors: 1,659,165
  - *6 times more*

- **Daily spending per tourist:**
  - Cruise passenger: $55
  - Overnight visitors: $120
  - *More than double*

- **Total spending for visit:**
  - Cruise passenger: $55
  - Overnight visitors: $1000
  - *18 times more*

- **Contribution to local economy:**
  - Cruise Ships tourism: $18.9 million
  - Overnight tourism: $2.1 billion
  - *111 times more*

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Trends in Ecotourism

2) Travelers’ Philanthropy:
Travelers’ Philanthropy: Deepens Meaning of Ecotourism

What is Travelers’ Philanthropy?

- Civic-minded travelers and travel businesses giving “time, talent & treasure” to host community projects
- Growing form of corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the tourism industry
- New source of development aid to host communities
- Coalescing into more organized “best practices”
- Grown exponentially, with many millions flowing into community projects
- Capturing media attention
Travel philanthropy is now core to sustainability," said David Krantz, program director for the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST).
Moving Toward Mainstream

Some Ways to Give Back to Host Communities & Conservation

- Tourism businesses or staff give in-kind or financial support, or provide expertise
- Guests contribute money or supplies to projects selected by tourism businesses and the community
- Tourism company helps connect travelers with projects
- Visitors donate time on vacation: “Voluntourism”
- Donations incorporated into prices for tours & room nights
  - Interaction with local projects integrated into tourism experience
Why are Tourism Companies Involved?

- Vanguard are ecotourism companies with strong social & environmental ethic
- Rising needs in poor countries ~ shrinking government budgets & donor aid
- “Insurance policy” ~ easier to do business in host community
- Offers marketing differentiation
- Increases staff pride and commitment
- Increasing consumer interest & demand

Visitor Support for Travelers’ Philanthropy

- More than 2/3 of U.S. and Australian travelers, and 90% of British tourists, consider active protection of the environment, including support of local communities, to be part of a hotel’s responsibility.
- 46 million U.S. travelers chose companies that “donate part of their proceeds to charities.”
- 65% of Conde Nast Traveler readers say they expect hotels to contribute a % of their revenues to the local community.
The Galapagos, Ecuador

The Galapagos: Conservation Crisis
Galapagos Conservation Fund

The Brochure ~ “The Invitation”
Giving structure to growing movement...

2nd International Travelers’ Philanthropy Conference

December 2008 – Arusha, Tanzania

... 230 participants from around the world
3rd International Travelers' Philanthropy Conference

San Jose and Monteverde, Costa Rica
July 20 - 23, 2011
Anticipating 250 participants

www.travelersphilanthropy.org/conference

Trends in Ecotourism

3) Transforming Conventional Tourism: Emergence of “Sustainable Tourism”
What is Sustainable Tourism?

Tourism that "meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future." (Agenda 21 for Travel & Tourism Industry)

“Sustainability principles should apply to all types of tourism activities, operations, establishments and projects, including conventional and alternative forms.” (UNWTO)

Types of Tourism

Nature-based Tourism
Ecotourism
Sustainable Tourism
Urban Tourism
Sun & Sea Resort & Cruise

Source: Amos Bien
Greening the Travel Industry

- Ski resorts
- Hotels
- Golf Courses
- Cruises
- Airlines
- Beaches

New Senior Positions Created for Sustainability

- Fairmont
- Marriott
- IHG
- Kimpton
- Accor
- Hilton
- TUI
- Vail
- Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines
Trends in Ecotourism

4) Setting Standards
   - Eco Certification
   - Sustainable Financing & Investment

Traditional Tourism Certification Programs

Measure Quality, Service & Price

[Logos of Mobil Travel Guide, Michelin, and AAA]
Growth of Eco Certification
After 1992 Earth Summit

Types of Certification

Source: UNWTO, Voluntary Initiatives, 2002
Eco certification programs:
Measuring Environmental, Social & Economic Impact

Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC):
Launched in 2010

- Housed within UNF, Washington, DC
- Guided by council elected by membership
- Widely endorsed by tourism industry, NGOs, governments & multilateral agencies
- Common set of baseline criteria
- Accredit & harmonize certification schemes
- Drive demand for certified products
Sustainable Investment and Finance of Tourism (SIFT) Network
UNEP to launch in 2011

Operation of SIFT Network

- IGOs
  - National & regional development agencies
  - Other donors
- Public & private banks
  - Investors
  - Financing corporations
- Destinations from developing countries (represented by public authorities or industry associations)

Ecotourism:
A Revolutionary Concept

- Set of principles & practices that has potential to transform tourism industry
- Measures for first time environmental, social & economic impacts -- & posits they can be positive
- Growing in significance
  - Demand from consumers, industry & destinations
  - New dimensions: Travelers' Philanthropy
  - Sustainable tourism expands ecotourism’s reach
  - ‘Green’ certification & investment initiatives set standards
Thank you!

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