

TOURISM

destination sustainability

They marvel at the pyramids of Egypt or the Taj Mahal. Tourists travel for pleasure, to discover new horizons, to relax, do business, or visit friends and family. Ever more numerous (694 million in 2003), tourists sustain the world's number-one economic activity and an expanding sector: the World Tourism Organization (WTO) predicts there will be 1.6 billion tourists by 2020. Such a flow of people is beginning to weigh heavily on the environment. Air, land or water pollution, and overexploited resources are some of the recurrent issues. Social problems are being multiplied too, with local populations sometimes falling prey to tourists in search of exoticism. And yet tourism, which employs 250 million people around the world, can also be a driving force for development, contribute to better living conditions for populations in host countries, and help preserve natural surroundings. Over recent years, aware that the protection of nature can influence the popularity of destinations, governments, tourism professionals and organizations have taken steps in a sustainable direction.

IMPACTS

Threats to natural resources and biodiversity

Thousands of tourists walking the same paths, admiring the sea-beds, and staying in the same places are bound to have an impact on natural resources. The most crucial issue today is water. Facilities such as golf courses and swimming pools pump thousands of litres from what are already low reserves in many countries. Coral reefs, tropical forests and other fragile ecosystems are also victims of the tourism boom. According to Ocean Planet, 90 of the 109 countries with coral reefs report that their reefs have suffered damage from boats, sewage and trade in coral. This increasing pressure poses a constant and daily threat to biodiversity.
www.biodiv.org/default.aspx

Air, land and sea pollution

The growing number of people moving from place to place adds to air pollution, in particular through greenhouse gas emissions. In 2003, 1.6 billion passengers, two-thirds of whom were holiday-makers, checked in at airports. Water pollution is a problem for certain tourist destinations that have yet to fully master sewage treatment techniques. Finally, disposing of growing mounds of waste is often problematic, in particular at natural beauty spots.
http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/air/environment/index_en.htm
www.thebmc.co.uk/world/exped/guide_1.htm

Loss of identity

Mass tourism can have an impact on local customs. Under pressure from visitors, rites, traditional festivals and religious ceremonies gradually lose their meaning to be relegated to the rank of tourist attraction. In a similar vein, many holidaymakers' need to feel on familiar ground can encourage local populations to propose hybrid services that are far-removed from their traditions.
http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=11408&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Alarming social repercussions

The development of tourism can sometimes bring with it a rise in criminality and in prostitution among children and young women. Furthermore, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 10% to 15% of people employed by the tourist industry worldwide are children.
www.ecpat.org

Economic benefits that bypass local populations

The vast amounts of money generated by tourism do not always find their way into the pockets of local populations. A study by Sustainable Living has shown that in Thailand, 70% of revenues from tourism leave the country. This figure reaches 40% in India and rises to 80% in the Caribbean.
www.oecd.org/document/2/0,2340,en_2649_34389_1826114_1_1_1_1,00.html

→ **60%**
of international
air traffic is for
tourism

3/4
OF THE WORLD'S
CORAL REEFS ARE
THREATENED BY
MORTALITY BECAUSE
OF BLEACHING



**CRUISE SHIPS
IN THE CARIBBEAN
DISCHARGE OVER
70,000 TONNES OF
WASTE EACH YEAR.**

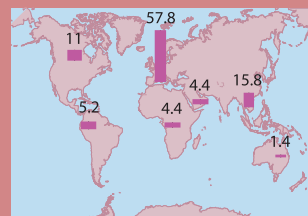


↓ Souvenirs made from protected species threaten biodiversity.

→ **11%**
of world GDP
is from tourism

TOURISM AROUND THE WORLD

With 57.8% of the world's tourists in 2003, Europe clearly stands out at the top of the tourist league, followed by Asia and the Pacific. www.world-tourism.org



↓ Influx of international tourists per world region (% market share). WTO - January 2004.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Sustainable tourism is a form of growth for the tourist industry that preserves local resources, improves living conditions, and respects a country's cultural integrity. It lends itself to all forms of tourism, activities and companies. A noteworthy example of sustainable tourism is ecotourism. Built around the discovery of nature and the host country's way of life, it directly contributes to nature conservation.
www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/eco-tour.html



↓ Almost three-quarters of the Mediterranean coastline between Spain and Sicily have been spoiled by hotel complexes.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

→ Shared tourism in Nepal

The Annapurna region of Nepal has come a long way. From the first lone trekker in 1957, it now draws 60% of the country's visitors each year. Nepal's most popular tourist destination, it has become a victim of its own success. Thus in 1986 the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), the first project of its kind in Nepal, was created under the aegis of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation. Land and resource sharing, conservation schemes and development initiatives benefit local populations and travellers alike. A visitors' fee also goes towards preservation schemes in the region. Local populations, who are actively involved in the conservation project, are therefore sure to directly benefit from the economic impact of tourism in Annapurna. www.gonomad.com/helps/0010/clay_annapurna.html



→ Flying the blue flag on Europe's coasts

Among the different tourism eco-labels, the Blue Flag scheme, set up in 1985 by the Foundation for Environmental Education, has succeeded in stimulating interest in coastline conservation. Each year the Blue Flag is awarded to cities and marinas for their outstanding results in global environmental management. Applicants for this eco-label are judged on several criteria: water quality, environmental education and information, environmental management, safety and services. There are currently some 29,000 Blue Flag beaches and marinas in 24 countries, and the scheme has been extended outside Europe to include countries in Africa and the Pacific. Each time criteria are adapted to local environmental conditions. www.blueflag.org

→ The tour operators' initiative for sustainable tourism

Intermediaries between tourists and their destinations, tour operators play a fundamental role in the tourist industry. By facilitating access to services and offering ready-to-go packages, they influence the type of holiday people choose. Having realized that sustainability is critical to their future, some twenty tour operators joined forces in 2000 to create the Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development (TOI). Set up with the support of UNEP, UNESCO and WTO, this initiative exists to help its members develop methods that respect the environment and local populations, and to identify and disseminate good practices that are compatible with sustainable tourism. From environmental certification to schemes to support local heritages, all initiatives are welcome. www.toinitiative.org



AT UNEP

→ PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Training and awareness activities for tourists and professionals are among UNEP's priority objectives in the field of tourism. Guidelines (good practices in water and waste management, energy consumption in hotels, voluntary initiatives such as eco-labels, etc.), conferences and working groups are some of its activities to lay the foundations for sustainable tourism. www.uneptie.org/pc/tourism

PUTTING IDEAS INTO PRACTICE

Individuals

→ CHOOSE FACILITIES AND SERVICES FOR THEIR IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT, POPULATION AND ECONOMY (CERTIFIED TOUR OPERATORS AND HOTELS, STRUCTURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SITE PRESERVATION, ETC.) → FIND OUT ABOUT CUSTOMS IN THE HOST REGION BEFORE SETTING OFF, AND RESPECT THEM → DEPOSIT WASTE WHERE IT IS SURE TO BE RECYCLED AND USE RECHARGEABLE BATTERIES → USE WATER AND ELECTRICITY IN MODERATION → PREFER LOCAL PRODUCTS AND COMPANIES (GUIDES, HANDCRAFTED SOUVENIRS, ETC.) → DON'T COME HOME WITH SOUVENIRS MADE FROM PROTECTED SPECIES

Companies

→ RESPECT THE RULES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM WHEN ORGANIZING COMPANY TRAVEL → PROPOSE A RANGE OF ETHICAL ACTIVITIES TO STAFF AND THEIR FAMILIES → ENABLE STAFF TO TAKE PART IN ECOTOURISM PROJECTS, ORGANIZED BY NGOs.

Local authorities

→ FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM BY TRAINING PROFESSIONALS AND IMPLEMENTING AGENDA 21s OR APPROPRIATE POLICIES → ENCOURAGE THE CREATION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURES THROUGH GRANTS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE → MODULATE ACCESS TO TOURIST SITES (BUSES, CYCLE LANES) AND IMPROVE FACILITIES FOR NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORT → SET UP TWIN-TOWN SCHEMES AND EXCHANGES BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND CULTURAL INSTITUTES

FIND OUT MORE

Ethical and sustainable tourism:

Tourism Concern: www.tourismconcern.org.uk
Friends of Nature travel check:
www.checkyourtravel.info/clever.asp?lang=en

Organizations and networks:

Global Reporting Initiative: www.globalreporting.org
Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economics: www.ceres.org
Centre for Sustainable Tourism and Transport of the Breda University of Professional Education (NHTV): www.sustainabletourism.nl
Sustainable tourism information portal: <http://destinet.ewindows.eu.org>
International Coral Reef Information Network (ICRIN): www.coralreef.org

Education and student organizations:

New Academy of Business, education for responsible enterprise: www.new-academy.ac.uk
International Student Organization for Sustainable Economics and Management (OIKOS): <http://oikosinternational.org>
Foundation for environmental education: www.fee-international.org
Quebec's declaration on ecotourism: www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/IYE/quebec/anglais/index_a.html

