

In your hands

Knowing what you consume to decide how you consume

Environmentally conscious, sustainable tourism alternatives in the **Mediterranean**



Regional Activity Centre
for Cleaner Production

Tourism in the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean region is a leading tourist destination. In the year 2000, the Mediterranean countries were the destination for 32% of international tourists, with 218 million visitors. This means that since 1970, the number of tourists travelling to the Mediterranean countries has increased fourfold.

Tourism is a main economic sector in terms of jobs and money generated, but its uncontrolled development can have an irreversible negative impact on the environment both in the Mediterranean and in any other part of the world.

This document has been produced in collaboration with the **Centre for Research and Information on Consumption (CRIC)**, a non-profit Catalan citizens' association that has been working for more than ten years providing information to the public on responsible consumption.

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How does unsustainable tourism affect the environment?

1 Rapid artificial construction and erosion of the coastline:

40% of the Mediterranean coast is built up and in some places, such as the French Riviera, this proportion is as high as 80%.



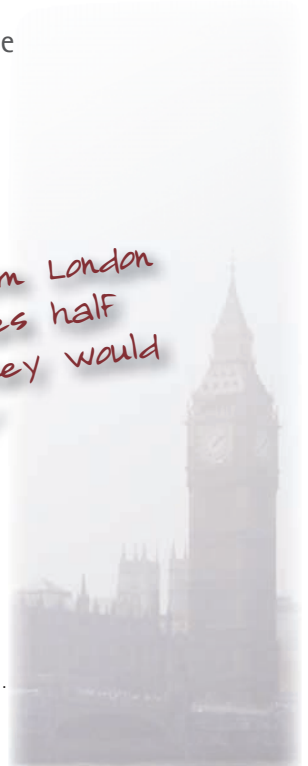


2 Exhaustion of resources and generation of pollution and waste

On average, international tourists consume more water and energy and produce more waste than domestic tourists or residents.

A person who goes to Cyprus from London for a fortnight's holiday consumes half of the natural resources that they would normally use in a year¹

¹ World Wildlife Fund: *Holiday footprinting*. March 2002. Available at www.wwf.org.uk/researcher/issues/footprint/000000261.asp#global.



3 More intense use of the most unsustainable means of transport

In the European Union, around 60% of holiday journeys are made by car, 25% by plane and just 16% by bus and train.²

The latter modes of transport consume three times less energy per passenger than cars and six times less than aeroplanes.

The atmospheric zone in which aeroplanes release CO₂ means that the gases they emit contribute between two and five times more to the greenhouse effect than they would if they were released at ground level.

Unfortunately, the least sustainable means of transport are also the ones that have experienced highest growth levels in Mediterranean tourist destinations. For example, in Spain air transport is the fastest-growing means of transport, increasing by 53% between 1991 and 2001.³



² Eurostat: *Panorama of the European Union 2006*.

³ Eurostat: *Panorama of transport - Statistical overview of transport in the EU*.



4 Alternatives for more environmentally conscious and responsible tourism

1 Enjoying nature and contact with other peoples and cultures while at the same time supporting their sustainable development

- Rural tourism

This is a good option for allowing us to get back to nature. It also takes some of the pressure away from crowded coastal areas as it usually exists in inland areas. For the most part, rural tourism is based in old houses and its workforce consists of people from the area.

It is a means of keeping alive rural areas in which it is difficult to continue with agricultural or stockbreeding activities. Those options that complement rather than replacing agricultural activities are therefore of particular interest.

In some cases this option has been called **agritourism**, which does not mean that tourists are required to participate in farming activities, but rather that the places where tourists find accommodation are also involved in their own agricultural activities or form part of the local farming framework.

Where?

There are interesting agritourism networks in France (www.accueil-paysan.com) and in Italy (www.agriturismo.com).

The European organisation ECEAT (www.eceat.org) provides guides to various European countries that meet a series of criteria linked to organic agriculture, local development, renewable energy, traditional architecture and culture, low-impact activities, etc. and it has its own initiatives in Mediterranean countries such as Turkey (www.bugday.org/tatuta) and Spain (www.ecotur.es and www.ecoagroturismo.es).

A very special example of agritourism would be **wwoofing**, in which the tourist participates in the agricultural activities carried out by their host in return for food and board. There are local organisations in several Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Israel, Turkey, France and Italy. There are also farms that participate in this active network in Morocco, Lebanon, Croatia and Greece.

- **Volunteering and solidarity tourism**

An increasingly popular option is to go on holiday as a volunteer working on nature protection projects. There is a multitude of organisations and programmes offering this as an alternative.

Another, similar option is what is known as solidarity tourism, which is organised mainly by NGOs that are active in cooperation for development. This type of tourism consists of participating in some way in cooperation projects while having a holiday.

One of the values of solidarity tourism is that it provides the tourist with training and raises their awareness of situations that are very far removed from their own way of life. Information can be obtained from NGOs involved in cooperation.



Where?

Options for this type of trip can be found at the following links or by contacting NGOs involved in cooperation for local development.

For further information::

- France: www.echoway.org, www.unat.asso.fr
- Italy: www.aitr.org
- Morocco: www.chaouenrural.org
- Turkey: www.friends-of-cirali.org/tourism.htm
- Spain: www.turismoresponsable.net, turismojusto.org
- Latin America: www.redturs.org
- International: www.tourismconcern.org.uk
www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk, www.responsibletravel.com,
www.transitionsabroad.com, www.ecovolunteer.org



2 Travel your own way

Internet-based initiatives are gradually emerging that promote accommodation options based on house swaps. There are several international networks with thousands of members: www.intervac-online.com, secure.hospitalityclub.org, www.intercambiocasas.com (Spain)

www.couchsurfing.com

“Surfing on the sofa” of the people who invite you to their house, that’s the idea here. This movement aims to generate connections between people from different places through the provision of accommodation. The organisation defines itself as a worldwide network for making connections between travellers and the local communities they visit.

How does it work? Once you have joined the network (you create a web profile with a description, photos, your details etc.) you can carry out a search for members in a specific region where you would like to travel. You can add conditions to this search and you can see the profiles of potential hosts, whom you will contact prior to arrival. If you get on, they will put you up in their home and they may take on the role of real hosts so that you can gain an in-depth insight into the community you are visiting. You will obviously receive requests from members who want to visit your region too. They say there are 385,000 members and the region with most members is Europe. There are members in 223 countries, which isn’t bad at all!

3 Choose accommodation that is certified as being environmentally respectful

There are various types of certification that enable the owners of tourist accommodation to show their commitment to respecting the environment.

Perhaps the most developed of these methods is "ecolabelling": ecolabels are distinctions granted by a public administration or other official organisation that guarantee that the establishment fulfils certain environmental criteria.

This enables consumers to recognise those products or services that meet the environmental criteria required by the body granting the distinction.

For further information:

- European Eco-flower: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/index_en.htm
- UNEP/DTIE⁴: <http://www.unep.fr/en/>
- International Organization for Standardization: <http://www.iso.org/iso/home.htm>
- Fairtrade Jordan: <http://www.fairtradejordan.org>
- Fair Trade in Tourism: <http://www.fairtourismsa.org.za/>
- Environmentally Friendly Hotels: www.environmentallyfriendlyhotels.com

⁴ United Nations Environment Programme. Division of Technology, Industry, and Economics.

4 Getting around

we should remember that travelling on shared or public transport is a more environmentally sound option and also has less of an impact on your wallet!



Share transport through:

www.compartir.org,
www.digihitch.com,
www.pass-europe.eu,
www.lifershhalte.info,
www.stiffarmingsociety.com/hitchhiking





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