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Green Room: Eco-tourism

Does eco-tourism do more harm than good?

The development of nature-based tourism can end up harming the areas the eco-tourist chooses to visit, argues James Mair of the Centre for Marine Biodiversity and Biotechnology.

The influx of visitors to what are often small, picture-postcard islands, may bring revenue and employment. But it can also lead to the draining of freshwater, loss of habitat and increased pollution.

The answer, Dr Mair says, is not to stop development in places such as Ecuador's Galapagos Islands, but to make sure development is sustainable.

Do you agree with James Mair? If so, how can we ensure sustainable development? Have you ever been an eco-tourist?

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Published: Thursday, 14 December, 2006, 18:43 GMT 18:43 UK

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Added: Thursday, 21 December, 2006, 13:45 GMT 13:45 UK

Unfortunately, the number one issue is numbers; there are too many of us on this earth. Until (unless) we can address the population issue, there will be no real healing of this beautiful planet we call home.

Sarah Terry, Palmira, Rep de Panama

It isn't the population number that make thing so bad, but cheap travel. Tax travelers more and you'll cut down the quantity - and still make your money by selling 'quality' packages.

[guthier], Oxford, United Kingdom

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Thursday, 21 December, 2006, 07:50 GMT 07:50 UK

Unfortunately, the number one issue is numbers; there are too many of us on this earth. Until (unless) we can address the population issue, there will be no real healing of this beautiful planet we call home.

Sarah Terry, Palmira, Rep de Panama

Actually, the populations of affluent Western nations (the people who can afford any type of tourism) are decreasing, especially in Europe. Population growth is an issue in poor, third world countries.

[Stunmai], Shrewsbury, MA, United States

Recommended by 1 person

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Added: Wednesday, 20 December, 2006, 21:31 GMT 21:31 UK

Eco-tourism *can* do more harm than good if it doesn't adhere to and teach the principals of sustainable development, minimal environmental impact and responsibility.

Christopher JR, Chicago, Illinois, United States

Recommended by 2 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Wednesday, 20 December, 2006, 08:35 GMT 08:35 UK

crowed cities people will prefer some romote uncrowded place. Truists must take responsibility to keep these places clean. My observation is tiurists are behaving very erresponsibal way. Only solution is truist depermant of that countries must have very strick rule and fine those spread dirt in this place

Ramesh Raghuvanshi, Pune[India]

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Wednesday, 20 December, 2006, 24:05 GMT 00:05 UK

The author might want to cut out the hamburgers in the airports, too. The main incentive for cutting down the

forests here in Guatemala is to be able to run cattle. I'm no vegetarian, but...

Carlisle Johnson, Guatemala City

Recommended by **1** person

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Added: Tuesday, 19 December, 2006, 11:08 GMT 11:08 UK

Not the most important question raised by this article...

Why does Mair start with a very good subtle joke (the Galapagos being naturally selected) and then go on to the inexplicably quotation-marked "shoulder to shoulder" and "trumped", the cringe-worthy "thonging" and the term "pleasure-seeking" (sic)? Am I missing a punning allusion with "pleasure-seeking"?

Jenny, London

Recommended by **1** person

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Added: Monday, 18 December, 2006, 16:50 GMT 16:50 UK

My family are going to an eco holiday resort in Spain next year. the problem is that the plane will be burning more fuel getting us there than my car burns in a whole year.

Al Blackwool, Stevenage

Recommended by **1** person

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Monday, 18 December, 2006, 16:46 GMT 16:46 UK

I think some people misinterpret what eco tourists want. The industry could be truly sustainable & still attract visitors. I worked on an archaeological dig on the coast of Ecuador in the late 80's & we had Earthwatch volunteers. They loved writing home about the compost toilets, lack of running water & candle lit dinners (no electricity). We composted all our food waste (after the site donkey had her fill) & had very little other waste. It generated jobs for the locals too.

Caroline Baggins

Recommended by **2** people

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Added: Monday, 18 December, 2006, 16:31 GMT 16:31 UK

I just returned from 4 months travelling in Central America. Eco-tourism is never going to be 100% eco-friendly, but it definitely helps to preserve the environment. The most important thing in these areas is to educate people about looking after their environment. The level of littering and environmental abuse I saw was unbelievable. Education about the environment at a local level is key to preserving these natural wonders.

Alex

Recommended by **3** people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Monday, 18 December, 2006, 15:26 GMT 15:26 UK

The sustainability of eco-tourism activities is often questioned. Tourism is a complex industry to manage and its impacts are not always readily visible. For example in Doubtful Sound, New Zealand, a seemingly low level of tour boat traffic is significantly affecting the viability of an internationally important population of bottlenose dolphins (fiordlandbottlenosedolphins.blogspot.com). So what could be perceived as benign ecotourism can indeed harm the environment it uses.

David, Halifax

Recommended by **3** people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Monday, 18 December, 2006, 13:30 GMT 13:30 UK

Words like "eco-tourism" are made up by media types. No one flying thousands of miles to see the wonders of the natural world is kidding themselves they're doing it for anyone other than themselves. However, that doesn't mean they don't care about the impact they have on the places they visit. I'd want to know what the resort was doing to (for example) recycle the water they use and the rubbish they generate, and how much say people who live there have over the development of their homeland.

Jessica, Reading

Recommended by **0** people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Monday, 18 December, 2006, 13:14 GMT 13:14 UK

I agree broadly with this article. As someone who works to promote sustainable tourism in Ecuador (*****) it is obvious that 99% of what tries to pass as "ecotourism" is only a veneer to salve the consciences of world travelers. Beneath this veneer irreparable damage is being done to both the biological and cultural diversity of Ecuador and other countries in similar positions. The solution is to promote sustainable development, of which ecotourism is but one element.

Andy Kirby, Quito

Recommended by **3** people

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Added: Monday, 18 December, 2006, 11:08 GMT 11:08 UK

I have to agree with Matthew. Until eco-tourism is clearly defined and understood by all it has become an oxymoron. Tourism by its very nature can ever only be sustainable as it is never eco friendly beyond educational. As for as rich people imposing on the poor, that is a rich person's view for sure. Years ago I spent time in Fiji and I asked the chief what he thought of us and our riches. His answer was "If that makes you happy good, but it is not for us".

Steve, Dubai

Recommended by **0** people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Monday, 18 December, 2006, 10:46 GMT 10:46 UK

Has this article been edited? If not, may I suggest it is? It makes little sense and is below the standards one would expect from the BBC.

The piece threatens to make interesting points but is stymied by not being very clearly written. The key issue is - is travel in itself a positive thing? What is the alternative to those 'thongers' in feeding local people? Industrial development? And how can tourists cut through the morass of issues in order to travel guilt-free?

Tom Hall

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Monday, 18 December, 2006, 09:10 GMT 09:10 UK

I agree. Sadly there are many example of Ecotourism here in Australia that exploit and degrade the environment. A much promoted example here in the Otway Ranges (Victoria) was designed to take visitors through the canopy of temperate Myrtle Beach rainforest on a network of steel platforms. Local ecologists warned that the ancient Myrtle Beach trees were vulnerable to a fungus if roots or limbs were damaged. They were ignored. Over 40 Myrtle Beach have now died and the fungus continues to spread.

craig Allen, Forrest

Recommended by 1 person

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Added: Monday, 18 December, 2006, 01:58 GMT 01:58 UK

Why do people always talk of "indigenous rights"? Surely the whole point of an open and connected (globalised) world is that people are free to come-and-go as they please? Otherwise the "indigenous people" of the UK would surely demand an instant end to immigration of ALL kinds - hardly something that would sit well with most people! Lets talk about how we can improve the living standard of people in these beautiful places without simply stopping experiencing them for ourselves!

Gareth Thomas, Oxford

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Sunday, 17 December, 2006, 20:57 GMT 20:57 UK

To respond to Angela from Hong Kong: I'm sorry, but indigenous communities are far from sustainable. You can take into account slash+burn agriculture, poaching, and litter, and all of a sudden an eco lodge doesn't look so bad. Tourist dollars are incredibly important to these developing nations, and if used correctly they can really do some great things and preserve some incredible things. I will admit though that unfortunately eco-tourism right now is quite far from really being ecological.

Matthew King, Piedmont, California

Recommended by 1 person

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Sunday, 17 December, 2006, 19:21 GMT 19:21 UK

I look forward to the time when foreign travel involves a much higher degree of personal investment and concomitant trepidation - it is tediously easy at the moment and the world, in this fashion, seems small and known.

I will not see these changes due to age, but I wish upon my children and their children a world 're-filled' with real exploratory challenges.

Lawrence Toms, London

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Sunday, 17 December, 2006, 11:54 GMT 11:54 UK

As population and disposable income continue to grow, so travel and tourism will increase. Maximising the 'eco' element of this will help limit the damage. It is therefore important. But limit the damage is all we can do. Until we address the source of the problem - over population - then we will continue to destroy more and more of the planet.

Friar Balsam, Glasgow, United Kingdom

Recommended by 3 people

Added: Sunday, 17 December, 2006, 10:05 GMT 10:05 UK

To live tomorrow, one must be alive today. To have an economy tomorrow... it has to work today. The future generations that do not exist cannot control either charity or abuse done in their name; and abuse has been done: far right and left dictatorships often invoked current public sacrifice for the sake of a future 'new man'. Please consider accountability before endorsing a slogan. Why guess centuries head? At least one future generation is present always.

Ana, Bucharest

Recommended by **0** people

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Added: Sunday, 17 December, 2006, 04:04 GMT 04:04 UK

What Tourists will bring into a resort area?

- 1/ Diseases such as HIV?AIDS, Super TB, VD, etc. ,
- 2/ Tourists can bring in sex-seekers on children at local areas.
- 3/ Tourists can bring in more garbages,trashes of all sorts to contaminate the resort areas.
- 4/ Tourists can bring in terrorisms, such as islamic terrorists, al Qaidas,and spies of all sorts. Narcotics drugs traffickers of all sorts
- 5/ Tourists can bring in numerous kinds of criminals
- 6/ Tourists lead locals destroying naturals resc

toannang, cnd

Recommended by **0** people

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Added: Sunday, 17 December, 2006, 03:09 GMT 03:09 UK

Eco-tourism definitely will cause some changes into the area, but the goals of eco-tourism aren't exclusively on preservation of the area and community development but also education and increasing awareness for preservation both to the locals and toward internationals. Remember that many destruction of natural resources happen not in the developed country.

James, Singapore

Recommended by **1** person

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 20:40 GMT 20:40 UK

My comment is one that will be expressed over and again by anyone who is even the least bit sensitive to the balance in nature required between what is given and what is taken and returned. To choose to exploit this simple to understand law of natural balance in the name of short-term financial gain is the very definition of avarice, perfidy and greed - the powerful few on the quick-take; the otherwise exquisit natural balance gone to hell, the result. We cannot EXIST on polluted, barren land.

Jeff Thompson, Buckland

Recommended by **0** people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 20:16 GMT 20:16 UK

Eco-tourism is too often mislabeled. Often the resorts that promote themselves as eco-friendly haven't done anything to reduce their consumption or the stress that they are putting on the land they occupy. It gives tourists a sense that what they are doing is OK, while at the same time isolating them from the native culture and scenes of poverty that surround them. These little islands of western culture are destroying the world bit by bit, and the only solution I see is to encourage camping.

Matthew King, Piedmont, California

Recommended by **3** people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 17:46 GMT 17:46 UK

Ecotourism may cause limited harm, but by itself it is form of industry most easily forced to modify to limit damage.

It is naive and dangerous to suggest that without ecotourism, wildlife will remain unharmed. NOT! Land will be developed into mass tourism or other industry with little or no place to wildlife.

Where are lions and elephants in East Africa outside "tourist-stressed" parks? Long ago extinct. Still, some naive people oppose eco-tourism. :-)

Jerzy, Basel. Switzerland

Recommended by **0** people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 17:33 GMT 17:33 UK

Watching wildlife around the world, only places which were really well protected were showcase eco-tourism spots, either for profit, or because being on public eye forced real conservation instead of usual creation of "paper park".

More often officials are preoccupied by minor harm from eco-tourism and ignore massive destruction by local people. In Galapagos, it is Ecuadorians who brought goats and predators, poach fish and kill tortoises.

Jerzy, Basel Switzerland

Recommended by **1** person

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 17:29 GMT 17:29 UK

I agree with your views. I used to operate and Eco-tourism business, and shut it down, when i realized that it only adds to the problem of ecological degradation. Native people should be given the freedom to choose what is best for them.

kenneth, malaysia

Recommended by **0** people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 13:48 GMT 13:48 UK

The author refers to humans as "aliens".

It might come as a surprise to him and to other so-called "environmentalists" that humans are as natural and organic as the next species.

As a human, I find it insulting and degrading to be referred to as an "alien" on my home planet.

Marty, Dearborn, Michigan USA

Recommended by **0** people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 12:53 GMT 12:53 UK

I agree, that eco-tourism is no better than any other tourism. Originally, tourists venturing into remote areas would take up a lot of responsibility for places they visited. In contrast, the other tick-off-the-list tourism doesn't have that same "healing" effect. It rather directs masses of people into very sensitive ecologies. Furthermore, the large infrastructures needed cannot be financed by local ('poor') people, and thus, the payoff goes to investors ('rich') from other places.

Kai Heussen, Stuttgart, Germany

Recommended by **0** people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 10:24 GMT 10:24 UK

The one side of sustaining the ecology should be in poverty-stricken areas not finding what was once an untouched place by humans and then saying, "We ought to save this place" unless the intrusion by those that wish to do harm is foreseeable in the future. Safari's do little for the ecology of Africa but probably boost their economy. It still doesn't make it right.

Ray Storer

Recommended by **0** people

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1 2 **3** 4 5

Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 07:21 GMT 07:21 UK

"Western-style conservation ethics" seems to imply that we should deny others what we seek for ourselves. I'm really sure these "indigenous island people" want to be living primitive lives for the sake of this preservation (some would call it "conservation"). If you preservationists want to keep things as-they-are, you better be willing to provide a replacement for the money-injection tourism provides communities. In the end, it's about *people*, not the environment.

Chris C, United States

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 03:46 GMT 03:46 UK

What's this stuff about "when a country is forced to use every available resource to enable its human population to improve their economic wealth and health..." ? If any of those moth-eaten Third World countries did that, they would become rich very quickly! Why do you think they are Third World in the first place?

Tourism is about the only resource these poor people can exploit: it is typical of the "human zoo" mentality of most of your chattering-class correspondents, to try to stop them.

Thomas Goodey, Rochester

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 03:34 GMT 03:34 UK

Real ecotourism is great. Its far to simplistic to write off ecotourism on the basis of a few 3rd world fiascos. Here in Australia the industry is very strong and well run- wildlife benefits from the perception by politicians that it benefits the economy. Would the great barrier reef be so well protected if not for ecotourism? No chance! Whats needed is iron clad international standards or we risk chucking out baby with the bathwater.

Mark, Hobart

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Saturday, 16 December, 2006, 01:17 GMT 01:17 UK

As someone who is 'happiest in the wild places of the earth', I would like to defend eco-tourism. That is the key word. For every eco-tourist, there are hundreds of people who are there to take pictures to send to all their friends back home, and to check that particular site off their list. People who simply go somewhere to say they have been there should be contained in special 'holding pens'. I am serious. These people do serious amounts of harm, and make it difficult for others to enjoy

make it difficult for others to enjoy

Evan, Toronto Canada

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 19:51 GMT 19:51 UK

In response to Noah, Bangkok; The point is that the very fact that an area is underdeveloped attracts eco-tourists and hence, development. places which might previously have been left untouched due to the lack of natural resources or large population centres are now marketable commodities, ready to be exploited. I absolutely agree that aggressive globalised development is a major threat to the environment but now far fewer places are without economic value, and hence safe from development

joe, wales

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 19:42 GMT 19:42 UK

I feel very strongly that eco-tourism has very little to offer in terms of meaningful conservation value. Income from tourism is extremely un-reliable and fickle, one natural disaster or bomb and tourists will simply go elsewhere. The other major problem which I see is that eco-tourists are generally keen to go 'off the beaten track' but not keen to endure the hardship and discomfort this can involve. the result is the cultural pollution of more and more remote and isolated places and peoples

joe, bedford

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 18:37 GMT 18:37 UK

Personally eco tourism is a double edge sword. On the one hand it can provide vitally important funding and awareness to an environment. It could end up damaging both the environment and the local inhabitation.

Dr Mair. How do you define sustainability? Its easy to say to allow both the community and environment to thrive. Who sets those parameters and how will you enforce it. How do you make sure the development improves the whole community and not just a few individuals.

Peter Slack, Rayleigh

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 15:49 GMT 15:49 UK

I very much agree with Mr. Mair. His point is clear... both spectrums can exist hand in hand, but with most money making predators wanting more profit, this is an extremely complicated feat. I have travelled Asia, North America, Central, and South America and have always made a point to stay in locally owned establishments. It IS possible, people just need to know the importance of educating themselves about where they're going instead of how much money they're saving for such a

going to read or watch history and planning for such a great trip.

Claire F., Winnipeg, MB Canada

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 15:32 GMT 15:32 UK

I lived in Madagascar for two years and was dismayed at the results of ecotourism. The wealthy and educated were able to advance, while the average family in poverty did not. In fact, all of the tourists with their shiny cameras and clothes made people feel more poor. No one ventured to see how locals lived or communicated with locals. As for saving the forest, it was cut more intensively to heat up hot water for those warm ecotourist showers! Tourism is not "development". Let people be.

Christopher Cole, Cleveland Ohio

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 15:26 GMT 15:26 UK

I agree with Dr Mair. Though the scale of the damage to the eco system caused by eco-tourism is lesser than any other type of tourism, it still have a negative impact to its core objective of "sustainable development". Development & sustainability are two different words which can not be reconciled. Development can only be achieved at the expense of sustainability. To choose one should be the choice of the indignious people.

HAYMANOT, DUBAI

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 15:22 GMT 15:22 UK

The Galapagos Islands are in trouble. I have worked in tourism here for the past 24 years and it is alarming to see the changes, particularly over the past 10 years. Although ecotourism is talked about here in the islands there is a long way to go before tourism in the islands can be characterized as ecofriendly. There are a number of reasons, chief among them is the need for sustainable local businesses, education reform, and a strengthening of local institutions to protect the islands.

Greg, Galapagos Islands

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 15:15 GMT 15:15 UK

I agree with Dr Mair 100%. Sustainable development is a contradiction in terms dreamed up by god-knows-who to justify the exploitation of places and people who are best left to live in peace as truly sustainable communities.

Angela, Hong Kong

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 15:14 GMT 15:14 UK

I have stopped all tourist travel and travel only to visit friends and relatives (by train wherever possible). I apply sustainable principles to all my personal and work decisions and am raising my daughter to apply these principles as well.

Governments and companies are moving far too slowly (society has been talking about the environment for over 40 years !) and only when sufficient numbers of individuals change their behaviour will any progress be made.

lisa marshall, paris

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 15:06 GMT 15:06 UK

Great to call attention to this issue. Solutions are not easy, but this is a looming disaster. I have come to see global tourism as the scourge of the planet. Wherever we go there are thousands of tourists waddling about, often buying more tourist crap from shops that once served the local people. The devastation of small port towns by cruise lines is stunning. Yet, perhaps the cruise ships are less damaging than air travel, rental cars, building hotels, restaurants, etc.

Bill Bowling, West Hollywood

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 15:05 GMT 15:05 UK

The raw fact is that we cannot create Eden,eco-tourism is a laugh - do tourists arrive in canoes? We are all involved in the 'destruction' process. When you open an 'environmentally sound' item, ask yourself how was it produced. Follow its creation. Ask questions! Ideally Eden should be available to all, but logic says this is a vain hope. 6bn+ pop. and growing, dictates the future: enjoy eco-tourism but take ALL with you and remove ALL, and I do mean ALL:) Still want to go?

Sandy, Ontario, Canada

Recommended by 0 people

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All comments as they come in

1 2 3 **4** 5

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 14:56 GMT 14:56 UK

The world is not going to be saved by tourism !

If you want to make a donation towards saving an endangered habitat, then people would be better advised to do so directly, rather than spending thousands to visit the Galapagos Islands or New Zealand, which get little benefit from the travel costs incurred.

The exception is if some deduction or donation is made by people for visiting somewhere close to an existing holiday destination, in Spain or Greece perhaps.

Trevor Fenning, Jena, Germany

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 14:36 GMT 14:36 UK

Dr. Mair is right in saying that non sustainable eco-tourism is harmful to the environment. He is not right, however, in saying that it brings revenue to locals. It is quite the opposite. When tourism arrives to a place, locals will abandon their traditional means of subsistence, to work for very low pay in the tourist industry. It is the large corporations that make the money: airlines, hotels, adventure travel agencies. Tourism should be economically, as well as ecologically sustainable.

Maria, Boston

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 14:34 GMT 14:34 UK

Eco-tourism is certainly not about invading sensitive ecosystems and setting up western style accommodation. It is about taking the pressure off natural resources such as forests and giving the indigenous population an alternative income source to forest encroachment. The effect is double: forest & wildlife protection (that's what your ecotourist will pay to see) and extra income from treks, boat rides, homestay with locals, handicrafts for the locals. It takes some training but it works.

Richard Schmid, Luxembourg

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 14:23 GMT 14:23 UK

Dr. Mair is right - he should feel guilty about flying. The most sustainable tourism is local and low-emission.

Jonas Hagen, New York City

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 14:21 GMT 14:21 UK

It's all about the rich feeding on the poor, and the poor exploiting the rich. The one thing being ignored is the bludgeoning world population...as depicted in Al Gore's documetary "An Inconvenient Truth". Unless the religious zealots get off their high horses and recognise that we need to curb the population in poor countries through education and family planning, we are doomed sooner rather than later. What's more, rich nations will see influx of the poor, as is happening in EU and US.

Realist Environmentalist, Cincinnati

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 14:16 GMT 14:16 UK

Dr Mair may be being naive about the wishes of local populations. Here in Reunion Island (SW Indian Ocean) modernisation, tourism and associated development have increased over the last 20 years often at the wishes of local elites who for years turned a blind eye at uncontrolled property development on the coast, insufficient waste disposal and water purification causing pollution of coastal sites like the island's coral lagoon. Only now "eco-tourism" is a marketable concept are they changing...

Heloise, Ile de La Reunion, Indian Ocean

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 14:08 GMT 14:08 UK

While critics criticise, others are working day in day out to improve tourism, and increase its benefits to the local economy, society and environment. The rest is pulp non-fiction, and a blend of messianism, cynicism and nihilism. Ecotourism (one word, no dash) is a broad movement for a better, ecological tourism, rather than a niche within nature tourism.

Antonis Petropoulos, Athens, Greece

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 14:05 GMT 14:05 UK

Regular tourism bad. Eco-tourism bad. Why don't we just all stay in our bedrooms? Clearly, immobility is the best way to help the environment.

Simon, Waltham MA

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 14:03 GMT 14:03 UK

Sorry, Professor, the World Tourism Organization is not a UN institution! Strange mistake...

Robert, New York

Recommended by 0 people

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 14:02 GMT 14:02 UK

The concept of eco-tourism is a trendy fad. The future of all tourism is to recognize, and quantify where possible, its impact to help minimize the environmental impact. Too many people see eco-this or eco-that as a lifestyle choice, such as smoking or drinking bottled water, but the health of the planet needs to be integral to everything we do.

Dave F, Cheshire, United Kingdom

Recommended by **0** people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 13:35 GMT 13:35 UK

Dr Mair is right. Even the seemingly good eco tourism after time becomes driven by the need to increase numbers and improve infrastructure. I am from the Caribbean where even the smallest of islands increase the size of their airports, improve roads and facilities at the expense of the natural environment. Short term political thinking sees material benefits/votes in which humans are the sole beneficiaries. Long term bio systems approaches are ignored though the cost to humans will be horrendous

Karl Watson, Bridgetown, Barbados

Recommended by **0** people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 13:32 GMT 13:32 UK

Perhaps a better use of disposable income would be to donate it to, say, a microlending program, and take our vacations close to home. What do we really gain by traveling halfway around the globe to bicycle in an exotic locale, besides a camera full of boring photos and bragging rights at our next social gathering?

joan, northfield, massachusetts, usa

Recommended by **0** people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 13:28 GMT 13:28 UK

My wife and I just returned from a month in Vietnam. You see all the good and bad aspects of tourism in that developing country. Greed and the necessity to put food on the table are very powerful motives. I think support of environmental education in these areas is critical. If the local people and government can be convinced to consider their long term rather than short term interests, the environment would benefit.

Dale Krumreich, Pinellas Park, Florida USA

Recommended by **0** people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 13:19 GMT 13:19 UK

Dr Mair is right. Even the seemingly good eco tourism after time becomes driven by the need to increase numbers and improve infrastructure. I am from the Caribbean where even the smallest of islands increase the size of their

airports, improve roads and facilities at the expense of the natural environment. Short term political thinking sees material benefits/votes in which humans are the sole beneficiaries. Long term bio systems approaches are ignored though the costs to humans will be horrendous.

Karl Watson, Bridgetown

Recommended by **0** people

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All comments as they come in

1 2 3 4 **5**

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 12:50 GMT 12:50 UK

Well Sir, you derive your academic career (and satisfaction both intellectual and financial) on the back of the indigenous and the threatened. Others find their niche in the global economy to exploit the world's resources in other ways. (the media, tour operators and real estate merchants)

I don't quite get the point of the program. Interesting as it is, it promotes the out of the ordinary destinations. As does the name dropping of "healthy" / "diseased" islands in the caribbean. What's ur bag?

Pete Hoffmann

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 12:50 GMT 12:50 UK

My father came from the caribbean island of Grenada where there is a marked difference between "haves" and "have not". When the issue is one of food protected species count for nothing. Turtles and their eggs are consumed, spear fishing on coral reefs continues. The main hotels are owned by overseas investors. Try explaining the need for conservation of species to people living at a subsistence level.

Rick Thomas, Kintbury

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 12:43 GMT 12:43 UK

Great piece! Tourism CAN contribute to conservation and sustainable development, although currently it mostly doesn't. One key objective must be that tourists and tour companies that go into natural protected areas must pay their way! Tourism is eroding our natural capital because nowhere near enough of tourist spending is invested in ensuring that parks have the capacity to manage it sustainably. Tour companies and international tourists must be prepared to pay appropriate entrance fees.

Andy, Washington DC

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 12:08 GMT 12:08 UK

There are now a couple of sights (including a British Airways site link) which allows the traveller to pay a carbon levy to offset the trip. Funds are used for various green projects. It may not clear the guilty conscience, but at least it helps a bit. In the long-run green tourism can only work if numbers are restricted, but this gives advantage to the rich, which is unfair. Therefore, I suggest a lottery system for spaces?

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 12:04 GMT 12:04 UK

The problem with "eco-tourism" as expounded in the article is that it is the very opposite of what it claims to be.

Eco-tourism is a marketable commodity which is now being exploited by the free market forces that destroy any notion of control.

I doubt whether anyone looking for a holiday to the wild places of the world wants the intrusion of the indigenous population - but the locals will always want to exploit rich visitors who exploit their lands - and who can blame them?

Simon Tucker, Swindon

Recommended by 0 people

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 11:55 GMT 11:55 UK

I grew up on Cape Cod in Massachusetts, USA and I have lived in Panama for the last 30 years. In both places people have caused incredible damage. Eco-tourism is less damaging than other forms of human invasion as it does help fund some conservation efforts. Unfortunately, the number one issue is numbers; there are too many of us on this earth. Until (unless) we can address the population issue, there will be no real healing of this beautiful planet we call home.

Sarah Terry, Palmira, Rep de Panama

Recommended by 4 people

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 11:53 GMT 11:53 UK

We need to stop blaming tourism for destruction of ecosystems and start thinking about what globalisation is doing. The damage caused by tourism in a few areas is far less than the damage due to industrialisation and a world of growing 'consumers'. As the poor in developing countries get richer they put a far heavier burden on the environment than a few eco aware tourists here and there. The only answer is to stop ANY development in wilderness areas for tourists and locals alike.

Noah Shepherd, Bangkok, Thailand

Recommended by 0 people

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 11:49 GMT 11:49 UK

I dont know what is all the fuss about alien invasion, is the the guilt of man? Or the latent anxiety that other people are clever enough to start making money and rising up the chain of economy.

There has always been movement of species across the world, the very basis of Darwinism and evolution. The world has become what is today due to the spread of species, otherwise we would have been evolving into some other

type of life

Satish Batta, Media

Recommended by 0 people

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Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 11:46 GMT 11:46 UK

Rights and obligations: the explosion of low cost flights made dreams of distant lands come true for a lot of middle-class people, likeme. Convinced that the Earth is everyone's and that i have the right to go anywhere and also that i will know how to minimise my impact, i have walked into many protected areas: Romania,Tenerife,France, and enjoyed it. But so did other thousants like me, and after us the traces were definitely visible, with all the care taken! Let's stay home for Christmas ...

Teodora

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 11:28 GMT 11:28 UK

Green tourism ? Of course not good !
Idem for archeological tourism : Egypt, Peru, Mexico...

luke, Kortrijk Belgium

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 11:19 GMT 11:19 UK

I agree that any form of tourism can have detrimental environmental effects, but would you not appreciate that eco-tourism is far more sustainable than mass or charter tourism as its basic principles include the benefits to local culture and heritage whilst benefiting the environment in as many ways as possible. This is undoubtedly far more sustainable than exploitation of local people and the influx of foreign workers that can be seen in tourist hotspots like the Maldives.

anonymous, London

Recommended by 0 people

[Alert a Moderator](#)

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 10:52 GMT 10:52 UK

I can't find a single website/agency for a guide to UK eco-tourist destinations/holidays! (Only some local ones like 'Green Island' for the Isle of Wight.)

What are green-concious holiday makers supposed to do? What are all these bodies like the Sustainable Development Commission for? Isn't this a gaping horse-in-the-mouth opportunity for the UK tourist industry to promote holidays here?

It's beyond belief.

Roger Thompson, Southend-on-sea

Recommended by 0 people

Added: Friday, 15 December, 2006, 09:41 GMT 09:41 UK

Travel to N.Z.used "my" lifetime airmiles. I now restate/argue statements I hear re travelling & holidays. Current zeitgeist promotes global travel & dismisses exploring local landscapes - note forecasters apologising for "bad" weather. Since WW2 going where only v. rich went previously is a great egalitarian opportunity for people of wealthy countries. Eco-tourism concept shows a vital shift towards redrafting our world view. I recall 'Silent Spring'. Governments must legislate for change.

rob, Kendal

Recommended by **0** people

[Alert a Moderator](#)
