

Ecotourism

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Introduction.

Ecotourism is defined as tourism that allows travellers to visit untouched parts of the world to enjoy the nature and traditional culture without impacting upon it.

Since it first became trendy in the 1980s, ecotourism has expanded rapidly and is now the fastest growing sector in the industry.

But there are pros and cons as well.

The Pros of Eco-tourism.

If done rightly eco tourism has several advantages. This means that more natural habitat is preserved and that the resources for building come from sustainable sources. This is the theory anyway.

Another advantage is that eco tourism provides an income for local inhabitants in an area. Moreover, showing people a rainforest rather than logging the forest is a good compromise if the forest is preserved.

People in the developed world through eco tourism get to experience places of great natural significance as well as interact with local and indigenous people.

The Cons of Eco-tourism.

It is felt by some environmentalists that there should be some parts of the world that are 'off bounds' for any tourists as any human activity will damage the eco system and disrupt the routine of the animals.

Although scuba divers try to be careful, any tourist scuba business is going to have a negative impact on fragile coral marine environments. Although, people walking carefully through the forest might not do much harm, building their eco lodges does.

A good example of this is the safari business in Africa. Tour jeeps going across the savannah scare off the animals that the lions rely on catching. The result is that lions can no longer hunt in parts of Kenya and Tanzania during the morning when the tour jeeps are out.

Conclusions

On balance, the cons often outweigh the pros. Whilst it is undoubtedly better to shoot animals with a camera, rather than a gun, the very presence of tourists upsets the delicate balance of the local ecosystem and impacts upon the lives of local people, not always for the better.

There are also reports of ecotourism firms failing to deliver on what they have promised. Perhaps ecotourism itself requires closer regulation and should be approved on a case-by-case basis; including consultation with local people.

References:

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