

28. PROS AND CONS OF SUPPORTING ECOTOURISM

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Tourism causes damage. The idea of ecotourism is that environment should not be damaged by the presence of tourists who visit to experience it.

Ecotourism is a mix of three key concepts: the environment, the local population and education that depend on each other in order to achieve sustainability in the long term. Ecotourism is a sub-component of the field of sustainable tourism.

The Nature Conservancy adopts the definition articulated by the World Conservation Union (IUCN):

"Ecotourism is the environmentally responsible travel to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and accompanying cultural features, both past and present) that promote conservation, have a low visitor impact and provide for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local peoples."

In fact it is a responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.

Carefully planned and operated ecotourism sites, especially if it is village-based and includes local participation, may provide direct benefits to offset pressure from other less sustainable activities that make use of natural and cultural resources.

On the positive side, ecotourism can provide vitally needed income to poor communities, giving them an economic stake in protecting the environment. It can also raise global awareness of the value of protecting nature.

Tourist operators have a vested interest in maintaining the environmental quality of tourist destinations; especially since ecotourism often involves travel to remote areas where small and isolated communities have had little experience interacting with foreigners. So they become increasingly interested in collaborating with those who work to protect the environment.

Ecotourism has low environmental impact. But it does not exclude the possibility of environmental pollution, waste of natural resources and the risk of environmental degradation.

Ecotourism means education, for both tourists and residents of nearby communities. Education can help reduce "avoidable impacts" such as littering, inappropriate disposal of waste, and damage to vegetation. Being a responsible eco-tourist means learning beforehand about the local customs, respecting dress codes and other social norms and not intruding on the

community unless either invited or as part of a well-organized tour. The higher the level of education among travelers, the more enthusiastic and effective agents of conservation they become.

Additionally, ecotourism can provide a viable economic development alternative for local communities with few other income-generating options like new opportunities for employment, including women employment, and promotion of local micro enterprise. The quality of agricultural production rises and production has its real value. New investments come to region that helps with provision for the development of the community, and for health and family planning. Income from tourism can also assist in the improvement of facilities, such as sanitation systems, for both residents and tourists.

On the other hand, the percentage of community employment in general stays low and inhabitants are afraid of risks of failure in small businesses. Accommodating these visitors requires building new roads as well as hotels, lodges, and other structures. Travelers to remote places may also bring diseases with them or pick up germs that they carry home.

Ecotourism helps in community development by providing the alternate source of livelihood to local community which is more sustainable. Its aim is to conserve resources, especially biological diversity, and maintain sustainable use of resources, which bring ecological experience to travelers, conserve the ecological environment and gain economic benefit. Ecotourism helps in involving local community for the conservation of the ecology and biodiversity of the area. Nevertheless there is still risk of disturbance to habitats and species while monitoring them. Sometimes it's also appears difficult to meet the community's understanding of the need of development

Ecotourism strives to minimize the adverse effects of hotels and other infrastructure by using either recycled materials or available local building materials, renewable sources of energy, recycling and safe disposal of waste and garbage, and environmentally and culturally sensitive architectural design.

Ecotourism has also low cultural impact and helps to promote festival and other activities of locals. But still presence of tourists may effect local peoples' daily life in a negative way and change their life styles.

After all pros and cons have been observed, it becomes clear that ecotourism has more positive effect on the process of sustainable development of the area, preserving nature and acquainting tourists with other cultures. All risky factors should be included and discussed before the process of route planning. If possible negative impacts are predicted beforehand, they can be removed before releasing the route.

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