

Ecotourism Fact Sheet

Tourism: “Travel undertaken for pleasure”ⁱ

Size:

- As the largest business sector in the world economy, tourism employs 200 million people, generates \$3.6 trillion in economic activity and accounts for one in every 12 or 8% of jobs worldwide.ⁱⁱ
- If tourism were a country, it would have the 2nd largest economy, surpassed only by U.S.
- In 2004, tourism contributed globally an estimated \$5.49 trillion of economic activity.ⁱⁱⁱ
- In 4 out of 5 countries (over 150) tourism is one of five top export earners. In 60 countries it is the number one export.^{iv}

Global Growth:

- 1950 – 25 million tourist arrivals
- 2004 – 760 million tourism arrivals
- 2020 -- forecast to reach 1.56 billion international arrivals^v
- 1990s – growing globally at 7%/year
- 2004 – grew globally 10% over 2003^{vi}

Importance to Developing Countries:

- Tourism is a principle “export” (foreign exchange earner) for 83% of developing countries, and the leading export for 1/3 of poorest countries.^{vii}
- For world’s 40 poorest countries, tourism is 2nd most important source of foreign exchange, after oil^{viii}
- Over last decade, tourism has been “the only large sector of international trade in services where poor countries have consistently posted a surplus.”^{ix}

Ecotourism: “Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people” (TIES, 1990)

Since surveys rarely ask either travelers or businesses specifically about ecotourism, precise statistics are difficult to determine. Ecotourism is frequently lumped together with nature tourism and other forms of ‘experiential’ or ‘alternative’ tourism. These figures represent TIES best effort to put together an accurate assessment of the strength of ecotourism, particularly since 2000.



Size:

- Beginning in 1990s, growing 20% - 34%/year^x
- In 2004, ecotourism/nature tourism was growing globally 3 times faster than tourism industry as a whole.^{xi}
- Sun-and-sand resort tourism has now “matured as a market” and its growth is projected to remain flat. In contrast, “experiential” tourism--which encompasses ecotourism, nature, heritage, cultural, and soft adventure tourism, as well as sub-sectors such as rural and community tourism—is among the sectors expected to grow most quickly over the next two decades.^{xii}

Economics of Ecotourism vs. Mass Tourism:

- In Costa Rica, tourism (most of which is ecotourism) generates \$1000/visitor while in France, standard tourism generates only \$400/visitor.^{xiii}
- In Dominica, in the Caribbean, “stay over” tourists using small, nature-based lodges spent 18 times more than cruise passengers spend while visiting the island.
- 80% of money for all-inclusive package tours goes to airlines, hotels, and other international companies. Eco-lodges hire and purchase locally, and therefore put a higher – sometimes as much as 95% of money into the local economy.^{xiv}

Consumer Demand:

- More than two-thirds of U.S. and Australian travelers, and 90% of British tourists, consider active protection of the environment, including support of local communities, to be part of a hotel’s responsibility.
- In Europe:
 - 20%-30% of travelers aware of needs & values of sustainable tourism
 - 10%-20% look for ‘green’ options
 - 5%-10% demand ‘green’ holidays ^{xv}
- In Germany, 65% (39 million) of travelers expect environmental quality; 42% (25 million) “think that it is particularly important to find environmentally-friendly accommodation.”^{xvi}
- Nearly half of those surveyed in Britain said they would be more likely to go with a ‘company that had a written code to guarantee good working conditions, protect the environment and support local charities in the tourist destination... [E]thical tourism will rightly be a big issue in the new millennium.’^{xvii}

- A survey of U.S., British, and Australian travelers revealed that 70% would pay up to \$150 more for a two-week stay in a hotel with a “responsible environmental attitude.”^{xviii}
- In U.K., 87% say their holiday should not damage the environment; 39% said they were prepared to pay 5% extra for ethical guarantees.^{xix}

Ecotourist Profile in Europe:

- Experienced travelers
- Higher education

- Higher income bracket
- Age: middle to elderly
- Opinion leaders
 - Ask & tell their friends & colleagues about trip
 - Are the most important source of trip information.^{xx}

Typology of Tourism

Category	Definition
Adventure tourism	A form of nature-based tourism that incorporates an element of risk, higher levels of physical exertion, and the need for specialized skill.
Ecotourism	Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.
Geotourism	Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, heritage, aesthetics, and culture and the well-being of its residents.
Mass tourism	Large-scale tourism, typically associated with ‘sea, sand, sun’ resorts and characteristics such as transnational ownership, minimal direct economic benefit to destination communities, seasonality, and package tours.
Nature-based tourism	Any form of tourism that relies primarily on the natural environment for its attractions or settings.
Pro-poor tourism	Tourism that results in increased net benefit for the poor people.
Responsible tourism	Tourism that maximizes the benefits to local communities, minimizes negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures and habitats or species.
Sustainable Tourism	Tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future.

xxi

Endnotes

ⁱ Miriam-Webster Dictionary.

ⁱⁱ Mintel Report. “Eco and Ethical Tourism-UK”, October 2003.

ⁱⁱⁱ World Travel and Tourism Council, *Travel & Tourism Forging Ahead: Executive Summary* (London, 2004), p. 4.

^{iv} World Tourism Organization, “Tourism, a Force for Sustainable Development,” 19th OSCE Economic Forum, Prague, Czech Republic, June 2, 2004.

^v World Tourism Organization, *Tourism 2020 Vision*, at http://www.world-tourism.org/market_research/facts/market_trends.htm

^{vi} World Tourism Organization, *World Tourism Barometer*, January 2005, p. 2.

^{vii} Lisa Mastny, *Treading Lightly: New Paths for International Tourism*, Worldwatch Paper 159 (Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute, December 2001), p. 15.

^{viii} *Ibid.*, p. 37.

^{ix} UN Council on Trade and Development, quoted in Patricia Goldstone, *Making the World Safe for Tourism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 46.

^x Mastny, p. 37.

^{xi} World Tourism Organization, press release, June 2004.

^{xii} World Tourism Organization, “Global Forecasts and Profiles of Market Segments,” Vol. 7, *Tourism 2020 Vision*, Madrid: WTO, 2001.

^{xiii} Statistics compiled by Horizontes Nature Tours, San Jose, Costa Rica, based on 2002 statistics.

^{xiv} United Nations Environment Programme, “Economic Impacts of Tourism,” at www.unep.org/pc/tourism/sust-tourism/economic.htm. Martha Honey, TIES, “Ecotourism: A Tool for Sustainable Development,” *Workshop on Ecotourism*, conducted by Eco Tourism Society

of Sri Lanka (ESSL) In Association with The Tourism Cluster & The Competitiveness Programme/USAID BMICH, Colombo, Sri Lanka, November 22, 2004.

^{xv} Herbert Hamele, Ecotrans, Germany, 2004. www.ecotrans.org

^{xvi} Ecotrans, 2002.

^{xvii} Tearfund, "Tourism—an Ethical Issue: Market Research Report," Tearfund, London, January 2000.

^{xviii} Travelbiz, "Green is Good for Hotel Business," Online article. 29 August 2002.

<http://www.travelbiz.com.au/articles/14/0c010614.asp> . Referencing IHEI, 2002.

^{xix} MORI, *Package Holidays*, MORI, September 2002.

^{xx} Herbert Hamele, Ecotrans, Germany, 2004.

^{xxi} Zoe Chafe, "*Interest in Responsible Travel Grows*, Vital Signs 2005 (The Worldwatch Institute,) p 101. which sources: Merriam-Webster Dictionary, National Geographic Traveler, TIES, World Tourism Organization, Pro-Poor Tourism, Encyclopedia of Ecotourism, and Responsibletravel.com