

Ecotour Leaders Training

English Language Course Book (Ecotourism)

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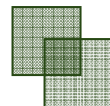


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INTRODUCTION

(UNEP, 2002)

Travel and tourism are among the world's fastest growing industries and are the major source of foreign exchange earnings for many developing countries. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) reports that receipts from international tourism grew by an average annual rate of 9% between 1988-1997. The number of international tourist arrivals reached more than 664 million in 1999 (well over 10% of the world's population), and international arrivals are expected to reach 1 billion by 2010. The increasing economic importance of tourism has captured the attention of most countries. However, the global growth of tourism poses a significant threat to cultural and biological diversity.

Ecotourism is a growing niche market within the larger travel industry, with the potential of being an important sustainable development tool. With billions of dollars in annual sales, ecotourism is a real industry that seeks to take advantage of market trends. At the same time, it frequently operates quite differently than other segments of the tourism industry, because ecotourism is defined by its sustainable development results:

conserving natural areas, educating visitors about sustainability, and benefiting local people.



Fig. 1-Safari in Kenya

Market research shows that ecotourists are particularly interested in wilderness settings and pristine areas. According to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, ecotourism has a unique role to play in educating travelers about the value of a healthy environment and biological diversity. However, proper planning and management are



critical to ecotourism's development or it will threaten the biological diversity upon which it depends.

In the last 10 years, travel experiences in fragile natural and cultural areas have benefited from a variety of innovative small - scale, low - impact solutions offered by ecotourism - some of which will be documented in this package. These approaches have had an influence on the larger tourism market, but ecotourism will never transform the tourism industry, nor can it be a perfect model in every instance. Like all forms of sustainable tourism, it is a dynamic field, with new techniques and approaches evolving every year. A wide variety of stakeholders must be involved in its implementation including business, government, non -governmental organizations and local communities. Responsible businesses must be encouraged to manage tourists properly with guidelines, certification and regulation. And local destinations must be ready to properly fund ecotourism management, or they will risk damaging their natural and cultural resources and, ultimately, their position in a rapidly growing international market.

Local communities have the most at stake, and therefore the most to lose, in the emerging international ecotourism marketplace.

As globalization makes local economic control increasingly difficult, ecotourism seeks to reverse this trend by stressing that local business owners and local communities must be vitally involved.

Opportunities to involve rural communities in tourism have attracted attention and raised many expectations, but the risks are great unless proper preparations are made. Local people must be informed in advance of all the possible consequences of tourism development, and they must formally consent to development in their areas.

The underlying concepts and principles behind ecotourism have helped set new standards for the tourism industry, and these standards continue to evolve. Many aspects still need to be fully addressed during implementation, and as answers to some of these questions arise from the field, the quick global dissemination of results is a priority.



WHAT IS TOURISM?

(UNEP, 2002)

Tourism is the act of travel for predominantly recreational or leisure purposes, and also refers to the provision of services in support of this act. According to the World Tourism Organization, tourists are people who "travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited". The distance between a place of origin and a tourism destination is immaterial to this definition.

WHAT IS TOURIST?

(UNEP, 2002)

Visitor is "any person visiting a country other than that in which he has his usual place of residence, for any reason other than following an occupation remunerated from within the country visited" (WTO 1981). The term visitor includes two distinct types of travelers:

- **Tourists**- Temporary visitor staying at least 24 hours in the country visited and purpose of whose journey can be classified:
 - a. leisure
 - b. Business
 - c. Family

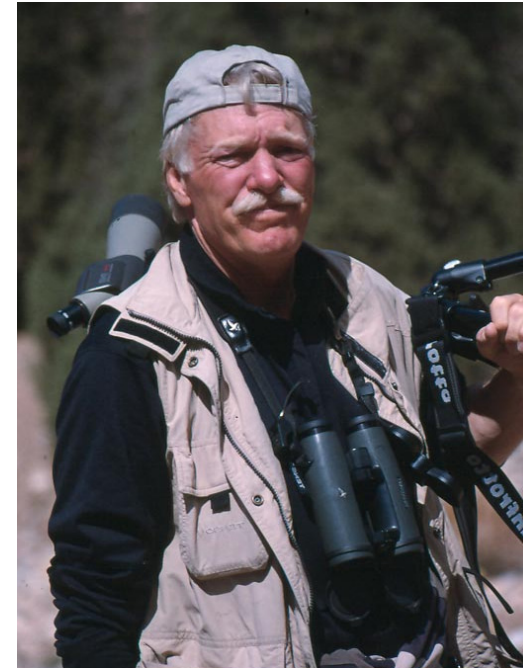


Fig. 2 - A Swedish birdwatcher in Iran
Photo by: Houman Jowkar



d. Mission

e. Meeting

- **Excursionists**- Temporary visitor staying less than 24 hours in the destination visited and not making overnight stay.

TOURIST ATTRACTION

- Natural Attractions
- Cultural Attractions
- Special Types of Attractions

Natural Attraction

Major categories of natural attractions include the types described in the following sections.

- Climate
- Scenic Beauty
- Beaches and Marine Areas
- Flora and Fauna
- Special Environmental Features
- Parks and Conservation Areas
- Health Tourism

▪ Climate

A warm, sunny, dry climatic is typically considered desirable by most tourists, especially those from cold winter areas, and particularly when associated with other attractions such as beach, marine, and mountain areas that provide opportunities for recreation activities.

▪ Scenic Beauty

The overall natural scenic beauty of an area may be a major motivation to visit there, especially if conservation measures have been applied to maintain the cleanliness and natural character of the environment. Associated with areas of scenic beauty are activities such as pleasure driving with tops at scenic view points, hiking, picnicking, camping and wildlife viewing.



▪ Beaches and Marine Areas

Beaches and associated marine areas for sunbathing, snorkeling and scuba diving, sport fishing, and other water recreation activities are major attractions in many places in the world.

▪ Flora and Fauna

Unusual and interesting flora and fauna can be very important attractions, especially when combined with scenic landscapes. Animal and plant life conservation is a major issue in many parts of the world because of various problems, especially reduction of wildlife habitat by encroachment of agricultural and urban uses and poaching of protected animals.

Zoos, aquariums, and botanic gardens are specialized flora and fauna features and, if well developed and maintained, can be major international attractions, such as the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park in California and the botanic garden at Kew near London, and in Sri Lanka and Bora Bora in Java, Indonesia.

▪ Special Environmental Features

Special environmental features such as high mountains, unusual geological formations, caves, geysers, hot springs, and mild forms of volcanic activity are important attractions for both general sightseeing and special interest tourists.

(Fig3)



Fig. 3- shahdad desert , kaluts
Photo by: Leyli Nashiba

▪ Parks and Conservation Areas

As mentioned, important natural areas and their flora and fauna should be designated for some type of conservation status, such as national or regional parks, nature reserves, and wildlife refuges.



▪ Health Tourism

Usually, but not always related to the natural environment are various types of health tourism. As mentioned, spas based on hot mineral waters were first developed some two thousand years ago by the Romans, and many spa resorts were developed during the nineteenth century. Another type of health tourism developed more recently is the "diet" resort, a place where people go to lose weight and regain physical vitality.

Cultural Attraction

Major types of Cultural attractions, based on man's activities, include those described in the following sections.

- Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Sites (Fig 4)
- Distinctive Cultural Patterns
- Arts and Handicrafts
- Interesting Economic Activities
- Interesting Urban Areas
- Museums and Cultural Facilities
- Cultural Festivals

- Friendliness of Residents

▪ Archaeological, Historical, and Cultural Sites

Archaeological, historical, and cultural sites, including cultural and national monuments, historic buildings, districts, and towns, important religious buildings such as churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, and monasteries, and places of historic events such as battlefields constitute a major type of attractions feature in most parts of the world.

Important archaeological and historic sites exist in virtually all parts of the world. Archaeological sites are, of course, important for viewing by tourists and, reflecting tourism trends in recent years, participation by tourists in archaeological excavations, on a supervised basis, has become popular.

(Fig 4)



Fig.4-Persepolis-Shiraz
Photo by: Kianoosh Mehrabi



▪ **Distinctive Cultural Patterns**

Cultural patterns, traditions, and lifestyles that are unusual (different from those of the tourists) and , in some cases, unique to a place can be of much interest to many tourists. These cultural patterns include customs, dress, ceremonies, lifestyles, and religious beliefs and practices and are often associated with rural and village life but may be prevalent in some urban places.

▪ **Arts and Handicrafts**

The performing art forms, including dance, music and drama, and the fine arts of painting and sculpting can be important attractions, especially if effectively presented . Art from can be those associated with small - scale traditional cultures or those related to the major western, Middle Eastern, or Asian cultures.

▪ **Interesting Economic Activities**

An often successful type of specialized cultural attraction is observation, description, and sometimes demonstration of interesting economic activities such as operation of tea and rubber plantations and processing plants, use of working

elephants in tropical forest, traditional fishing and agricultural techniques in some areas, and the operations of modern manufacturing plants. Traditional market places are also widely popular with tourists.

▪ **Interesting Urban Areas**

In contrast to rural and village life, large urban areas with their varied architectural styles, historic buildings and districts, civic centers, shopping facilities, restaurants, parks, and street life are of interest to many tourists who enjoy general urban sightseeing and absorbing the ambience of a city's character, as well as visiting specific attractions such as museums and public buildings.

▪ **Museums and other Cultural Facilities**

Related to various aspects of both natural and cultural features of an area are different types of museums on such themes as archaeology, history, ethnology, natural history, arts and crafts, science, technology and industry, and many specialized subjects. These are usually developed primarily for residents to enjoy but, if well done , can also be important attractions for domestic and international tourists.



Other cultural facilities such as cultural centers, important commercial art galleries, and antique shops or, in some places, whole districts of galleries, and antique shops should be considered as tourist attractions.

▪ **Cultural Festivals**

Various types of cultural festivals related to the local traditions and arts can be major attractions. Large religious festivals and pageants such as the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, Mardi Gras in New Orleans, and the Peral Herain Kandy, Sri Lanka attract many tourists as well as residents.

▪ **Friendliness of Residents**

Although not quantifiable, a very real attraction for many tourists can be the friendly, hospitable character of local residents and, more generally, their tolerance and acceptance of tourists visiting their environment. The honesty and reliability of residents in their dealings with tourists are also important factors.

Special Type of Attraction

Special types of attractions not particularly related to either natural or cultural features, but that are artificially created, are described in the following sections.

- Theme Parks, Amusement Parks and Circuses (Fig 5)
- Shopping
- Meetings, Conferences and Conventions
- Special Events
- Gambling Casinos
- Entertainment
- Recreation and Sport
- Cuisine

▪ **Theme Parks, Amusement Parks, and Circuses**

Theme parks are oriented to particular themes, such as history, adventure, unusual geographic places, fantasy and futurism, or a combination of these in one park, and offer simulated experiences, shows, thrill rides, shopping, and a variety of restaurants and snack bars in a clean and controlled environment. Best Known of the theme parks and



their prototypes are Disneyland in Anaheim, California, opened in 1935, and Disney World in Orlando, Florida. (Fig5)

Traveling circuses have long been popular, catering primarily to residents of the area where the circus stops over, and are not typically major attractions for tourists. However, some permanent circuses are famous, such as the Russian circus in Moscow and Leningrad and acrobatic circuses in China and Korea, and attract many tourists who are visiting those places.



Fig.5-Disneyland, California-USA

▪ Shopping

Shopping is a significant activity and type of expenditure of many tourists and must be considered in tourism planning as a possible attraction as well as service.

Meetings, Conferences, and Conventions

Domestic and international conference and convention tourism, including small meetings, training courses, seminars, and workshops as well as large conferences and conventions, is a significant type of tourism throughout the world and steadily expanding in all countries.

▪ Special Events

Special events, such as sports contests, fairs, and expositions, can be major tourist attractions for short time periods. These are organized for the purpose of attracting tourists and also for reasons such as national or regional prestige and gaining new facility complexes for permanent use, perhaps along with concomitant redevelopment of urban districts. International sports events, such as the Olympic, Commonwealth, and Asian games, may draw global interest while others are of wide spread national importance.



▪ **Gambling Casinos**

Gambling casinos have been developed in certain places as major attractions, but usually in areas that have limited natural and cultural attraction features and where there is little negative social impact from gambling on the local residents.

▪ **Entertainment**

Entertainment is a broad category and has already been referred to relative to the traditional and contemporary performing arts and its association with gambling casinos and their resort environments. Nightclubs, discos, and some restaurants in tourism areas provide evening entertainment that is popular with many tourists and considered essential for successful operation of some hotels and resorts.

▪ **Recreation and Sports**

Most recreation facilities are of a local scale catering to residents of an area. But some types can be important primary or secondary attractions for tourists, such as championships golf courses and tennis centers, polo grounds, horse and other types of race tracks (which may also include betting on the races), and stadiums for major

spectator sports events such as football, soccer, baseball, basketball, rugby, and bull fights.

▪ **Cuisine**

The food of an area, in addition to being an important service for tourists, can be a significant secondary tourist attraction, especially if the area offers a special type of cuisine that is well prepared and presented.



WHAT IS ECOTOURISM?

Ecotourism has been defined as a form of nature - based truism in the marketplace, but it has also been formulated and studied as a sustainable development tool by NGOs, development experts and academics since 1990.

The term ecotourism, therefore, refers on one hand to a concept under a set of principles, and on the other hand to a specific market segment. The international Ecotourism Society (TIES) (previously known as The Ecotourism Society (TES)) in 1991 produced one of the earliest definitions.

Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of local people.

IUCN (now called the World Conservation Union) states in 1996 that ecotourism:

“is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features - both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio - economic involvement of local populations.”



Fig. 6-An Ecotour in Keolado National Park , India
photo by Kianoosh Mehrabi



Fig. 7-Birdwatchers in Chile



Ecotourism aspires in all cases to achieve sustainable development results. However, it is important to clarify that all tourism activities be they geared to holidays, business, conferences, congresses or fairs, health, adventure or ecotourism - should aim to be sustainable.

This means that the planning and development of tourism infrastructure, its subsequent operation and also its marketing should focus on environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability criteria.

COMPONENTS OF ECOTOURISM

- Contributes to conservation of biodiversity.
- Sustains the well being of local people.
- Includes an interpretation /learning experience,
- Involves responsible action on the part of tourists and the tourism industry.
- Is delivered primarily to small groups by small - scale businesses.
- Requires lowest possible consumption of non – renewable resources.

- Stresses local participation ownership and business opportunities particularly for rural people. (Fig 6 to 9)

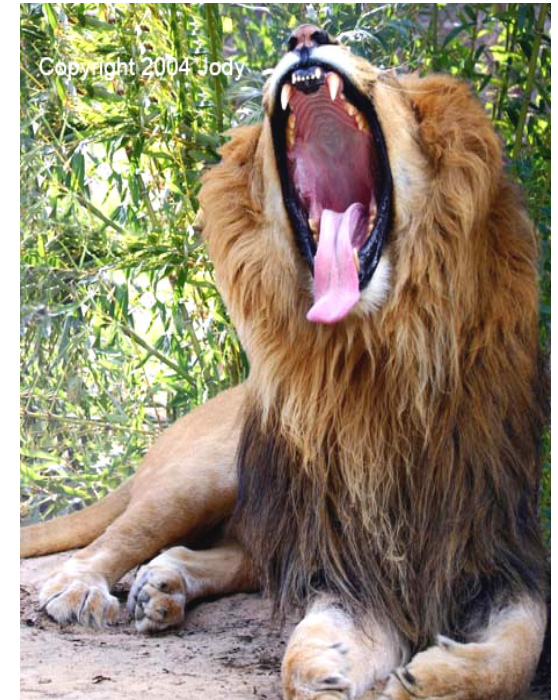


Fig.8 and 9 -Keolado National Park , India
photo by Kianoosh Mehrabi

THE ROOTS OF ECOTURISM

With a history deeply rooted in the conservation movement, ecotourism has provided a highly strategic source of revenue to natural areas that need protection. Ecotourism began as an untested idea that many hoped could contribute to the conservation of natural resources worldwide. Research undertaken in Kenya in the 1970s (Thresher 1981) demonstrated that the economic benefits of wildlife tourism far surpassed hunting – and activity that was banned in Kenya in 1977.

In the early 1980s, rainforests and coral reefs become the subject of both innumerable studies by biologists interested in biological diversity and of a plethora of nature film documentaries. This interest helped launch a wide variety of local small businesses specializing in guiding scientists and filmmakers into remote zones. As these small businesses quickly began to prosper in countries such as Costa Rica and Ecuador, a more formal industry soon evolved to meet the needs of small tourism groups that were primarily composed of bird watchers and committed naturalists. In many areas of the world, pioneer

entrepreneurs created special field visits and studies for adult travelers, students and volunteers.

International nature-based businesses began to thrive in the 1980s with the growing interest in outdoor travel and the environment, spurred by excellent new outdoor equipment for camping and hiking, and events such as Earth Day. These companies began to realize that they could take the initiative to conserve the environment by sponsoring local conservation groups in the destinations they visited or by raising funds for local causes.

They soon learned that training and hiring local people to run their businesses was the best way to manage their operations, and an excellent way of creating significant benefits for local people. Tour operators selling trips to the Galapagos Islands, Costa Rica, Kenya and Nepal were some of the early players in this movement. Some of these companies argue that in fact, they had already been using ecotourism principles for some 20 to 30 years.

Many travel and tourism businesses have found it convenient to use the term "ecotourism" in their literature, and governments have used the term extensively to promote



their destinations, all without trying to implement any of the most basic principles explained in this document. This problem of "green washing" has undermined the legitimacy of the term ecotourism. Some green washing though certainly not all, is the result of a lack of understanding of the underlying principles of ecotourism.

International conferences, workshops and publications have made some advances in educating governments and business about ecotourism, but the misuse of the term remains a problem worldwide.

Many people often ask why ecotourism should be viewed differently from other forms of sustainable tourism. In essence, ecotourism must be planned and managed to successfully offer its key social and environmental objectives. This requires:

1. Specialized marketing to attract travelers who are primarily interested in visiting natural areas.
2. Management skills that are particular to handling visitors in protected natural areas.

3. Guiding and interpretation services, preferably managed by local inhabitants, that are focused on natural history and sustainable development issues.

4. Government policies that earmark fees from tourism to generate funds for both conservation of wild lands and sustainable development of local communities and indigenous people.

5. Focused attention on local peoples, who must be given the right of prior informed consent, full participation and, if they so decide, given the means and training to take advantage of this sustainable development option.



PRINCIPLES OF ECOTURISM

Minimize the negative impacts on nature and culture that can damage a destination.

- Educate the traveler on the importance of conservation.
- Stress the importance of responsible business, which works cooperatively with local authorities and people to meet local needs and deliver conservation benefits.
- Direct revenues to the conservation and management of natural and protected areas.
- Emphasize the need for regional tourism zoning and for visit or management plans designed for either regions or natural areas that are slated to become eco - destinations.
- Emphasize use of environmental and social base - line studies, as well as long - term monitoring programs, to assess and minimize impacts.
- Strive to maximize economic benefit for the host country, local business and communities, particularly peoples living in and adjacent to natural and protected areas.
- Seek to ensure that tourism development does not exceed the social and environmental limits of acceptable change as

determined by researchers in cooperating with local residents.

- Rely on infrastructure that has been developed in harmony with the environment, minimizing use of fossil fuels, conserving local plants and wildlife, and blending with the natural and cultural environment.



NATURE TOUR OPERATOR GUIDELINES

- **Prepare travelers.** One reason consumers choose an operator rather than travel independently is to receive guidance. How can negative impacts be minimized while visiting sensitive environments and cultures? How should one interact with local cultures? What is an appropriate response to begging? Is bartering encouraged?
- **Minimize visitor impacts.** Prevent degradation of the environment and / or the local culture by offering literature, briefings, leading by example and taking corrective actions. To minimize accumulated impacts, use adequate leadership and maintain small groups to ensure minimum group impacts on destination. Avoid areas that are under managed and over - visited.
- **Minimize nature tour company impacts.** Ensure managers, staff and contract employees know and participate in all aspects of company policy that prevent impacts on the environment and local cultures.
- **Provide training.** Give manager, staff and contract employees access to programs that will upgrade their ability

to communicate with and manage clients in sensitive natural and cultural settings.

- **Contribute to conservation.** Fund conservation programs in the regions being visited.
- **Provide competitive local employment.** Employ locals in all aspects of business operations.
- **Offer site- sensitive accommodations.** Ensure that facilities are not destructive to the natural environment and particularly that they do not waste local resources. Design structures that offer ample opportunity for learning about the environment and that encourage sensitive interchanges with local communities. (The International Ecotourism Society, Ecotourism Guidelines for Nature Tour Operators, 1993)



Nature Tourist Market Profile

- **Age:** 35-54 years old, although age varies with activity and other factors such as cost.
- **Gender:** 50% female and 50% male, although clear differences by activity were found.
- **Education:** 82% were college graduates.
- **Household composition:** No major differences were found between general tourists and experienced nature tourists.
- **Party composition:** A majority (60%) of experienced nature tourist respondents stated they prefer to travel as a couple, with only 15% stating they prefer to travel with their families, and 13% preferring to travel alone.
- **Trip Duration:** The largest group of experienced nature tourists (50%) preferred trips lasting 8-14 days.
- **Expenditure:** Experienced nature tourists were willing to spend more than general tourists, the largest group (26%) stating they were prepared to spend \$1001-\$1500 per trip.
- **Important Elements of Trip:** Experienced nature tourists top three responses were:
 - (1) A wilderness setting,
 - (2) Wildlife viewing, and
 - (3) Hiking/ trekking.

- **Motivations for Taking Next Trip:** Experienced nature tourists top two responses were
 - (1) to enjoy scenery/nature, and
 - (2) New experiences / places.

Experienced nature tourists were tourists that had been on at least one ecotourism oriented trip. Ecotourism was defined in this study as nature/adventure/culture - oriented travel - This research included both domestic and international travel.

(HLA and ARA Consulting, 1994. Wight 1996a, 1996b)



Characteristics of a Good Ecotour

- Provides information prior to the trip on the culture and environments to be visited.
- Offers guidelines on appropriate dress and behavior in writing before departure and verbally during the tour.
- Offers in-depth briefing upon tourist arrival of the destinations geographical, social and political characteristics, as well as its environmental social and political challenges.
- Offers in-depth guiding throughout the trip with well - trained local guides.
- Offers the opportunity to meet and interact with local communities in a setting that is clearly not just a commercial venue for shopping or sales.
- Develops an understanding of both the local people's daily life and traditions, and the types of issues that are appropriate to discuss, well in advance of community interactions.
- Provides opportunity for contributions to local NGOs.
- Ensures that all par entry fees are paid in full.
- Offers site - sensitive accommodations.



EXPLANATION OF AN ECOLODGE

The term “ecolodge” was formally launched in the marketplace at the First International Ecolodge Forum and Field Seminar held in 1994 at Maho Bay Camps in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Formal dialogue at this conference resulted in the Ecolodge Sourcebook for Planners and Developers (Hawkins et al 1995). The first International Ecolodge Guidelines (Mehta et al, in press) are the result of a 1995 international conference in Costa Rica and five years of research and international review.

This is the first book to offer a definitive international definition of an ecolodge.

It must be stressed that an ecolodge's value is as much in its setting as its structures. Ecolodges need a well - protected setting that is not plagued by over - development or resource destruction issues. The value of an ecotourism property rises and falls with its ability to protect substantial biodiversity, wildlife and pristine landscapes. Many ecolodges have established their own private reserves, enabling them to directly manage the natural resources they depend on for their business.

Ecolodges can be extremely rustic or very luxurious. Accommodations in general for the ecotourism industry are usually mid – range In price, though the range of accommodation types is enormous -from luxury tent - camps in Africa, to backpacker tents in Alaska, to rustic lean -tos and home stays in Belize, to ranches and haciendas in Venezuela, to tea houses in Nepal. Live - aboard boats also are popular, particularly on the Amazon. High - end small cruise ships that can travel to idyllic marine environments such as Baja, Mexico, or Australia's Great Barrier Reef have also been extremely successful. (Fig 12 and 13)

Many lodges offer their own guides and interpretation walks, as their visitors are frequently independent travelers that are not traveling with a tour guide. Often local farmers or indigenous people with in-depth knowledge of the local flora and fauna are hired to guide for ecolodges.



The local guide's knowledge of the land goes well beyond what most urban citizens have ever experienced in their lives and this gives visitors a genuine respect for the people and places they are visiting. The interaction between host and guest can lead to a whole new outlook for local people on the special nature of where they live.

Other recreation opportunities offered by lodges vary tremendously depending on the site: game drives bird watching, canoeing, horseback riding, bicycling, beach trips and educational visits to locally run museums, zoos butterfly farms, agricultural and livestock farms, craft production areas and other natural history and cultural sights. Some high-end lodges are creating jungle canopy walkways on their own properties as another guest amenity, these walkways provide unparalleled opportunities to explore the life above the rain forest tree-tops and in the most diverse part of the rain forest.

Coordination of a fulfilling ecotourism itinerary requires active working relationship with the local community. Ecolodges need to work with local guides and interact with the owners of different tourism resources - whether these

are farms, canoes or horses - that would provide interesting day and half-day tours for visitors.



Fig. 11 and 12: An ecolodge in Kenya

Ecolodge Definition

An ecolodge is tourism accommodation facility that meets the following criteria.

- It conserves the surrounding environment both natural and cultural.
- It has minimal impact on the natural surroundings during construction.
- It fits into its specific physical and cultural contexts through careful attention to form landscaping and color, as well as the use of localized architecture.
- It uses alternative sustainable means of water acquisition and reduces water consumption.
- It provides careful handling and disposal of solid waste and sewage.
- It meets its energy needs through passive design and combines these with their modern counterparts for greater sustainability.
- It endeavors to work together with the local community.
- It offers interpretative programs to educate both its employees and tourists about the surrounding natural and cultural environments.
- It contributes to sustainable local development through research programs.

(Adapted from Mehta et al, International Ecolodge Guidelines, In Press)

Ecolodge Management Characteristics

- Provides on-the-job the training to community members and local guides.
- Uses a majority of local staff people, and avoids giving city-trained or expatriate individuals all of the key responsibilities.
- Sets up after-hours second-language programs (to assist staff in speaking the language of visiting guests) using a local college graduate with expertise in language training.
- Has guests contribute to staff education and community development projects involving education or health.
- Encourages interested community members to communicate their knowledge about the area, while encouraging local guides to mingle with guests during communal hours.
- Supports guest learning experiences through visits to local farms, nurseries, reforestation projects, butterfly farms and other efforts to promote sustainability in the region.
- Promotes a system for guests to contribute financially to the preservation of natural areas in the region.



For Your Information:

- Insists on recycling everything from table scraps to plastics, paper and metal.
- Uses alternative energy wherever possible.
- Uses biodegradable detergents and avoids the use of toxics whenever possible.
- Does not keep caged or exotic animals on the premises.

(Adapted from Lewis, International Ecolodge Guidelines, In Press)

LOCAL VENDORS

Local vendors in the ecotourism industry include food stands, restaurants, guiding services, vehicle rentals, taxis, recreation services (horses, boats and rafts, bikes, etc.) and craft producers/vendors. These types of service are most often offered by local community members. These vendors play a crucial role in the success of the ecotourism product and its ability to benefit local communities.

Many times, these businesses are very small and the owners need encouragement and a small amount of capital to get started. They can turn to NGOs or to the ecotourism industry itself to provide assistance with start-up businesses.



For Your Information:

Handicrafts and Ecotourism - A case study from Nepal, Laos and Indonesia

The study “Tourism, the Poor and Other Stakeholder” Experience in Asia, published by Overseas Development Institute (ODI) notes that the growth of Nepal’s handicraft industry was rewarded with nearly 15% of all tourism expenditures in 1990.

In a specific example, tourism gave a boost to craft makers in Nepal’s Kullu region, who developed a thriving souvenir industry with shawls and caps are now an important export item. On the other hand, numerous examples show where ethnic minority women, such as the Sa Pa in Laos, have seen their embroidery and designs co-opted by cheap imitators, forcing them to sell their originals at unfair prices in order to earn the cash they have come to depend on. In many cases local people have excellent, marketable crafts but few skills in marketing. They can be easily undercut by cheap imitators. This problem can be counteracted, according to the ODI report, if agencies intervene to create fair marketplace conditions for all vendors.

For example, in Iran, Java, Indonesia, an annual art auction was organized to prevent this problem and generate high profits for local wood carvers on the island.

(Adapted from Shah and Gupta, Tourism, the Poor and Other stakeholder, 2000 Case Studies from Nepal, Laos, & Indonesia)



Most Popular Nature Based Tour Activities

Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism is a type of niche tourism involving exploration or travel to remote areas, where the traveler should expect the unexpected. Adventure tourism is rapidly growing in popularity as tourists seek unusual holidays, different from the typical beach vacation.

Adventure tourism typically involves traveling into remote, inaccessible and possibly hostile areas. It may include the performance of acts that require significant effort and grit and may also involve some degree of risk.

Bungi Jumping, Rafting (Fig 14) and rock climbing (Fig 13) are frequently cited as examples of adventure tourism.

- Backpacking
- Extreme tourism
- Urban Exploration
- Outdoor education
- River trekking
- Rafting



Fig 13: ice climbing



Fig 14: white water kayaking



Geotourism and Cultural Heritage

▪ Geological adventures

Geology is the colour of nature in all its shapes. From those that prefer hiking over former molten rock, or climb the highest mountains, to those that are tempted to dive to the coral reefs or raft down the roaring gorges, or those again that crawl down the deepest mines or caves, or those that collect the splendour of minerals and the imaginative fossils: The unexplored Earth provides a wealth of opportunities to escape the boring daily routine.

A dramatic and spectacular world tempts one, no matter what season or day, to explore the extra dimension of the geology adventure. Be it when admiring the landscape while traveling by train, car or airplane, or while admiring the wonders of nature when visiting exotic places, or again, when telling tales to the young ones about monsters, big as houses, now extinct. Even when exploring the urban landscape, geology can tell exciting stories of the connection between the natural heritage and the built heritage. Churches and monumental buildings are built with materials from quarries nearby, or from far away, and this can be used

as an entrance to local history. Geology is all around us, and nature is still writing its own story. (Fig15 and 16)



Fig. 15- Tourists on a volcano, Canary Islands

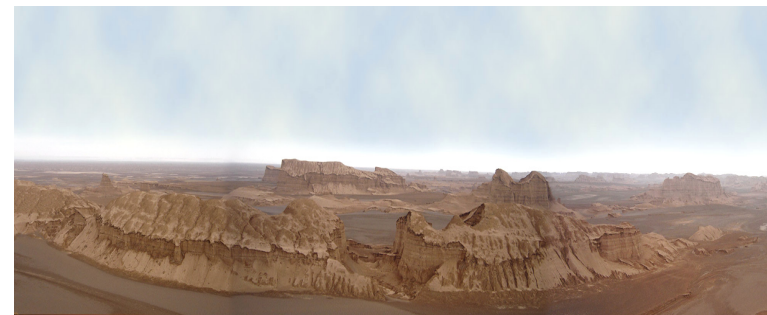


Fig 16: Shahdad Desert
photo by Payam Sajadian



▪ Geoparks

If you ask Europeans about geological heritage, many will think of places such as Iceland, Mount Etna, the Giant's Causeway or the Alps. But there is more to geological heritage than these special, often exceptional outcrops. Across Europe there are examples of landscapes and rocks that provide key evidence of a particular moment in Earth history. This diversity of sites is also part of our geological heritage. Around Europe, Geoparks are established in order to let tourists explore these important parts of the puzzle that together make up Europe's natural history.



Fig.17- Bird Watchers in Iran
photo by Houman Jowkar

Bird-watching Tours

Bird watching or **birding** is the observation and study of birds with the naked eye, or usually through a visual enhancement device, most commonly binoculars. Most birders or birdwatchers pursue this activity for recreational or social reasons, unlike ornithologists, who are engaged in the formal scientific study of birds. Ornithologists can, however, study birds using the same methods as birders.(Fig 17 and 18)



Fig. 18- Pleske's Ground Jay, The only
endemic bird in Iran
photo by Houman Jowkar



Wildlife Tours

Wildlife tourism can be an eco and animal friendly tourism in both captive and wild environments. It has experienced a dramatic and rapid growth in recent years world wide. Wildlife tourism, in its simplest sense, is watching wild animals in their natural habitat.

Wildlife tourism is also a multi-million dollar industry offering customized tour packages and safaris.

Animals can be viewed in their native or similar environments, from vehicles or on foot.

Wildlife tourism fuelled by media coverage and inclusion of conservation education in early school curriculum Wildlife tourism & Ecotourism has fast become a popular industry generating substantial income for poor nations with rich wildlife specially in Africa. This ever growing and ever becoming more popular form of tourism is providing the much needed incentive for poor nations to conserve their rich wildlife heritage and it's habitat. (Fig 19,20 and 21)



Fig. 19: Ranthambore National Park, India



Fig. 20: Persian Wild Ass, photo by Houman Jowkar



Fig. 21: Leopard photo by Houman Jowkar



Desert Safari

Desert safari, also known as Dune bashing is a form of off-roading, using an off-road vehicle to explore sand dunes. Whilst in some parts of the world, such as the fragile coastal dunes of Australia, it is illegal, in others such as the Middle East, it is a booming attraction for tourists. (Fig.22)

Rural Tourism

In simple terms, **rural tourism** is tourism that takes place in the countryside. Increasingly, the countryside is becoming a more attractive place in which to holiday or visit for the following reasons:

It provides remoteness and solitude so often missing from our hectic lifestyles. It provides a relaxing environment where peace and quiet can be enjoyed. It provides a wealth of opportunities to engage in various sporting and adventure activities. It provides a healthy environment with fresh air. It provides an opportunity to experience the treasures of the environment such as wildlife and landscape. It provides and opportunity to experience the culture and lifestyles of rural communities. (Fig 23)



Fig. 22: Desert Safari in Morocco



Fig. 23: Meymand Village, Kerman



Backpacking

Backpacking (also **tramping** or **trekking** or **bushwalking** in some countries) combines hiking and camping in a single trip. A backpacker hikes into the backcountry to spend one or more nights there, and carries supplies and equipment to satisfy sleeping and eating needs.

- **What is backpacking?**

A backpacker packs all of his or her gear into a backpack. This gear must include food, water, and shelter, or the means to obtain them, but very little else, and often in a more compact and simpler form than one would use for stationary camping. A backpacking trip must include at least one overnight stay in the wilderness (otherwise it is a day hike). Many backpacking trips last just a weekend (one or two nights), but long-distance expeditions may last weeks or months, sometimes aided by planned food and supply drops.

Backpacking camps are more **spartan** than ordinary camps. In areas that experience a regular traffic of backpackers, a hike-in camp might have a fire ring and a small wooden bulletin board with a map and some warning or information signs. Many hike-in camps are no more than

level patches of ground without scrub or underbrush. In very remote areas, established camps do not exist at all, and travelers must choose appropriate camps themselves. (Fig 24 and 25)



Fig. 24: Backpacking in Nepal



Fig.25: River Bank Camps, Shivpuri, Uttranchal India
photo by Kianoosh Mehrabi



In some places, backpackers have access to lodging that is more substantial than a tent. In the more remote parts of Great Britain, places exist to provide simple (free) accommodation for backpackers. Another example is the High Sierra Camps in Yosemite National Park. Mountain huts provide similar accommodation in other countries, so being a member of a mountain hut organization is advantageous (perhaps required) to make use of their facilities. On another trails (e.g. the Appalachian Trail) there are somewhat more established shelters of a sort that offer a place for weary hikers to spend the night without needing to set up a tent.

Most backpackers purposely try to avoid impacting on the land through which they travel. This includes following established trails as much as possible, not removing anything, and not leaving residue in the backcountry. The Leave No Trace movement offers a set of guidelines for low-impact backpacking ("Leave nothing but footprints. Take nothing but photos.").



Extreme tourism

Extreme tourism or **shock tourism** is a type of niche tourism involving travel to dangerous places (mountains, jungles, deserts, caves, etc.) or participation in dangerous events. Extreme tourism overlaps with extreme sport. The two share the main attraction, "adrenaline rush" caused by an element of risk, and differing mostly in the degree of engagement and professionalism.

Extreme tourism is a growing business in the countries of the former Soviet Union (Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, etc.) and in South American countries like Peru, Chile and Argentina. The mountainous and rugged terrain of Northern Pakistan has also developed into a popular extreme tourism location.

While traditional tourism requires significant investments in hotels, roads, etc., extreme tourism requires much less to jump-start a business. In addition to traditional travel-based tourism destinations, various exotic attractions are suggested, such as flyovers in MIGs at 2.5 Mach, ice diving in the White Sea, or traveling across the Chernobyl zone.



Nature Photography

Nature photography refers to a wide range of photography taken outdoors and devoted to displaying natural elements such as landscapes, wildlife, plants, and close-ups of natural scenes and textures. Nature photography tends to put a stronger emphasis on the aesthetic value of the photo than other photography genres, such as photojournalism and documentary photography.

Nature photographs are published in scientific, travel and cultural magazines such as *National Geographic Magazine* and *Audubon Magazine* or other more specific magazines such as *Outdoor Photographer* and *Nature's Best Photography*, as well as a growing hobby as photography is getting more popular in general. (Fig. 27)



Fig. 27



Wildlife Photography

Wildlife photography is devoted to capturing interesting animals in action, such as eating, fighting, or in flight. Although usually shot in the wild, game farms are also a frequent location for wildlife photography.

The techniques of wildlife photography differ greatly from those used in landscape photography. For example, in wildlife photography wide apertures are used to achieve a fast shutter speed, freeze the subject's motion, and blur the backgrounds, while landscape photographers prefer small apertures. Wildlife is also usually shot with long telephoto lenses from a great distance; the use of such telephoto lenses frequently necessitates the use of a tripod (since the longer the lens, the harder it is to handhold). Many wildlife photographers use blinds or camouflage.(Fig. 28)



Fig. 28



Agritourism

Agritourism is a style of vacation in which hospitality is offered on farms. This may include the opportunity to assist with farming tasks during the visit. Agritourism is often practiced in wine growing regions, as in Italy, France and Spain. In America, Agritourism is wide-spread and includes any farm open to the public at least part of the year. Tourists can pick fruits and vegetables, ride horses, taste honey, learn about wine, shop in gift shops and farm stands for local and regional produce or hand-crafted gifts, and much more. Each farm generally offers a unique and memorable experience suitable for the entire family.

River Trekking

River trekking or **river tracing** is a form of hiking or outdoor adventure activity, particularly popular in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and, in some ways, similar to canyoning or **canyoneering**. River trekking is a combination of trekking and climbing and sometimes swimming along the river. It involves particular techniques like rock climbing, climbing on wet surface, understanding the geographical features of

river and valleys, knotting, dealing with sudden bad weather and find out possible exits from the river.

Rafting

Rafting is a recreational activity utilizing a raft to navigate a river or other bodies of water. This is usually done on whitewater or different degrees of rough water, in order to thrill and excite the raft passengers. The development of this activity as a leisure sport has become popular since the mid 1980's. (Fig. 29 , 30)



Fig.29: Rafting in Brazil



Fig. 30: Rafting in Ganges River, India
photo by Kianoosh Mehrabi

The type of raft used nowadays for recreational rafting is almost exclusively an inflatable boat. It consists of very durable, multi-layered rubberized fabrics with several independent air chambers. Its length varies between 3.5 m (11 ft) and 6 m (20 ft), the width between 1.8 m (6 ft) and 2.5 m (8 ft).

Rafts come in a few different forms. In Europe the most common is the symmetrical raft steered with a paddle at the stern. Other types are the asymmetrical, rudder-controlled raft and the symmetrical raft with central helm (oars). Rafts are usually propelled with ordinary paddles and typically hold 4 to 12 persons.

Scuba Diving

Scuba diving is using self-contained breathing equipment to stay underwater for periods of time greater than human breath-holding ability allows. The diver carries all equipment necessary for diving and is not reliant upon equipment elsewhere (e.g. on the surface) to supply breathing gas or other support during the dive. The diver swims underwater using fins attached to the feet. Some divers also move

around with the assistance of a DPV (Diver Propulsion Vehicle), commonly referred to as a "scooter", or by using surface-tethered devices called sleds, which are pulled by a boat.

The word 'SCUBA' is an acronym for "Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus", but it has become acceptable to refer to 'scuba equipment' or 'scuba apparatus'. The term SCUBA in common usage usually means open-circuit equipment in which gas (usually air) is breathed from a tank of compressed gas and then exhaled into the water, usually in the line of kit development started by Emile Gagnan and Jacques-Yves Cousteau.

However, rebreathers (both semi-closed circuit and closed circuit) are also self-contained systems (as opposed to surface-supplied systems) and could be classed as SCUBA. The term SCUBA arose during World War II and originally referred to USA combat frogmen's oxygen rebreathers, developed by Dr. Christian Lambertsen for underwater warfare.



Scuba diving is still evolving, but general classifications have grown up to describe various diving activities. These classifications include, but are not limited to:

- recreational diving
- public safety diving
- Technical diving (also called Tech Divers)
 - Cave diving
 - Deep diving
 - Ice diving
 - Wreck diving
- Military diving: this includes combat divers and armed forces work divers.
- Commercial diving.
- Scientific diving.

Within recreational diving there are those who are considered professional divers, because they maintain a professional standard of training and skills (and must, in theory, according to the laws of the area, carry professional liability insurance).

Some consider technical diving to be a subset of recreational diving, but others separate it out due to the

extensively different training equipment and knowledge needed for technical dives.

Public safety diving and military diving might likewise be classified as commercial diving because public safety divers and military divers make a living from their pursuit of diving. However, public safety divers (police or rescue) and military divers have a different mission from the typical commercial diver.

Scientific diving is used by marine scientists (including diving marine biologists and underwater archaeologists), as a tool for collecting their research data. .(Fig. 31)



Fig. 31: Deep See Diving



Caving

Caving is the recreational hobby of exploring caves. Speleology is the scientific study of caves and the cave environment.

The challenges of the hobby depend on the cave being visited, but often include the negotiation of pitches, squeezes, and water. Climbing or crawling is often necessary, and ropes are used extensively.

Caving is often undertaken for the enjoyment of the activity or for physical exercise, but original exploration or physical or biological science is an important goal for many cavers. Virgin cave systems comprise some of the last unexplored regions on Earth and much effort is put into trying to locate and enter them. In well-explored regions (such as most first-world countries), the most accessible caves have already been explored, and gaining access to new caves often requires digging or diving.

Caves have been explored out of necessity for thousands of years, but only in the last century or two has the activity developed into a sophisticated, athletic pastime. In recent decades caving has changed considerably due to the

availability of modern protective wear and equipment. It has recently come to be known as an "extreme sport" by some (though not commonly considered as such by its practitioners, who may dislike the term for its perceived connotation of disregard for safety.)

Many of the skills of caving can also be used in the nature activities of mine exploration and urban exploration. (Fig. 32)



Fig. 32: Gol-e-Zard Cave, Mazandaran
photo by Payam Sajadian



Whale Watching

Whale watching is the practice of observing whales and other cetaceans in their natural habitat. Whales are watched most commonly for recreation (cf. bird watching) but the activity can also be for scientific or educational reasons. Whilst individuals do organize private trips, whale watching is primarily a commercial activity, estimated to be worth up to \$1billion per annum worldwide to whale watching operations and their local communities. The size and rapid growth of the whale watching industry has led to complex and unconcluded debates with the whaling industry about the best use of whales as a natural resource. (Fig. 33)



Fig. 33: Whale watching



Other Popular Nature Based Tour Activities are, as follow:

- Botanic Tours. (Fig.34)
- Mountain Climbing
- Rock Climbing
- Ice Climbing (Fig.13)
- Mountain Skiing (Fig.35)
- Snowboarding



Fig. 34

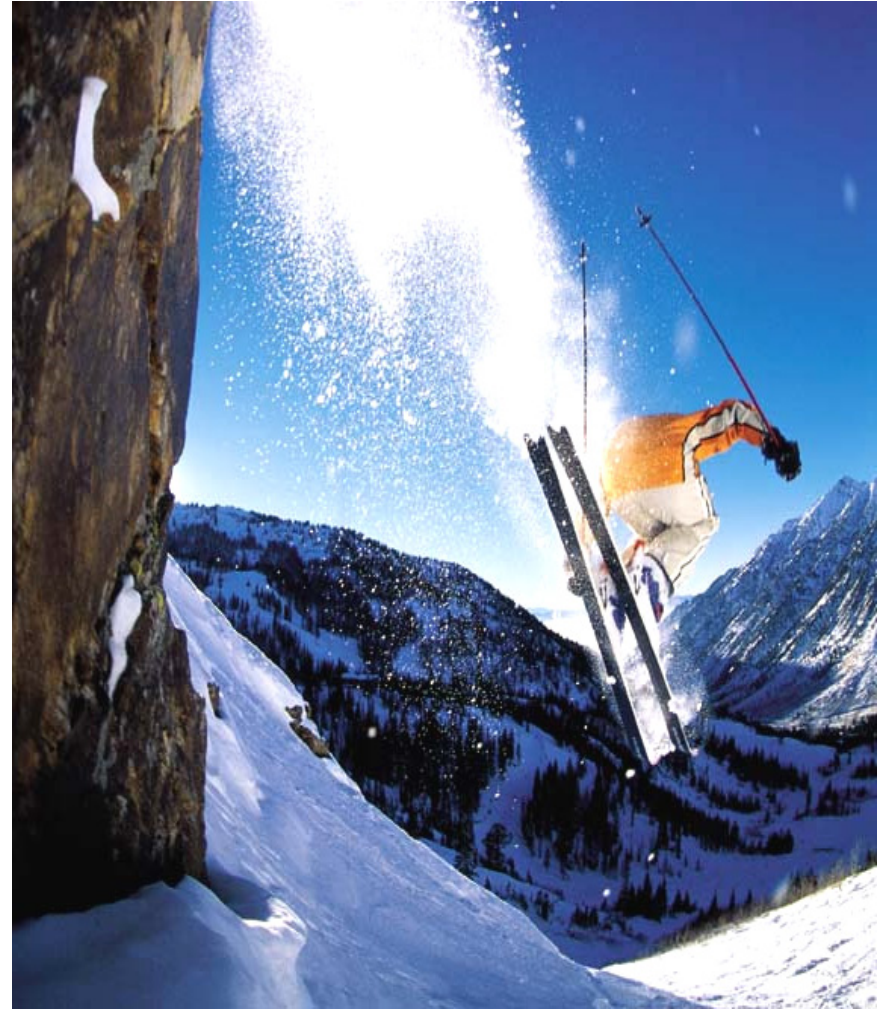


Fig. 35: Mountain Skiing



- Nomad Tours (Fig.36)
- Butterfly Tours
- Mountain Biking (Fig.37)
- Hunting (Fig.38)



Fig.37: Mountain Biking



Fig.38: Hunting



Fig.36



- Sport Fishing
- Cruises and Boating
- Other Water Sports :
 - Water Skiing
 - Banana
 - Parachute
- Horse Riding
- Camel Riding
- Waterfall Rappelling (Fig.39)
- Tree Climbing
- Zip Line Tours (Fig.40)



Fig. 40: Zip Line Tours



Fig. 39: Waterfall Rappelling



- Turtle Release (Fig.41)
- Astronomical Trips (Fig.42)
- Balloon Safari (Fig.43)
- Paragliding



Fig. 42



Fig. 43



Fig. 41



SOME INTERESTING TOURS

- Body Guard Tours
- Mountain Flight
- Ultra Craft
- Golf Tours
- Bungy Jumping
- Pony Trekking
- Bookstore Tourism
- Creative Tourism
- Dark tourism
- Drug Tourism
- Eco-region Tourism
- Garden Tourism
- Medical Tourism
- Gambling Tourism
- Spa Tourism
- Pop-cultural Tourism
- Space Tourism
- Wine Tourism



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