

# Ecotourism: Formula to Travel and Discover Responsibly

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## ABSTRACT

Ecotourism participates in local economies in its implementation; ecotourism must be part of the development of the territory. The tourist slows take the time to discover rather than to travel thousands of kilometers; who on the floor; these kilometers they cycle on horseback or by boat often associated with sustainable green tourism or ecotourism slow tourism is the opposite of mass tourism all studies show that this is a deep societal trend and global.

**Key words:** Ecotourism; Ecotourist; Natural areas; Nature; Tourism; Responsible

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an activity of considerable global importance from both an economic and social point of view, but also from an environmental point of view. With nature tourism, ecotourism is a segment of tourism practiced by people seeking close contact with nature and without harming it. Ecotourism is the dream of the traveler is immersed in the heart of a protected area with rare and colorful species. Ecotourism remains a tourism of the future because applied and organized by competent people, it can support more effectively than any other industry the development of remote areas and in a sustainable way.

The knowledge of the tourist activity is essential for the understanding of the tourist phenomenon and opens the way for the analysis of the links between the tourism and the other activities. This makes it clear that tourism is a transversal and multidisciplinary sector. Moreover, tourism is attracting the interest of public authorities who are constantly being convinced, by international bodies, of the interest of seeing tourism included in the guidelines of their economic policy.

In this paper, we will develop the ecotourism as a new approach and all the areas that are connected to it: the actors, the ecotourist and the benefits of the ecotourism [1,2].

### Birth and development of ecotourism

Before ecotourism, we should talk about tourism as a general concept. The latter is an activity of people traveling to places outside their usual environment and staying in those places for less than one year consecutively for leisure, business or other purposes.

Tourism is one of the world's leading industries with international

tourism receipts of \$ 733 billion in 2006, or \$ 2 billion a day.

- Tourism accounts for 35% of world exports of services and more than 70% of those of Least Developed Countries (LDCs): 1.6 billion international tourist arrivals planned for the world in 2020. (Average growth of 6.5% per year since 1950) (Figure 1).

According to the International Ecotourism Society in 1990): Ecotourism: is defined as follows: "it is about a responsible trip in the natural areas that preserves the environment and increases the well-being of the local populations (new travel formula)".

In (1999, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

This term is newly defined under the following terms: "This environmentally responsible tourism modality consists in traveling in natural areas in order to appreciate and enjoy nature, while promoting preservation. , having a minimal visit impact and favoring active integration that brings socio-economic benefits to local populations. "

The main criteria for ecotourism are defined as follows, among others:

- Have a low impact on the resources of the protected natural area.
- Integrate different actors (individuals, communities, tourism operators and government institutions) in the planning, development, implementation and monitoring phases.
- -Respect local cultures and traditions.
- Generate sustainable and equitable income for local

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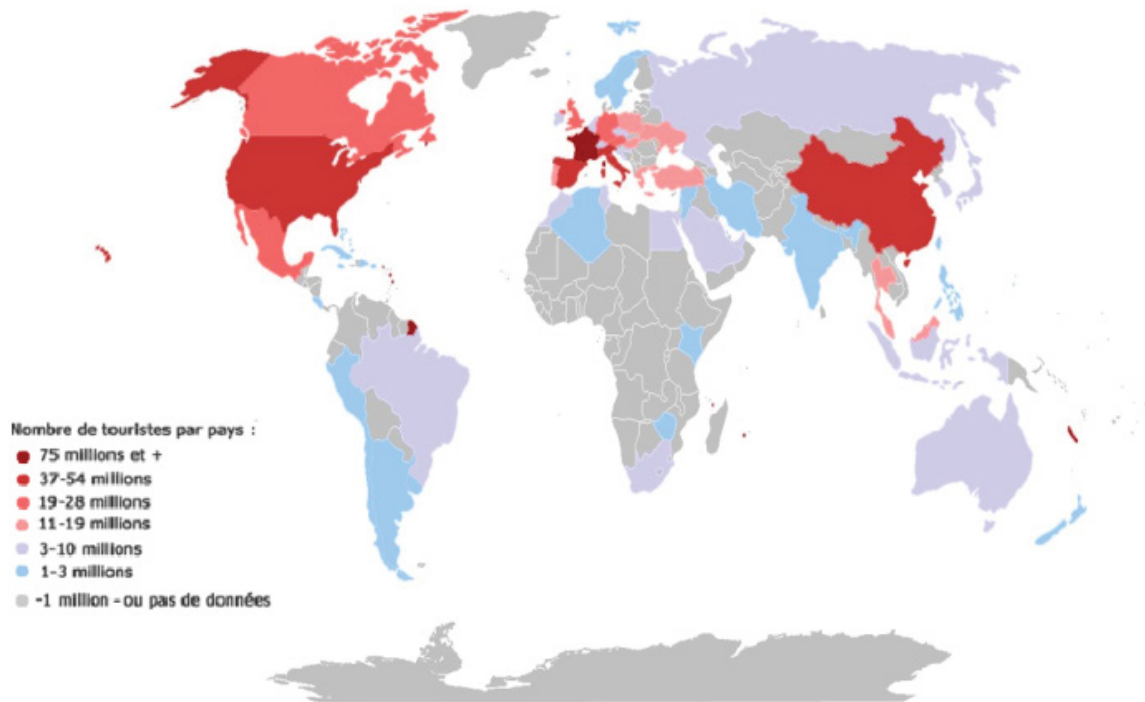


Figure 1: Global distribution of tourism.

communities and for as many stakeholders as possible, including private tourism operators.

- Producing income that will be used for the preservation of protected areas.
- Educate all committed actors about their role in preservation.

Ecotourism as a form of travel has emerged little by little and has developed over time, according to several problems encountered:

- Originally, mass tourism in LDCs: Least Developed Countries;
- Short term profitability research;
- Generate little income for local people.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Tourism mainly causes the degradation of natural sites and the living conditions of local communities, resulting in the emergence of ecotourism as a self.

From the beginning of the 80s, there was an environmental awareness that has an impact on tourism. Since then, we have noticed an increase in demand for "responsible" tourism, and a worldwide recognition of the concept of "ecotourism" (2002: International Year of Ecotourism, annual ecotourism summit)

Today, ecotourism is growing rapidly, (between 10 and 15% per year according to World Travel and Tourism Council).

It is also developing, mainly in the LDCs (especially Central America, tropical Africa and Southeast Asia).

In terms of certification and label, we can say that ecotourism benefits from a certificate under the name of: Environmental Management System (ISO 14001, EMAS).

The creation of a label and certificates "ecotourism" facilitates the task to ensure the professionalism of the activity (Certification for Sustainable Tourism, Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program,...).

## The actors of ecotourism

There is a multitude of actors working in the ecotourism sector are multiplying more and more given the importance of the concept, a classification can be done in this direction [3-5].

- Personal Protected Areas,
- Individuals and community organizations,
- Members of the private sector of industry and tourism,
- Officials from governmental or non-governmental organizations,
- Secondary speakers.

Ecotourism is a mode of travel that presents itself as the tourism of tomorrow too.

It is a form of tourism that consists of visiting relatively untouched natural areas in order to study and admire the landscape of the plants and wild animals that they shelter.

It is a form of responsible travel that contributes to the protection of the environment and the safeguarding of ecosystems.

Ecotourism activities are culturally friendly so group activities are often limited to 12 people. It takes into account the cultural heritage of these destinations it is a new way to develop the territory is to be a responsible traveler [6,7].

## Who is the ecotourist?

The international ecotourism society developed the following profile for the ecotourism market in 1998 based on a survey of travelers from the United States.

Several factors are taken into consideration to have a better profile, which we quote as follows:

**Age:** Between 35 and 54, although age varies depending on the activity.

**Gender:** 50% were women and 50% men, with clear differences depending on the activities.

**Education:** 82% were in possession of a university degree. Interest in ecotourism is shifting, affecting more and more layers with a lower level of education.

**Group Composition:** A majority (60%) of experienced ecotourists prefer to travel as a couple: only 15%, that they will be traveling with their families and 13%, that they prefer to travel alone.

**Duration of the trip:** The largest group of experienced ecotourists give preference to trips of 8 to 14 days.

**Expenses:** Experienced ecotourists were more willing to spend than mainstream tourists: The largest (26%) was willing to spend between US \$ 1,000 and US \$ 1,500 per trip.

**Important elements of the trip:** The predominant answers of experienced ecotourists: Landscapes. Observation of animal life and excursions, hikes. The two main motivations of ecotourists experiment with their next trip: to enjoy landscapes and nature, to make new experiences and to know new sites.

Protected area managers are divided into categories, within protected areas, very important people ensure the proper management of this space. :

- In general, there are biologists, botanists or animal specialists for the purely scientific themes of the protected area;
- Then there are the actors who must guide the interests of all stakeholders in ecotourism so that they benefit protected areas and their conservation goals.
- Key actors for the preservation of natural resources that have very broad local and traditional knowledge to better manage tourists.

### The impact of ecotourism on the region

Ecotourism is a very important factor that has fundamental results. The latter has an essential contribution to create programs of education on the environment and on the local population which will benefit from the advantages of ecotourism:

The local population, are people living in or around protected areas, their territory and their place of life attract tourists.

Ecotourism has an essentially economic meaning, but here it represents an upheaval of the daily life of the local population since it allows it to generate some benefits from the activities carried out between AGR, Cooperatives, and guest house.

The local population is decisive in this sense, since they must participate actively in decision-making concerning the planning and management of their activities in order to develop their resources and continue to attract ecotourists [8-10].

### Benefits and threats of ecotourism

Ecotourism is an effective tool for managing protected areas, some of which we will highlight:

- Strategy adapted to reduce the pressure of tourism on biodiversity.
- Generates direct income for the protected area (admission fees).
- Improves relationships between local communities and protected area administrations.
- May be a better option than other rival economic activities (deforestation, poaching, ...).

- Justifies the existence of protected areas

## DISCUSSION

This responsible tourism management, which is called ecotourism, has many advantages and strengths that can help improve the place where it is practiced in a responsible way that are among others:

An asset for local communities

- Establish a sustainable income: direct creation of jobs in protected areas, development of local crafts, restoration, Improves services: creation of infrastructures (transport, education, health)
- Cultural affirmation of the inhabitants because of the interest and the respect that the visitors bring to them.
- The other side of the coin always presents the less bright spots and here we refer to the potential threats of ecotourism.
- Degradation of protected areas: excessive influx of tourists, even "responsible", disrupts ecosystems.
- Price increase: local population must pay the same price as tourists to access services.
- Demographic instability, linked to a massive influx of populations attracted by the financial "mane".
- To avoid these problems, it is necessary to study in advance all these impacts and to develop a management plan to minimize them.
- Tourism in care is a mass industry, employing a multitude of people in very different trades (operators, carriers, restaurants, craftsmen, guides).

## CONCLUSION

It fits perfectly into the theme of sustainable development; it is a very young concept, in development.

Ecotourism brings together all forms of nature-oriented tourism in which the main motivation of the tourist is to observe and appreciate nature as well as traditional cultures that reign in natural areas. It includes local and indigenous communities in its planning, development and operation and contributes to their well being. It promotes the protection of natural areas.

It involves a part of education and interpretation of the natural heritage and culture.

Ecotourism is an interesting solution for the management of protected areas because it helps to reconcile the objectives of preservations with economic and social development.

It is a relatively complex sector with which protected area staff and communities need to become acquainted to form partnerships, whose common denominator between mass tourism and other types of tourism is to: achieve economic benefits.

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