

ECO TOURISM

Definitions of eco tourism

'Ecotourism is a form of tourism inspired primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures. The ecotourist visits relatively undeveloped areas in the spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity. The ecotourist practices a non-consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources and contributes to the visited area through labor or financial means aimed at directly benefiting the conservation of the site and the economic well-being of the local residents...'

- 'Ecotourism is a nature tourism that contributes to conservation, through generating funds for protected areas, creating employment opportunities for local communities, and offering environmental education.' (Boo, 1991b, 4)
- 'Nature-based tourism that is focused on provision of learning opportunities while providing local and regional benefits, while demonstrating environmental, social, cultural, and economic sustainability' (Forestry Tasmania, 1994, ii)
- 'Ecologically sustainable tourism in natural areas that interprets local environment and cultures, furthers the tourists' understanding of them, fosters conservation and adds to the well-being of the local people.' (Richardson, 1993, 8)
- 'Nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable. This definition recognizes that natural environment includes cultural components, and that ecologically sustainable involves an appropriate return to the local community and long-term conservation of the resource.' (Australia Department of Tourism, 1994, 17)
- 'Travel to remote or natural areas which aims to enhance understanding and appreciation of natural environment and cultural heritage, avoiding damage or deterioration of the "environment and the experience for others".' (Figgis, 1993,

➤ 'Travel to enjoy the world's amazing diversity of natural life and human culture without causing damage to either.' (Tickell, 1994, ix)

➤ 'A responsible nature travel experience, that contributes to the conservation of the ecosystem while respecting the integrity of host communities and, where possible, ensuring that activities are complementary, or at least compatible, with existing resource-based uses present at the ecosystem.' (Boyd & Butler, 1993, 13, 1996a, 386)

➤ 'Ecotourism is a form of tourism which fosters environmental principles, with an emphasis on visiting and observing natural areas'. (Boyd & Butler, 1996b, 558)

➤ 'Low impact nature tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly through a contribution to conservation and/or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community sufficient for local people, and therefore protect, their wildlife heritage area as a source of income.' (Goodwin, 1996, 288)

➤ 'Ecotourism is tourism and recreation that is both nature-based and sustainable.' (Lindberg & McKercher, 1997, 67)

➤ 'Responsible travel that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people'

The Concept of Ecotourism, Evolution and Trends

The research within the area of ecotourism still appears to be at its infancy stage. The definitional perspective of the concept is lacking both in terms of scope and criteria used, as well as in aspects of its planning and operationalisation. There are a variety of ecotourism definitions all reflecting a range of paradigms and perspectives. The view that this article has taken is that the definition of ecotourism is not really necessary if the discussion focuses on the concepts rather than the issues implied by ecotourism. Hence, it seems that ecotourism definitions could range from passive to active stances incorporating the three common concepts in the form of trade-off scenarios. The three common concepts within ecotourism are natural-based, educational, and sustainable (which includes economic and social criteria). Within these components, both benefits and costs exist, and in some circumstances there is disequilibrium towards greater costs. Fundamentally, ecotourism could merit wider credibility, but only when the different actors involved avoid overmarketing, and control the overuse of its products by consumers. In light of these pitfalls, this paper focuses on the three components of ecotourism and includes a review of ecotourism's definitions followed by an examination of its natural-based, sustainability and educational components. It concludes with the future state of ecotourism research in light of the changes in trends in the tourism industry.