

Is eco-tourism good for the environment and world?

Background and Context of Debate:



One common definition of Ecotourism is, "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." The Ecotourism Society

defines it as "responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of the local people". In general, Ecotourism aims to strike a balance between conservation, communities, and sustainable travel. Ecotourism emerged in the 1990s and has grown at a very rapid pace into a multi-billion dollar industry.



Environment: Does ecotourism benefit the environment?

Yes

Ecotourism's human impact on nature is part of the natural process Humans are part of nature, and their impact on nature is part of the World's natural processes. This doesn't mean that humans should be wanton about their impact on nature. It simply means that to consider all human impact on the environment as bad is to miss the fact that we are part of the environment.

Some negative externalities from ecotourism are ok There are certainly some negative impacts from eco-tourism. What is important is to recognize that they are and can continue to be limited to a tolerable level, given the benefits.

No

Human's should not tour natural areas because they will degrade them No matter how careful humans are, if they descend on an area to tour it, they will degrade that ecosystem. Therefore, encouraging ecotourism encourages environmental degradation.

Ecotourism can disturb wildlife Wildlife is often disturbed by ecotourists. Polar bears, for example, are supposed to sleep through much of the winter months to conserve energy and avoid burning needed fat. Ecotourists that attempt to observe these bears by vehicle put them on "alert" and cause them to burn much of this needed energy and fat.

Ecotourism incentivizes environmental protection over exploitation Landowners, in third world countries in particular, are often faced with the question of how to make their lands profitable. They have many choices, but many often conclude that exploitation, such as clear-cutting, is the only course of action. Ecotourism offers landowners an alternative to exploitation that will still allow them to profit from their land, and more sustainably.

Ecotourism cultivates a conservation ethic Environmental conservation is achieved through popular support and pressure. This requires that individuals believe passionately in conservation ethics. Ecotourism helps cultivate this ethic by exposing people to the preciousness of the thing that they should help protect.

Ecotourism generates funds for conservation The profits from many ecotourism businesses can be used to expand conservation efforts. Some Ecotourism businesses realize that having a policy to donate a portion of their profits to environmental conservation efforts actually attracts more consumers for greater profits and environmental aid.

Ecotourism encourages the tourism industry to be "greener" Tourism is going to happen whether we like it or not. Ecotourism helps better manage and direct the tourism industry on a more environmentally friendly course.

Ecotourism can damage habitats Even ecotourists will inevitably deposit trash, trample on some plants, and even bring certain damaging microbes to a habitat that are capable of having devastating effects. Even electric wires that will presumably be used to supply energy to expanding ecotourism camps are capable of having negative environmental effects.

Ecotourism is just "green-washing" for profit The tourism industry realizes that its consumers like to see that their tours are environmentally friendly, at least in name. Indeed, the problem is that most "ecotourism" is in name only. Consumers seem willing to accept the title of "ecotourism" without scrutinizing the impact of their tours. "Ecotourism", for example, is sometimes used by tourism companies to describe a drive through the wilderness. Therefore, the term "ecotourism" is being abused by companies to give a false impression of what is "green".

The success of Ecotourism is bad for the environment The ecotourism industry is growing incredibly quickly, with annual revenue growth in the double digits. This means that more people are going on tours into habitats. Yet, the more people that go on eco-tours, the more environmental damage will be incurred. Therefore, the irony of ecotourism is that its success entails the failure of its environmental mission.

Culture: Is Ecotourism good for cultural understanding?

Yes

Ecotourism builds cultural awareness and respect. A big part of Ecotourism's mission is to reveal cultures and build respect and understanding. This is good, irrespective of the environmental issues, and helps build a more compassionate, cohesive world

No

Ecotourism does not preserve but damages local cultures The commercialization of cultures through tourism does not preserve cultures. Rather, it makes a show of them. This damages the authenticity of cultures, by placing a price-tag on them.

Local effects: Do local populations benefit?

Yes

Ecotourism economically benefits local people Ecotourism is an industry brought to local environments that supplies many various jobs in tours, lodging, restaurants, and in all other accompanying elements of the tourism industry. This is good, particularly in poor countries where such jobs are very welcome.

No

Local community benefits from ecotourism are minimal Foreign companies gain the most from "ecotourism". Ecotourism companies are not popping up locally, but are typically coming from developed countries to poorer countries to take advantage of the opportunity to profit. This inevitably leads to many instances of abuse, in which the majority of profits go abroad, while local wages are pushed down.

Third world governments often seize local control to expand ecotourism Ecotourism can offer a substantial stream of revenue to poor countries and their governments. Yet, local landowners may resist. This has led, in some cases, to governments forcing the hand of locals to give up control of land to official administration, for the purpose for developing a profitable ecotourism industry.

Social/democratic: Are there positive social/democratic benefits from ecotourism?

Yes

Ecotourism is good for the human soul and social health. While much emphasis in this debate is placed on the environmental pros and cons, it is important to consider the benefits to humans and society in general from these kinds of activities. When a human enters a forest or sees a breath-taking landscape, it often changes their perspective on life for the better. This is good for the individual and for those that interact with the individual. Cumulatively, it is good for society.

Ecotourism raises awareness of host country socio-environmental politics. It is important that international awareness is raised not only about the need for conservation, but of the specific political issues surrounding conservation in a particular region or country. These issues can vary widely, and are essential to understand if effective international responses are to be crafted. On-the-ground ecotourism is very important to achieving this understanding.

No

Ecotourism favors corporate interests over democratic processes Ecotourism is a transnational corporate industry. The problem with expanding ecotourism is that it expands transnational corporate interests at the cost of democratic processes. This occurs because transnational corporations are not accountable as national governments are to voting constituents and various other democratic processes.

- **Prepare a presentation giving both sides of the Ecotourism debate in one area/ region/ country.**