

What Is Ecotourism and just It Important?

Is Ecotourism just another 'green' trend? We'd say no.

So what exactly is ecotourism in Costa Rica?

Based on the International Ecotourism Society, the ecotourism definition is: "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and increases the well-being of people."



Ecotourism is centered on uniting conservation, communities and sustainable travel. There are several guidelines set up for those who take part in ecotourism. Namely, ecotourism:

- Focuses on pristine, unspoiled natural environments
- Minimizes influence on the environment
- Builds environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- Provides positive experiences both for visitors and hosts
- Provides direct financial benefits for conservation
- Provides financial benefits and empowerment for residents
- Raises awareness to host countries' political, environmental and social climate

Now, this may seem like a tall order, nevertheless the aim of sustainable travel is a huge vision. Given the very real threats of deforestation, a loss of biodiversity, and global climatic change, ecotourism is much more important than ever.

On the other hand, what is NOT ecotourism?

Equally as important as the question "what is ecotourism" is understanding what it isn't. As an example, someone may look at a walk through the rainforest being an ecotourism activity.

However, this isn't the case unless possibly the particular rainforest trail benefits environmental surroundings and/or the local community. Some may also look at a rafting vacation to be an ecotourism activity; however, this can't be considered ecotourism unless it raises awareness and/or funds to aid protect the watershed.

While in doubt, it's best to consider all of the definition parameters as established by The International Ecotourism Society.

Ecotourism: Thoughts on criticism.

Some critics of ecotourism argue that no travel may be eco-friendly considering the large number of fuel/carbon/resources involved with transport. It is a fair point.

However, there's another indicate be made and it's really very simple to comprehend. Here it is: humans are not likely to stop traveling.

Consider this example: Nobody wants an increase in landfill garbage, but humans are not going to stop making trash. And then we invented recycling as a means to lower the impact and raise awareness. Similarly, because technology now makes travel accessible to many -- also much of the worldwide economy depends on it -- it's not really realistic to launch a campaign to persuade people to travel less. However what we can do is raise understanding of environmental impact, from the importance of preserving nature, and also the empowerment available through community.

Ecotourism: How come it's important?

To add to that idea, not just is ecotourism designed to have less environmental impact than traditional tourism, it holds the possibility to improve the social, cultural and economic well-being of holiday destinations and local communities across the globe. If we raise knowing of pristine natural environments, are we not also creating evangelists for preservation? When we raise awareness of local communities do we not develop a new help for them?

There were a lot of people who declared recycling programs could not work... imagine where we'd be today had we abandoned trying. Fortunately, ecotourism appears to be gaining coverage and recognition.

In closing, we give you this question: As we can shift someone's destination to be oriented around sustainability and education, will we not also create more aware global citizens?

Published by Lisa at Happy Holidays Guides.

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