



TOURISM

The WWF mission and tourism

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

Tourism is the largest and fastest growing economic sector in the world and has significant environmental, cultural, social, and economic impacts, both positive and negative. If undertaken responsibly, tourism can be a positive force for sustainable development, conservation and environmental protection, and can provide unique opportunities for awareness raising and enhancing support for conservation. If unplanned, tourism can be socially, culturally and economically disruptive, and have a devastating effect on fragile environments.

WWF and the tourism sector need to share a common goal: the long-term preservation of the natural environment. WWF seeks to conserve nature while popular and marketable holidays rely, to a large extent, on the existence of attractive and clean destinations. These often occur in environmentally fragile areas that are biologically significant and rich in wildlife.

WWF's vision for tourism

WWF's vision for tourism is that it should maintain or enhance biological and cultural diversity, use resources sustainably, and reduce over-consumption and waste. In particular, tourism development and practice should:

- be part of a wider sustainable development strategy
- be compatible with the effective conservation of natural ecosystems
- involve local cultures and people, ensuring that they have an equitable share in its benefits.

Definitions

WWF believes that 'sustainable tourism' is currently an unachievable ideal, not least because of the significant contribution that air travel makes to climate change. It is therefore more useful to think about 'responsible tourism' within the context of a wider sustainable development strategy.

Responsible Tourism

Responsible tourism is tourism that satisfies tourists, maintains or enhances the destination environment, and benefits destination residents.

Position Statement

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For further information please see the "WWF Tourism Background Paper" and the "WWF Tourism Issue & Activity" papers. For details, please contact:

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Ecotourism

Ecotourism should be seen as a subset of responsible tourism and can be described as tourism to natural areas that is determined by, and benefits, local communities and the environment.

Principles for responsible tourism

WWF believes that the tourism sector needs to accept responsibility for its impacts, both on nature and people, and to be proactive in addressing them. The following principles are offered as a guide to the issues that WWF believes should be considered in pursuing more responsible tourism.

1. Tourism should be part of wider sustainable development and support conservation

Tourism should be compatible with and part of international, national, regional, and local sustainable development and conservation plans. It should be planned, managed and undertaken in a way that avoids damage to biodiversity, and that is environmentally sustainable, economically viable, and socially equitable. All tourism development should be undertaken using a precautionary approach.

Tourism should not compromise opportunities for a diversified local economy, should be undertaken within limits of acceptable change, and in preference to other potentially more damaging forms of development. On occasion, tourism itself may be the most damaging activity and may need to be heavily restricted or prevented. Sound land-use planning, including environmental impact assessment, strategic environmental assessment, and respect for natural landscapes and protected areas, can help avoid impacts in sensitive areas. Whenever possible and appropriate, economic instruments and incentives should be used to achieve responsible tourism. In particular, the polluter pays

principle should be applied in mitigating impacts, especially those caused by aviation.

Tourism should support nature conservation, especially the protection of terrestrial, coastal and marine wildlife, habitats and ecosystems. It should avoid contributing to the fragmentation of natural landscapes which both reduces the quality of the tourism experience and degrades the environment.

Tourism should be planned in order to prevent the degradation of archaeological, historical, prehistoric, and scientific sites and remains, and should support their conservation.

Tourism should comply with international conventions and national, state, and local laws where these support sustainable development and conservation. Where such regulation does not exist, the tourism sector should support its initiation.

2. Tourism should use natural resources in a sustainable way

Conservation and sustainable use of natural resources are essential to the long-term health of the environment. The concentration of tourists, both in time and space, can impose a very heavy toll on scarce resources such as water. Tourist management systems should strive for a more even distribution of tourist flows throughout the year, and tourism revenue should support sustainable use strategies and technologies.

Sports and outdoor activities in ecologically sensitive areas, including recreational hunting and fishing, should comply with existing regulations on conservation and the sustainable use of species and habitats. Where regulations do not exist, or are ineffective, the tourism industry should seek guidance from appropriate bodies with expertise and

knowledge of the particular area where activities are planned.

3. Tourism should eliminate unsustainable consumption and minimize pollution and waste

Reducing pollution and consumption lessens environmental damage, improves the tourism experience, and reduces both operational costs and the high cost of cleaning up the environment.

The consumption of fossil fuels and motorized transport, both within and between destinations, should be avoided whenever possible. Negative impacts of transport on the environment should be reduced, and particular attention should be devoted to environmental impacts of road and air traffic, especially in ecologically sensitive areas. Seeking cleaner energy sources and pursuing efficient resource use are essential.

4. Tourism should respect local cultures and provide benefits and opportunities to local communities

Local communities reserve the right to maintain and control their cultural heritage and to manage the positive and negative impacts that tourism brings. Tourism should therefore respect the rights and wishes of local people and provide opportunities for the wider community to participate actively in decision-making and consultations on tourism planning and management issues. Local traditions should be taken into account in buildings, and architectural development should be in harmony with the environment and the landscape. The knowledge and experience of local communities in sustainable resource management can make a major contribution to responsible tourism. Tourism should therefore respect and value local knowledge and experience, maximize benefits to communities, and recruit, train, and employ local people at all levels.

5. Tourism should be informative and educational

Education, awareness, and capacity building are key to achieving responsible tourism. All involved in tourism should be made aware of its positive and negative impacts, and encouraged to be responsible and to support conservation through their activities. This includes industry, national and local government, local communities, and consumers.

Information about environmental, cultural and social issues should be provided to tourists as an essential part of responsible tourism. Tourism should also provide the opportunity for the sharing of local heritage, culture, and traditions with visitors.

WWF action

On the basis of these principles, WWF is engaging with tourism where it conflicts with the objectives of WWF, or where it can be used to support sustainable development. WWF works, as appropriate, with industry, governments, local communities, multinational organizations, and non-governmental organizations. WWF also works on broader policy issues relating to tourism, influencing and improving regulatory frameworks and public and private financing, raising awareness and support for its aims, and promoting the development and use of indicators for monitoring and evaluating tourism impacts on environmental resources, including biodiversity. This means:

- Working with the tourism industry, governments and communities to support the development of international, national, and regional tourism policies that build on existing mechanisms and approaches, such as Local Agenda 21, integrated natural resource management, environmental impact assessment, and national sustainable development strategies.

- Raising awareness of sustainable development principles and tools, including the precautionary principle, the polluter pays principle, economic instruments, minimum standards, and environmentally sound technologies.
- Implementing and facilitating tourism-related field projects which promote and illustrate key elements of responsible tourism, test and refine standards, promote dialogue between stakeholders, establish good practice models, and inform policy development.
- Raising awareness amongst consumers about the environmental impacts of tourism, such as the excessive consumption of water and energy, and the need for responsible tourism.
- Helping the tourism industry to improve its environmental standards and develop good practice, including promoting the use of clean technology, the adoption of responsible marketing, and the sustainable use of species.
- Promoting respect for local people and cultures and their rights, encouraging their informed participation in tourism through long-term partnerships between local and non-local operators, businesses, and suppliers.
- Undertaking capacity building to ensure the equitable distribution of benefits and the establishment of locally owned enterprises that support conservation and promote the use of local sustainably produced goods by the tourism industry.