

TOURISM NORTH

Prepared for the
Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

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Tourism North

Introduction

The Northern Alberta Clearinghouse Project is a partnership of northern colleges who each year identify a number of priority research topics. The partner colleges are: Fairview College, Grande Prairie Regional College, Keyano College, Lakeland College and Northern Lakes College. The investigation of relevant issues as well as industry requirements for the tourism industry in Northern Alberta colleges was one such priority topic.

Methodology

Information for this report was obtained from a variety of sources including interviews, electronic research and analysis of current and historical publications. Telephone interviews were conducted with knowledgeable representatives of Alberta Economic Development as well as similar officials from Alberta Aboriginal Affairs. Electronic information presented in this report was obtained from general web site research as well as from specific internet leads acquired during the interviews. Data presented from published sources contains contemporary information, relevant to gaining an understanding of current issues surrounding tourism, particularly as it applies to Northern Alberta.

Currently active Northern Alberta field staff from the Department of Alberta Economic Development were also interviewed, and provided practical firsthand intelligence, with insights to determining local issues that could be addressed through new programming.

In addition to the specific focus on local data contained in this report, electronic research and analysis of foreign countries was conducted. Portions of this research can be found in Appendix “C”, and details for further information can be found in Appendix “D”.

Lakeland College is delivering the single tourism program currently available in Northern Alberta. The College’s program staff were contacted and interviewed to present experiential data pertaining to primary areas of interest to project participants.

It must be noted that the topic of tourism, even within the parameters of Northern Alberta, is a massive and diverse subject. While a section of this report provides some background and statistical information about tourism in Northern Alberta, the author has necessarily established that the major focus of this report will be on ecotourism and Aboriginal tourism.

Background

The most recent available statistics concerning travel to Northern Alberta are taken from a 1999 Alberta Economic Development publication; *Tourism in Alberta’s North*. This report measures travel in Alberta by Canadians for trips of at least 80 kilometres one way from home, and trips to the province made by American and Overseas visitors to Canada.

During 1999, Alberta’s North received 7% of total person visits into Alberta. The 7% of visitors were responsible for just 6% of the province’s entire tourism revenues. Using this report’s method of measurement, the majority of visitors were identified as Albertans, with over one-half of these being from the North.

The most often reported purpose of the visits was to see relatives (36%), followed by pleasure (31%) and business (17%). Total tourism spending in Alberta in 1999 was \$4.2 billion. \$3.76 billion of the total was spent by

visitors who made same-day or overnight trips to locations in the province. The portion spent in Alberta's North only reached \$242.4 million.

Business travel accounted for 32% of overnight trip expenditures in the region, followed by pleasure trips (27%) and trips to visit friends or relatives (18%). The spring and summer months were the highest travel months. The July to September period accounted for 32% of all visitor expenditures while the April to June period accounted for 25% of expenditures.

Of the total dollars spent by overnight visitors to the North, 22% was for private vehicle operation or vehicle rental. Accommodation accounted for 26%, and another 26% was spent on food and beverages. Recreation and entertainment as well as public and local transportation accounted for 12% of purchases.

Over one-half (57%) of visitors staying overnight reported staying with friends or relatives. Fifteen per cent stayed in campgrounds and trailer parks. Hotel and motel accommodation accounted for another 20%.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is becoming a popular world-wide phenomenon. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people".

As members of an emerging sector of the tourism industry, ecotourism professionals do not have ready access to programs that enhance their ability to deliver quality services. TIES was one of the first institutions in the world to offer training in this field. These training programs reflect the newness of the sector and often influence the direction of the industry. Short courses are offered at locations around the world and attract individuals who are park rangers, tour operators, government planners and landscape architects.

An introductory one-day workshop was held recently in Canada as part of an international conference. Presenters and participants were from all over the world. Those in attendance could choose to learn more about a number of topics such as:

- ❖ Ecotourism origins, evolution and trends
- ❖ The ecotourism market
- ❖ Operating successful ecotourism businesses
- ❖ Ecotourism planning for governments and communities
- ❖ Educating the ecotourist
- ❖ Ecotourism marketing

The organization has announced a number of future workshops ranging in duration from three to five days. *Ecotourism for Local Communities & Biodiversity Conservation* will provide a knowledge of the scope and nature of ecotourism and focus on the relationship between biodiversity conservation and community well being. *Ecotourism in Emerging Tourism Markets* will consider the social, cultural and environmental impacts of tourism and consider solutions to affect these impacts with special consideration of ecotourism. *Ecotourism Interpretation & Product Development* will help participants develop an understanding of the role of interpretation in natural and cultural heritage sites in the context of ecotourism and will emphasize the relevance of such interpretation approaches to the tourism professional and to the tourist. TIES courses are intended for ecotourism operators, planners and policy makers, managers of protected areas, education officers within protected areas and tourism decision-makers.

The International Ecotourism Society has begun the process of preparing a document that provides guidelines for nature tours. TIES indicates that the guidelines will require frequent revisions as the ecotourism industry progresses through its infancy. The guidelines are sufficiently comprehensive to be suitable for inclusion in an ecotourism training curriculum. Samples of the guidelines are outlined Appendix “B”.

The full report can be viewed at <http://ecotourism.org/textfiles/ecoguid.txt>

Aboriginal Tourism

The second major focus of this report concerns the tourism opportunities for the many Aboriginal communities in the North. “Aboriginal Tourism” as used in the context of this paper is all tourism businesses that are owned or operated by First Nation, Metis, and Inuit people.

The Benefits

Aboriginal tourism can be good for everyone in a community. A successful Aboriginal tourism business can do the following:

- ❖ Help with cultural revival within a community
- ❖ Foster a sense of pride
- ❖ Teach young people about their history and heritage
- ❖ Help employees develop front-line and management skills
- ❖ Help dispel the stereotypical image of Aboriginal people
- ❖ Help employees gain transferable skills
- ❖ Allow new Aboriginal partnerships with neighbours and businesses
- ❖ Share Aboriginal culture and heritage with the rest of the world

Did You Know?

Aboriginal tourism generated about \$270 million in 1999 and is expected to reach the \$1.9 billion mark in 10 years if all potential is realized. In 1999, Aboriginal tourism employed about 14,000 people in Canada.

Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada published a comprehensive study in March 2002 that provides a rich source of information for those contemplating the rewards of offering tourism services in Aboriginal communities. While the paper is not available electronically, it can be ordered by e-mail. (See Appendix “D”) The study, *Demand for Aboriginal Tourism Products in the Canadian and American Markets*, does not provide specific direction for Aboriginal communities. It provides sound, basic information concerning the demographics and interests of potential participants in Aboriginal tourist experiences.

The study investigators identified potential markets for visits by Canadians, Americans and Overseas visitors of 45.9 person visits. The preferred activities by person visits were broken down as follows:

Outdoors (with or without cultural activities).....	38.3 million
Outdoor – no cultural activities	28.9 million
Outdoors and cultural activities.....	0.3 million
Cultural activities only	7.6 million

Key Market Segments

Canadians represent three-quarters of the overnight Outdoors segment, two-thirds of the “Culture Only” segment, and about one-half of the High Yield Outdoors and High Yield “Culture Only” segment. While Canadians account for robust markets in these segments, Americans are also prime

contenders for these types of trips. Destinations for the bulk of this travel occurs in northern Ontario, with a smaller amount of U.S. travel into Northern Alberta and British Columbia.

The authors caution that this industry requires a unique formula of measuring market size, balancing the issue of the potential number of visitors with the issues of a site's capacity and yield. Fewer high yield visitors can bring the same economic benefits to a community as easily as can larger numbers of lower spending visitors. A vital question concerns the number of visitors an area can support while still maintaining its wilderness qualities.

This raises the question about marketing. Who is likely to bring the greatest economic benefit to the community? Also, if the area will attract most of the visitors during the July – September period, consideration must be given to the economics of unused infrastructure during the “down” months.

A comparison of spending by Canadian and American tourists in Outdoor segments, Dual Track and Culture Only visitors was reported. (Dual Track tourists participate in both outdoor and cultural experiences.)

The Outdoor Segments

Americans spend more money on outdoor destinations than do either Canadians or Overseas visitors. American tourists are more likely to stay in roofed accommodation and to shop and visit local attractions. Canadians are inclined to stay in private homes or lower cost camping facilities. Overseas visitors' spending varies according to the country of origin, with average spending being more than Canadian tourists and less than American visitors.

Dual Track Visitors

Spending patterns of Canadians are higher in this segment than those of Americans and Overseas visitors. Thus, to gain the highest yield from Canadian visitors, it is useful to package outdoor and cultural activities together. This packaging is less effective in attracting non-Canadian visitors, the portion that accounts for Culture Only.

Typical Seasons When Tourists Visit

More than half of all overnight tourism in Canada associated with the outdoors takes place in the July – September period. About one-fifth of tourism activities associated with Aboriginal communities occurs in the April – June period. The various market groups from at-home and abroad all exhibit similar touring patterns.

The study revealed a small winter market for Aboriginal tourism. Activities such as skiing and snowmobiling are the prime attractions during the October – March time.

Important Markets in the United States and Overseas

Markets with the strongest potential for Aboriginal communities are those that are furthest from the Canada/U.S. border. The authors found that the further an American lives from the border, the more likely this visitor will fall within the Outdoors, High Yield Outdoors and/or Outdoor/Culture segments. The closer an American lives to the border, the more likely this individual will come to Canada for “culture only” activities. The biggest spenders in the Outdoor market segment are from Minnesota, Wisconsin,

Texas, Illinois and the greater Washington D.C. area. The lowest spenders live in Washington State.

It is not surprising that frequency of travel to Canada is positively correlated with closeness to the border. For example, Washington State sends three times as many tourists to Canada as any other state. Therefore, examination of these markets requires that one balance the yields from low numbers/high spenders against the yields from high numbers/low spenders.

As reported above, Dual Track American travellers are among the highest yield tourists in the country. Ontario and British Columbia have attracted the largest portion of this group. During the study year Alberta attracted 13% of these visitors compared to 45% for B.C.

American Dual Track tourists were asked their preferred activities. The highest five activities reported were natural wonders, historical sites, different cultures, unspoiled nature and adventure. Sought after opportunities included hiking and backpacking, wilderness experiences, fresh water fishing, canoeing and kayaking, and horseback riding. Other respondents expressed interest in local arts and crafts, antique markets and casinos as possible attractions.

Those surveyed indicated that Canada was viewed as a mediocre to poor destination for winter travel.

The study indicated that there is potential for Aboriginal tourism development in remote parts of Canada. The issue identified is that the American market does not consider Canada when they think of Aboriginal experiences. This issue will need to be addressed through focussed marketing if the Aboriginal tourism market is to be developed.

Overseas Markets

Europeans represent a strong market for outdoor experiences in Canada, especially those who mix outdoor and cultural/heritage experiences on their Canadian vacations. Close to two-thirds of Dual Track outdoor/culture visitors from Overseas are Europeans compared to just one-half of Canada's total Overseas markets.

Visitors from Germany display relatively little interest in coming to Canada for cultural experiences only. Their preference is for a cultural component combined with outdoor experiences. Japanese tourists appear to be less interested in the combined experience, preferring one or the other.

Destinations for Market Segments

Travellers in the High Yield Outdoors Only segment tend to go to Canada's West and to Ontario. Approximately 4 million of the 10.7 million visitors in this category travel to British Columbia, Alberta and the Territories. This number can be further broken down into a reported 88,000 visitors annually to the Prairie's North.

Visitors who seek primarily cultural experiences tend not to go to the North (about 4% of High Yield Culture Only visitors). However, the High Yield Outdoor and Culture segment exhibit travel patterns similar to the Outdoors Only segment.

Tourism Activities of the High Yield Outdoor Segment

In the study year the activities of 5 million Canadians, 4.2 million Americans and 1.5 million Overseas visitors in this segment were reported. Different travel patterns emerged among the three major flows.

Sightseeing is important to all visitors in this segment. Parks and historic sights are more intensively used by U.S. and Overseas visitors than by Canadians. Similarly, Canadian tourists are less likely to want to shop than the other two tourist groups. Overseas visitors usually mix activities of seeing family and friends, going to festivals and fairs and other cultural events, visit museums and natural displays and stay longer.

Aboriginal Tourism Among Canadians

Canadian tourists were given the Canadian Travel Survey that included many activities that were not in the International Travel Survey. One of these activities was “attend an Aboriginal or native cultural event”.

Over one-half million Canadian overnight travellers have attended an Aboriginal or native cultural event in their trip. A sizable concentration occurred in Alberta (91,000).

Most of these Canadians were on trips that included outdoor activities (60%). Just over half took place in the July – September period and a further 20% travelled in the April – June period. (Numbers do not add due to visitors who reported travel in all seasons.) Most Dual Track Canadian travellers claim to travel for pleasure throughout the year. Of the 1.1 million Canadian travellers, 56% reported winter travel. Activities most undertaken were alpine/cross country skiing and snowmobiling.

Available Training for Members of Aboriginal Communities

The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council has developed an on-line Aboriginal Tourism Planning Guide. The Guide was designed to assist Aboriginal operators to develop, market and run a tourism operation. The Guide includes questions that should be asked during the business planning process, and lists resources, services and programs that can help answer these questions.

An outline of the Guide content is as follows.

- ❖ Getting Started
- ❖ Developing Your Product
- ❖ Involving Your Community
- ❖ Selling Your Idea
- ❖ Assembling Your Team
- ❖ Marketing Your Product
- ❖ Using Consultants
- ❖ Running Your Business

Aboriginal Tourism and the Alberta Government

Alberta Learning published the First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education Policy Framework in February 2002. The Framework document addresses future improved socio-economic opportunities for members of Aboriginal communities in the province. Goals include building capacity with regard to community, individual and entrepreneurial readiness:

- ❖ Strengthen the administrative and managerial abilities of Aboriginal individuals and communities so they can develop and implement their business plans and related strategies in support of their economic goals.
- ❖ Improve the success rate of Aboriginal students in our schools and provide educational upgrading, job training and employment readiness for Aboriginal people.
- ❖ Improve entrepreneurial and business training and opportunities for Aboriginal people and businesses.

The opportunities for Aboriginal people within the various economic sectors of the province are included in the goals. “First Nations, Metis and other Aboriginal communities are interested in other forms of economic development including construction, tourism, gaming, electronic commerce, high technology and a variety of small business ventures with both domestic and international markets.”

Aboriginal Tourism Projects in Northern Alberta

There are several existing projects in Northern Alberta located through postings on various websites. The list is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to provide examples of projects that are possible.

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation offers guides for wilderness travel, angling, birdwatching, ecotourism and cultural experiences.

The Narrows Cultural Resort Inc. is owned and operated by Kapaweno First Nation. The resort provides fixed roof accommodation and traditional Aboriginal dishes. Visitors can participate in wilderness hikes and fishing.

Fort Chipewyan Lodge has 10 rooms and provides full service.

Caribou Mountain Wilderness Ltd. is a fly-in fishing destination.

Discussion

Northern Alberta receives considerably less from the economic benefits of tourism than does the rest of the province. The challenges identified by the Peace Region Economic Development Alliance (PREDA) also appear in the other two northern regions of the province.

The challenges identified were:

- ❖ Lack of tourism infrastructure available to tourists (accommodation, infrastructure and transportation)
- ❖ Lack of awareness of the value of tourism
- ❖ Lack of regional tourism planning and partnerships

The report also identified what was termed a human resource “problem” that appears to contain two major issues. The first is the lack of supply and the second is the requirement to upgrade the professionalism of existing workers.

An Alberta Economic Development paper, *Alberta Aboriginal Tourism Product Opportunity Product Analysis*, supports this finding. The report indicates that one problem contributing to the lack of Aboriginal tourism projects is a lack of qualified people and a similar lack of Aboriginal-based tourism training. In a rating of infrastructure, available education and training was rated at 1.6 on a 5-point scale. The report recommends an increase in training and education in tourism small business management and service for the tourism industry.

No available source for levels of training required for work in the tourism industry were found. The Tourism Education Council has done considerable work in developing competency standards for the hospitality industry, but no other organization has compiled standards by occupation for the entire industry. While portions of the necessary information can be found in the

National Occupational Classification System, an industry-wide systematic analysis would be a daunting task.

The government of Australia has done a laudable job in identifying the occupations in tourism in that country. A policy overview of the industry further identifies government policy that requires integration of the Aboriginal population into the industry from both an entrepreneurial position as well as within the national tourism department. The range of training programs in public institutions and industry are identified in the document. This led to the conclusion that the Australian industry is currently better served than is the case in Canada.

At the outset of this paper, the goal was to provide some clear program direction for the member colleges in the Clearinghouse Project. What was discovered was fragments of planning for certain subsectors of the tourism industry in Northern Alberta. The federal government assisted in the preparation of the Aboriginal Tourism paper that provided much of the basis for that section of this paper. At the time of writing, Alberta Economic Development was unable to comment on subsequent provincial direction because two key staff members with extensive knowledge in the field had gone on to other employment and no replacements had been located. However, department spokesmen indicated that the government has clearly articulated its support of Aboriginal entrepreneurial activities with tourism being an important economic sector to consider.

The information available on ecotourism is extensive. Equally extensive networks exist for the delivery of ecotourism experiences. A note of caution is in order, however. There are beginnings of understanding in the literature that products promoted as ecotourism products are not achieving the success that was originally anticipated. What is emerging is sound wilderness or adventure experiences that adhere to an eco-philosophy principle. Thus, it remains necessary to include the various ecotourism guidelines in instruction for prospective project workers.

The northern part of the province offers the opportunities that certain travellers are seeking. What appears to be lacking are initiatives in developing the necessary infrastructure, identifying tourism potential at the

community level and gaining an understanding of the human resources necessary to implement and deliver the services.

The Alberta Economic Development Authority has provided the groundwork for the industry in identifying tourism as a major sector requiring attention. The provincial department and a number of regional groups are both planning and distributing their planning documents. There is information available about the makeup of tourism facilities that currently exist. There are training and education programs related to the industry throughout the public colleges, albeit primarily Edmonton and south.

What appears to be missing is a comprehensive tourism industry human resource plan for Northern Alberta. Such a plan would grow out of an assessment of possible tourism project opportunities and would lead to an analysis of skills required to operate these projects. One of the benefits to this is that local colleges would be able to develop and market tourism programs with some confidence.

Glossary of Terms

Person Visits	A person visit reflects one person who reported travelling in the Federal Government survey.
Outdoor activities	Overnight visitors who are interested in encountering Canada's outdoors, either through camping, a visit to a national or provincial park, hunting or fishing, bird or wildlife viewing, boating or other water sports, hiking or walking, downhill or cross country skiing, other winter sports.
Cultural activities	Overnight visitors who go to fairs, festivals or events, zoos, museums, galleries, cultural performances and/or Aboriginal cultural events.
Dual Track travellers	Those that have sought Aboriginal cultural experiences on trips in the recent past and also like to engage in outdoor activities when traveling.
High Yield visitors	Those who stay in paid, roofed accommodation – in hotels, motels, B&Bs, commercial cottages, cabins and resorts. These travellers not only spend money on their lodging, but they are also more likely to eat in restaurants, seek entertainment in the community and spend more on shopping than those who stay in private homes.
Outdoor High Yield segment	Had to have participated in one of: camping, fishing, boating or other water sports,

Canadian winter sports, visit a national/provincial park, bird or wildlife viewing, downhill/cross country skiing.

Summary of Guidelines for Nature Tour Operators

Pre-departure Programs -- Visitor Information and Education

Guideline:

Prepare travellers to minimize their negative impacts while visiting sensitive environments and cultures before departure.

Guideline:

Prepare travellers for each encounter with local cultures and with native animals and plants.

Guideline:

Minimize visitor impacts on the environment by offering literature, briefings, leading by example, and taking corrective actions.

Guiding Programs -- Prevention of Cultural Impacts

Guideline:

Minimize visitor impacts on local cultures by offering literature, briefings, leading by example, and taking corrective actions.

Guideline:

Use adequate leadership, and maintain small enough groups to ensure minimum group impact on destinations. Avoid areas that are under-managed and over-visited.

Guideline:

Ensure managers, staff and contract employees know and participate in all aspects of company policy to prevent impacts on the environment and local cultures.

Guideline:

Give managers, staff and contract employees access to programs that will upgrade their ability to communicate with and manage clients in sensitive natural and cultural settings.

Guideline:

Be a contributor to the conservation of the regions being visited.

Guideline:

Provide competitive, local employment in all aspects of business operations.

Guideline:

Offer site-sensitive accommodations that are not wasteful of local resources or destructive to the environment that provide ample opportunity for learning about the environment and sensitive interchange with local communities.

Ecotourism Guidelines for Nature Tour Operators: Main Document
by The Ecotourism Society 1993

Pre-departure Programs -- Visitor Information and Education

Guideline:

Prepare travellers to minimize their negative impacts while visiting sensitive environments and cultures before departure.

Offer visitors the educational materials they need to learn about the places and people to be visited and introduce the importance of contributing to the conservation of places being visited.

Educate visitors about the full range of natural and cultural phenomenon to be observed.

Educate visitors to consider the effects of their visit in advance and to modify their behavior while travelling, with the objective of minimizing impacts.

Provide introductory information on the people and ecosystems to be visited in pre-departure packages. Stress the importance of reading pre-departure information, such as selected bibliographies, and review additional resources for each destination.

Keep information objective and well-grounded using examples of phenomenon visitors might encounter.

Provide general travel ethics addressing standards for behavior in natural areas and with local cultures.

Provide information on the equipment, clothing and personal supplies suitable to the regions being visited.

Warn against bringing disposable goods that contribute to the solid waste burden in the region.

Provide information on products to avoid those that are illegally traded.

Provide information, as required, on avoiding the accidental transport of foreign, exotic species into isolated ecosystems being visited.

Visitor Benefits:

Visitor is attuned to the full range of opportunities for viewing wildlife and learning about different cultures.

Awareness of personal responsibility to minimize impacts on the environment and local cultures before departure.

Visitor has proper gear and clothing for environments and cultures to be visited.

Guiding Programs -- General Principles of Guiding Tours

Guideline:

Prepare travellers for each encounter with local cultures and with native animals and plants.

Objectives:

Pave the way for reciprocal sensitivity between cultures by teaching tourists to be unobtrusive while they are encountering environments and cultures.

Provide visitors with the opportunity to learn more about the social and political circumstances of the region being visited.

Provide visitors with the opportunity to learn more about local environmental problems and conservation efforts.

Techniques:

Provide quality orientation and enough leaders to manage the group according to the sensitivity of the environment visited.

Give quality interpretation at all times; explain local cultures and describe natural history. Encourage interaction with local people while overseeing contact to avoid cultural errors.

Conduct briefings before each stop, including behaviors to avoid, restricted practices and zones, special alerts for fragile and endangered species, specific distances to maintain with local wildlife, and local regulations.

Use of time on road and in cities for educational discussions of all kinds including balanced discussions of local issues.

Visitor Benefits:

Awareness of how to encounter cultures and environment with minimum negative impact.

Insight into the visitor's own role and potential contribution to local conservation and sustainable economic development efforts.

Guiding Programs -- Prevention of Environmental Impacts

Guideline:

Minimize visitor impacts on the environment by offering literature, briefings, leading by example, and taking corrective actions.

Objectives:

Help visitors to minimize their negative impacts by enhancing their understanding of the fragility of the environment.

Company guides should pursue the following procedures:

Provide a set of environmental guidelines, created by the company, specific to the area being visited.

Obtain and distribute available guidelines for each natural area visited.

Allow protected area staff to introduce guidelines if possible.

Brief visitors on proper behavior - on trails, in campsites, around wild animals, around fragile plants - and with trash, with human waste, with fires, and with soaps.

Advise all travellers on the level of difficulty of each excursion to prevent damage to the environment caused by lack of experience or ability to maneuver in unfamiliar terrain.

Discourage unrealistic expectations of observing rare wildlife and plants by interpreting all aspects of the ecosystem.

Advise against collecting souvenirs from natural areas, such as feathers, bones & shells, unless it is specifically condoned by local authorities.

Advise against purchasing specific crafts that are produced from threatened natural resources.

Visitor Benefits:

Learns how to travel without leaving footprints.

Gains a greater understanding of travel's impact on the environment.

Is informed of the rules and regulations of natural areas and the need to follow them.

Guiding Programs -- Prevention of Cultural Impacts

Guideline:

Minimize visitor impact on local cultures by offering literature, briefings, leading by example, and taking corrective actions.

Objectives:

Protect the integrity of the cultures being visited by minimizing visitor contribution to acculturation and the decline of local values. Enhance visitor

understanding of local cultures but avoid improper intrusions into the private lives of others.

Techniques:

Company guides should be aware of the following procedures:

Interpret local cultural values and history of local cultures.

Provide a set of cultural guidelines created by the company, specific to the area being visited. Where available, obtain and distribute guidelines written by local communities.

Advise visitors to accept differences, adopt local customs, and be unobtrusive. Discuss appropriate behavior when photographing.

Discuss appropriate behavior when purchasing goods, tipping, and responding to begging.

Visitor Benefits:

A better understanding of local values and cultures and how to behave with local peoples to minimize cultural impacts.

The ability to look, listen and learn from others without intruding.

Monitoring Programs -- Prevention of Accumulated Impacts of Tourism

Guideline:

Use adequate leadership, and maintain small enough groups to ensure minimum group impact on destinations. Avoid areas that are under-managed and over-visited.

Objectives:

Diminish accumulated effects of tourism on sensitive sites.

Avoid overloading local visitor management capabilities if there are inadequate funds and staff to manage visitors in sensitive sites.

Contribute to an effort to disperse tourism, and lighten the load on popular destinations during peak seasons.

Recognize sites, in advance, that are inappropriate for tourism, or need assistance with existing damage.

Techniques:

Be sensitive to total number of groups visiting sites simultaneously. Informally census the number of groups encountered on trails or roads within protected areas and keep track of sites with rapid increases. Notify authorities or landowners if the number of groups is growing rapidly.

Monitor negative environmental impacts, including trail erosion, improper waste dumping, littering, water pollution, species harassment, illegal collecting of plants or animals, feeding of wildlife, or wild animals that have become abnormally tame or aggressive. Notify authorities or landowners both verbally and, if need be, in writing.

Assist land managers in monitoring key, indicator species, or offer logistical assistance to researchers working on tourism impacts.

Design itineraries and promotions to avoid overselling popular sites, particularly those that are inadequately managed for visitation during peak seasons.

Watch for accumulated cultural impact and work to prevent or buffer them. Indicators include; inflated prices for goods in communities; hostility towards tourists from local communities; black markets, drug dealing and prostitution catering to the tourist industry.

Visitor Benefits:

Avoids contributing to the destruction of sites visited.

Learns to recognize the negative impacts of tourism and the importance of notifying the authorities when this occurs.

Learns to avoid overloading popular sites, by making trips in off-season or avoiding peak visitation hours.

Learns to recognize cultural impact and avoids contributing to the decline of local values.

Management Programs -- Prevention of Nature Tour Company Impacts

Guideline:

Ensure managers, staff and contract employees know and participate in all aspects of company policy to prevent impacts on the environment and local cultures.

Objectives:

Make the nature tour company as environmentally and culturally sensitive as possible, both in the office and in the field.

Techniques:

Establish an environmental code and objectives manual for the company.

Confidence in the personnel who are leading the organization and the tours.

Management Programs -- Training

Guideline:

Give managers, staff and contract employees access to programs that will upgrade their ability to communicate with and manage clients in sensitive natural and cultural settings.

Objectives:

Offer meaningful opportunities for staff and contract employees to work within a sustainable economy.

Techniques:

Establish clear guidelines for staff regarding opportunities and company support available for training via internal training programs (natural and cultural history) and via training programs available locally (language skills and first aid, accounting, mechanics).

Establish an operators consortium for training. Establish a relationship with a local educational facility and work to integrate needed training components into the curriculum. Work with non-governmental organizations to establish an ecotourism training program.

Visitor Benefits:

Opportunity to contribute to a local sustainable economy that offers local people opportunities to be employed in increasingly responsible positions.

Management Programs -- Conservation Contribution Programs

Guideline:

Be a contributor to the conservation of the regions being visited.

Objectives:

Put tourism-generated revenues into the hands of local environmental organizations and protected area management agencies for conservation initiatives.

Ensure that tourism revenues cover the costs for the management of tourism on wild lands and protected areas.

Help parks and protected areas generate revenue, thereby providing economic impetus to a conservation agenda on the national level in destination countries.

Techniques:

Provide corporate contributions to local non-profit conservation initiatives and protected areas through direct corporate donations, partnerships, technical assistance, education programs, publicity, facilitation, direct staff involvement, and becoming involved in joint initiatives.*

Facilitate visitor contributions to local conservation initiatives during the trip by: providing literature on projects in the regions being visited and guidelines for in-kind contributions; arranging briefings and visits to local projects with project staff; or offering opportunities for visitors to volunteer.

Facilitate visitor contributions to local conservation initiatives after the trip by: sending follow-up mailings to clients with local nonprofit membership literature, brief descriptions of projects that need assistance, upcoming opportunities to do volunteer services, or opportunities to work at home by being an ambassador or fund raiser or organizer for local projects.*

Encourage writing to government and corporate organizations whose policies are damaging to the environment or local cultures in the areas visited by providing addresses and contact names.

*This may not apply to non-profit organizations running tours

Visitor Benefits:

A better understanding of how tourism can be a net contributor to the conservation of cultures and environment visited.

A chance to be a part of the effort to conserve a beloved place on a long-term basis and preserve biological diversity and cultural heritage worldwide.

Management Programs -- Local Employment & Jobs Programs

Provide competitive, local employment in all aspects of business operations.

Make ecotourism beneficial to local communities.

Provide local people access to jobs that are not destructive to the environment.

Provide local people with a full range of opportunities beyond the service employment sector.

Techniques:

Hire locally owned businesses including transport (vehicle and boat rental services), accommodations (hotels, lodges, camps), and restaurants.

Buy local supplies from food and craft vendors and avoid all products made from endangered or threatened species.

Hire local office and field staff. Pay competitive wages, above minimum wage for the region, and offer acceptable benefits.

Contribute to community enterprises and development efforts that support a wide variety of local residents, with special sensitivity to indigenous groups.

Visitor Benefits:

Opportunity to contribute to a sustainable market economy, i.e. to provide job opportunities that are not destructive to the environment.

Awareness that the choices visitors make affects the lives and livelihoods of others.

Local Accommodations Checklist

Offer site-sensitive accommodations that do not waste local resources or destroy the environment and that provide ample opportunity for learning about the environment and sensitive interchange with local communities.

Ensure all aspects of the visitor's experience are in harmony with the natural and cultural environment.

Review the following checklist of considerations when booking new accommodations:

Select accommodations that are in compliance with environmental regulations.

Review facility's level of destruction to natural surroundings.

Consider facility's efforts to maintain a scale in keeping with the local environment and to reflect national or local cultural design motifs in architecture and interior design.

Review facility's use of energy saving devices and renewable energy resources.

Review facility's treatment of solid and organic waste. Ensure that solid waste is safely disposed of and that recycling programs are in place where

possible. Ensure that all waste products are treated to prevent effects on natural resources.

Determine if restaurant is composting and using other techniques to reduce waste such as avoiding paper products and styrofoam.

Determine if facility is offering meaningful opportunities for locals.

Check into training programs offered by lodge.

Review opportunities for locals to have sensitive cultural interchange, on their own terms, with visitors.

Look for locally produced craft and food items available for sale on the premises or used in facility restaurants, and ensure that all products from threatened natural resources are avoided.

Check for the interpretive/educational materials inside the facility that are available to guests. Look for field guides, videos, books, pamphlets, and checklists of species found locally.

Check for availability of interpretive services outside, such as self-guided trails and guide services.

Check for the facility's sensitivity to interpretive opportunities; i.e. how well the facility has interpreted its own land's natural features and natural resources, or the local cultural backgrounds and perspectives of its own staff, for visitors.

Ask if owners contribute to conservation or community development efforts with financial, technical or logistical support.

Avoid sites that bait animals, or that keep exotic species on the property that were trapped in the wild, especially threatened or endangered species.

Visitor Benefits:

An appreciation of the possibilities for sustainable living.

Greater sensitivity to the role of the resort in a community, its impact and contribution to locals, and how to select resorts that are environmentally and socially sensitive.

Better opportunities for sensitive cultural interchange and enlightening field trips accompanied by staff or representatives of local communities.

WWF Sweden's 10 Principles on Ecotourism

1. *Ecotourism should promote sustainability in relation to ecological and social factors.* Ecotourism should work for the protection of nature and culture. Level of activity must be determined by the carrying capacity of the natural and social environment.
2. *Tour operators should employ an environment officer and develop an environmental strategy for their company.*
3. *Tour operators should demand a certain environmental standard from their collaborates.*
4. *Tour operators and tourists should choose environmentally friendly hotels.* One should only use environmentally conscious hotels and should use local hotels.
5. *Well-educated guides are all-important.* Ecotourism builds on providing knowledge, and therefore can not be undertaken without educated guides.
6. *Ecotourism should benefit the local economy.* Tourists should buy local goods and souvenirs, stay at local hotels, eat local goods, etc.
7. *Society should influence tour operators to respect the environment upon which they depend – both the natural and the social environment.* One should respect local culture and traditions and follow their codes of conduct.
8. *Don't buy their lives.* Tour operators should encourage tourists not to buy endangered species, either flora or fauna.
9. *Ecotourism demands good information to travellers beforehand.* The concept of ecotourism entails informing and preparing travellers about the place he/she is about to visit. Travellers should also be informed about the company's environmental strategy, which should be used effectively in marketing the company.
10. *Ecotourism should lead to nature conservation and local economic growth.* Tour operators should show how they contribute to this achievement, either by supporting local schools, national or international NGO's etc.

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