

Tourism, Tourism Everywhere

How many of us ask key questions before booking a holiday?

Introduction:

Green issues are everywhere and the 'hot' topic at the moment, and an issue which is of considerable public interest. The public in the UK do have a growing awareness for the need to re-cycling, saving fuel, checking out their carbon foot print, etc. But what about the impacts on the places that we travel to? The latest static's for the UK reveal that we are all taking overseas holidays at constantly increasing numbers. The aviation industry has recently been topical in the greenhouse gas emissions debate and the environmental issues that surround increased aircraft use.

I personally feel that the time is right for an educational documentary film, series for TV, examining the facts and impacts of foreign travel is long overdue. It would important that the film would contain interviews with tourists and local people alike. Traditionally travel programmes have been a source to promote and idealise travel to the public, touching on only the 'clean' side of travel.

Below is a brief introduction as an illustration as to why the public should become sensitively aware of the impacts of their holidays and other trips to foreign destinations. The impacts could also have huge economic benefits to the areas that they visit, if the public was better informed of the impacts of their travel.

Overview:

In the developed world we nearly all fly at sometime in our lives to experience the cultures, wildlife, sun, sea, adventure sports and what ever else takes our fancy. Often to idyllic hedonistic places, that offers us escapism from the reality of our lives. How often do we stop to consider the reality of the lives of the hosts and the environmental pressures we impose upon the places that we visit? What impact is our travelling to such places having on the people and environment that we travel too? And how could we make things better at our destinations?

A basic introduction and guide explaining sustainable:

- q Cultural, human rights and economic impacts.
- q Environmental Impacts

There are many examples in the World of people and animals being exploited by the tourism industry. Low wages given to locals by hotel chains have been of concern as well as unclean beaches as lack of protection to sensitive areas.

The Earth Summit briefing paper (August 2002), states that sustainable tourism should operate with the natural capacities of for the regeneration and future productivity of natural resources. That the contribution of customs and lifestyles, make to the tourism experience, that people must have an equitable share in the economic benefit of tourism and that they are guided by the wishes of local people and communities in the host area.

The environmental impacts of tourism also focus on water supply, waste management, over development, theft of land to build hotels and exploitation of hotel workers.

The economic benefits to highly tourist dependent places that we fly to is debateable as much of the money spent does not stay in the destination unless spent with local people.

Aviation Industry

More people than ever living in the UK have the time and resources to travel abroad. This is good news for the many developing economies that rely on the tourism industry, particularly those located in the Caribbean and Africa. Many governments of these regions, particularly South Africa and beyond see tourism as the most important industry to both bring in vital tourist dollars and provide rural employment.

Over the last 12 months 69.5 million people have travelled from the UK to overseas and spent £34,411 million during 2006 doing so. Two thirds of this travel was for holidays and the figures show that travel has increased by 35% during the period of 1993 to 2002.

However, we are very aware that currently aviation travel is under the spot light, being targeted by environmental groups for the increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Why is this important?

In the UK over all greenhouse gasses went down during the years 1990-2003 (currently most up-to-date figures) by 11.90% from 218.6 million tonnes of CO₂ in 1990 to 192.6 million tonnes in 2003. However, greenhouse gasses from transport were 48% higher in 2003 than 1990, responsible for 95.7 million tonnes of CO₂ during 2003. The latest figures tell us that the aviation industry increased its output of CO₂ by 9.9% between 2004 and 2005. This means that since 1990 emissions from aviation have doubled. In fact aviation is responsible for 87% of the total increase of CO₂ in the transport and communications sector of the economy. (Environmental Accounts *National Statistics*, 12 July 2007).

Conclusion:

Undoubtedly tourism is a huge and great industry. Travel educates, broadens and mind and distributes billion of dollars around the world. With more people

than ever having the means to travel is it not time for a TV show that considered the impacts of our trips and how we can best service the communities that we visit?

Visitors would find it interesting if hotel resorts gave informed information in the rooms about the limited natural resources in the locality, a little information about the wildlife and to treat it with respect. Examples of what they are doing to put some of their profit back into the local community in which we are visiting would all make good PR.

If the travelling public were made aware of the issues and impacts of travelling they may be prompted to ask tour operators key questions before they book and travel. Some tour operators and hotel chains have started to look inward and to clean up their act, but they are still far and few between.

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