

Definition:

Responsible travel to natural areas where active steps are taken to conserve the environment and improve the well-being of local people. Ecotourism can be found in many different parts of the world.

The Key Ecotourism Principles:

Ensure the visit enhances the lives of the local people

Ecotourism should place the hosts of tourism at the centre of its design. Local people should not only be consulted on how and where tourism venues are located, but included in key decisions about how they are run. Money from tourism projects should be returned into the communities who are hosting tourists rather than to a multinational tour group and local people can then also decide how it is spent. Infrastructure projects that are built to serve and encourage tourism, such as new roads or electricity and water supply lines, should also be built in such a way that it benefits local communities at the same time.



Reduce the negative impact the visit has on the local environment



Ecotourism often involves visits to remote and environmentally sensitive natural areas such as forests, dunes or glacial areas. Visitors undertaking this type of tourism should try to make sure that this natural environment is left as they found it (or in an enhanced state) when they leave. Adhering to rules regarding litter and wildlife disturbance is a good starting point but this may also include making sure that their personal use of resources (such as water) is sustainable. Venues that host ecotourism activities, such as hotels and restaurants, should think about their use of energy, and where their energy comes from, as well as how they minimise waste.

Engage in activities that respect local cultures

Many tourists visit a location in order to learn about a local culture and in ecotourism this can include getting to know and sharing ideas with local people. Ecotourists tend to visit a place with an open mind to different food, fashion, music, religions and values, and behave in such a way that embraces these differences and tries to learn from them. The people with the greatest knowledge about a tourist destination are the people who actually live there and ecotourism ventures should use local people's experience and expertise where possible to promote their local culture.



Examples of Ecotourism:

- Keeping to small group sizes
- Using local people as guides
- Checking that profits from tourists go towards local projects
- Having limits or restrictions on the times when people can visit a place
- Undertaking lectures and educational classes on the locality
- Eating locally produced and prepared food
- Wearing clothing appropriate for the cultural norms of the locality
- Buying locally made souvenirs
- Reducing one's usage of heavy or polluting vehicles
- Taking all rubbish away from sensitive sites
- Learning key phrases in a local language or dialect

