

# LESSON 1

# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



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## Definition:

“ Environmentally responsible travel and visitation to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features, both past and present) in a way that promotes conservation, has a low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local people”  
(World Conservation Union,1996)

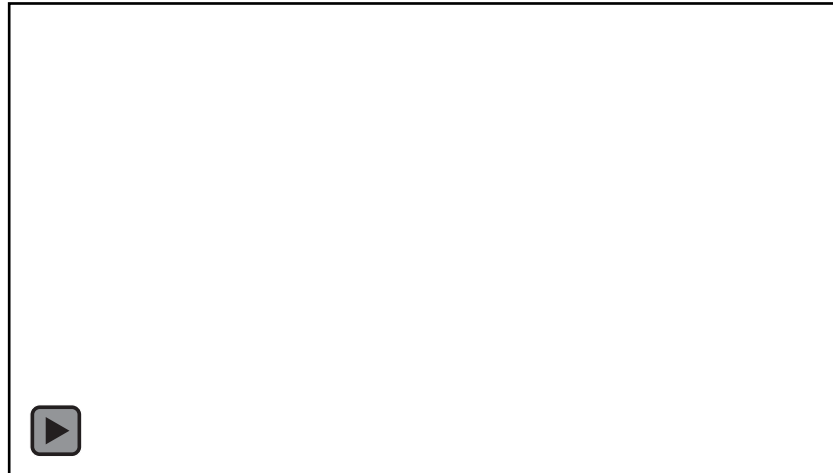


Tourism has become an important economic activity in and around protected areas around the world. Well-planned sustainable tourism programs provide opportunities for the visitor to experience natural areas and human communities, and learn about the importance of conservation and local culture.



Sustainable tourism is particularly promising as a key mechanism for local communities to benefit from the environmental and biodiversity resources.

Sustainable tourism is deliberately planned from the beginning to benefit local residents, respect local culture, conserve natural resources, and educate both tourists and local residents.



Sustainable tourism deliberately seeks to minimize the negative impacts of tourism, while contributing to conservation and the well-being of the community, both economically and socially.



## CONVENTIONAL TOURISM

1. Has one goal: profit
2. Often not planned in advance; “it just happens”
3. Tourist oriented
4. Controlled by outside parties
5. Focus on entertainment for tourists
6. Conservation not a priority
7. Communities not a priority
8. Much revenue goes to outside operators & investors

- SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
- 1. Planned with three goals: profit, environment, and community (triple bottom line)
- 2. Usually planned in advance with involvement of all stakeholders
- 3. Locally oriented
- 4. Locally controlled, at least in part
- 5. Focus on educational experiences
- 6. Conservation of natural resources a priority
- 7. Appreciation for local culture a priority
- 8. More revenue stays with local community

# The triple bottom line of sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism has three key components, sometimes referred to as the “triple bottom line”: (International Ecotourism Society, 2004):

**1. Environmentally,** sustainable tourism has a low impact on natural resources, particularly in protected areas. It minimizes damage to the environment (flora, fauna, habitats, water, living marine resources, energy use, contamination, etc.) and ideally tries to benefit the environment.



**2. Socially and culturally,** it does not harm the social structure or culture of the community where it is located. Instead, it respects local cultures and traditions. It involves stakeholders (individuals, communities, tour operators, government institutions) in all phases of planning, development, and monitoring, and educates stakeholders about their roles.



**3. Economically,** it contributes to the economic well being of the community, generating sustainable and equitable income for local communities and as many other stakeholders as possible. It benefits owners, employees and neighbors. It does not simply begin and then rapidly die because of poor business practices.



A tourism enterprise that meets these three principles will “do well by doing good”. This means running a tourism business in such a way that it doesn’t destroy natural, cultural, or economic resources, but rather encourages an appreciation of the very resources that tourism is dependent on. A business that is run on these three principles can enhance conservation of natural resources, bring appreciation to cultural values, bring revenue into the community, and be profitable.



## Case study: Unplanned conventional tourism in Cancun, Mexico

Prior to its development as a tourist resort in the 1970s, only 12 families lived on the barrier island of Cancun. The entire area that now comprises the state of Quintana Roo was made up of relatively untouched rain forests and pristine beaches and was inhabited by an indigenous Maya population of about 45,000. Today, Cancun has more than 2.6 million visitors a year and has more than 20,000 hotel rooms, with a permanent population of more than 300,000.





Environmental and social impacts were given secondary importance in the development plan for Cancun. For instance, no provisions were made to house low-income migrants who now work and live in the area. As a result, a shantytown developed, in which the sewage of 75 percent of the population is untreated. The mangrove and inland forests were cut down, swamps and lagoons were filled, and dunes were removed. Many bird, marine, and other animal species vanished. (Sweeting et al. 1999)



Exercise: What attributes of sustainable tourism are important to the nation?