

Ecotourism

1 Read about ecotourism and match each paragraph with a heading.

—A definition of ecotourism— Benefits and Downsides Organisations involved
The principles of ecotourism The future of ecotourism The history of ecotourism

1 A definition of ecotourism

Any form of tourism – adventure, sports, recreational, cultural or educational – can be based on the principles of sustainable tourism, because it contributes to and doesn't harm the environment it's in. However, ecotourism is a separate branch of tourism altogether, widely defined as: 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people'.*

2

What most ecotourism holidays have in common is their ecological sustainability, their support for local communities, conservation of the environment and of natural resources, their sensitivity towards cultural diversity, and their educational focus.

3

Ecotourism was developed to meet the needs of the increasing number of nature tourists who were also concerned about the environment. There was an early example of ecotourism in Kenya, East Africa in the 1970s, where people began paying to visit safari parks and the money was used for wildlife conservation. Other successful examples are the nature lodges in the rainforests of Costa Rica and Belize, and recent expeditions to Antarctica.

* The International Ecotourism Society, 1990.

4

The greatest danger with ecotourism lies in its popularity. The high number of people means there is a constant need for accommodation, transportation and natural resources, all of which can damage the environment and natural habitats.

On the other hand, Ecotourism also enables us to sustain and support communities and their economies by creating jobs and investing in conservation, development and education projects.

5

Today many international non-profit organisations are involved in researching and promoting ecotourism. Some of the best known include the World Tourism Organisation, the World Travel and Tourism Council, Tourism Concern and the World Wildlife Fund. Yet ecotourism has become so profitable that there are also many commercial organisations now focusing on this niche market.

6

Ecotourism is currently the fastest growing market in the tourism industry, but is it too little too late? Have we already destroyed too much of the planet with our environmentally unfriendly mass tourism? In the future will we have to limit the numbers of visitors and increase the cost of travel in order to preserve certain destinations?

2 Read the text again and try to write a definition for these expressions.

habitat ecotourism niche market environmentally
unfriendly wildlife conservation non-profit organizations

3 Read the text again and decide if these sentences are true (T) or false (F). Correct the false statements.

- 1 Any form of tourism can be sustainable but that doesn't make it ecotourism. T
- 2 Ecotourism usually has an educational focus.
- 3 The earliest form of ecotourism was in Belize.
- 4 The popularity of ecotourism can be a problem.
- 5 Ecotourism doesn't create jobs.
- 6 It is possible to make a lot of money from ecotourism.
- 7 Ecotourism is not a fast growing market in the tourism industry.

