

Conscious Tourism

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Traveling is a way to see the world, experience different cultures and learn about yourself. However, traveling has major effects on our vacation destinations. As visitors, it is our responsibility to be aware that tourism has both positive and negative impacts on local communities and environments, and it is important to know how to treat them with respect.

Some of the positive effects of tourism include job creation and increased revenue coming into local areas. Tourists' dollars can be used to protect natural landscapes and aid impoverished areas. Shopping at local markets or smaller restaurants and paying park entrance fees ensures that money goes directly to local businesses instead of larger corporations. Respectfully taking part in traditional customs, like Flamenco dancing or cooking classes to learn how to make local dishes, helps keep traditions alive and build a better cultural understanding.

Unfortunately, tourism can also cause various problems for local communities. Tourism-related jobs are often seasonal and poorly-paid, and much of the money goes to large travel or resort companies. A large influx of tourists damages the natural environment with litter, footpath erosion or habitat destroyed for lodging. Tourism can also drive out locals due to overcrowding or a higher cost of living from the money visitors bring in. In some parts of the world, animal tourism is problematic as well, with animals being drugged or taken from the wild for tourists' amusement.

To help combat some of these effects, do your research before traveling. For example, if you plan on spending a lot of time outdoors, check how you can minimize environmental damage, such as not using certain bug sprays or sunscreens in protected areas. Or if you're going to a country with elephants, find an elephant sanctuary that does not offer riding. The best experiences come from keeping an open mind and being respectful of local people and their cultures and traditions.