**IB Geography – Ecotourism**

**Possible Ecotourism Destinations**

* Rainforests (Amazon)
* Antarctica
* Coral Reefs (Australia and Belize)
* Deserts (Sahara and Atacama)
* Savanna (areas of grassland - common location to do safari in Africa)
* Mountain ranges (Himalayas and Andes)
* Remote islands (Galapagos Islands)

Some countries like Belize and Costa Rica market themselves as ecotourist destinations

**Possible Ecotourism Activities**

* Bird watching
* Walking
* Cycling
* Rafting and kayaking
* Safari (looking for animals)
* Restoring water ways
* Flora and fauna surveys (counting and cataloging species)
* Cleaning beaches and reefs
* Hot air ballooning
* Horse riding
* Surfing
* Tree planting
* Swimming and diving

People often get sustainable tourism and ecotourism confused, but there are some unique differences between the two. You will learn more about sustainable tourism at the end of this unit but some of the main similarities and differences include.

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| **Similarities Between Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism** | **Differences Between Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism** |
| * Both attempt to minimise the impact on the environment
* Both attempt to minimise the impact on local populations. With ecotourism this might include indigenous groups.
* Both aim to create a unique and enjoyable experience for tourists.
* Both aim to educate tourists about responsible travel
* Both hope to be sustainable over the long-term.
 | * Ecotourism is usually on a smaller scale, whereas sustainable tourism can be on a much larger scale
* Sustainable tourism also focuses on the economic needs of areas
* Ecotourism is usually to remote areas of natural beauty, where sustainable tourism can be to any location e.g. cities or beaches
* Ecotourism usually involves physical activity.
* Ecotourism is a type of tourism that is included under the umbrella of sustainable tourism
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How to be Sustainable (Go to sustainable tourism section for more information: [Sustainable tourism)](http://greenfieldgeography.wikispaces.com/Sustainable%2Btourism)

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| **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY** | **ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY** | **SOCIAL/CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY** |
| * Use renewable energy sources to power tourist facilities
* Promote use of public transport or non-polluting transport methods e.g. cycling, walking and kayaking
* Avoid deforestation or damage to any natural habitat when building tourist facilities
* Recycle all waste (plastic, paper, glass, metal)
* Minimise waste e.g. packaging for hotel toiletries
* Conserve water (half flush toilets, showers, reduction in washing by reusing towels).
* Educate about importance of biodiversity, energy reduction, conservation, etc.
 | * Employ local workers and provide them with training programmes.
* Only buy local products so to support local economy.
* Reinvest all tourist company profits in the local economy to minimise economic leakage.
* Use local guides and companies
 | * Ensure that all tourist facilities are able to be accessed by locals and that they are affordable.
* Promote local food, dance, music, costumes, language, etc.
* Educate about local history and culture
* Preserve historical and archeological sites (ruins, churches, castles, etc.)
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## Carrying Capacity

The idea of carrying capacity does come in for some criticism. The main argument is that facilities and technology change and all tourists behave differently. For example 10 cyclists, cycling and camping in a forested area are going to have a very different impact compared to 10 hunters travelling through a forest in 4 x 4 vehicles. Also an areas carrying capacity may increase with the building of a new resort, the development of renewable energy or the opening of a desalination plant. Despite its criticisms it can be useful for explaining the possible impacts from tourism. Carrying capacity is often divided into

**Ecological/Environmental/Biological/Biophysical:** This deals with the extent to which the natural environment is able to tolerate interference from tourists. This is made more complicated by the fact that because it deals with ecology which is able to regenerate to some extent so in this case the carrying capacity is when the damage exceeds the habitats ability to regenerate.

**Economic:** This relates to a level of unacceptable change within the local economy of a tourist destination. It is the extent to which a tourist destination is able to accommodate tourist functions without the loss of local activates e.g. a souvenir store taking the place of a shop selling essential items to the local community. This might also involve a cost-benefit analysis of income generated versus added costs from inflation.

**Perceptual or Social:** This relates to the negative socio-cultural affects related to tourism development. Perceptual and social carrying capacity may have been reached when the local tolerance for tourism decreases or tourists enjoyment is reduced.

**Physical:** This is the maximum number of people that an area is actually able to support/hold. In the case of an individual tourist attraction it is the maximum number that can fit on the site at any given time and still allow people to be able to move. For a tourist destination this might mean also mean the total number of rooms available or incoming flights e.g. Easter Island only has five flights a week and there is no other way of getting there.

Problems if a destination exceeds its carrying capacity include:

* Inflation
* Tensions between locals and tourists
* Deforestation
* Congestion
* Water pollution from increased waste
* Water shortages from increased demand
* Air pollution from increased cars and flights
* Footpath erosion
* Damage to archaeological sites
* Power black-outs
* Visual and noise pollution
* Disturbance of wildlife
* Reduction in visitor numbers

IB Case Study of Ecotourism – My Choice \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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