
Taking Responsibility for Tourism

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Harold Goodwin

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Part 1

Why Responsible Tourism?

*Ah but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?*

Robert Browning

Tourism is inherently neither good nor bad – though the word ‘tourist’ has a pejorative edge to it and most of us would rather see ourselves as travellers or visitors.¹ Tourism is used to describe both the human activity, the experience, and the services which facilitate it. And tourism is what we make of it – individually and collectively, as businesses and as tourists. In buying a tourism experience, whether as a package or constructing it ourselves, we purchase accommodation, transport and activities which allow us to experience another place. Then there are the consumer goods: accommodation, food and beverage, entertainment, souvenirs, entrance fees, guiding and a wide range of other goods and services. Responsible Tourism is one response to the challenge of sustainability for a particular area of consumption; it is about taking responsibility for making the consumption and production of tourism more sustainable.

Responsible Tourism is in principle inherently optimistic: at its heart, the imperative to make tourism better. This is not about a niche. All forms of tourism can be better and more responsible if we, individually and collectively, take responsibility. The converse of Responsible Tourism is irresponsible tourism. Most of us do not wish to be, or be thought of as being, irresponsible. Some will counter that to advocate Responsible Tourism is to be a killjoy, a naysayer, that urging people to behave responsibly when they seek irresponsible self-indulgence is elitist and unlikely to be successful. As we shall see the evidence does not support that generalisation. It is of course, partially true: there is plenty of irresponsibility to work on. There is a substantial critique

1 ‘I am a traveller. You are a visitor. They are tourists.’ Quoted by Adrian Phillips in his foreword to Ceballos-Lascurain (1996): xi

Chapter extract

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