

# Part II

## Responsible Tourism in Practice

Tourism has positive and negative impacts. With scant attention on the ground often accorded to the negative impacts, and a great deal of emphasis on the positive benefit, too little thought is given to the net benefit, and who captures it. Tourism cannot be isolated from other economic sectors, and the tourism sector is only part of the economic and social activity occurring in a particular local environment. It is a central tenet of Responsible Tourism that sustainability is a local challenge: it is a challenge nearly everywhere but the solutions are local. Responsible Tourism is about engaging with the particular issues that arise in particular places as a consequence of tourism. If sustainability is about balancing the needs of environment, communities, visitors and the tourism sector, the optimal balance will be determined in destinations by the people who live there. That said, it is important to learn from experience elsewhere.

The second part of this book follows a traditional triple bottom line approach. Although in recent years greater emphasis has been placed on the green aspects of the sustainable tourism agenda, the Responsible Tourism agenda remains relentlessly three-pronged, recognising that the 1992 Rio settlement with its focus on environment and development is critical to achieving sustainability. The objective is sustainable development: developed countries and their populations cannot expect others to continue to live in poverty so that we can enjoy our existing and rising standard of living. Evangelical environmentalists, of all faiths and of none, rely on converting people to an eco-centric value system, one which is nature-centred rather than human-centred (or anthropocentric). This radical approach requires a shift in values and ethics on a broad scale, one which would accept, as a basis for action, that humans possess no greater intrinsic value than non-human nature. Our species is a very long way from accepting that ontological principle. It is just conceivable that the ethical basis upon which we live our lives may change and that developed country populations will accept a dramatic change in their material standard of living – but it does not appear likely.

So we must do our utmost to preserve our standard of living while helping others achieve a similar one – hence the attraction of the Rio solution: sustainable development.

The social, economic and environmental impacts of tourism are experienced in destinations. The major exception to this generalisation is the impact of the journey between home and destination and, in particular, the greenhouse gases emitted through the burning of fossil fuels. Having looked at the case for Responsible Tourism, the business cases for taking responsibility, and Responsible Tourism management in destinations, we turn now to look at some of the particular sustainability issues and at how responsibility has been exercised in particular places.

Responsible Tourism is about social, economic and environmental sustainability. Sustainability cannot be reduced to the green agenda.

In the three chapters which follow, we follow the triple bottom line approach. The focus in Chapter 4 is on social issues which arise in destinations as a consequence of tourism, although there are other issues which affect our decisions about where to travel, in particular issues of human rights in Burma and a host of other countries. Chapter 5 looks at economic issues, and Chapter 6 at environmental sustainability. Each chapter looks first at the range of issues which arise in destinations, and then gives examples of how responsibility has been taken for particular issues in particular places.

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# 4

## Social Responsibility

*Your everyday life is their adventure<sup>1</sup>*

We take our holidays, and our business trips, in other peoples' places, in their homes. Experiencing another culture or society, however shallowly, is a significant part of the travel experience internationally and domestically. We seek that experience of other people's societies, their music, food, arts and crafts, their dress, customs, habits, attitudes and ways of life. While in theory we know that the societies we visit are probably as diverse and divided as our own, we easily forget that complexity. If for example we travel to Kerala, we glimpse something of daily life in Kerala – agriculture, religion, the public markets – but we also encounter Indians on holiday there, and other foreigners, visitors and workers, all discovering Kerala differently. People from many different societies and cultures are sharing a place: some born and brought up there, some who have migrated to live there, others who have chosen to visit as tourists or day-visitors. Their views on the place, and on the impact of tourism are formed by their experiences, some there, some carried pre-packaged from home or another place. It is in destinations that the diversity of local and outsider perspectives come into conflict about the impacts of tourism and what might be done to manage it.<sup>2</sup> Between the impact and the potential intervention to manage that impact are three fundamentally political questions. Is there agreement that the impact is an issue? Is there agreement about the cause? And, can agreement be reached, and responsibility accepted, to make a difference, reducing negative impacts and growing positive ones? Two further questions arise from the third: whose responsibility is it to make the change? Will they shoulder their responsibility?

Responsible Tourism addresses the established anthropocentric values and attitudes which are rather more widely held. It is difficult enough to secure changes in behaviour which benefit ourselves and other human beings; it is much more difficult to convert people to sacrificing their own wellbeing for the greater good of biodiversity and nature – which requires more than

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1 Swedish NGO flyposting around the Slovenian National Assembly in 1998

2 For a discussion of the cultural basis of perspectives on sustainability see Robinson (1999)

in the 'Third World' are sometimes the result...'<sup>61</sup>.

Yet the interplay of these forces, while potentially destructive, is more complex than this statement suggests, and to be specific to each local manifestation. Wall and Mathieson argue that carving did not play a significant part in the life of the Canadian Inuit until demand from tourists resulted in an 'upsurge in Inuit carving' and the development of art prints.<sup>62</sup> Yet, looking at a similar phenomenon from a different point of view, Ryan and Crofts report that tourist demand for Maori art has resulted in a regeneration of their traditions: its commodification has provided resources to maintain the culture, and the Maori have maintained a relatively high degree of control. Aboriginal art from Australia has prospered in part because of tourism, which has contributed to its international success.<sup>63</sup> This contrasts with Bali, where work by Francillon revealed an increasing tendency for religious symbols and rituals to be used for tourism and trivialised. Here outbound and inbound tour operators, guides, hotels and tourism offices can take responsibility by encouraging tourists to buy from local artists and crafts people and encouraging visitors to engage with local cultural life while avoiding the tourist traps. Tourism can be used to re-instil pride in their cultures amongst the youth of First Peoples by demonstrating that their culture is valued by others and that it can provide livelihoods.

Cultural Studies has increased academe's understanding of the complexity of 'travelling cultures'<sup>64</sup> and there is an increasing awareness of cultural diffusion and hybridity.<sup>65</sup> People, cultures and objects migrate. Tourism is only a part of many cultural encounters. The notions of home and abroad, of ours and theirs, have become, or have come to be recognised, as over-simplistic: '[T]ourist cultures are a complex of relationships that occur with, through, and in space – both real and imagined.'<sup>66</sup> Baudelaire's concept of the *flâneur*,<sup>67</sup> someone who wanders to experience other places as an immersed outsider, becomes increasingly relevant. As experiential travel becomes more common the 'framework is ... expanded from one concerned with disassociated 'gaze'

61 Bruner (2001): 881

62 Wall and Mathieson (2006): 275

63 See for example <http://aboriginalart.com.au> and Myers 2002

64 Said (1983) and Clifford (1992)

65 See for example Rojek and Urry (1997): 4

66 Wearing, Stevenson and Young (2010): 2

67 "The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense job to set up house in the middle of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite', Baudelaire (1986): 9