

Coral Reefs in Grave Danger



Underwater tourism is of special importance for some countries. Australia, the Pacific islands or the Caribbean are currently facing a serious problem. According to scientists at the biannual meeting of the multinational Coral Reef Task Force, record amounts of coral have died off in these areas from pollution, overfishing and rising sea temperatures since the late 1990s.

The environmental issue has never been more important for these economies. The health of the coral reefs guarantees the preservation of attractive local habitat. The paradox is that the underwater life attracts millions of divers and fishermen, but it is them who represent the gravest danger to the coral reefs. If not well protected, the coral reefs would simply stop reproducing and die. According to the Australian government, nearly 500 million people depend on coral reefs for tourism income and coastal protection.

Some countries have already started dealing with this problem. Australian officials have banned fishing along a third of the Great Barrier Reef, thereby losing about \$3.9 billion. Although this is obviously detrimental to the immediate fishing industry, it has prevented further increases in sea temperature, the principal cause of coral death.

According to the Future of World Travel report, by 2020 the natural features of some of the wonders of the world will be damaged by global warming. For example, tourists visiting the Mediterranean, currently a very popular destination, could be exposed to temperatures reaching far beyond 40°C.

Experts encourage officials in such locations to try cutting down the number of incoming tourists by raising of entry costs and charging additional taxes. One day, places may only be accessible by winning a holiday lottery.

Date: 2006-11-08

Article link: <http://www.tourism-review.com/coral-reefs-in-grave-danger-news39>