

# HOW TO DEAL WITH THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON THE ENVIRONMENT



Growing tourism often means more wastes and more pollution. With the influx of people, a country will have to cater for their needs, and as more people go on vacation, the more the tourism industry's carbon footprint seems to increase. Unfortunately not all governments seem to understand the importance of doing something to reduce this negative environmental impact.

There is no denying that lately there have been significant changes in the travel industry. Due to increased mobility, traditional travel patterns had to change. Many tourism experts who gathered at a recent global transportation summit in Leipzig concluded that to combat climate change it has become crucial to change the very nature of travel.

Moreover, according to The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), it is estimated that the number of tourists is going to increase practically twice as much by 2030. **In 2013 there were just over 1 billion tourists travelling over the world, but by 2030 this figure is estimated to go up to some 1.8 billion.**

There is no denying that the money that these tourists spend is crucial for the world economy. According to statistics it accounts to about 9% of the GDP. Another interesting statistic is that about 5% of exported goods around the world are tourism-related. Thus the importance of tourism from an economic perspective is really critical.

However, having tourists around the world also means that there is an impact on the environment. But, this impact can be rendered less harmful if some changes are put in place.

According to the OECD, the number of tourists is set to increase steadily at about 3% per year. This increase will result in a 5% increase in global greenhouse emissions. This can be further broken down as follows: 40% from air travel, 32% from automobiles and 21% from tourists' accommodations.

At face value sustainable tourism may seem like an impossible dream, especially when seeing these figures. Besides, transportation is ultimately an intrinsic part of tourism. However, there are some changes that can be made so as to improve the environmental impact.

For starters, we would need to change the very way tourists travel. According to experts, governments need to come up with viable alternatives to conventional methods of travel, which could have a less negative impact on the environment. For instance, better railways and reliable public transportation are important measures.

Unfortunately, as noted by many speakers at the forum, the majority of the governments are not taking this seriously at all. They are not shouldering the responsibility of trying to come up with environmentally friendly solutions for the tourism industry.

According to Dirk Glaesser, a risk and crisis management coordinator at the World Tourism Organization, **the portfolios of tourism and transportation are being divided, rather than worked on simultaneously.** Thus, activists need to work harder to get this message across to the governments and policy makers.

There is going to be a UN summit in Paris next December, and world leaders will be discussing ways and means to make these changes. They are going to try to come up with concrete policies and solutions.

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