

THE DARK SIDE OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY



It is obvious that tourism is hurting environment and culture. Traveling causes pollution and contributes to global warming and there are also other negative impacts that may not be that obvious at first sight. Let us look at some facts first.

Travel and tourism is definitely one of the world's biggest industries. It creates a significant part of the global GDP (estimates speak about 10%). Some 694 million international arrivals were registered in 2003 worldwide and the number is expected to double by 2020. The tourism industry is also one of the biggest employers as it employs more than 250 million people. Tourism is vital for some developing countries as 65% of all the people employed in the industry are from those countries.

The developing countries are, nevertheless, those most endangered by the industry. Tourism industry market is flooded by supranational organizations. International hotel chains and tour operators therefore operate at the expense of local enterprises, which can not compete with the big players. This development goes so far that the big corporations are in fact selling everything from the airline ticket to "local art" in the souvenir shop. It is estimated that currently up to 50 per cent of revenues from tourism leave the country through foreign-owned businesses, imported goods, and promotional spending. The money that stays in the country goes to the richest strata of society - to the hotel owners and alike. A paradox is that the increase in tourism can be really bad for the poor. The influx of tourists may cause inflation which makes poor people even poorer. What more, a fisherman that becomes a cook in a hotel restaurant can not become a fisherman again that easily. However, it is the nature of the tourism industry that it is very volatile. Any change in political situation or e.g. in the exchange rate can ruin the whole industry

The best solution to these problems would be not to travel at all. That is, however, not possible and therefore it is necessary to cause as little damage as possible while traveling.

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