

HA LONG BAY THREATENED BY MASS TOURISM



The Famous UNESCO site and one of the new Seven Wonders of Nature already feels environmental effects of mass tourism.

Vietnam's Ha Long Bay, which is located 400 kilometers east of Hanoi, is one of the most visited places in the world. In fact, an estimated six million people visit the place each year. It is a beautiful sight indeed.

According to Tran Phu Cuong, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Vietnam, tourism brings a lot of revenue to the country. Vietnam's economy has benefited a lot from Ha Long Bay. It has created a lot of jobs for Vietnamese and it has been supporting many families for years. 10 per cent of Quang Minh's economic success can be attributed to its tourism sector.

A challenge faced by many tourism officials regarding the famous heritage site is balancing the nature and the number of tourists. Any similar environmental tourist spot, just like Ha Long Bay, could eventually go into danger if the number of tourists visiting is not controlled, according to Katherine Muller-Marin from UNESCO Vietnam.

She added, however, that the government has taken preventive measures to avoid the destruction of the area. **The management board of Ha Long Bay has undergone extensive training and has developed a great management plan hand in hand with UNESCO.**

The heritage area is 1500 sq. km. and there are 2,000 lime islands at present. The key strategy is to keep the tourist head count growing while spreading them around the lesser known parts of the bay. If the management will fail to do this, Ha Long Bay might not be a good sight to see anymore.

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