

# ETHICAL TOURISM IS NOT A SOLUTION



Who didn't feel bad after visiting a souvenir shop that turned out to be like a little shop of horrors? Or who didn't feel ashamed after spending a vacation on a beach in the Caribbean where only white people sunbathed? Or who didn't come home from a vacation with a feeling of absurdity? These are the questions asked by Rodolphe Christin, sociologist and author of a book titled "Anti-tourism Manual" criticizing even the ethical tourism. For him, even the tourists with the best intentions contribute in some way to the world-destroying force of tourism.

The tourism industry, Christin argues, is proud to present the world's cultural diversity, but in fact is dedicated to destroy it. The loss of cultural identity, pollution, gentrification, tourism-phobia ... These are many unwanted side effects of the proliferation of tourism. **This trend was born in the 20th century with paid vacations in rich western countries.** In fact, these countries are the source markets of the majority of tourists (Germans, Americans, English, French and Japanese) and they also receive the highest tourist influx (France, Spain and the USA) according to statistics.

The tourist is, according to Christin, an indiscriminate destroyer. Only 3.5% of the world population falls into this category. In theory, tourists travel because they "love the planet," but in doing so, they contribute to its destruction. So for the sociologist, the only way to save the planet is to stop traveling altogether.

For Christin, not even sustainable tourism is a valid option because it also follows an equally mercantilist set of rules, and it represents only a small percentage of the total. Ethical tourism serves, according to Christin, to grow awareness but it won't change the world.

If you are not willing to stop traveling altogether, the author gives some advice to step out of the "tourist" category and become a "traveler", which is less pernicious. According to him, today the search for fun or entertainment is above what the trip always entails: a reality closer to philosophy than consumerism. The trip was always the search for diversity as a means to discover the planet and, in the process, to discover oneself.

The author thus advises to cherish the encounters with people, to plan the trip and look for a real goal of discovery and introspection. He also recommends doing it less often, making longer journeys and traveling more slowly. Why not a 3-day-walk to your destination? An experience that, according to the sociologist, can be life changing.

The journey is already a trip. In this sense, Christin recommends not opting for the quickest solution (such as taking a flight, which is ultimately the most polluting option), but **choosing other slower means of transport, such as trains or bicycles**, which follows the principles of ethical tourism as well.

How to convince others (and yourself) that you need to stop traveling? The solution, for Rodolphe Christin, is for everyone to take charge of their own existence. The fact that people go on vacation indicates, according to him, that they are not comfortable in their daily lives and it is pure escapism. To travel less, you would have to improve your day-to-day life and also be content with those closest to you. We should discover, or rediscover, what is left within our reach. According to Christin, it is paradoxical that the tourist moves to the antipodes to meet the local folk and, on the other hand, doesn't bother to get to know his own neighbor.

Why not ride a bike to work, instead of taking your car, and make the journey more interesting? And why not visit the local monuments?

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