

AMAZONIAN NAZARETH BANS TOURISTS



Not all places welcome tourists as a convenient source of income and local economy boost. A small Amazonian town of Nazareth in Colombia, home to the Ticuna people, banned tourists two years ago and has not looked back.

Trekking in the Amazonian jungle is becoming an increasingly popular pastime especially for ecologically minded tourists. However, **the presence of cameras and eager visitors with endless questions and very often lack of courtesy has led some tribes to think twice before inviting tourists.** The Amazonian town of Nazareth reached a point when travel agencies profited from them and only a very small portion came back to the town.

While tourist presence usually means flourishing business, the Ticuna people felt only a negative impact. Inconsiderate tourists came and eagerly took pictures and recorded every unique aspect of local life without realizing that such curiosity may often border with rudeness. The Ticuna also complained about visitors seeking the ancient tribal secrets and information about their sacred medicines. While travel agencies kept the profits, apart from little income from selling tribal art, the only thing left visibly behind were garbage bags and plastic bottles.

Even though Nazareth is in an area famed for unrivalled biodiversity, the Ticuna decided to ban all tourist traffic and no longer allow visitors in their town. Their tribe is on the brink of extinction and the younger generation is easily influenced by the modern gadgets, speech or even music brought in by the tourists; the old tribal ways seem obsolete to them.

Nazareth is the only town which refuses tourist attention - many of the nearby tribes see the increase in visitor attention as a great opportunity to make money for their community. What the consequences are is too early to tell.

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