

IMPACTS AND ALTERNATIVES OF THE MASS TOURISM



In 2022, 415 million tourists traveled worldwide due to mass tourism, which has both positive and negative impacts on the environment and locals. Some cities attract millions of visitors each year, which can have adverse effects.

Mass tourism: what are the consequences for the environment?

We are mainly discussing pollution and environmental destruction. Activities related to mass tourism are highly polluting. For instance, if you travel by plane, it can emit up to 241 kg of CO₂ per passenger over a 500 km journey; the mode of transportation matters a lot. In comparison, per person and per kilometer, the train pollutes eight times less than a car and fourteen times less than a plane.

Adverse effects on biodiversity

According to a study conducted by the NGO World Animal Protection between 2014 and 2017, the number of selfies taken with animals increased by 292%. The NGO points out that these animals are often tortured or captured solely for the purpose of photography.

It should also be noted that pollution caused by the sector harms ecosystems and, consequently, biodiversity, risking the destruction of their natural habitats with even the slightest disruption.

What are the social and cultural impacts of mass tourism?

Local cultures are not spared by this form of tourism; experts believe it may be the cause of cultural erosion. In this context, some local practices, such as religious, traditional, or ethnic rituals, are disrupted, as well as festivals and customary events.

Local culture is seen as a set of folk practices

Tourist commodification tends to folklorize these practices, which are rich in history and represent so much for local inhabitants. Many travel agencies prioritize low prices over providing an immersive cultural experience. Price competitiveness is their main priority.

Sustainable tourism: what does it consist of?

This concept presents itself as an eco-responsible alternative to mass tourism and aims to fulfill three main objectives:

- The protection of the identity of the World Heritage by encouraging respect for the way of life of local communities.
- The living conditions of local inhabitants can be improved through their participation in economic activities related to tourism.
- The protection of the environment, biodiversity, and natural resources of the various tourist sites is essential.

It should also be noted that sustainable tourism can be divided into several categories:

Ecotourism

This category encourages visitors to explore biodiverse sites while highlighting the importance of conservation.

Staying with locals

Eco-tourists prefer Airbnb-style accommodations to hotels, allowing them to live and share the lives of locals while immersing in the regional culture. Staying in an Airbnb can help save money on lodging costs.

Responsible travel

Tourism should prioritize respect for nature and solidarity between tourists and locals. Equity should be maintained to ensure local residents benefit from the economic benefits of tourism.

Initiatives to limit the impact of mass tourism

Solutions have been implemented to reduce the effects of mass tourism, such as regulating attendance at tourist sites and restricting access to some.

Costa and MSC Cruises have both developed cruise ships powered by natural gas, making them less environmentally damaging than other vessels.

Two examples

There are other examples. Every year, Venice welcomes nearly 50,000 visitors. In response to this influx, the authorities have considered setting up an urban park not far from St. Mark's Square to allow locals to enjoy their walks in peace.

Peru has put measures in place to protect Machu Picchu, like limiting daily visitors to 5,940 and allowing visits throughout the day instead of just in the mornings. This helped to reduce the pressure on the scene.

Tips to reduce the ecological and social impact of a trip

Traveling responsibly and sustainably is within everyone's reach. Experts offer tips to help you do so:

- Choose an ecological or unusual accommodation
- If you have to fly, it is preferable to take direct flights
- On-site, opt for public transportation to get around
- Prefer local cuisine based on local products
- For your travels, instead of using public transport, prefer walking or using green means of transport
- Remember to limit your waste, especially when you go hiking

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