Ecotourism

**Ecotourism** is a form of [tourism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism) involving visiting fragile, pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural areas, intended as a low-impact and often small scale alternative to standard commercial [mass tourism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_tourism). It means responsible travel to natural areas, conserving the environment, and improving the well-being of the local people. Its purpose may be to educate the traveler, to provide funds for [ecological conservation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_conservation), to directly benefit the [economic development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_development) and political empowerment of local communities, or to foster respect for different cultures and for [human rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights). Since the 1980s, ecotourism has been considered a critical endeavor by environmentalists, so that future generations may experience destinations relatively untouched by human intervention. Several university programs use this description as the working definition of ecotourism.

Generally, ecotourism deals with interaction with [biotic components](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biotic_components) of the natural environments. Ecotourism focuses on socially responsible travel, personal growth, and environmental sustainability. Ecotourism typically involves travel to destinations where [flora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flora), [fauna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fauna), and [cultural heritage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_heritage) are the primary attractions. Ecotourism is intended to offer tourists an insight into the impact of human beings on the environment and to foster a greater appreciation of our natural habitats.

Responsible ecotourism programs include those that minimize the negative aspects of conventional tourism on the environment and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Therefore, in addition to evaluating environmental and cultural factors, an integral part of ecotourism is the promotion of [recycling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recycling), [energy efficiency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Energy_conservation), [water conservation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_conservation), and creation of economic opportunities for local communities. For these reasons, ecotourism often appeals to advocates of environmental and social responsibility.

Ecotourism is tourism which is conducted responsibly to conserve the environment and sustain the well-being of local people. It...

* Builds environmental awareness
* Provides direct financial benefits for conservation
* Provides financial benefits and empowerment for local people
* Respects local culture
* Supports human rights and democratic movements such as:
	+ conservation of [biological diversity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biodiversity) and [cultural diversity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_diversity) through [ecosystem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecosystem) protection
	+ promotion of [sustainable use](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability) of biodiversity, by providing jobs to local populations
	+ sharing of all socio-economic benefits with local communities and [indigenous peoples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples) by having their [informed consent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Informed_consent) and participation in the management of ecotourism enterprises
	+ tourism to unspoiled natural resources, with minimal impact on the environment being a primary concern.
	+ minimization of tourism's own environmental impact
	+ affordability and lack of waste in the form of luxury
	+ local culture, flora, and fauna being the main attractions
	+ local people, who benefit from this form of tourism economically, and often more than mass tourism

[The International Ecotourism Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_International_Ecotourism_Society) defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education".

Ecotourism is often misinterpreted as any form of tourism that involves nature. According to critics of this commonplace and assumptive practice, true ecotourism must, above all, sensitize people to the beauty and the fragility of nature.

**Tourism** is [travel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Travel) for pleasure or business; also the theory and practice of touring, the business of attracting, accommodating, and entertaining tourists, and the business of operating tours. Tourism may be international, or within the traveller's country. The [World Tourism Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Tourism_Organization) defines tourism more generally, in terms which go "beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only", as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure and not less than 24 hours, business and other purposes".

**Biotic components** or **biotic factors,** can be described as any living component that affects another [organism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organism), or shapes the [ecosystem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecosystem). This includes both animals that consume other organisms within their ecosystem, and the organism that is being consumed. Biotic factors also include human influence, [pathogens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pathogens), and [disease outbreaks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disease_outbreaks). Each biotic factor needs the proper amount of energy and nutrition to function day to day.

Biotic components are typically sorted into three main categories:

1. [**Producers**](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/producer#Noun), otherwise known as [autotrophs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autotrophs), convert energy (through the process of photosynthesis) into food.
2. [**Consumers**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consumer), otherwise known as [heterotrophs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heterotrophs), depend upon producers (and occasionally other consumers) for food.
3. [**Decomposers**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decomposer), otherwise known as [detritivores](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Detritivores), break down chemicals from producers and consumers (usually antibiotic) into simpler form which can be reused.