



## ECOTOURISM: DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, SIGNS, FORMS

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**Abstract:** This article explains the definition, principles, forms and directions of ecotourism.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, forms of tourism, principles of tourism, soft tourism, green tourism.



### Introduction

Soft (Sanfter Tourismus, German, Soft Tourism, English), mountainous, nature-oriented or natural, as well as virgin-natural (Mountain, Nature or Wilderness Tourism), green, adventure, rural tourism (Green, Adventure, Agro-Tourism), finally, ecological or ecotourism (Ecological or Ecotourism) is a range of epithets that characterize partially different, but in many respects similar forms of tourism that have become widespread throughout the world in recent decades. All these forms of tourism and the terms used to designate them are more or less due to their origin and development to the powerful impact on modern society of the ecological imperative, as well as the concepts of sustainable or, more precisely, Sustainable Development and conservation of biological diversity. Tourists who are committed to eco-friendly forms of travel and recreation can be found everywhere - in Antarctica and Canada, in the USA, in all countries of Western Europe, in Central and South America, in Africa, in Japan and Malaysia, on the islands of Mauritius and Fiji, in Australia (this is the world leader in ecotourism, there is even a special government environmental and Tourism agency with the rank of a ministry). Dozens of symposia and conferences dedicated to ecotourism are held annually. Every year, world congresses are held, bringing together hundreds of participants - travelers and scientists, businessmen, and politicians. Despite the increasing popularity of eco-tourism, its share in the global turnover of tourism capital, according to WTO experts, is still about 7 and no more than 10 percent, or about 35-40 billion US dollars. To a large extent, this is due to the skillfully managed behavior of the mass consumer of standard tourist services, a consumer who is somewhat afraid of the epithet

"ecological" and associates with this epithet ideas about exceptionally spartan recreation conditions (a straw mattress instead of a cozy bed, coarse clothes and food, dust, mosquitoes and similar tests, which is wrong in principle). That is why the WTO prefers to promote and use the term "sustainable tourism", putting into it a content very close to the concepts of ecotourism.

## Methodology

A significant addition to the definitions and concepts of soft tourism outlined above was made by Dieter Kramer. In his opinion, the humanization of tourism, the reform and transformation of hard tourism into soft tourism are more productive not on an individual level, that is, not through changing the individual behavior of tourists or specific politicians and leaders of the tourism business, but through the targeted influence of public organizations on the policies of large travel agencies. This author considers such organizations primarily to be alpine unions, as well as environmental societies, whose members are willing to sacrifice excessive comfort and spend their holidays in somewhat more "harsh" conditions, buying "soft" tours from large companies in large numbers. Thus, according to Kramer, in the "soft tourism" system, the most important component is not just a tourist, but a conscious, prepared tourist. The definitions of ecotourism are similar in many respects to the German-language definitions of soft tourism described above and the stricter terminological designation of this area in tourism, which has become widespread and recognized in Austria, Germany and Switzerland in recent years ("Umwelt und sozialverträglicher Tourismus"), which can be translated from German as "ecologically and socially responsible tourism") existing in English-language literature. One can only note their comparative laconism and the widespread use of vocabulary related to the concepts of environmental sustainability. Another notable feature of them is their desire to link ecotourism primarily with natural, undisturbed or slightly disturbed and protected landscapes. Let's summarize some of the results of this brief analysis of the definitions of ecotourism. Obviously, if we take into account its most essential properties, which are included in most definitions, we can identify five main principles for the construction and implementation of environmental tours and programs.

## Results and discussion

Ecological tourism should be:

- facing nature (both virgin and cultivated) and based on the use of primarily natural resources;
- not causing damage or minimizing damage to our habitat, that is, environmentally sustainable;
- certainly, aimed at environmental education and enlightenment, at the formation of relations of equal partnership with nature;
- caring for the preservation of the local socio-cultural environment;
- economically efficient and ensuring the sustainable development of the areas where it is carried out.

This concise list is quite sufficient to distinguish ecological tours from harsh, non-ecological and generally other forms of tourism. At the same time, this list does not link ecotourism exclusively with uncomfortable trips to the "wild" nature. According to these principles, even sailing on an Amazon liner can be considered an ecological tour, provided that this liner is perfect from the point of view of eco-technology, that tourists often leave the ship for boating, hiking or horseback riding routes, that they get acquainted with the local nature, indigenous culture and environmental problems of the region and make a certain contribution to their solution, even in the simplest way, is donations to local environmental projects.

Therefore, along with eco-tourism proper, eco-technological tourism should also be highlighted. This direction in the development of the tourism industry must certainly be in our field of vision. Moreover, ecological technologies are equally needed for purely ecological tours, and for tourism in general. With this in mind, it is possible to formulate a number of characteristic features inherent in ecological tours and programs. So, a program or a tour is eco-friendly if:

- the program is not planned very rigidly and allows for options and changes at the request of tourists; programs are usually designed for small ones, including family groups of participants, as well as for individual trips;
- haste and short duration of visits (the whole of Europe in 5 days is, for example, the motto of many Japanese travel agencies) are not typical for a soft, environmentally oriented tour;
- the purpose of a soft, ecological tour is not to visit the obligatory, standard "attractions", but to acquire deep impressions and knowledge, so tourists prepare for the trip in advance by studying the nature and culture of the country.;
- tourist routes and qualified guides lead them to interesting and environmentally friendly natural and cultural landscapes;
- the tour program includes visits to educational ecological trails, natural history and local history museums, eco-technological farms and, of course, familiarization with local environmental problems.;
- in the tour program, the acquaintance with purely natural objects and "virgin" nature is combined with ecological and cultural subjects involving the study of traditional, indigenous forms of nature management;
- the transport used by tourists is eco-friendly (automobile tourism, for example, in no way refers to eco-friendly forms of tourism);
- the food of tourists is environmentally friendly and healthy, while local products are present in the diet of tourists;
- garbage is not thrown into the general garbage dump or landfill, but is collected in a special way and then goes to eco-tech recycling; thus, organizers of eco-friendly tours prefer reusable food packages rather than single-use ones.;
- halts, bivouacs and especially bonfires are arranged only in specially equipped places;
- mushrooms, berries, flowers, medicinal plants, any natural souvenirs are collected only when and where allowed; hunting tours are anti-ecological;
- hotels, campgrounds or shelters and huts where tourists stay are located in such a way that they do not disrupt the normal, environmentally sustainable development of the surrounding landscape and do not disfigure its appearance.;
- these hotels and campsites are built from environmentally friendly materials, their inhabitants do not consume excessive energy and water, while wastewater and emissions are cleaned, and other waste is disposed of.;
- local residents are involved in the tourism business and get the opportunity to develop their traditional forms of economy;
- tourists respect local cultural traditions, strive to study and understand them.;

- Tourists participate in solving local environmental problems in the ways they can.;
- the income from the tour is not entirely withdrawn from the local budget, but contributes to its filling.

## Conclusion

Ecotourism, as a sustainable form of tourism, emphasizes environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and responsible travel to natural areas. Unlike mass tourism, ecotourism is characterized by minimal ecological impact, active local community participation, and educational components that promote awareness about biodiversity and sustainability. The core principles of ecotourism include responsible travel behavior, conservation of natural resources, support for local economies, and respect for indigenous cultures. These principles ensure that tourism activities contribute to environmental protection while providing economic benefits to local communities. The key signs of ecotourism include low-impact infrastructure, use of renewable resources, waste management strategies, and ethical wildlife interactions. Ecotourism exists in various forms, including wildlife tourism, adventure tourism, cultural ecotourism, and agro-tourism, each offering unique experiences that blend nature-based exploration with sustainable practices. As global tourism continues to expand, the adoption of ecotourism principles is essential for mitigating negative environmental impacts while fostering responsible and meaningful travel experiences. Moving forward, the success of ecotourism depends on effective policies, strict environmental regulations, and continuous education for travelers and stakeholders. Future research should focus on innovative strategies for ecotourism development, the role of technology in sustainability, and measuring the long-term impacts of ecotourism on biodiversity and local communities. By integrating these elements, ecotourism can serve as a powerful tool for achieving sustainable tourism development while preserving the planet's natural and cultural heritage.

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