



Ecotourism/Nature - based tourism

Many times when think of tourism, we tend to visualize blue waters, sandy white sun-kissed beaches with palm trees, and hotels towering over the skyline. What if I tell you there's scenery even more breathtaking? Imagine nature in its undisturbed and pristine state, an abundance of flora and fauna,



nature's critters crawling on the forest floor and winged exotic creatures navigating through the canopy of giant trees reaching to the skies. This is just a glimpse at the wonders that nature/ecotourism has to offer.

Tourism is not just limited to fancy architecture, blue waters and white sandy beaches so highly advertised in magazines and on television. These features in fact, exist in only some parts of the world. For countries that are not blessed with white sandy beaches, but have virgin forests and abundant wildlife, it is all about smart marketing and promotion of our unique natural treasures to draw tourists to our neck of the woods.

Our many rivers and thick forests provide an ideal setting for nature and ecotourism which appeal not only to those who seek pleasure, relaxation and a change in scenery, but also to tourists who crave a sense for adventure, and are nature lovers. Nature/Ecotourism is



for those who realize and recognize the intrinsic value of the environment.

Tourism is a booming industry in many parts of the world regardless which form it takes. According to the World Tourism Organization, in 2014 the industry raised approximately US \$1.5 Trillion dollars. Besides the money, Ecotourism/Nature tourism is not just about lucrative profits and mere pleasure, even though one of the aims is to get ecotourists to spend more on trips. It's more than that; it's a form of tourism with the environment being its main interest. It's a form of low impact tourism, with little to no impact on the physical and socio-economic environment and seeks to give back to the locals and the community. Ecotourism is all about utilizing the natural environment in its pristine state without harming or having any major negative impacts on the environment-the environment is the product and the environment is its business.

The ecotourism industry itself takes special consideration of building design and construction of resorts, hotels, and inn's or whatever the establishment. Natural materials from the environment are utilized in building design and construction with no major alteration to the built environment. So instead of constructing large swimming pools and installing air conditioners and solar heaters, building design utilizes features like natural springs and creeks, benches and small thatch roofed huts, and is constructed in such a way that the use of natural lighting, breeze and heating can be maximized. Also, special emphasis is placed on education of workers and visitors, management of the operation, and also tour operations to ensure effective function. This is done since eco-tourists are responsible consumers interested in social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Guyana a country with so much to offer in the ecotourism is still to reach its peak. Just like our neighbour Brazil one of the top five listed eco-tourist destinations according to *National*



Geographic in 2007, has so much to boast about. Take our virgin forest which covers approximately 76% of the country and the majestic rivers running like snakes for miles through it. What about power falls like the mighty Kaieteur shining like jewels in

nature? For any eco-tourist venturing here, adventure and thrill awaits. As the eco-tourism sector advances in Guyana it will move closer to realizing its potential to generate millions of US dollars to contribute to our developing economy. It is just a matter of time before ecotourism in our country becomes the one to watch. Let us as individuals give impetus to this sector and take conscious action to plan a trip for ourselves and our contacts overseas to visit one or more of the many eco-tourism destinations within Guyana – it will be an adventure of a lifetime.

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com

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