

*International Centre for Responsible Tourism*

*Advances in Responsible Tourism*

Harold Goodwin

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# Advances in Responsible Tourism

International Centre for Responsible Tourism

Occasional Paper No. 8 – November 2007



**November 14th 2007 is the first World Travel Market World Responsible Tourism Day.**

This is the first of a series of annual registers of *Advances in Responsible Tourism* published by the International Centre for Responsible Tourism and recording some of the advances in responsible tourism made during the year. We welcome contributions which record major developments during the year. ART will be published in November each year in time for the World Travel Market's World Responsible Tourism Day.

It was back in the mid-nineties, with VSO and then Tearfund, that we began campaigning for responsible tourism. In 1998 we published *Travelling in the Dark* with league tables showing the different performance of UK operators in providing information about the countries where they operated. In 1999 market research conducted with Tearfund demonstrated that the ethical characteristics of the tour operators were more important to British holidaymakers travelling abroad than whether they had travelled with that operator before.

In 2000 the Association of Independent Tour Operators adopted the principles of Responsible Tourism and in 2003 the Federation of Tour Operators endorsed the principles, recognising that "responsible tourism is about making a positive difference when we travel". Earlier this year Mintel reported that over one million responsible holidays were taken in 2006 and forecast growth at 25% per annum.

In the ICRT class of 2001 we identified the need to establish a market place, an annual awards and a foundation. All three now exist:

- [responsibletravel.com](http://responsibletravel.com)
- The Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards
- Travel Foundation

South Africa was the first country to adopt responsible tourism as a national policy in 1996. In 2002 the Cape Town Declaration defined responsible tourism, and the World Travel Market is using the same definition. The campaign of the mid-nineties has become a diverse movement and it is growing rapidly.

World Responsible Tourism Day challenges us to ask ourselves what we are doing "to make better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit". This annual publication will carry short reports on new initiatives and achievements – please send copy to [Harold@haroldgoodwin.info](mailto:Harold@haroldgoodwin.info)

For regular updates on what is happening in Responsible Tourism see <http://haroldgoodwin.blogware.com/>.

**Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism in Destinations**

## Responsible Tourism

- minimises negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- provides access for physically challenged people; and
- is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

[www.icrtourism.org/capetown.html](http://www.icrtourism.org/capetown.html)



*Fiona Jefferies, Chair of WTM writes*  
**WORLD TRAVEL MARKET**  
**WORLD RESPONSIBLE TOURISM DAY**  
**CATALYST FOR ACTION**

As chairman of World Travel Market, I have been lucky to have been involved in many initiatives highlighting key issues within the travel and tourism industry. There is one that has always been close to my heart – that of the environment and responsible tourism – and I have been privileged to see at first hand some of the excellent work that is being carried out around the world through my work with the travel and tourism industry's global charity Just a Drop and as a judge for the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism and Tourism For Tomorrow Awards.

Responsible Tourism has come a long way in the past few years. It is thankfully no longer seen as a passing trend. It has become a recognised and accepted sector within the industry with holidaymakers becoming more aware of their responsibilities as travellers.

The international Centre for Responsible Tourism is a post-graduate training and research centre based at the Leeds Metropolitan University, led by Prof. Harold Goodwin, Dr Xavier Font and Dr Janet Cochrane. A PDF of this paper can be downloaded at [www.icrtourism.org/art1.pdf](http://www.icrtourism.org/art1.pdf). Suggested citation: ICRT (2007) *Advances in responsible tourism*, Occasional paper No. 8. International Centre for Responsible Tourism, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK – [www.icrtourism.org/wtm07](http://www.icrtourism.org/wtm07)

World Travel Market has been at the forefront of its growth. It was over 13 years ago that we started World Travel Market's Environmental Awareness Day, encouraging delegates from around the world to engage in discussion and constructive debate about the problems and challenges that face the industry. It was the success of Environmental Awareness Day and latterly Responsible Tourism Day that has been the cornerstone of our new initiative – WTM World Responsible Tourism Day initiative – WTM World Responsible Tourism Day supported by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation and other industry bodies around the world.

Given the fact that nearly 50,000 industry professionals from 202 regions and countries attend World Travel Market, we felt strongly that there was a role we could play, acting as a catalyst for change. After all as an industry we have a responsibility to protect the very product we seek to promote. With our track record we believe the event is well placed to take a lead.

Recognising the salient global principles of the Cape Town Declaration, we are driving an important new global campaign for all of us to do more. Not just with words, but action as well.

There is no industry better placed to embrace a day that highlights the importance of protecting environments, respecting local cultures, supporting local communities, conserving natural resources and minimising pollution.

Research has already demonstrated that consumers now want the industry to be more sustainable and that responsible tourism can and is already a proven path to profitability. Therefore in launching WTM's World Responsible Tourism Day, a truly global cross industry initiative, our aim is to both harness and educate travel and tourism businesses the world over as to what represents responsible tourism practice and what doesn't.

Our objectives for World Travel Market and the industry are clear and concise.

1. Help drive change by educating more responsible behaviour with the travel and tourism industry and travelling public.
2. To explore the issues of how countries and destinations are made more sustainable including case studies of best and worst practices.
3. To take even greater responsibility for contributing to sustainable tourism and
4. To harness the influence of World Travel Market as an international business forum to encourage the industry to drive the responsible tourism agenda forward.

This year the dedicated day showcases and highlights good practice as well as tackling some key environmental and social issues such as water, poverty reduction, carbon neutralisation and destination best practice. We've even designed a special logo for companies, tourist offices and industry associations to demonstrate commitment to the Cape Town Declaration principles within their own responsible tourism policies.

WTM is proud of its track record in responsible tourism. There is no better time for the industry to demonstrate positively its sense of responsibility and preparedness to act and it's our hope that through the day we can positively promote what the industry is doing, help spread the word and educate across the world.

WTM's World Responsible Tourism Day is in its infancy. To date no other international industry exhibition has tackled responsible tourism as comprehensively as we have.

It's our continued desire for World Travel Market to be seen as a positive driver for change and action, by bringing the industry together to tackle the key issues and give back to the industry we work in.

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## *NO WATER, NO FUTURE – TOURISM DRINKING DESTINATIONS DRY?*

Water is an important resource for the tourism industry and for local communities. Tourism often places severe pressure on water resources in destinations, and its demands are growing fast. Tourism is growing rapidly in areas where future water security is most uncertain. Water use for tourism is having a serious (usually negative) impact on the ecosystems it relies upon. The damage being done through pollution and over-extraction is often irreversible.

Where water is diverted to meet the requirements of tourists it can deplete local sources and drain water courses, leaving local people short of water. Large resort developments require significant amounts of water which are extracted from the local environment; in areas of water scarcity this reduces the amount of water available for local people. The tourism industry is able to pay more for water than locals. It is the poor who go short of water.

The tourism industry has an important role to play in tackling some of the wider global issues surrounding access to safe water.

### **WTM Water Research**

The WTM water research reports on what the industry is doing to manage and reduce its impact on other peoples' water supplies and other peoples' environments. It assesses the contribution of hotels to reducing water consumption and increasing local peoples' access to freshwater; providing a baseline from which progress, innovation and knowledge sharing can be monitored.

### **Future crisis?**

Water supply is already a big concern for the tourism industry and will become even more critical as climate change continues, compounded by pollution, and population growth. In a survey carried out for the WTM report, 96% of respondents said that they felt water was an issue that the tourism industry ought to address. 53% of hotels reported that water shortages were already affecting their business. This before the main impacts of predicted climate change are felt. The situation in Africa is particularly serious with 81% of respondents reporting water shortages affecting their businesses.

### **Water in hotels: reduce, reuse and recycle**

Many hotels are turning to unsustainable sources to provide tourists with water such as groundwater extraction and desalination. More focus should be placed on reducing demand for water and adopting practices that increase the efficiency and optimal use of this precious resource. Water management can deliver low and consistent usage per guest night, whilst increasing water efficiency is one of the most significant opportunities for realising cost savings. This is likely to become more important as water becomes scarcer and more expensive. In addition, besides the direct reduction in water bill costs, other indirect savings are made on energy, sewage, and detergent bills.

### **Water for local communities**

19% of respondents said that their hotel did provide access to water for local communities. However the level of assistance

varies from letting three local households use hotel taps for water collection, to building wells and water provision infrastructure for entire communities. A concern was that only 5% of hotels knew of other schemes in the tourism industry to provide potable water for local communities. This indicates that there is work to be done in sharing innovative ideas and exploring what can be achieved. Those that are engaging in this positive activity are making a big difference to the local communities; access to clean water improves health, education and quality of life.

### Report Highlights

- Reducing water use can be achieved through a combination of behavioural, operational and technological changes, many of which are not costly to instigate but have a big impact on water use and save money.
- There is a level of awareness of the issue but much more is still to be done. Some hotels and chains are beginning to think 'beyond towels' in terms of their water saving measures.
- There are some excellent examples of hotels that are assisting their local community with water issues and having a measurable impact through their practices.
- The IBLF and WWF-UK's Environmental Benchmarking guide published in 2005 established performance targets for freshwater consumption, in cubic metres per guest night, by eco zone (temperate, Mediterranean and tropical) and by hotel category. This is a practical tool that hotels can use as a starting point.
- Improving 'Water literacy' is key – through educating tourists, hotel owners, staff and local people about the importance of water conservation and how to approach water conservation measures.

Whether we are travelling as individuals or acting as tour operators we have the opportunity to exercise some responsibility and make a difference through our purchasing. Tourism businesses in destinations, particularly those in areas of water stress, need to be challenged about what they are doing to reduce their consumption. Reliable water sources for tourism are under threat globally, not just in the traditional problem areas. Better water management has enormous potential to make the tourism industry more responsible and reduce the negative impact on local populations and destinations. At the current rate of consumption the detrimental effect of tourism's unsustainable thirst will be unavoidable. The industry must take this opportunity to make better places for people to live in and better places to visit.

Harold Goodwin & Kate Walters, ICRT a copy of the report can be down loaded from [www.icrtourism.org/water](http://www.icrtourism.org/water)

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## INITIATIVES IN THE USA

*In February the US Tour Operators Association announced that it was adopting a responsible tourism approach and changes are afoot in Washington State.*

### Washington State

Communities Target Sustainability in One Generation. Seattle is amongst the top "green" cities nationally, and is one of the first in the nation to cut greenhouse-gas emissions just below Kyoto targets. Besides a selection of green hotels, Seattle requires all new city buildings over 5,000 square feet to be certified Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) buildings, a program similar to BREEAM in the U.K. Seattle now has one of the highest concentration of LEED buildings in the U.S.

In addition to stringent state-wide environmental laws and a governor committed to nature-based tourism, City of Seattle mayor Greg Nickels launched in 2005 the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. More than 650 cities have since joined to counteract climate change at the local level.

Local Washington State communities are focusing on long-term sustainability to protect lands from encroachment and unsupportable development. Citizen-led sustainability councils are bringing together government, environmentalists, businesses, farmers and residents to take action. Their primary goal: to achieve sustainability in one generation, community by community.

*Steven Gersman*

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## THE HOTELS HOUSING TRUST – CAPE TOWN

Many visitors to South Africa have been saddened by the proliferation of shacks that are visible from the freeways around the cities. The reality is that a large percentage of people in South Africa live in shacks because their income is so low they cannot afford bonds to buy a house.

The visitor has obviously asked "What can be done to help these people?" By helping people build their own homes, in addition to getting a home, the homeless gain self-respect and pride and learn skills that benefit the whole community. Working together with Habitat for Humanity, the Hotels Housing Trust raises money through tourism to assist poor communities to build their own homes under special guidance from experienced builders, community leaders and both International and South Africa volunteers who help to build.

The Hotel Housing Trust is supported by about 10 hotels in Cape Town. A brown paper brochure is placed in the hotel room and offers guests an opportunity to leave a donation which will be used towards housing for the poor and needy.

*Vernon Kirsten: [vkirsten@reservhotel.com](mailto:vkirsten@reservhotel.com)*

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## DEVELOPMENTS AT [responsibletravel.com](http://responsibletravel.com)

We've seen a shift this year in the public debate on aviation. The debate on flying is wrongly raging at two extremes, with environmental campaigners arguing that all flying is evil and the Government planning to double UK flights and expand airports. I believe the solution lies at neither of these extremes but instead involves a steady reduction in flights and an increase in responsible tourism. The challenge now is to move this debate on and begin to encourage sensible discussion among consumers with a view to taking fewer and longer holidays.

In our efforts to continue raising awareness of important issues and to help facilitate knowledge sharing within the responsible tourism industry, we have recently launched [www.responsibletravelnews.com](http://www.responsibletravelnews.com).

In order to encourage travellers to take the train to short haul destinations, we will soon be launching a train affiliate scheme on the site, which will allow travellers to search for train journeys. Furthermore, in the past 12 months we have increased the number of UK holidays on our site by over 200%, thereby offering travellers the very best responsible holiday options at home in the UK.

We have worked with Conservation International this year to both understand and address some of the issues relating to the success of community tourism projects, particularly those relating to poor visitor numbers, resulting from lack of marketing and access to the tourism industry. We have started to create a 'buyers club' of established tour operators interested in adding community tourism projects to their itineraries and marketing them through their normal channels. Watch out for more on this in 2008 – [www.responsibletravel.com/communitybasedtourism](http://www.responsibletravel.com/communitybasedtourism).

*Justin Francis, [www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com)*

*Justin Francis completed his MSc at the ICRT in 2001 - he did the initial research for [responsibletravel.com](http://responsibletravel.com) as his research project.*

*Concerned about irresponsible volunteering in South Africa two leading companies have come together to produce a code for responsible volunteering in their country – the ICRT applauds these kinds of initiatives and urges operators in South Africa and in originating markets to work to it.*

### **CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE – RESPONSIBLE VOLUNTEERING IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Volunteering as a global travel practice is big business. Unfortunately growth markets are susceptible to unethical practices and we should endeavour to operate our programmes within guidelines that are recognised, respected and adhered to.

More and more organisations in South Africa are now offering volunteer packages to their clients. However, it is important that volunteer programmes are well thought out and impact positively on economic, social and environmental issues in the community.

Most importantly if you are going to offer volunteer travel it should be done in a transparent and responsible manner that recognises the needs of both the community and the volunteer. Responsible operators should guard against exploiting the communities they serve and set realistic goals and expectations for volunteers they place.

Responsible volunteering should be about creating a better place for people to live in and a better place to visit.

As a responsible volunteer operator we pledge our commitment to uphold a minimum Code of Good Practice, which includes but is not limited to:

- Having a long-term relationship and agreement in writing with the host community.
- Programme outputs must be determined by and with the community, for example, via a needs analysis, collective consultative meeting.
- Having a shared vision with the community/project on the role played by volunteers.

- Volunteers must not be taking the place of local employees.
- Where overseas placement organisations are used to source volunteers, these organisations should be charging fair prices in a transparent way.
- Volunteers must be screened for personal references and criminal records.
- Volunteers' skills/interests/hobbies must be matched to the programme needs.
- The community or programme must have final right of acceptance or rejection of applicants. Automatic acceptance should not be the norm.
- Volunteers must be provided with a written Task Description outlining project duration, resources, supervision, reporting structures and final objectives/measurable outcomes.
- Volunteers must transfer skills to the community.
- Volunteers must be orientated effectively prior to arrival and on the programme.
- Volunteers must be self-funding so as not to burden the host community.
- Volunteer programmes must be financially transparent by giving volunteers access to information on the breakdown of their fee and what amounts go into the community.
- Volunteers must be effectively managed on the ground (assistance, guidance, supervision) by programme co-ordinators, so as to ensure community and volunteer gets value from placement.
- Volunteers must abide by a written code of conduct.
- Volunteer programmes must carry volunteer specific insurances (legal compliance).
- Volunteer programmes must carry PDP permits and relevant insurances when charging volunteers for transfers/transportation.
- Volunteering management companies/agencies must adhere to basic legal requirements of their specific sector of the industry and laws of South Africa.
- Volunteer project must have a Responsible Tourism Strategy that addresses economic, social and environmental policy.
- Volunteer programmes must have a structure/system for monitoring feedback and de-briefings with the volunteer.
- Volunteers should be advised what form of post volunteer support the programme can offer with regards to continued communications, fundraising, awareness issues.
- Volunteer programmes must have a reporting process back to the sending organisation, where applicable.
- Volunteer programmes must have a reporting process back to the community that allows for community participation.

South African volunteer companies should adhere to this Code of Good Practice to be recognised as responsible operators.

*For further information and discussions regarding the Code of Good Practice for Responsible Volunteering in South Africa, please feel free to contact:  
Paul Miedema [www.calabashtours.co.za](http://www.calabashtours.co.za)  
Marnie Heim-Stafford [www.voluntours.co.za](http://www.voluntours.co.za)*

“A river is often the thread that weaves lives and traditions in an ageless manner. A river sustains a civilisation.” The Blue Yonder (TBY), a tour operator based out of Bangalore, India was established in 2003 to provide income to support the Nila Foundation – an organisation that researches on rivers in India in general and River Nila of Kerala in specific. Both TBY and the Nila Foundation were founded by Gopinath Parayil following his personal realisation that the Nila, on the banks of which he had been brought up, was being destroyed by sand mining, damming and life style changes. TBY uses tourism as a tool to raise funds and at the same time support the process of wealth creation amongst the communities they work with.

During their time spent on the River Nila, visitors take part in a variety of activities including, music trails, folk expressions, martial arts, river rafting, and village walks, all of which are owned, operated and managed by local people.

By creating a meaningful connection between visitors and the river through interpretations, local people feel more connected with the river as they are the ones giving the interpretation. Retelling stories, legends and songs about the area and explaining their significance, local people are themselves made aware of their culture and the need to conserve it.

As a social entrepreneur and pioneer in Responsible Tourism in India, TBY has a well-defined focus on creating wealth for the local people. From sand miners to folk artists, from martial art experts to cobblers and goldsmiths, TBY is looking at themes that could be incorporated into the holiday. This generates alternative and supplementary sources of income for many in the community and provides a reason for them to pursue many skills and art forms that were being given up for purely economic reasons.

For further details go to [www.theblueyonder.com](http://www.theblueyonder.com) or email Gopinath Parayil [gopi@theblueyonder.com](mailto:gopi@theblueyonder.com)

Gopi has also started Blue Yonder Associates, a regional responsible tourism site where a travellers can find details of responsible accommodation in southern India.

[www.theblueyonderassociates.com](http://www.theblueyonderassociates.com)

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## TOUCH AFRICA LIGHTLY

Touch Africa Lightly is a locally initiated, international campaign designed to raise awareness and appreciation of the impacts that travel has on this continent. Established by the Heritage Environmental Rating Programme as part of its ongoing efforts to make Africa one of the most responsible tourist destinations on earth, the initiative aims to encourage and motivate travel companies, tour operators and product owners to operate in a more environmentally and socially responsible manner when promoting and marketing this continent.

The loss of biodiversity, cultures and customs of destinations is now being recognised as too high a price – one that is not worth paying to attract growing numbers of visitors. While mass tourism can boost the economy of destinations worldwide, without appreciation of the impacts that this type of travel has on all the elements that constitute the destination itself, sustainability cannot be guaranteed and, ultimately, this leads to the collapse of the industry itself.

For more details contact Greg McManus  
[www.heritagesa.co.za/contact.htm](http://www.heritagesa.co.za/contact.htm)

FTTSA is a non-profit initiative that encourages tourism businesses to support local communities, uphold labour standards, and respect culture, human rights and the environment. 30 enterprises have qualified for FTTSA certification including 5 community-owned establishments, and FTTSA is actively working with some 40 international tour operators and a growing number of South African inbound operators, to link responsibly operated products to the market.

In 2007, FTTSA published an online manual to assist businesses to apply for certification and help certified establishments to improve their performance in relation to FTTSA standards. Additional online tools including a responsible tourism procurement tutorial and calculator, will be published in 2008. For more information go to [www.fairtourismsa.org.za](http://www.fairtourismsa.org.za).

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## DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH ASIA

Responsible tourism activities in South Asia continue to involve interesting new initiatives using tourism as a tool for development. The Asian Development Bank SASEC (South Asian Subregional Economic Cooperation) programme, which has poverty reduction objectives, has included the publication of a Tourism Development Plan for the five countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka) in 2004, soon to be updated, and a HRD and Capacity Building in the Tourism Sector project that trained 271 trainers from the five countries in topics relevant to the two SASEC tourism themes: “Buddhist Heartland” and “ecotourism based on nature and culture”. Currently, a 31-person technical assistance team is preparing a tourism development loan project for upgrading tourism infrastructure, community-focused software and marketing in the subregion, due to be completed March 2008.

Led by SNV Nepal and ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development), the Great Himalaya Trail development project is gaining momentum with donors and the private sector as an innovative “great walk” concept that can deliver marketing and development benefits to remote mountain communities in the trek areas of Nepal, Bhutan and India (Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh), along the length of the Himalaya.

The Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme (TRPAP) funded by DFID and managed by UNDP, was a five-year programme in six districts of Nepal that operationalised and mainstreamed pro-poor tourism theory. TRPAP was recently handed over to the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) in 2007, under the Sustainable Tourism Development Unit.

NTB also continues to host the Sustainable Tourism Network (STN) which links government agencies, INGOS, NGOs and the private sector active in responsible tourism to share experiences.

Funded by the EU and UNEP, the NTB with SNV Nepal (Netherlands Development Assistance) is linking responsible tourism operations with source markets in their MAST programme (Marketing Assistance to Nepal for Sustainable Tourism Products).

The new Sagarmatha National Park Management Plan developed under TRPAP was approved by the Government of Nepal in 2007. It includes ground-breaking community

management techniques and responsible tourism in this popular World Heritage Site. Kangchenjunga Conservation Area was also handed over for community management in 2007 with assistance from WWF Nepal and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation. Jointly led by WWF Nepal and the Mountain Institute, a Sacred Himalaya Programme has been initiated aimed at environmental and cultural conservation in the middle hills.

Some other high profile and successful responsible Nepal tourism activities came to an end in 2007, including EcoHimal's Rolwaling Ecotourism Development Project supported by the Austrian government, and the EU-funded Bandipur Eco-cultural Tourism Project.

In October 2007, the Canadian Government sponsored an exchange study tour by high-level officials from Tibet's Poverty Alleviation Office to visit some of Nepal's responsible tourism models, as part of the preparation process of a new pro-poor strategy to use tourism in rural villages of the Tibet Autonomous Region to improve livelihoods of the farmers and herders.

2007 saw a number of study tours and exchange visits to learn from South Asia's responsible tourism projects, including a group of government officials from Cambodia who were brought to Nepal by WWF Greater Mekong programme.

*Contributed by Lisa Choegy, one of ICRT's associates.  
Contact her at [lisa@trcnz.com](mailto:lisa@trcnz.com)*

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## *RESPONSIBLE SKIING IN LECH*

Many people look at the downhill ski industry and take the view that it ruins the environment, consumes vast amounts of energy and cannot possibly be in harmony with the principles of Responsible Tourism. However, Responsible Tourism must balance environmental protection with economic benefits to local residents and the fact remains that the downhill ski industry has been the saviour of many mountain communities and traditions, halting the de-population of the mountains that was occurring at the end of the 19th century.

Tourism in ski resorts faces many of the same issues as tourism elsewhere; concerns about development, the social impacts on the community, pressures on transport, infrastructure and the environment and greater consumption of energy and water and the resulting increases in waste. However, there are ski resorts that have taken action to address these in innovative ways.

Lech, a ski resort in Austria, has to abide by the stringent national environmental laws which are well ahead of the UK. Stringent five-way household recycling is the norm and energy is obtained from sustainable sources. A Biomass plant provides hot water for the whole village, successfully cutting their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by over 50% and reducing their oil consumption and SO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Electricity comes from renewable hydroelectricity.

A local development plan detailing development and protection zones and an upper limit on bed spaces ensures that supply and demand are in balance with occupancy levels. Development is carefully controlled with consultation periods for new buildings regarding style and impact. However, this does not mean that Lech has no contemporary buildings, they are just built using the traditional materials in a style that blends harmoniously. All businesses are locally owned, there-

fore it is the local residents who benefit from the tourism.

A free public bus service runs year round benefiting both locals and guests reducing both traffic congestion and pollution. Resort transfers from local airports and rail stations are frequent but even those guests arriving by car tend to park underground for the week and use the bus during their stay. The hamlet of Oberlech is actually car free in winter and all supplies and waste are taken in and out via a tunnel keeping the village peaceful and pollution free.

Of course it is the infrastructure required for the sport itself where ski resorts differ from other tourist destinations – the pistes, lifts and snowmaking equipment. Pistes are being created in Lech using a method called 'soil push' where effectively the 'turf' is lifted – any machine grading is done underneath – and the 'turf' re-laid with the biodiversity undisturbed. Inevitably there are areas where re-seeding is necessary; this is done using seeds that are an exact copy of the natural vegetation mix. It has taken much time and money to create such a seed mix. However in the long run, it is cost effective since the revegetation is successful as the plants are suited to the altitude and aspect.

Another innovative approach is to reduce the need for pistes by creating ski routes which are marked routes down the mountain that are safe and avalanche protected but where no grading has been done and no grooming takes place. This has the added benefit of providing excitement for skiers who as "skilled consumers" are always seeking out new challenges. Forest areas are protected from skiers and heli-skiing only takes place in a remote valley where no wildlife is present due to the depth of the snow.

Lifts and lift buildings undeniably have a visual impact on the mountain and require energy, however in Lech they are run off hydroelectricity. Old lifts are have been replaced with new ones which are both more energy efficient and quieter and their greater capacity means that two or three old lifts can be replaced by a single new one. Visual impact is reduced by lower profile buildings with the machinery housed underground and by utilising 'detachable' chairlifts where the chairs are stored away in a building when the lift is not working. The heat produced by the machinery is re-used to heat the offices.

In Lech, the artificial snow is run off hydroelectricity and is made from pure water and air – confirmed by certified organic pastures underneath. Large amounts of water are required, however careful studies have been made to ascertain the amount of water that can be taken out of the watercourses without impact and reservoirs have been created up the mountain to store rain water. These underwent a lengthy environmental impact analysis before construction and are harmonious to such a degree that summer walks are routed to them. Repeated scientific studies have found no negative impacts of artificial snow or delayed snowmelt and a possible positive effect whereby the vegetation may actually be protected from the spring frosts.

Lech has achieved a careful balance between economic prosperity, the conservation of the environment and the protection of local community and traditions. Disappointingly, a recent study of skiers in Lech found that awareness was very low of all the actions taken. Equally, the UK ski industry and media has little knowledge of what the potential negative impacts of skiing are and how they have been mitigated in Lech. No association is made with how the actions taken are directly enhancing the beauty of the resort, the environment and the skiing experience – resulting in a better holiday for the skiers. This is a missed opportunity

since skiers base their resort selection equally around ski related factors such as pistes for their ability, the beauty of the resort and scenery and the reputation of resort.

It is undeniable that mistakes were made in ski resort development in the 1970-80s, but what is important now is to recognise those resorts that are seeking to mitigate the mistakes of the past and positively manage their resorts for the future. The same study found that two thirds of skiers are keen to know more about what resorts are doing to protect the village, benefit local residents and conserve the environment and that their future decision making would be influenced by it. Whilst Lech has made great strides in destination management, the fact remains that there are resorts doing little or actively ignoring the lessons of the past.

It is important that the media and the ski industry are made aware of what the potential negative impacts are and what advances have been made in responsible ski resort management to counter the myths. They, together with the local tourist offices, have the key role in educating skiers – with knowledge skiers can make informed decisions based on which ski resort will give them a better holiday experience and so place pressure on those resorts managing the destination irresponsibly. It is imperative that skiing continues to prosper for the sake of the communities who depend on it, but not at the cost of the environment on which it, and everyone, relies so heavily.

*Veronica Tonge did research on responsible skiing for her MSc at the ICRT - [www.vritassociates.com](http://www.vritassociates.com)*

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## **GUIDE TRAINING TO LEGALISE EMPLOYMENT IN EGYPT**

The massive growth in accommodation in the Red Sea and South Sinai has led to low added value copycat excursion provision, symptoms of larger structural tourism development problems. There are hardly any qualified tour guides operating in South Sinai, and hardly any of these are Bedouins, who would originate from the area.

An EURAid funded programme prepared a sustainable tourism strategy for ten years for the region, trying to come to terms with the many negative impacts such major physical development plans will bring, and looking at legalising job opportunities. As part of this study funding was secured to train all (200) snorkelling guides to NAUI standards (currently untrained and working illegally, often leading to irresponsible behaviour from customers), to train and legalise 100 Bedouins as field guides, and to create new national qualification of ecoguide in order to improve quality and broaden the range of excursion possibilities in the region, hopefully leading to product development market diversification.

*Contributed by Xavier Font, ICRT Director of Studies*

## **WILDLIFE TOURISM SECTOR IN SCOTLAND TAKES THE LEAD**

Wild Scotland is the Scottish wildlife and nature tourism operators association. The organisation was started in 2003 by wildlife tourism companies who were aware of the need for the industry to take responsibility for their actions. As a result the aim of the organisation is to 'encourage the commercial operation, development and promotion of wildlife and nature-tourism in Scotland in ways which are sustainable environmentally, economically and socially'.

To demonstrate this responsibility, the association has recently published a series of Best Practice Guidelines for commercial wildlife-watching. The guidelines acknowledge that the effects of regular visits to an area (or an individual animal) may have cumulative impacts on animals and the environment.

The three guidelines (Wildlife Watching by Boat, Wildlife Watching in a Vehicle and Wildlife Watching on Foot) not only provide advice on how to approach wildlife and minimise the impact of the trips on the environment, but also acknowledge the operators' role in monitoring changes in the environment and helping visitors understand and appreciate the natural environment.

These guidelines, the first of their kind in the UK, aim to help operators minimise the collective impacts of wildlife watching and demonstrate the increasing professionalism of the wildlife tourism sector in Scotland.

Wild Scotland has also been moving the sustainable tourism agenda forwards in Scotland but developing a quality assurance scheme for wildlife tour companies with the Scottish Tourist Board, VisitScotland and is currently working with UK's most successful tourism eco-label, Green Tourism Business Scheme to develop environmental criteria for activity providers and tour operators.

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*Caroline Warburton, Manager, Wild Scotland  
Scottish Wildlife & Nature Tourism Operators Association is  
an alumni of the ICRT – she completed her MSc in 1999.*



### **Second International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations, Kerala March 2008**

Kerala Tourism, along with International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT) India, is organizing the Second International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations in Cochin. The Conference is reflecting on the five years since the Cape Town Declaration. The conference will provide an excellent opportunity to learn more about what has been achieved and to discuss how to move the agenda forward – you can find more details about the conference and register online at

[www.responsibletourism2008.org](http://www.responsibletourism2008.org)

Kerala Tourism is beginning to implement Responsible Tourism principles and approaches and there will be an opportunity to learn more about these as well as to participate in discussion about the major issues confronting Responsible Tourism climate change and carbon, cultural respect, developments in policy and practice in Africa and Asia, the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics, wildlife and conservation, local government, local economic development .....

There are two parts to the Conference:  
21st March an Academic Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations

22nd-24th March the Second International Conference on Responsible Tourism in Destinations register at  
[www.responsibletourism2008.org](http://www.responsibletourism2008.org)

If you would like to present a paper or poster at the Academic Conference or if you have ideas for a session or presentation in the main conference please email [Harold@haroldgoodwin.info](mailto:Harold@haroldgoodwin.info) co-chair of the conference.

### **2007 Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards**

It has been a record year with over 1,700 nominations for tourism organisations – wherever they are, mainstream or niche – that seek to benefit local people and to be as eco-friendly as possible. This year's winners were announced on World Responsible Tourism Day at The World Travel Market on 14 November, for details of the winners go to [www.responsibletourismawards.com](http://www.responsibletourismawards.com)

### **Corporate Reporting on Responsibility**

One of the major trends in the Responsible Tourism Movement over the next few years will be in reporting. In 2007 First Choice Holidays PLC published its Environment and People Report 2006 – download a copy at [www.fcenvironmentandpeople.com](http://www.fcenvironmentandpeople.com)

Jetwing Eco Holidays, the leading wildlife tour operator in Sri Lanka is leading the way with its report on the environment and community. Download a copy of their report at [www.jetwingeco.com/files%5C/pdf/pages\\_841.pdf](http://www.jetwingeco.com/files%5C/pdf/pages_841.pdf)

### **[www.irresponsibletourism.info](http://www.irresponsibletourism.info) new website launched**

Whilst the responsible, tourism movement grows there is still plenty of irresponsible tourism about, blow the whistle and debate.

Irresponsible Tourism is a forum designed to give YOU an opportunity to blow the whistle on practices in the travel and tourism industry which you think are irresponsible, and to discuss them with others.

The forum and its threads are accessible to anyone, but only registered users can post responses, comments and create new threads. Take a look at [www.irresponsibletourism.info/forum/](http://www.irresponsibletourism.info/forum/)

### **Taking Responsibility for Carbon Emissions**

The Carbon Consultancy has completed a review of ways in which tour operators and travellers can take responsibility for reducing their carbon footprint by flying less miles and choosing to fly more responsibly when they do.

It is time for us all to take responsibility for our aviation emissions – download a copy of the report at [www.icrtourism/aviation07](http://www.icrtourism/aviation07)

The report has been produced by the Carbon Consultancy [www.thecarbonconsultancy.co.uk](http://www.thecarbonconsultancy.co.uk) They have a very useful briefing on carbon offsetting available at [www.thecarbonconsultancy.co.uk/carbon-offset.shtm](http://www.thecarbonconsultancy.co.uk/carbon-offset.shtm)