



## Ecotourism

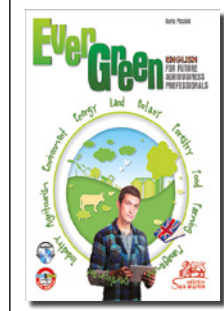
According to the World Tourism Organization ecotourism is the fastest growing market in the tourism industry with an annual growth rate of 5% worldwide, representing 6% of the world GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and 11.4% of all consumer spending.

The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people". Ecotourism is about conserving resources, valuing<sup>1</sup> the local culture, and contributing to the local economy. It focuses on local traditions, wilderness conservation, volunteering, personal growth, and discovering constructive ways to experience our vulnerable planet. Recycling, energy efficiency and the creation of economic opportunities for local communities are integral<sup>2</sup> elements of eco-tourism. By creating economic incentives for impoverished villages or communities, ecotourism encourages the preservation of natural resources, habitats

and wildlife. Besides, by involving the local community in such aspects as planning, decision-making and management, ecotourism encourages the empowerment of individuals. Employing local people and paying fair wages is another principle of ecotourism. This prevents exploitation and benefits the local economy.

Limiting both the size and number of tours in a particular area, introducing environmentally-conscious meals, lodging, waste management, and wildlife viewing principles into the tours are some of the strategies adopted by ecotourism.

Ecotourism also aims at educating travellers through leaflets, websites and advice from tour operators or guides about the culture, customs and traditions of local people. This prevents potential conflicts and misunderstandings<sup>3</sup> between the local community and the tourists.



### GLOSSARY

- 1 appreciating
- 2 essential
- 3 disagreements, quarrels

### ACTIVITIES

1 Answer the following questions.

- 1 Why does ecotourism play a key role in the tourism market?
- 2 What are the main aims of ecotourism?
- 3 How does ecotourism benefit the local community?
- 4 How does ecotourism aim at educating people?

2 Explain in your own words the meaning of the following terms.

- 1 Well-being .....
- 2 Personal growth .....
- 3 Recycling .....
- 4 Incentives .....
- 5 Wages .....
- 6 Strategies .....

3 Read the text and identify the aims of the World Ecotourism Conference.

#### The World Ecotourism Conference

The World Ecotourism Conference is an ambitious initiative whose aim is to bring global ecotourism players together to collaborate and share their experiences, best practices and technologies for the improvement of nature conservation, environment protection, preservation of communities and consequently the advancement of ecotourism around the world.

A key objective of WEC is to support host countries that are in need of a global platform and leverage to champion, position or support ecotourism policies and ini-



tiatives that will bring transformational changes for the development of their economy as well as of their environment.

4 Read the previous exercise again and find synonyms for the following terms.

- 1 Striving .....
- 2 Project .....
- 3 Cooperate (v) .....
- 4 Advance .....
- 5 Sustain (v) .....
- 6 Assets .....
- 7 Characteristic .....
- 8 Constituent .....