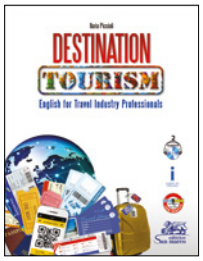
Ilaria Piccioli
Destination Tourism



The impact of tourism in Africa

Land-based tourism is a major economic activity in Africa, drawing[1] millions of visitors to different sites across the region every year and generating millions of dollars in foreign exchange[2] earnings. Sites such as the pyramids of Egypt, the Great Rift Valley of Eastern and Southern Africa, Great Zimbabwe, Table Mountain in South Africa, Mount Kenya in Kenya and Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania are some of the major attractions. Mountains, wildlife, wetlands, and coastal areas are also major tourist attractions. However, only a small percentage of the earnings generated by tourism remains in Africa. Ecotourism accounts for about 20 per cent of total international tourism and many countries in Africa, such as Kenya and South Africa, have invested heavily[3] in ecotourism. Tourism can serve as a powerful incentive to protect natural resources. In Madagascar, where tourism is the country's second largest foreign exchange earner, 40 new protected areas have been established since 1998, covering roughly[4] 2 per cent of the country's land area. In Southern and Eastern Africa, privately-owned protected areas that support tourism and hunting enterprises are also growing. Tourism not only generates revenue[5] to support conservation and management of natural environments but also generates many jobs. Despite the growth of tourism, the region still only accounts for about 5 per cent of world tourism. The tourism industry in Africa also has human and environmental costs, contributing to the displacement of communities and thus undermining[6] rights and livelihoods, and generating waste and pollution. Tourism's effects on indigenous peoples have sometimes been profound, with the eviction[7] of communities from their lands, in addition to economic dislocation, breakdown of traditional values, and environmental degradation. The massive influx of tourists and their vehicles in the Masai Mara National Park in Kenya and in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Tanzania has destroyed grass cover, affecting plant and animal species in the area. Hotels have dumped[8] their sewage in Masai settlement areas while campsites have polluted adjacent rivers. One emerging approach is to focus on promoting community conservation areas and also collaborative tourism initiatives in order to ensure greater benefits to communities. There are different levels of community participation, varying from passive participation to interactive decision making to community empowerment initiatives. The challenge facing policymakers in this industry and other land-based activities is to critically assess[9] the costs and benefits to ensure that all options are fully weighed and that the policy responses contribute to sustainable development and minimize overexploitation.

(Adapted from *Africa Environment Outlook 2: Our Environment, Our Wealth*)

GLOSSARY

1 attracting
2 transaction of international monetary business
3 a lot
4 about
5 income
6 weakening
7 expulsion of someone from the possession of land
8 discharged
9 to estimate the value of

ACTIVITIES

1 *Read the text quickly to find out the general content of each paragraph and write notes on the margin to summarise the text.*

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