

# Case study of ecotourism in china tourism essay

[Sport & Tourism](#), [Ecotourism](#)



The project aims to create a publishable case study on an eco-tourist enterprise, Naked Retreats (<http://www.nakedretreats.cn/>) operating in Mainland China. With the rise in eco-tourism, this firm has positioned itself as a low-carbon experience and minimalist lifestyle. The firm constructed one successful lodge in Monganshan near Shanghai and is completing another near Hangzhou with potential future developments. The case will explore the challenges and opportunities for a firm seeking to position itself as an alternative tourism experience.

## **Ecotourism Defined**

Ecotourism differentiates itself from traditional tourism as it focuses on traveling to low impact and small scaled areas and fulfill criteria including educating the traveler, and to benefit the environment, economic development and political empowerment of the local communities.[1]

While there has been criticism of the lack of official definition of ecotourism, the following is one working definition that has been used and accepted since the recognition of ecotourism.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defined ecotourism as “ Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people” (1990). This definition was further expanded by Co-founder of the Center for Responsible Travel, Martha D. Honey, PhD has also further expanded this definition in her book (Ecotourism and Sustainable Development, Second Edition: Who Owns Paradise?) according to the following principles set by TIES guiding those who implement and participate in ecotourism:

Minimize impact.

Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.

Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.

Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.

Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.

Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.[2]

## **Ecotourism in the World**

Ecotourism has been earning great recognition worldwide since 1990s.

According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), the sector has been growing at an average rate of 20-34% per year since then.[3]In year 2005, ecotourism has been rated as one of the fastest growing sectors in the tourism industry, representing 6% of the world's gross domestic product and 11. 4% of all consumers spending.[4]

Up to 95% of income earned from ecotourism is fueled back to the local economy.[5]A survey shows that the majority (61 percent) of the 58. 5 million Americans, who would pay more to use a travel company that strives to protect and preserve the environment, would in fact pay 5 percent to 10 percent more for ecotourism.[6]A survey also shows that the daily expenditure of cultural tourists (US\$90) is higher than visitors on a touring holiday (US\$67), beach holiday (US\$62), city break (US\$54) or rural trip.[7]

A study was conducted of North American ecotourists, including more general interest travelers and more specialized, experienced ecotourists; The following figure shows the major ecotourism market profile and trip characteristics.[8]

There are also several types of tourism which are also said to be closely related to ecotourism defined to according to a 2005 report by The Worldwatch Institute as follows:[9]

#### Geo tourism

Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place-its environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and the well-being of its residents.

#### Nature-based tourism

Any form of tourism that relies primarily on the natural environment for its attractions or settings.

#### Pro-poor tourism

Tourism that results in increased net benefit for the poor people.

#### Responsible tourism

Tourism that maximizes the benefits to local communities, minimizes negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures, habitats, and species.

## Sustainable tourism

Tourism that meets the needs of present tourist and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future.

While some countries and destinations have benefited from ecotourism, the fact that others have not has led some to conclude that significant gaps exist between ecotourism's potential and actual contributions in many areas. Nevertheless, countries and regions continue to turn to forms of nature-based tourism and ecotourism as a means of contributing to national, regional, and local development.[10]

## Outlook of the International Tourism Market

The following are the top ten countries by tourist arrivals, receipts, and citizen spending in 2008 and 2009. (Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), August 2010)

Globally, international tourism created direct receipts of US\$ 852 billion (611 billion euros) in 2009. 48.5% of this revenue went to Europe, with Asia capturing 23.9%. The contribution of tourism to economic activity worldwide is estimated at 5%. Tourism's contribution to employment direct and indirectly is slightly higher relatively and is estimated in the order of 6-7% of the overall number of jobs worldwide.[11]

Tourism could be highly susceptible to weak economic conditions as well as social conditions such as terrorism, etc. In year 2008-2009, the negative change of both international arrivals and receipts for most countries could be

explained by the slow recovery of the economic recession, as well as the A(H1N1) influenza pandemic. This was the first year of decline since year 2003, when tourism was hit by the Iraq war and outbreak of SARS.

Developing countries in particular have looked to tourism to help increase national foreign exchange earnings, GDP and employment rates, and to improve socioeconomic conditions in peripheral regions.[12]According to the WTO report of 2001, East Asia/Pacific, the Middle East and South Asia were the three fastest developing tourism regions in year 2000.

## **Ecotourism in Asia and China**

Ecotourism has been one highlighted economic sector among many developing as well as developed countries in Asia, such as India, Pakistan, Thailand, Indonesia and China.

Ecotourism in China started around year 2000 with the establishment of pioneer ecotourism companies such as Chinafaces, Nomadic Journeys, TibetGateway and WildChina. These companies operate various daytrips, educational and corporate tours to regions and places such as Yunnan, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Hebei, Shanxi, Gansu, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Hunan, Jiangxi, and Guizhou. Among these companies, WildChina seems to be the market leader of the ecotourism industry, winning several awards since its establishment including being selected as one of National Geographic ADVENTURE magazine's 2009 Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth. [13]

Ecotourism is thought to be an inevitable way for Chinese nature reserves to achieve sustainable development, and it certainly has the potential of becoming a prominent industry in western China[14].

An article written in 2004 divided the ecotourism in China into six fundamental types, namely Forest Recreation Ecotourism, Prairie Coquette Ecotourism, Wetlands Bird-watching Ecotourism, Desert Exploration Ecotourism, Countryside Experience Ecotourism and Ocean Vacation Ecotourism.[15]

Ecotourism faces many challenges in China. As there have been disputes and differences with the definition of ecotourism worldwide, China has been having a hard time to determine which tourism could be considered as ecotourism. Another issue is the lack of direction and resources on how to construct truly ecofriendly travel.

Most of China's ecotourism spots are concentrated on areas that are less developed. Many communities within these pristine natural areas and rich biodiversity face a challenge with mass tourism. Although an upward hike in tourism could mean development and higher standards of living, but it could also lead to destruction of biodiversity, local culture, Mother Nature etc. Hence, the biggest challenge for these communities is to develop their knowledge on building sustainable ecotourism spots and programs. To help these communities, Conservation International China (CI China) is establishing an Ecotourism Academy that will provide training courses for 200 people each year from communities in China.[16]

Nevertheless, He Guangwei, director of China's National Tourism Administration in year 2003 said that China's tourism now occupies 5.4% of its gross domestic product (GDP), and by 2020, this proportion will reach 11%. He also estimated that tourism's percentage of the GDP will be 6% in 2005 and 8% by 2015.[17]

China excluding Hong Kong hosted 50.9 million tourists' arrivals in year 2009, ranking 4th after France, United States and Spain, with tourism receipts of US\$39.7 billion, accounting for 8.1% of total GDP.[18] China is also ranked first in terms of share of international tourists' arrivals (28.1%) and receipts (19.5%) in the Asia and the Pacific region in year 2007-2009. [19]

A research by the China National Tourism Association (CNTA) and PATA indicates that rural tourist destinations in China now attract 300 million visitors annually while the UNWTO predicts China will become the world's largest inbound travel destination by 2020. CNTA has named year 2009 the "Chinese Ecotourism Year" with the slogan for which encourages citizens to "be a green traveler and experience eco-civilization."

However, there are still many projects that have not properly established norms to be named "ecotourism". The country has also yet to use international certifications such as Green Globe, a global benchmarking system based on the Agenda 21 principles for sustainable development drawn up at the UN Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, and which is largely recognized elsewhere as a guarantee of a project's environmental



credentials.[20]As of 2006, only two hotels, two parks and one museum in China had been Green Globe certified.[21]

## **Potential Benefits and Costs of Ecotourism**

Ecotourism is growing in many countries, and is mostly on undiscovered lands. As the numbers of tourists grow, so does the interest in seeing new places and seeking new experiences, and some of these locations show how tourism can have negative impacts. The primary costs and benefits for ecotourism are as follows:

### **Benefits**

#### **Costs**

Increased funding for protected areas and local communities

Environmental degradation

Job creation for local residents

Economic instability and inequity

Environmental education for visitors

Socio-cultural changes

### **About Naked Retreats**

The “ Naked Concept” was founded by Grant Horsfield in Shanghai around 2 years ago. Founders of Naked Retreats including Grant, Gabriela Lo, and Evan Lai was inspired by the prospect of providing ways of getting away while benefiting the lives of all involved. They believed that people, are

innately good at heart. Hence, they came out with the idea of Naked Retreats to provide ways in which people could nourish their own needs for recreation, while not leaving a massive carbon footprint.

Naked Retreats is located in Moganshan, at the top of the mountain. This village currently has about 40 guesthouses, villas and hotels (named Studios, Bungalows and Lodge) in various states of functionality and several mixed decades of decor. Naked Retreats also offer several event packages for its customers, including Corporate/School/Wedding events, as well as Yoga Weekend and Naked by Candlelight. There are many activities that could be arranged and done in Moganshan, and most of them have received great reviews from its customers, those includes Yoga, Tennis, Fishing, Mountain Biking, Hiking, Forest Walk and Daytrips to Tianshan.