

Be Travel Smart and Contribute to Saving the Environment

Tourism, in its modern form, is a result of the technological development. It provides tourists with the chance of a wider exposure and easy openness to the world, but on the other hand it is a threat to sustainability. The number of tourists is in rapid increase, and more than 70% of tourists within the Mediterranean visit the coast. Foreign destinations are exotic paradises offered to travelers in cheap holiday packages which consist of all-inclusive resorts, flights, and even local culture encapsulated in evening entertainment. You can have it all arranged for a convenient sum of money: accommodation, transportation, meals, and even what resembles a taste of culture and entertainment. This is Mass Tourism. A big number of tourists cooped up in resorts during a certain season. These tourists have no, or little contact with the local community and culture, neither do they benefit local economy, as most of the profit leaves the country into the pockets of foreign hotel owners and airline companies.

Community Based Tourism (CBT) on the other hand, still hasn't emerged as an alternative to Mass Tourism, but it should. It offers a more meaningful and pleasurable vacation to tourists parallel to preserving the environment and benefiting local communities. Community Based Tourism has a threefold focus, people, nature, and culture.



Many communities in cities and villages on the Mediterranean coast rent their houses to tourists during the summer. Contact between the tourist and the local owner is established either through Airbnb or directly through e-mails. Tourists spend their vacation as part of the community. House owners usually show their hospitality by presenting a bottle of olive oil or any other local product. The tourists emerge in small talks every morning with local shop keepers, restaurant and coffee shop owners and employees learning about the new community and place, and exchange experience. Spending a vacation within a community exposes the tourist to that new culture through food, music, language, interaction, and the sensation of the atmosphere, as the tourist's vacation is not planned for him/her, but by him/her.

Tourism should be linked with the environment for the purpose of saving the planet for future generations. Community Based Tourism is gentler towards water consumption, waste, and gridlock. The tourist in this case, compared to a local person, consumes equal amount of water. There are no golf courses and gardens to be watered, no pools, and no mass cooking and cleaning like in resorts and hotels that consume huge amounts of water and produce waste. Neither beaches nor public places are crowded. It is a more responsible approach to tourism and environment.

Compared to Mass Tourism, CBT is financially more convenient to the tourist and the economic contribution to the local community is also important. Accommodation is private local ownership, many of the restaurants are family businesses where the mother, the aunts, and the nephews all work together, and serve traditional fresh almost home cooked meals to tourists.



The relationship between the restaurant and stores' owners and their customers is by time developed into a warm one, through communication. Tourists usually tend to take home some local product and souvenirs too, to remind them of the beautiful experience.

All in all, before tourism becomes a victim of its own success, a more responsible approach towards it must be taken. Although Community Based Tourism hasn't turned into an alternative to Mass Tourism economically and politically, it has become a vacation alternative to travel smart people. Spreading awareness about the environmental threats of Mass Tourism is a must, and the responsibility of all Mediterranean residents.

