

## Summary

# Sustainable Tourism - The Key to Success

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## Tourism - a Worldwide Market in Movement

The world is more than ever in movement : increasing numbers of holiday trips are being made to increasingly far-flung regions by ever faster means of transport - for short stays or stays on the spot. This trend was confirmed again this year at the world's most important travel trade fair, the ITB 1997 in Berlin.

Worldwide the WTO (World Tourism Organisation) currently records more than 600 million cross-border tourism and business trips with at least one overnight stay - this figure includes, of course, compulsory trips such as refugee streams. On top of this there is an estimated 2,000 million or more trips within countries' internal borders. The world is more than ever in movement. About half of all these trips take place in Europe, most of them to the Mediterranean or the Alps.

The holiday trips made by the Germans alone of at least five days duration amount to nearly 60 million trips annually. 30% of these are in Germany, 30% travel or fly to the Mediterranean, barely 15% to the Alps, 15% to the rest of Europe and around 10% are to long distance destinations overseas.

## What type of tourism do we really want ?

Tourism not only creates jobs and income, and promotes intercultural relations and mutual understanding. It also contributes to the increasingly well-known side effects on people and populations, nature and culture caused by the enormous amounts of transportation, the consumption of resources, inadequate preparation of travel and inappropriate behaviour at the destination.

With RIO 92 and Agenda 21, the worldwide community / grouping of States has created a very general framework for sustainable, environmentally-friendly development. In this context the Federal Republic of Germany has committed itself to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 25-30% (on the basis of its 1990 levels) by the year 2005 - a goal which is slowly fading into the distance. With the *'International Convention on Climatic Change'*, and the Berlin Declaration on *'Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism'* made by the International Conference of Ministers of the Environment on 08.03.97 in Berlin should help to convert these general goals into more concrete and binding ones, and help to give a sense of direction to the growing worldwide economic sector of tourism. In this context Karl Tempel, head of the department for „Tourism, Leisure, Sport & Recreation" of the Federal Ministry of Environment, refers to the EU's 5th Environmental Action Programme (1992-1997) (and the European Council's meanwhile approved „European Strategy for Biological Diversity", which also contains recommendations for environmentally-directed tourism and leisure activities.

Where exactly this journey into the future will take us was an element of the speech made by the Secretary General of the „Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt‘ in his welcome to the **ECOTRANS FORUM "Sustainable Tourism - The Key to Success"** at ITB '97 in Berlin on 10. March 1997:

*"We sincerely hope that the holiday of the future will be characterised by the selection of more energy-saving forms of transport, hotels which produce less waste and use more regional produce, as well as the decision to make shorter trips and longer stays. In this context we hope that the large tour operators in particular will increasingly include sustainability in their future programmes".*

Sustainable tourism with equal-ranking ecological, social and economic goals is obviously more than just environment, jobs and profits. Economic prosperity and well-being, cultural diversity, and social peace are significant goals; but none is more important than the maintenance of the natural preconditions for life as „conditio sine qua non". Without economies and trade, sustainable development cannot be expected within the natural limits of growth. The „key to success" in the long term for a „tourism with future" lies in conditional orientation along ecological limit values and figures.

## **Key Indicators or : How do we measure Success ?**

"Hooray! In 1996 another 5% more visitors and 3% more turnover !" But how long did they stay, what did they really bring and what did they leave behind ?

In the framework of the ECOTRANS FORUM at ITB '97 \*), for the first time in a European context, environmental indicators in connection with practical examples for "more sustainability in tourism" in Germany, the Alps and the Mediterranean were presented and their effectiveness projected.

Figures on expenditure or the number of visitor arrivals have long ceased to be the measure for successful work in tourism. What counts, both today and tomorrow, are indicators reflecting the optimal use of available resources combined with the lowest possible environmental impact. Much more meaningful are e.g. :

- visitors' length of stay
- occupancy rates in terms of bednights
- spending on regional products.

These show the effectiveness of a regionally-oriented tourism concept and the corresponding figures should be a must for inclusion in any local or regional tourism report. Even more so the environmental indicators, which are proof of the success of the various measures initiated and carried out by businesses, 'Kommunen' (municipalities or local authorities / communities), associations and federations :

- drinking water consumption (hotel) per guest/per stay or meals (in restaurant)
- energy consumption per guest
- waste produced per guest
- use of energy by means of transport used for arrival
- proportion of guests using train, bus or bicycle as main means of transport
- proportion of trips in holiday area made by train, bus or bicycle

- incidence of endangered species, continued existence of attractive 'Kulturlandschaft' (historic landscape; land developed and cultivated by man) and ecologically valuable biotopes, water quality.

**A key indicator for developing more environmentally-friendly tourism is the use of energy on transport per day of stay.** For the tourists or the tour operator this means: if a long flight is involved, the stay should be as long as possible. For the destination this means: if guests are long-distance, as many overnights as possible.

## Case Studies show Opportunities

The following case studies, recently researched by ECOTRANS experts, show that even and particularly in so-called "mass tourism" successful steps towards achieving improved sustainability are possible.

- **Hotels make Profits through Environmental Protection**

**Heidelberg** is currently setting the standard with its Town Development Plan and integrated tourism model. As a long-distance destination, Heidelberg aims to attract "closer guests for a longer stay" - obviously a difficult undertaking. An easier goal would be to make immediate reductions in environmental pollution in the hospitality sector. With 800,000 overnight stays a year (and over 3,5 million day visitors !) in the hotels alone over 520,000 aluminium containers less a year can be used. Bruno Schmaus, Director of the 'Amt für Stadtentwicklung' (Department for City Development) projects this "small" amount: savings of 1560 litres of rubbish and 40,500 kWh of energy. In total, this means that Heidelberg's hospitality sector can make savings of 30% in energy or 9 out of 30 million kWh p.a. The much-visited city's contribution within the international climate alliance would mean a reduction of 5,400 t. in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. And with the installation of water heater savers in hotel rooms, 45.6 million litres of water were able to be saved. At current water prices of 3.59 DM/m<sup>3</sup> for drinking water and 3.70 DM/m<sup>3</sup> of waste water this meant savings of DM 350,000 for the businesses involved. The investment had paid for itself if after only four months.

And in the Mediterranean ? In **Southern Italy** it would be possible to make similar savings in energy and water immediately. Lorenzo Canova from the 'Associazione Culturale Turismo Ambiente' in Milan calculates that with an average daily consumption of 250 l. per guest and 35 million overnight stays, in this hot region water savings of over 2 million m<sup>3</sup> could be made. However, the low price of drinking water at only DM 1.25/qm - plus waste water rates only where there are water purification plants! - is not an incentive to the hotelier to make savings, particularly if at present DM 2.6 million less must be paid, and the investments would be paid for after ca. 1 year.

However, with energy in South Italy things could be different: average consumption of heating oil by the 3766 hotels is 118 kWh/m<sup>2</sup> of hotel area. 1/3 of this is used for heating water. 60% of this amount could be saved by installing solar panels. The current total costs of around DM 50 million could be reduced to DM 20 million p.a., with the investment paying for itself in 7 years. The European Commission hopes to promote the use of such installations through guarantees of success in the form of a '*Guarantee of Solar Results*': if, after installation, the hotelier has not achieved the energy savings calculated within a period of four years, the firm or company concerned agrees to take over the "damage".

- **Regional Products: Jobs and Traffic Reductions**

In the heavily-frequented Alps, in **Weissensee / Kärnten** Tourism Director Christoph Gruber counts on the 32 part-time (second occupation) farmers as guardians and managers of the attractive 'Kulturlandschaft' (historic landscape), formed by human hand, which is the main reason given by the 55,000 overnight guests and just as many day visitors for their visit. An ingenious premium or bonus for the cultivation of the landscape contributes to the survival of the farmers: the land is cultivated ecologically. "If someone applies fertilizer, his bonus is redistributed to the other areas." With the winning back of one-third of the previous land earmarked for development in Grünland in 1990, the motorboat ban on the lake which was already made 30 years ago, the prevention of a through-road and the building of the ring-sewerage installation in 1973, the early on had set out on the important course towards environmentally-friendly tourism development. For Karl Reiner, adviser of the *ÖAR Regionalentwicklung (ÖAR Regional Development)* in Vienna, now more than anything else, there is a need for action in the fields of transport and energy, e.g. by using the "Hackschnitzelverfeuerung".

More than anything the use of regional produce can - as in all predominantly agricultural regions - make a significant contribution towards safeguarding jobs and the regional economy, fully in harmony with and particularly in the preservation of the agriculturally-formed historic landscapes. Over several years in the **Rhön** Biosphere Reserve, Dieter Popp, from the *FUTOUR Environment, Tourism & Regional Consultancy* in Munich, made a projection of the potential and examined: the present average private consumption of regional products in Germany is around 2%, its use by the gastronomy sector around 3%. The use of gastronomic products in the Rhön rose from 4% to 10% between 1992 and 1996, the increased demand for hand-made products as e.g. in the furnishing of hotel rooms, achieved a turnover of around DM 5 million in 1995. An increase in the use of local products for private consumption of 20 % is perfectly feasible. We are all faced with this on a daily basis. As holiday guests we can all afford DM 8 per day, or as day visitors DM 0.20 per day for cheese or honey, fruit schnaps, or herbal teas without any problem. Such purchases in the Rhön alone could help secure around 2,000 family jobs which, in view of the scarcity of State budgetary resources, were no longer able to be supported. Over and above this, 500 new jobs could even be created. In the whole of Bavaria, several thousand million (billion) DM in value could be created in this way.

There is enormous potential for the desired synergy effects which can be achieved by reducing or avoiding long-distance transport routes, often across the length and breadth of Europe, and by supporting endangered jobs in agriculture or in manual professions and trades. Thus "sustainable tourism development" it is not only a question of the environment, but should also always address the issues of employment / jobs and the social aspects.

- **Nature Protection for Integrated Regional Development**

For Jürgen Resch of the '*Deutsche Umwelthilfe*' (German Environmental Aid) in Radolfzell, the increased use of regional products in tourism can easily go hand-in-hand with nature protection. Thus the flower island of Mainau on the Bodensee (Lake Constance), the mass destination in southern Germany with 1.5 million visitors a year, has completely converted all its gardening and agricultural enterprises to ecological farming. Today all the restaurant menus include a "Bio-Menu". Thanks to the demand for biological and organic products, pesticide and fertiliser use on over 20 ha. of agriculturally productive land was drastically reduced. The results: the number of species and the area of original natural 'Kulturlandschaft' or historic landscape have increased.

Nature protection is also surprisingly high on the agenda of **Calviá / Mallorca**. With 60,000 beds and 12 million overnight stays p.a., this epitome of mass tourism - is the first 'Gemeinde' (municipality / local authority) to have a local 'Agenda 21' i.e. with a binding model based on the principles of sustainable environmentally-friendly development, is working in close collaboration with citizens' groups, the authorities and businesses. What is already relatively normal for the Alpine area has remained a one-off until now in the Mediterranean region. The Lady Mayoress Margarita Najera draws attention not only to the spectacular blowing-up of 12 (admittedly extremely run-down) hotels and buildings previously used for tourism purposes. She has also applied to the Government of the Balearics for the designation of large areas and several islands as nature protection areas. These should mean that the building boom of the previous years has now finally ended. Quality is now its motto. With its 5 functioning (!) purification plants, Calvia is also the model for the Mediterranean. Nature conservationist Marion Hammerl-Cavanna from *the Fondo Patrimonio Natural Europeo (FPNE)* in Madrid refers to the continuing problems faced by the drinking water situation. Mallorca's self-sufficiency is no longer assured, a large part of the needs is brought to the island by ships from the mainland. With a relatively low water price of between DM 0.73 and DM 3.81 / m<sup>3</sup> there is no real incentive to make savings: the 259 l. / per guest per day could be considerably reduced. Anyone awaiting the development of Mallorca into a "green" model island which has ceased to exceed its carrying capacity will be disappointed: the take-off and landing capacity of the airport is presently being more than doubled - quite the reverse of a sign to limit visitor figures.

- **Tour Operators : The Bridge to Demand**

Tour operators are also being questioned about limiting the particularly serious environmental pollution caused by the rising and increasingly energy-intensive amounts of transport produced by tourism. **Studiosus Reisen Munich**, with its own operations / business model has committed itself not only to achieving the highest possible degree of environmental performance and social responsibility, but is also the first tour operator to recently carry out a comprehensive environmental audit with the help of FUTOUR. The main achievement, for Michael Schablow from FUTOUR, is in the integration and transposition of a detailed catalogue of measures in various areas of business. For example, this already includes the exemplary collation of transport 'energy balance-sheets'. Studiosus was able to chalk up concrete successes in the use of rail transport as an alternative to aeroplane in 1996. 18% of the 92,000 customers chose Italy as their destination, of which one in three opted for a city tour in Rome. Mario Kubsch, an executive shareholder, is of course happy that the bookings to Rome have increased by 22% within one year. But he is particularly happy - and justifiably so - that this growth has been achieved almost completely in the rail sector. The reasons for this lie in their exemplary information work - e.g. by giving comparisons of energy use by the different means of transportation in their catalogue - and in the price: anyone who books Rome may, at no extra cost, use the comfortable rail shuttle from his home to Munich Central Station. This helps to reduce the specific transport energy consumption per guest by more than 6%, the total consumption of Rome-visitors has increased by "only" 14%. Whilst more and more people are flying, here a slight dissociation between the idea of tourism growth and air transport can be seen.

For Europe's largest tour operator **TUI**, things are obviously not that simple. Dr. Wolf-Michael Iwand, Environment Director of TUI, with over 4 million customers p.a. can list numerous small successes. However, compared to the total volume no big successes can be seen in the use of transport resources for the arrival, or in the consumption of water and energy or waste produced in the more than 50,000 hotel beds with TUI involvement. Nevertheless TUI is the first large tour operator to introduce environmental checklists for its contract hotels and destinations, although the results obviously do not exert a great influence on the purchasing policy. If customers want to know more



about the environmental situation in the holiday destinations, they can find general information and advice on environmentally-friendly hotels in TUI's catalogues. This information could be expanded further if TUI wishes to meet the demands of its clients. With the small but well-produced environmental brochure on Mallorca, TUI has proved that it can inform its customers well, without spoiling their holiday mood. Further brochures on this type are also in the pipeline.

Given adequate demand, the pioneers in city, Alpine or Mediterranean tourism can survive, gain market share and thus contribute towards the 'ecologising' of this huge branch of economic activity. If we can see the energy consumption of the different means of transport in black & white in tourism brochures, and can read about environmental awards in tourism on the Internet \*), and if the information in local tourism brochures contains information on hotels with ecolabels, then we should be able to make more spontaneous decisions that favour the environment.

- **More sustainability = more quality**

Through increased cooperation in local networks (of the 'Gemeinden': municipalities, local authorities) and through joint marketing, tourism resorts and regions can make use of the synergies which they urgently need to survive and to write off or amortise their environmental investments. In tourism without frontiers, here above all European policies with their aid programmes are required, particularly if it is to do with reducing pollution and environmental pressures caused by the continual increase in tourism and goods traffic.

However, tourism-induced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are unlikely to be reduced through voluntary environmental efforts by a growth-oriented economy. Besides the "soft" instruments such as voluntary commitments and environmental audits, ecological seals / ecolabels and environmental awards & prizes, networks and seminars are not enough. "Hard" instruments such as drinking water prices and refuse collection charges, the removal of tax exemptions on aviation fuel or a CO<sub>2</sub>/energy tax to implement the "polluter pays principle" are indispensable. The sooner and the more clearly the policies on regional as well as at international level impose the appropriate legal and tax regulations, the sooner binding environmental plans in the style of „Sustainable Netherlands" can be worked out and introduced in the form of a development framework at national level, the suppliers of tourism products will be able to better calculate and invest more securely. In this way they will also be investing in quality. Because greater sustainability of the tourism product i.e. more regional products, less noise and emissions, less waste and unpurified sewage - means the creation of jobs and quality of life for the local population, and an improved quality of holidays for the guest. **Sustainability and quality in tourism are two sides of the same coin.**

**\*) Literature Tips**

**Holidays and Travelling in Germany - environmentally-friendly, naturally !**

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**The Book of Seals & Ecolabels**, International Seals & Ecolabels in Tourism, Herbert Hamele / ECOTRANS e.V. with support from the Germany Ministry for the Environment (German & English), Munich 1996

on Internet : <http://www.wttc.org/ECoNETT>

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