



UNEP's Assessment and Management of Environmental Pollution (AMEP)

25 things you should know about Tourism and the Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR)

1. Tourism is very important for the Wider Caribbean Region. In 2007 it generated US\$56.1 billion of economic activity and is expected to increase to US\$107.3 billion by 2017.¹
2. In at least 8 Caribbean countries, tourism accounts for over 30% of the GDP.²
3. Tourism has become the dominant sector in Caribbean economies generating one fifth (1/5) of all jobs and accounting for one quarter (1/4) of all foreign exchange earnings.
4. Net benefits derived from tourism, fisheries and shoreline protection could be reduced, due to coral degradation by an estimated US\$350-\$870 million/yr.³
5. The most popular tourist activities are; beach lounging, scuba diving, snorkeling, water sports and fishing.
6. The current practice of tourism in the Caribbean are NOT sustainable, they are depleting our natural resources- presently 2/3 of the Caribbean's coral reefs are at risk.
7. Resort building damages the natural coast line. Sand and coral are being mined for aesthetic and structural purposes.
8. Currently 22% of reef in the region have been lost, this figure is expected to reach 50% by 2015.⁴
9. In the last 20 years, cruise ship tourism has quadrupled worldwide; with 58% of the world's cruise ship passengers occupying the Caribbean cruise industry.⁵
10. Globally cruise ships bring with them between 3 to 10 billion tons of ballast water.⁶ This water is harmful to the marine environment as it contains more than 7,000 invasive species that destroy native creatures.⁷

¹ WORLD TRAVEL & TOURISM COUNCIL, "Caribbean The 2007 Travel & Tourism Economic Research." *World Travel and Tourism Council*; (2007)

² Tourism Expansion: increasing threats or conservation opportunities? ." *Environment Alert Bulletin*. UNEP. Web.26 Aug 2009. <http://www.grid.unep.ch/product/publication/download/ew_tourism.en.pdf>.

³ Tourism Expansion: increasing threats or conservation opportunities? ." *Environment Alert Bulletin*. UNEP. Web.26 Aug 2009. <http://www.grid.unep.ch/product/publication/download/ew_tourism.en.pdf>.

⁴ Vanzella-Khouri, Alessandra. "CARIBBEAN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ISSUES: Our Natural Environment: Importance, Symbiotic and Conflicting Relationships." 2006. CEP UNEP. Web.24 Aug 2009.

⁵ Tourism Expansion: increasing threats or conservation opportunities? ." *Environment Alert Bulletin*. UNEP. Web.26 Aug 2009. <http://www.grid.unep.ch/product/publication/download/ew_tourism.en.pdf>.

⁶ "Globallast." 18 Dec 2006 Web.26 Aug 2009. <<http://globallast.imo.org>>.

11. Cruise ships leak or spill oil an estimated 250 times yearly in the Caribbean Sea. This oil poisons the sensitive marine and coastal organic substrate, interrupting the food chain that marine creatures depend on.⁸
 12. Resorts dump waste into the sea, currently only 1/4 of hotel and resort wastewater treatment plants are in good operating condition. This introduces toxins (nutrient, pathogens and viruses) into the water that are deadly for many sea creatures.⁹
 13. Approximately 1.2 million divers visited the Caribbean, in the year 2000.
 14. Inexperienced and irresponsible snorkelers and divers frequently touch and feed wild life. In addition they also crush and break corals and other reef dwelling organisms with their fins, equipment and body parts.¹⁰
 15. Overfishing is the most pervasive direct human threat to reefs and threatens 60% of them. ¹¹Overfishing poses the greatest threat to the Eastern Caribbean reefs followed by coastal development, sedimentation and pollution.¹²
 16. In many tourist areas there is overharvesting of marine resources for seafood or as souvenirs, this reduces the biodiversity of the region, throwing off the natural balance of marine life and the food chain.¹³
 17. There will be no future for tourism unless it becomes sustainable. Sustainable tourism aims to prevent or minimize ecological impacts by using natural resources efficiently. This includes biodiversity, fresh water and energy; it also seeks to prevent pollution and physical degradation of ecosystems. In short it seeks to preserve the natural state of the area and its inhabitants.¹⁴
 18. Ecotourism is a form of sustainable tourism. It promotes responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and sustain the well-being of the local people.¹⁵
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⁷ Vanzella-Khouri, Alessandra. "CARIBBEAN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ISSUES: Our Natural Environment: Importance, Symbiotic and Conflicting Relationships." 2006. CEP UNEP. Web.24 Aug 2009.

⁸ Vanzella-Khouri, Alessandra. "CARIBBEAN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ISSUES: Our Natural Environment: Importance, Symbiotic and Conflicting Relationships." 2006. CEP UNEP. Web.24 Aug 2009.

⁹ Gardner, Lloyd . "PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM SECTOR IN THE CONTEXT OF PHYSICAL ALTERATIONS AND DESTRUCTION OF HABITATS (PADH) IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION." 2003. UNEP, GPA.

¹⁰ Gardner, Lloyd . "PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM SECTOR IN THE CONTEXT OF PHYSICAL ALTERATIONS AND DESTRUCTION OF HABITATS (PADH) IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION." 2003. UNEP, GPA.

¹¹ Mark Spalding, Philip Kramer, Edmund Green, Suzie Greenhalgh, Hillary Nobles, Johnathan Kool World Resources Institute WA S, "Reefs at Risk." 2004. World Resources Institute. Web.26 Aug 2009.

¹² Mark Spalding, Philip Kramer, Edmund Green, Suzie Greenhalgh, Hillary Nobles, Johnathan Kool World Resources Institute WA S, "Reefs at Risk." 2004. World Resources Institute. Web.26 Aug 2009.

¹³ "A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE ." *Managing Environmental Impacts In The Marine Recreation Sector*. The Center for Environmental Leadership in Business (CELB).

¹⁴ Barbut, Monique . "Tourism Expansion : increasing threats, or conservation opportunities ?." *Environment Alert Bulletin*. 2005. UNEP.

¹⁵ Barbut, Monique . "Tourism Expansion : increasing threats, or conservation opportunities ?." *Environment Alert Bulletin*. 2005. UNEP.

What can you do?

1. Even touching a marine creature can harm them. Follow a no contact policy when snorkeling or diving, this ensures that you will have as little negative impact as possible on the wildlife in the Caribbean Sea.¹⁶
2. Support ecologically sustainable fisheries practices. If you eat seafood cuisine, do not choose fish that are threatened or endangered, instead, choose non-threatened or non-endangered fish.¹⁷
3. The level of wildlife disturbance caused by snorkelers and divers can be significantly reduced with a voluntary policy of: “take only pictures leave only memories”. This discourages fish feeding and harassment of wildlife. Do NOT feed or harass wild life.¹⁸
4. Providing artificial food to sharks, reef fish or other marine wildlife can alter their behavior, impair their natural feeding abilities and negatively affect their survival mechanisms. Again never feed wild animals.
5. Partial or total catch-and-release programs can be especially effective when dealing with threatened or endangered fish species. When fishing practice catch and release fishing.
6. Monofilament lines, lead weight nets and other fishing tools tangle and kill corals and other types of marine life. Ensure that nothing is left behind from fishing.
7. Find out the facts about the place that you are visiting. Ask key questions about their environmental policy- waste disposal, recycling, energy use- to see if you are supporting an eco-friendly establishment.

For more information see

www.cep.unep

¹⁶ A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE ." *Managing Environmental Impacts In The Marine Recreation Sector*. The Center for Environmental Leadership in Business (CELB).

¹⁷ "A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE ." *Managing Environmental Impacts In The Marine Recreation Sector*. The Center for Environmental Leadership in Business (CELB).

¹⁸ "A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE ." *Managing Environmental Impacts In The Marine Recreation Sector*. The Center for Environmental Leadership in Business (CELB).