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Optimising tropical ecotourism: the case of 3 Malaysian destinations

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Ecotourism – defined

According to Newsome et al. (2013)* ‘Ecotourism’ can be understood in terms of 5 fundamental characteristics

1. Based on the natural environment (conserved areas)

2. Ecologically sustainable
   Minimal impact
   Principles of sustainability

Ecotourism – defined

3. Environmentally educative
Enjoyable and meaningful experiences
Knowledge and awareness
Expectations of ecotourists

4. Locally beneficial
Support, services and products
(local employment)

5. Tourist satisfaction
Quality, safety and business viability
Ecotourism attractions in Malaysia

Tropical forests
Waterfalls
Wildlife
Mountain summits
Rivers
Coral reefs
Beaches
Islands

Strong marketing of ecotourism attractions especially Malaysian Borneo
Rafflesia & Mossy Forest Adventure
(8.45am to 6.00pm)

- Aborigine village
- Blow pipe Hunting (Demonstration)
- Waterfall/ Swimming
- Jungle Trekking (1 to 2 hours)
- Rafflesia - The world's biggest flower (Seasonal)
- Tea Plantation & Factory
- Gunung Brinchang (6,666 ft)
- Mossy Forest (Oldest Forest)

Travel By 4x4 off-Road Drive Vehicle

RM 98 per head
* exclude entrance fees
Walk trail leading to the summit of Irau, Cameron Highlands
Infrastructure

Facilitates access

Minimises impact

Visitor safety

Visitor satisfaction
Beyond the Boardwalk!

Impacts

Visitor safety?

Tourist satisfaction?
Maintenance of Facilities

Impacts

Tourist satisfaction?
Leave no trace!
Environmental education?
Tourist map highlighting Robinson falls

This path section down to the power station is quite steep.
Orientation: issues of quality
Integrity of walk trails

Impacts

Visitor safety?

Tourist satisfaction?
Safety and tourist satisfaction!
Visual impact, safety and tourist satisfaction!
Solid waste disposal issues and littering

Quality!

Tourist satisfaction!
Green route no more

I refer to “Runaway development” (Front page, Sept 17). I use the Cameron Highlands-Gua Musang road when I make the journey back to my kampung. I have seen the Lojing area and as reported, it is no longer the verdant hills that it used to be.

Now all the hills are bald or no more and it is sad to see the destruction of the natural forest there to be replaced with government buildings and vegetable farms.

The report said that the Environment Department is monitoring development to make sure it’s sustainable. But are they really doing anything to protect what is left? It may be private land, but what about the destruction of the natural habitat nearby?

Unfortunately, my route back home will no longer be green but I guess I can now stop to buy vegetables.

Sulaiman
Bangi
Based on the natural environment
Based on the natural environment: conserved areas
River corridors in the landscape
Waterfalls, rivers and streams promoted as tourist attractions

Quality!

Tourist satisfaction!

Safety?
Location of the Kinabatangan River
Sukau rainforest Lodge, Sabah
Tourism operations and activities

Guided touring
Main river
Tributaries
Ox bow lake

Walk trails
Lodge boardwalk
Ox bow lake land component

In-house interpretation
Local community

Employ local people
Strong educational focus
Tree planting programmes
Use local produce
(locally made boats)
Donate rain water tanks
Donations for education
Transport for families who need medical attention
Pay for medical checkups
(4 villages)

Principles of ecotourism realised
Pesticides
Fertilisers
Erosion
Ecotourism along the K. River: recognising problems of sustainability, quality and visitor satisfaction

1. Beyond the borders: Expansion of oil palm industry

2. Within the borders: Uncontrolled development, lodge proliferation, excessive numbers of boats

3. On site: Noise and fumes from boats, behaviour of tour operators, crowding at viewings
Tanjung Piai

325 ha mangrove

1997 P A status
Information boards, signage, 350m jetty, 1.2 km boardwalk, trails, bird hide, camping facilities
Visitation
2002: 8,000
2009: 46,267
LINDUNGI BUMI KITA
PROTECT OUR PLANET
Dilarang menggunakan Polistren & styrofoam
No Polystreene, styrofoam allowed in the park!
Congratulations! You are now standing at the southern most tip of mainland Asia.
Ecotourism at Tanjung Pai: recognising problems of sustainability, quality and visitor satisfaction

1. Beyond the borders: Significant problems arising from the wider seascape

2. Within the borders: Harvesting of mangroves

3. On site: Degradation by rubbish
TRF environments have the potential to provide for high quality ecotourism experiences but.....

Violations of the principles of ecotourism (trail impacts, pollution, development impacts) are evident

Tourism agencies can do more to promote, market and advance the benefits of authentic ecotourism

Negative influences from the matrix pose serious problems for the future

On-site management and maintenance essential
Thank you