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Global Perspective of Ecotourism: Listening to Visitors and Locals -- Ecotourism means something different to everyone and in this review Ron Mader discusses the ways to engage visitors and locals. He presents an overview of key issues are being discussed around the world including the heated debate on carbon emission offsetting and tourism, the role awards play in developing awareness and how the web is being used for distance learning. Results from the recent Planeta.com review of the impact of the International Year of Ecotourism will be included as well as proposals for using grassroots events and Web 2.0 technology as tools to connect visitors and locals.

CARBON EMISSIONS

Most visitors to New Zealand indicate strong interest in nature and conservation. New Zealand is taking a leading role in discussing carbon emissions and developing strategies in respect to long haul travel. Visitors who travel a great distance are conscious of why they are traveling and what they are seeking. How will New Zealand officials answer questions about the environmental impact of transportation? As travelers are increasingly concerned about climate change, will this manifest in changing travel plans?

Recommended reading: [Carbon Emission Offsetting](#), [Environmental Impact of Transportation](#)

AWARDS

Participants in the [Ethical Marketing of Ecotourism Conference](#) and the [Ecotourism Certification Workshop](#) emphasized that awards play an important role in establishing a positive reputation for an eco lodge or guide service. Acknowledging best practices in tourism ecotourism is still evolving. Leaders who attempt to work in an ethical and ecological fashion do so not necessarily for the recognition, but appreciate the kudos given by their peers.

Recommended reading: [2007 Ecotourism Spotlight Award](#), [Reflections on Awards](#)

WEB 2.0

The changes at hand in tourism are notable. The online booking industry has been transformed with reviews by travelers and by operators and associations using new online tools that revolutionize the way visitors are guided. A challenge for operators lies in understanding the new venues for dialogue and promotion. As veteran trend watcher Steve Bridger [points out](#), much of the action is taking place 'out there' in social networks and online communities instead of from your own website.

Recommended reading: [Strategies for using Web 2.0 for Travel Operators and Visitors](#), [Web 2.0](#)

USING THE WEB FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

How to best leverage limited resources depends on bridging the online and offline worlds. Challenges for educational institutions will be the incorporation of rating systems that evaluate individual professors and student work. The 'ethics' within institutions will be a hot topic in 2008.

Recommended reading: [Seminars](#), [Educational Travel](#)

FIVE YEARS AFTER THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ECOTOURISM

In May 2007 Planeta.com conducted a [survey](#) to evaluate the development of ecotourism in the five years since the [International Year of Ecotourism](#). Three dozen respondents have responded. Among the findings: respondents are cynical about the development of ecotourism, believe that indigenous people are not actively included and give low marks to United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organization. These criticisms, Mader argues, should be taken as a roadmap for making immediate corrections that can win over the critics.

Recommended reading: [Evaluating the Impact of the International Year of Ecotourism: Anniversary Report, IYE+5](#)

URBAN ECOTOURISM

Also, in connection with our focus on [urban ecotourism](#), Planeta.com is launching [CJ-friendly](#) city guides to Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington.

Recommended reading: [Urban ecotourism](#), [Citizen Journalism](#)