The ECOCLUB Team wishes you a Happy & Eco New Year 2009!

a year with less violence, irrationality, inequality, intolerance, ignorance, greed, pollution & waste,
with more meaningful & pleasant eco journeys that support communities & promote understanding

ECOCLUB Members & Friends offer new year messages on Tourism & the Environment in 2009:

As the year 2008 comes to a close, there are indeed many dark clouds overhead regarding the state of the world economy, the environment (including climate change), tourism, etc. Perhaps it is still too early to notice any noticeable decline in ecotourism visitation around the world. What I have noticed, however, is that in many countries (especially Latin America, including my own Mexico) adventure tourism and “extreme sports” activities seem to be gaining the lead over true ecotourism. Unfortunately many of the former modes of practicing tourism are not very sustainable and frequently their practice does not do much to enhance the appreciation of the beauties of nature. What is worse, many of these unsustainable activities are being described as “ecotourism” activities in many countries and it is a pity that many people believe that to truly enjoy the outdoors one must rely on excessive gadgets and contraptions: zip-lines or zip wires, “gotcha”, rappel gear, jet-skis, expensive mountain bikes, etc. In my experience, to really be in communion with nature you hardly need anything more than good hiking boots, keeping your eyes and ears open (binoculars are a big help, of course, for wildlife viewing, especially birding) and an open spirit of awe and admiration upon beholding the natural glories of our planet…. A Merry Christmas and a great 2009 to everybody!"

Arq. Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, Director General PICE, Mexico

"Tourism is an important economic engine for the United States and beyond, so informed and sustainable tourism policies should become a national priority globally. Policies should be established to handle tourism-related issues effectively, including having the necessary support staff that are intimately familiar with how best to utilize sustainability as a means to enhance the positive economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism. International visitors provide an important source of revenue for many economies around the world. In the U.S., for example, the Travel Promotion Act should be passed in order to better leverage the US’ many cultural and natural resources to the appropriate markets through the creation of the Corporation of Travel Promotion. Provide economic incentives and tax credits to the private sector that help to offset any up-front costs and incentivize the adoption of sustainable business practices. Renewable energy and energy efficiency are key elements in our transformation from a high carbon, oil dependent economy to a sustainable low carbon economy. Investment in mass transportation infrastructure should also be a priority since reliable and affordable mass transit options enable larger and more diverse populations to travel wider distances”

Brian T. Mullis, President, Sustainable Travel International, United States

"Many people around the world are working hard to protect their cultural and natural heritage and offering excellent alternatives to generic tourism that destroys their communities. They are providing crucial services to society and deserve our greatest respect. Many travellers think their world should follow them wherever they go – chlorine, jet skis, unlimited water and electricity. Some travellers think that residents should be their servants and free entertainments. If communities could ban anyone that contributes to their destruction (including their government), tourism would nearly grind to a halt. To sustain our world is to respect it and be the solution.”

Nikki Rose, Founder & Director, Crete’s Culinary Sanctuaries, Greece

"We are experiencing a remarkable phase of tourism development at a time when the environmental challenges requires urgent attention and sustainability is in the top of development agendas. One billion tourists will travel around the world by the end of this decade. They will demand enormous quantities of energy, water, and natural resources to support their holidays. Sustainability in the tourism is associated with lower costs and more benefits since it is about a better management of resources. For this reason sustainable tourism should not be approached as a small niche market but as a mainstream option for successful tourism development.”

Dr Stefanos Fotiou, Tourism Programme Coordinator, United Nations Environment Programme

"With the Carbon Consultancy I am launching www.flysma.n.org and a campaign to encourage people to fly less, if they fly then to fly more efficiently and to assuage their guilt by giving to carbon philanthropy rather than by buying a permit to pollute from an off-setting company. Other priorities for 2009 are to establish a transparent auditing system for Responsible Tourism; to encourage people to blow the whistle on irresponsible tourism (www.irresponsibletourism.info) and to work with local governments to enhance their ability to manage tourism in destinations, in order to realise the ambition of "making better places for people to live in, better places for people to visit.”

Professor Harold Goodwin, International Centre for Responsible Tourism, Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom


9/1/2009
"In my new book, Reinvent, I discuss how travel adventure can change your life. With unprecedented economic, social and political turmoil facing us in 2009 a new vision of how travel can reinvent communities is needed. Despite lower incomes and employment uncertainty, I believe tourism will persevere. Government leaders should embrace tourism as a legitimate economic stimulus and support creative, grass-root initiatives that maximize community benefits. Politicians and banks have had their turn at leading change and the results have been less than stellar. Perhaps, in the New Year the voices of environmentalists and artists will be heard!"

Carol Patterson, Principal, Kalahari Management, Canada

"What would it take to show that change is truly part of the new tourism landscape? My take is - we need to see a whole new generation of professional endeavour. Tourism 2.0 - to take a page from author Thomas Friedman’s books. Back in the “day,” we were pleased to celebrate the small number of companies that were achieving change. Now “green” tourism has become a norm. But methods to deliver “green” are far from systematized. Benchmarking the environmental and social impacts of tourism corporations worldwide, especially carbon impacts, are a critical starting point. Let the measurements begin!"


"Tourism and Environment 2008: Australia. Climate change is now on the industry’s agenda but is overshadowed by financial and forex issues. Adaptation options are not yet being considered at the scale of individual destinations, except ski resorts. State government budgets for some parks agencies have been cut, especially in NSW, and tourism lobbyists are using the opportunity to try to obtain development rights in conservation areas. There is a growing interest in connectivity conservation involving private lands, but the focus as yet is more on publicly-funded stewardship schemes than on tourism opportunities."

Professor Ralph Buckley, Director, International Center for EcoTourism Research, Griffith University, Australia

"What is the future of ecotourism industry and environmental degradation in Malaysia? Well, it has certainly not looked too well for this naturally beautiful tropical rainforest country towards the end of this year. With intense rain (more than 250mm), massive landslides have been occurring in Malaysia with the worst being the recent Bukit Antrabangsa, a highland residential area in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur that had left 4 dead. “Enough is enough, stop the hillside projects”, said the Prime Minister of Malaysia. But sadly calls for controlled development has fallen deaf among many hillside developers. Then comes the headline news, Tasik Chini, the second largest lake in the country, was dying “a slow and unnatural death”. The once famed lake, an ecotourism destination is totally polluted and not accessible to tourist. Yet again, the enforcement to tackle this fragile environment has failed miserably. Malaysia has to wake up and take the environmental issues more seriously before the goose that is laying the golden eggs is gone for good."

Dr. Vikneswaran Nair, Taylor’s University College, Malaysia

"Under the Asean Sky: The blue Asean Sky will be most likely be covered in red in 2009 and beyond. With the financial and economic challenges in the rest of the world, I foresee the huge increase in air traffic in Asean. The recent air liberalisation of KL-Singapore sector, the continuing introduction of new routes by Air Asia around Asean countries with its purchase of 175 new aircrafts to be delivered up to 2013, the addition of new LCCC, Tiger Air and Jetstar into the region will help drive traffic up and price down on some of the routes which has been traditionally protected and milked exclusively by national carriers. The multilateral air agreements once ratified by all ten Asean transport ministers in 2009 will further create more competition and grow the tourism arrival to and within the Asean sky providing a much needed economic stimulus for a trying economic times. Finally, more people can afford to fly on short and medium haul even as the rest of the world is in recession come 2009. Not all is bleak yet... Kota Kinabal where I am based will see a boom in tourism arrival in 2009 once the new airport is completed. We will see a shortage of rooms and it will catch some of us by surprise as more people travel short haul."

Albert Teo, Managing Director, Borneo Eco Tours, Malaysia

"Dear Friends of ECOCCLUB. Let me start end with words, which are not mine: I have a dream. I have the dream, that the nations, races, cultures, religions, any individual will be willing and able to learn from each other, to respect the differences, and to understand the values of our colourful world, to realize the common within the differences, to enable themselves to look and to feel behind of the horizon. I have the dream, the leaders of this wonderful planet will give more attention to the tourism industry being the world largest employer and having an enormous chance and responsibility for a global social, economical and ecological ‘change’ (an important word in 2008) in order to enable the tourism stakeholders to take over their responsibility for real active interhuman intercultural understanding and peace from heart. Money is good and important, but for tomorrow we need responsible, sustainable, holistic travel and tourism which is to create a common long term future. Listening to the economic and financial managers we should follow the church reformer Martin Luthers saying “Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.” Does the tourism industry have a chance to change? Yes, we can!"

Burkhard Hebert, Editor, WorldTourismDirectory.com, Germany

"Ever since I work for PAN Parks Foundation, I consider 2009 as probably the most important year. The main challenge will be to take forward wilderness conservation in Europe. There is a draft report on wilderness areas which will be discussed and hopefully approved by the plenary of the European Parliament on February. There will be the first ever European wide conference on Wild and Nearly Wild Land in Prague on May. The challenge for us in these processes will be to ensure that tourism is considered as a potential ally for wilderness conservation!"

Zoltan Kun, Director, Pan Parks Foundation, Hungary