

ECOTOURISM IN CHINA: PROBLEMS AND WAYS TO SOLUTIONS

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Ecotourism is a new type of tourism based on the concept of sustainable development, with the protection of the ecological environment and local culture at its core, and with the goal of promoting local economic development and improving the well-being of local communities. However, there are some problems in the actual development of ecotourism, such as large differences in the development of ecotourism between regions, disturbances caused by the entry of tourists, people's lack of awareness of ecological environmental protection, backward infrastructure construction, and the emphasis on development and neglect of ecological protection, etc. These problems have a direct impact on the ecological environment, which restricts the sustainable development of ecotourism. This paper will discuss the problems and solutions for ecotourism.

Keywords: ecotourism; environmental protection; sustainable development.

ЭКОТУРИЗМ В КИТАЕ: ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПУТИ ИХ РЕШЕНИЯ

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Экотуризм – это новый вид туризма, основанный на концепции устойчивого развития, в основе которого лежит защита экологической среды и местной культуры, а также содействие региональному экономическому развитию и повышение благосостояния местного населения. Однако в развитии экотуризма существуют некоторые проблемы, такие как значительные различия в развитии экотуризма между регионами, нарушения, вызванные въездом туристов, недостаточная осведомленность людей об охране окружающей среды, отставание в строительстве инфраструктуры, акцент на развитии и пренебрежение охраной окружающей среды и т.д. Эти проблемы оказывают непосредственное влияние на экологическую обстановку, что ограничивает устойчивое развитие экотуризма. В данной статье будут рассмотрены проблемы экотуризма и пути их решения.

Ключевые слова: экотуризм; охрана окружающей среды; устойчивое развитие.

The term «ecotourism» was first coined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1983 and defined by the International Ecotourism Society (IES) in 1993 as tourism activities that have a dual responsibility for the protection of the natural environment and the preservation of the livelihoods of local people [1].

In 1992, China's first national forest park, Zhangjiajie National Forest Park, was established, organically combining tourism development with ecological environmental protection [2]. Ecotourism at this stage was based on nature reserves, emphasising the protection of the natural environment and culture, but on a smaller scale and with limited impact. With the development of global tourism and people's increasing concern for the ecological environment, ecotourism has entered a stage of vigorous development. This stage is characterized by the continuous enrichment of ecotourism products and the expansion of the market scale, making it an important part of the global tourism industry.

As of 2021, a total of 2,750 nature reserves have been established nationwide. Among them, there are 474 state-level nature reserves [3]. The concept of ecotourism has gradually gained wider acceptance as a sustainable way of tourism. It can be seen that the prospects for the development of ecotourism in China are optimistic, and the speed of development is also amazing. The state gives governmental support to encourage supportive attitudes and policies, at the same time various attractions and tourist areas are also paying more and more attention to the protection and development of ecotourism.

At present, the ecotourism areas open in China mainly include forest parks, scenic spots and nature reserves. According to the type of ecotourism, China's current famous ecotourism scenic spots can be divided into the following nine categories:

- 1) mountain ecological scenic spots, represented by the Five Mountains, famous Buddhist mountains, famous Taoist mountains, etc.;
- 2) lake ecological scenic spots, represented by Changbaishan Tianchi, Zhaoqing Xinghu, Qinghai's Qinghai Lake, etc.;
- 3) forest ecological scenic spots, represented by Jilin's Changbai Mountains, Yunnan's Xishuangbanna Tropical Rainforest, etc.;
- 4) grasslands ecological scenic spots, represented by Hulunbeier grassland in Inner Mongolia, etc.;
- 5) marine ecological scenic spots, represented by mangrove coasts in Beihai, Guangxi and Wenchang, Hainan, etc.;
- 6) bird-watching ecological scenic spots, represented by wintering migratory birds nature reserve at Poyang Lake in Jiangxi Province, bird island at Qinghai Lake, etc.;

7) ice and snow ecotourism zones, represented by Yulong Snow Mountain in Lijiang, Yunnan Province, and Changbai Mountain in Yenbian, Jilin Province, etc.;

8) drift ecological scenic spots, represented by Hubei Province, the Shennongjia and others;

9) drift ecological scenic spots, represented by Hubei Province, the Shennongjia and other ecotourism areas. Shennongjia, etc.;

9) hiking adventure ecological scenic spots, represented by Mt. Everest in Tibet, Lop Nor, the Grand Canyon of the Yarlung Zangbo River, etc.

In recent years, but also due to the improvement of people's living standards, social, economic and scientific and technological development, ecotourism is rapidly developing in the direction of returning to nature as the keynote, in order to protect the natural resources, the natural environment, and promote the harmonious development of the regional society for the purpose of advocating that people in the process of protecting the environment to feel the beauty of nature.

Although ecotourism in China is developing rapidly, it is also facing a number of problems, mainly in the following areas:

1. Large differences in ecotourism development between regions. The natural environment and resource conditions are important factors affecting the development of ecotourism. China is rich in natural ecosystems, covering different climatic zones and geographical environments from east to west and from south to north. As a result, ecotourism resources in each region are also distinctive. For example, forest ecotourism in the northeast, tropical rainforest ecotourism in Yunnan, and plateau ecotourism in Tibet all have unique charms. Generally speaking, regions with a higher level of economic development have more funds to invest in the development of ecotourism, such as the eastern coastal regions and some inland economically developed regions. The economically backward regions, on the other hand, may not be able to fully develop ecotourism due to a lack of funds.

2. Disturbances caused by tourists' entry. The influx of tourists has put pressure on the environment of the protected areas. The activities of tourists, such as trampling on the grass and discarding rubbish, cause a certain degree of damage to the natural environment, threatening the survival of local flora and fauna and the ecological balance. The activities of tourists may interfere with the life and reproduction of wild animals, and may even trigger changes in animal behavior, such as changes in migration and feeding routes. The consumption behavior of some tourists towards wildlife, such as buying wildlife products, may also pose a threat to animals. At the same time, tourists' entry into tourist areas also has an impact on the water environment. Rubbish and sewage discharges from tourism activities may pollute water bodies,

affecting the survival of aquatic organisms and water quality. In addition, the influx of a large number of tourists also increases the emission of atmospheric pollutants, including car exhaust and carbon dioxide exhaled by tourists, all of which will affect the local atmospheric environment.

3. Outdated infrastructure construction. The primary problem in China's ecotourism infrastructure construction is inadequate facilities. This is mainly in the areas of transport, accommodation, catering, interpretation and education. Some eco-tourism areas have backward transport conditions and poor road conditions, which affect the arrival and departure of tourists. Meanwhile, accommodation and catering facilities are insufficient to meet the basic needs of tourists, which reduces their travelling experience and satisfaction. In addition, the lack of interpretation and educational facilities fails to provide tourists with adequate information and education, which affects their knowledge and understanding of ecotourism areas. At the same time, many facilities are aging and damaged due to the lack of necessary maintenance and upkeep, which affects the normal use of the facilities. This not only shortens the service life of the facilities, but also increases operating costs and maintenance difficulties.

4. Emphasis on development and neglect of ecological protection. China's ecotourism does have the problem of emphasizing development and neglecting ecological protection in the process of development. Due to the lack of sufficient ecological protection awareness and measures, many developers have over-consumed ecological resources and neglected the protection of the ecological environment in the process of development, leading to increasingly serious ecological damage and environmental pollution. In the process of development of tourist attractions, they only focus on economic benefits and neglect the carrying capacity of the ecological environment, and over-development has led to resource depletion and environmental degradation. When developing tourism resources, the relevant departments of some regional governments lack in-depth investigation and research and comprehensive scientific proof, assessment and planning, and develop them hastily. Especially in the development of new tourism areas, developers are quick to make quick profits, in the absence of the necessary demonstration and overall planning conditions, blindly exploratory, sloppy development. In the course of development, emphasis is placed on exploitation but not on protection, resulting in the damage and waste of many non-renewable and valuable tourism resources.

5. To promote the high-quality development of ecotourism, relevant recommendations and countermeasures are proposed:

1. Strengthen regional cooperation and exchanges. Strengthen inter-regional cooperation and exchanges to promote the integration and sharing of

ecotourism resources. Better-developed regions can provide experience and assistance to other regions to jointly promote the development of ecotourism. Talent team building can be strengthened through a combination of cultivation and introduction. Local residents should be trained to improve their awareness and ability in ecotourism services. At the same time, optimization of ecotourism products and services according to market demand and tourists' preferences can improve tourists' satisfaction. Among other measures – development of ecotourism products with local characteristics, provision of better-quality tourism services, etc.

2. Strengthen publicity, education and supervision:

- supervise eco-tourism zones to ensure their legal, standardized and sustainable development;

- reduce interference with the environment by raising the environmental awareness and quality of tourists;

- increase penalties for illegal behaviors to maintain market order and fair competition;

- formulate and implement strict norms and standards for the management of eco-tourism, and carry out reasonable planning and control of eco-tourism in terms of area, time, number of people, activities, etc., so as to avoid over-exploitation and overloading of operations;

- strengthen environmental education and publicity on ecotourism, improve tourists' ecological literacy and environmental awareness;

- guide tourists to abide by the code of conduct for ecotourism, such as not littering, not capturing and disturbing wild animals, and not destroying vegetation and soil.

3. Increase investment. In the view of the backwardness of China's eco-tourism infrastructure construction, the government should increase investment in eco-tourism infrastructure construction, and provide sufficient funds for eco-tourism infrastructure construction by increasing the financial budget and guiding social capital investment. At the same time, it should also optimize the structure of the use of funds, focusing on supporting the weak links and key areas of infrastructure construction.

4. Strengthen the awareness of ecological protection through education and publicity, raise the awareness of ecological protection among the government, enterprises, communities and tourists. Let all parties recognize the close relationship between ecological protection and ecotourism development, and make it clear that ecological protection is the prerequisite and foundation for the sustainable development of ecotourism; advocate and promote the core concepts of ecotourism and respect for nature, protection of the environment and promotion of local community development; guide tourists and practitioners to participate in ecological conservation actions, and raise their

awareness and sense of responsibility for ecological conservation through publicity and educational activities.

The problems of ecotourism in China need to be taken seriously and solved. While correctly recognizing the shortcomings, society should also strive to correct them. There is a strong need to rationalize and scientifically develop ecotourism and carry out comprehensive ecotourism environmental protection in order to achieve the sustainable development of ecotourism.

The vulnerability of ecotourism resources will continue with the non-development of ecotourism activities, and will continue to diminish as people rationalize, scientifically and ecologically develop and protect them. Therefore, it is only through careful ecotourism development planning, formulation and implementation of ecotourism development policies, careful environmental impact assessment and auditing, implementation of ecotourism management and careful ecological education of tourists that we can ensure that the environmental capacity of ecotourism sites is not overloaded and that the ecotourism environment realizes a virtuous cycle, and ultimately realizes the sustainable development of ecotourism.

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