

TOURISM & MORE'S "TOURISM TIDBITS"

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Green Tourism is Beautiful Tourism

It is no longer a rarely to find on your hotel bed a sign asking you to reuse your towel and/or to accept having your sheets changed once every three days rather than once a day. While tourism's critics may have had some reasons to argue that tourism was an unfriendly industry to the environment, much of those criticisms are no longer valid. The reasons for tourism's overuse of resources are numerous. Few people will argue against the notion that travel is hard, and that people on vacation or a business trip want to be pampered. Many travelers believe that part of the fun of traveling is leaving cares and concerns behind and enjoying those little extras luxuries that are not part of most people's every day lives.

Tourism professionals are now keenly aware of the importance of green spaces. When urban areas have become fields of concrete held together by rivers of asphalt tourism suffers. These area are not only visually unappealing, but tend to hold heat in causing higher air conditioning usage. Tourism professionals are now working with locales to create green spaces that not only add beauty to their visitors (and citizens') lives but also help to replenish the oxygen supply. Police are also aware of the fact that green and beautified locales tend to have lower crime rates. In fact, one of the least expensive ways to reduce crime rates is through beautification projects. Tourism and travel then are faced with the issue of balancing the needs of the environment with the needs of its customer base. If travel becomes too hard, then it may lose its enchantment and glamor; if on the other hand, if tourism does not respect the Earth then there may be no place to which to travel!

From the perspective of tourism, beautification projects help the industry grow by attracting more visitors, providing positive word of mouth publicity, creating an inviting environment that tends to lift the spirits of service personnel, and creating community pride. Here are some suggestions on how to improve your tourism locale while caring for the environment.

-Look at your community the way others may see it. All too often we become so accustomed to run down appearances, dirt, or lack of green spaces that we simply come to accept these eyesores as part of our urban or rural landscaping. Take the time to view your area through the eyes of a visitor. Are there landfills in clear view? How well are lawns kept? Is garbage dealt with in a clean and efficient manner? Then ask yourself, would you want to visit or live in this community?

-Turn your Environmentalism into a form of marketing. All too often people in the travel and tourism industries forget that a clean and healthy environment does not take away from the bottom line it adds to it.

-Encourage hotels and restaurants to promote sensible laundry policies. Policies such as washing sheets every three days rather than every day do wonders for the environment, also consider the use of new technologies such as light bulbs that save on light/heat pollutions. Restaurants can be careful to use soaps that pollute less and serve water only upon request

-Involve the whole community/locale and not just tourism people, in beautification projects. Too many places have come to believe that beautification is the other person's business. While governments must provide funding for major projects such as sidewalks or road reconstruction, there are a whole host of projects that local citizens can accomplish without government assistance. Among these are planting of gardens, cleaning of front yards, developing interesting street corners, creatively painting walls, and/or planting bushes to hide dumpsites.

-Choose one or two key and do-able projects. Nothing succeeds like success, and beautification projects reflect as much about a community's insides as outer appearances. If a community does not like itself, that will be manifested by the way it looks to visitors and possible business developers. Before beginning a beautification project, set do-able goals and then make sure that as many people as possible are enthusiastic about the project and reject negative thought. Beautiful places begin with community harmony.

-Make sure that your tourism beautification projects fit your climate and terrain. A major mistake in beautification projects is trying to be what a locale is not. If you have a desert climate, then plant with water concerns in mind. If you have a cold climate, then seek ways to deal with not only a harsh winter climate but also in a manner to present a cheerful face during the gray winter months.

-Think of beautification as part of an economic development package. Remember that tax incentives can only do so much. No matter how much money a community offers in tax abatements, quality of life issues will always have a major impact on where people choose to live and locate their businesses. Tourism demands that a community offer a clean and healthy environment, with good restaurants and places of lodging, fun things to do and good customer service. The way your community appears has a lot to do with the choices which business executives make regarding site selections.

- **Involve local police and security professionals in the planning of your community's beautification projects.** The New York City experience ought to prove to everyone in tourism that there is a connection between quality of life issues and crime. The basic principle is that as communities seek ways to beautify, crime decreases and money used to fight crime can be redirected to quality of life issues. Policing tends to be reactive by nature; beautification projects are proactive. While pretty flowers beds and tree-lined boulevards will not prevent all crimes, the elimination of garbage along streets, unkempt lawns and shoddy structures does a great deal to lower crime rates.

Do not define "green" in its most narrow sense, but rather in its broadest sense. Few people will spend a lot of money to eat over a garbage dump, but many people are more than willing to spend top dollar to eat in a charming setting, be that setting a table overlooking an ocean, a crystal clear lake, a beautiful garden, or a forest. By promoting green and by finding innovate ways to protect the environment, tourism is assuring that it will continue to offer products that are pleasant to the eye, and good for generations that are yet to be born.
