

Sustainable Tourism 45:

Comment

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Comment: Sustainable tourism: How people behave on vacation in other countries (Sri Lanka)

In relation to our general topic "Sustainable Tourism", we specialized us in the following area: "How do people behave on vacation in other countries using the example of Sri Lanka".

When we talked about our travel destinations and the problems prevailing there, we noticed that today's tourism is often characterized by ignorance of the local situation distance from the local culture and a lack of confrontation with the consequences of one's own behaviour.

Approximately 540,000 tourists travel to Sri Lanka (Länderdaten.info, 2020), but how many of them question their own travelling behaviour in terms of sustainability?

Many travellers are not even aware of the problems and their consequences: there is a lack of independent information gathering by the tourists themselves and information provision by the travel providers, and in addition, the distance between the tourists and the locals contribute to the travellers' unknowing. The most common reasons for this are convenience and disinterest in booking and planning the vacation. Travel portals make booking as easy as possible for travellers without having to deal with the destination and their prevailing problems.

To relate to our example country Sri Lanka, we highlight some of the bigger problems on site. Starting with the garbage disposal, which takes place due to the missing garbage collection as well as the recycling facilities in the garden and / or nearby public places (for example on the beaches), the accumulated garbage is burned or buried.

Apart from the problem of garbage disposal, there are other factors, such as the economic crisis, that significantly affect the lives of the locals.

The economy in Sri Lanka is completely based on tourist activities and entertainment. There is a lack of jobs, resulting in a lack of funds for medicines and other necessities. Not to forget the lack of gasoline. Gas is only rarely available at gas stations too little gasoline available and if at all only given to large corporations. Smaller independent businesses, such as the local tuk-tuk drivers, cannot survive under these measures.

Due to larger resorts in Sri Lanka, tourists are very isolated from the culture and surroundings. As a result, coupled with the impending return to the homeland there is a lack of respect for the homeland of the locals. This is characterized by maladaptive behaviour.

One solution for those problems based on the tourist's behaviour and a way to support a more sustainable form of travelling would be to create a space where tourists can get in contact with local people and get information about their travel destination. The main goal is to encourage tourists to change their behaviour while also engaging in local NGO's instead of violating the environment out of ignorance and lack of information.

Based on the goal mentioned above, we have developed a portal called TERRA, which implements them in a variety of ways. TERRA is an international travel portal that presents people a sustainable form of tourism during their stay in the destination region. Accordingly, we aim to introduce tourists to an adapted behaviour while traveling. The term TERRA reflects the components that are crucial for our portal. The T stands for Tourism and raises the questions of how tourism is defined, where it begins and where it ends. The information about culture and problems in the destination, are reflected in the E for Education and support the conflict prevention and better adaptation of tourists. The R stands for Responsibility, the responsibility of the locals and the respectful treatment of nature and culture. It is important to portray that we have only one earth and we have to protect it. In order to dissolve the distance between the locals and the tourists, the R for Relations represents the establishment of contact and the consequent adaptation to the respective culture. Finally, the A for Action represents the tourists' engagement in the destination, which creates a mental and emotional connection with the locals.