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Round Table

“The potential of eco-tourism in Uzbekistan”

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Eco-tourism Definition



Eco-tourism is defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” (TIES, 2015). Education is meant to be inclusive of both staff and guests.

Source: The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting ecotourism.

Principles of eco-tourism

Those who implement, participate in and market eco-tourism activities should adopt the following ecotourism principles:

-  **Non-destructive use**
-  **Protection and restoration of biodiversity**
-  **Promotion of environmentally sustainable development**
-  **Education and interpretation, awareness**
-  **Direct economic benefit for local people, alleviation of poverty**
-  **Health, well-being of stakeholders**

The World Tourism Organization



UNWTO has been involved in the field of eco-tourism since the early 1990s and developed a set of guidelines focusing on the strong link between protected area and tourism, with the aim of ensuring that tourism contributes to the purposes of protected areas and does not undermine them.

In the framework of the UN-declared International Year of Ecotourism (IYE) in 2002 UNWTO undertook a wide range of activities, including the organization of regional conferences and the World Ecotourism Summit.

According to the World Tourism Organization, eco-tourism is a major trend with a growing demand for consumers for packages which offer responsible travel to natural areas, conservation of the environment, and improvement of the well-being of local people. The Mediterranean area is one of the most interesting regions in the world in terms of eco-tourism potential. The high diversity of landscapes and ecosystems together with the unique socio-economic and cultural mosaic provide suitable conditions for the development of eco-tourism.

Eco-tourism in Europe



The Mediterranean area is one of the most interesting regions in the world in terms of eco-tourism potential. Within the European Union the Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism (MEET) Project aims to improve the sustainability and the rationalization in distribution of the tourism sector in the Mediterranean region. In the framework of cross-border cooperation within the European Neighborhood Policy Instrument (ENPI Med), this strategic project involves 10 countries of the Mediterranean: Italy, France, Spain, Malta, Cyprus, Greece, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Tunisia.

The MEET Project aims at developing an eco-tourism model for Mediterranean Protected Areas (PAs) based on the “European Charter for Sustainable Tourism” to promote a better seasonal distribution of tourism flows.

The total budget for the MEET project is 5 Million Euro

Website: <http://www.medecotourism.org>

Eco-tourism in Europe: Italy



In Italy there are 4 MEET projects



1 Lucanian Apennines



2 Sinis Peninsula – Mal di Ventre Island



3 Coastal Dunes



4 Monte Rufeno Nature Reserve



Eco-tourism in Italy: Greenway Liguria

In Italy, there are plenty of abandoned railways spread out all over the Peninsula. The old railways become the ideal destinations for *green* tourists that love biking and hiking.

Greenway Liguria is one of the most beautiful bike paths along abandoned railways. In 2001 a section of the coastal railway of the West Liguria was displaced and closed to train circulation. Among the other benefits of this shift, there is the creation of a bike path that looks over one of the most stunning seas Italy can offer. Almost 24 km entirely dedicated to bikers and pedestrians that make the coastline and its breathtaking landscapes accessible to every traveler.

In Liguria is not enough, there is also another destination for this kind of sustainable tourism right in the heart of the Cinque Terre area. From Levanto to Framura, 6 km of the former railway are now dedicated to bike rides and relaxing walks along the coast. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LaUZmchl3dM>



Eco-tourism and related activities



Tourists who travel across the country to enjoy and admire the beauty of the natural environment, heritage sites and local culture are also very interested in discovering specific traditions of each region.

Eco-tourists often like to spend the night in small villages and in farms that offer accommodation on the premises and let tourists to be in direct contact with the locals. Such farms are defined Agritourism and have grown all over the country since hospitality services are a good complement to the traditional agricultural activity. Recently the Italian government has issued a law to allow farmers develop agritourism accommodation services in rural areas where there is limited hotel supply.

In recent years the interest towards food and wine has grown tremendously. Italy is internationally known for its cuisine and fine wines. Since each region offers a wide variety of choices in terms of local cuisine and wines, eco-tourists can enjoy a great amount of options. In rural regional areas, within each region, it is possible to visit vineyards, attend authentic local cuisine courses, buy regional food products to take home. This is Enogastronomic Tourism and it is growing fast. It offers an additional and pleasant kind of enjoyment to exploring the natural environment in any country.

Experiential and Eco-tourism



Tourists are increasingly looking for memorable life-time experiences to enjoy while traveling. Eco-Tourism can be a form of experiential tourism since it allows people to enjoy nature and the environment and to disconnect from daily routine.

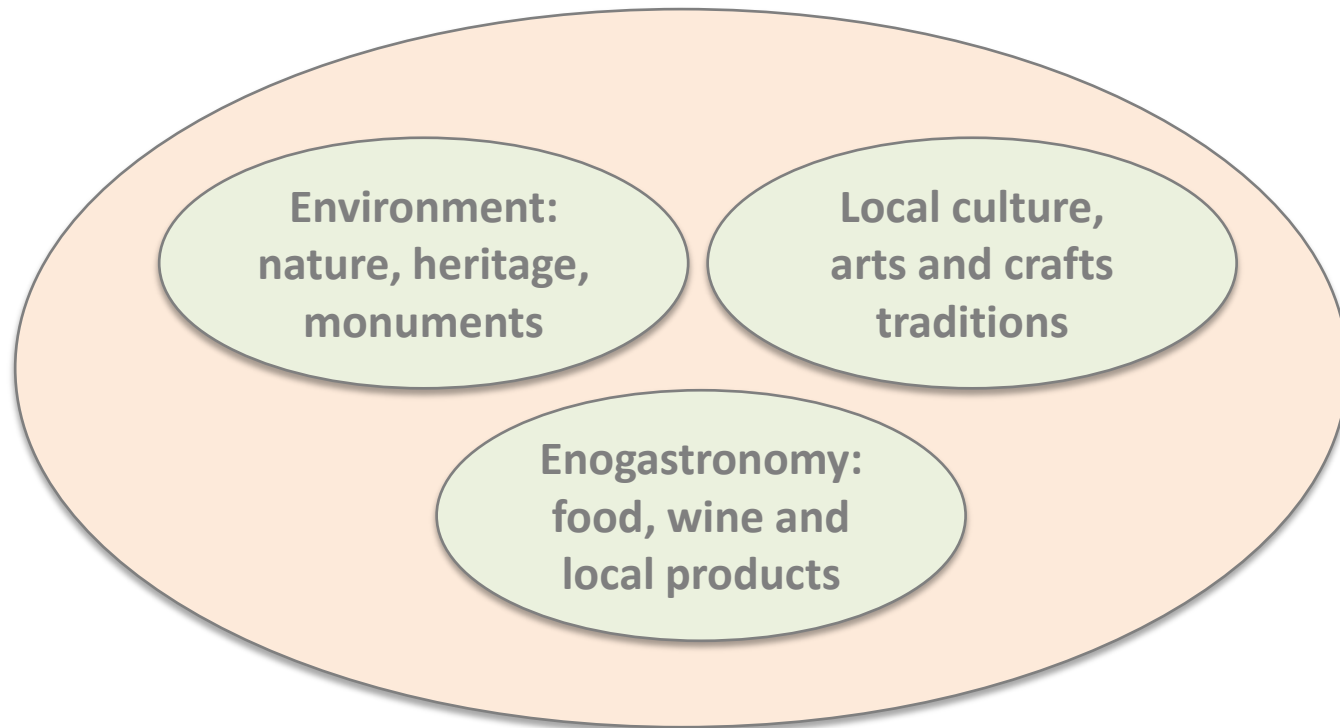
For an experience to be memorable, the tourist has to immerse himself in a country and discover the values of its identity by interacting with the local community.

In this respect enogastronomy is:

- an expression of the culture of a local community;
- a component of a region's identity and consequently an element of differentiation on the market;
- demand-wise, a growing segment of travelers interested in exploring a territory.

Enogastronomy represents a synthesis of the context of life of a local community that, together with natural environmental beauty, heritage sites and monuments, adds to the travelers' experience and makes it a memorable one. Therefore, enogastronomy can be considered the flip-side to eco-tourism and a valuable help in attracting demand to specific territorial areas.

Experiential and Eco-tourism



Eco-tourism in Europe: Italy



EXAMPLE

MEET Projects in Italy

1 - Lucanian Apennines

A Journey across the Lucanian Apennines, among Nature, History, and Art Appennino Lucano-Val d'Agri-Lagonegrese National Park is a large protected area situated in Basilicata, whose perimeter includes some of the highest summits of the Lucanian Apennines, delimiting fanwise the upper valley of the river Agri. Situated close to Pollino and Cilento National Parks, it represents a connection and environmental continuity area. It is the youngest Italian National Park, established with DPR on 8th December 2007. For its considerable extension in length, it is an area rich in interesting biotopes going from the thick beech tree woodlands of the mountains to the characteristic white poplars, and to woodlands alternating with pastures and meadows. The many cultivated areas are the evidence of the strong human presence in this Park which, as demonstrated by Grumentum archaeological site and the several religious destinations, has been since ancient times a wonderful crossroads of traditions, art, culture, and faith.

3 - The Regional Park of the Coastal Dunes – Apulia Region, ITALY

The “Regional Park of the Coastal Dunes” is covering beaches, wetlands – with the presence of migratory birds – and numerous fossil streams, fascinating caves and rock dwellings. Inland the park is characterised by ancient olive groves and the Roman-age Traian Route, numerous historic farms and oil mills.

Several ecotourism activities can be carried out in the Coastal Dunes Regional Park: starting from the Park House (located in a disused railway station), which provides information about the park and on the natural, historical and cultural context in which it is located, it is possible to rent a bike or to ask for a guide to be accompanied along the numerous itineraries of low and medium difficulty, or going horseback or with donkeys. The farms of the park are home to taste workshops with education courses for tasting the olives or cheeses produced in pastures of the Park, for laboratories for hand-made “pasta” and much more.

Eco-tourism in Europe: Italy



EXAMPLE

MEET Projects in Italy

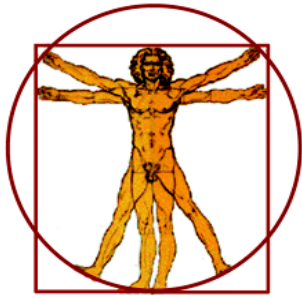
4 - Monte Rufeno Nature Reserve

At the very northern part of the Lazio region (central Italy, 120 km north of Rome), stands the Monte Rufeno Nature Reserve, that was established in 1983 and safeguards wide woods in a gentle, hilly landscape crossed by the Paglia river. About 3,000 hectares of protected area are dominated by mixed oak woods, Mediterranean maquis, reforestations with conifers, some rare fields, ancient olive groves and wetland vegetation close to the river banks.

At the border between Lazio, Umbria and Tuscany, the Reserve, thanks to its particular geographical position and to local historical events, houses very rich flora and fauna characterized by several rare species. Many typical stone farmsteads are scattered in the woods, buildings that have been restored with didactic and tourist aims; moreover, the area is rich in streams, ponds, and springs which favor not only pleasant excursions, but also the presence of flora and fauna exclusive of these places.

Several facilities for cultural development, environmental education, leisure and interpretation are included within protected area, such as a Museum of Flowers, a House of Rural Traditions, an Astronomical Observatory, a Didactic Water Mill, together with some comfortable facilities for tourist accommodation. At the southern border of Nature Reserve stands the beautiful Sasseto Wood, a reservoir of biodiversity including hundreds of century-old trees that represent a wide variety of species ranging from holm-oaks to lime-trees, from maples to beeches.

Due to its intense activity supporting sustainable tourism and thanks to a five-year action plan that involves a “forum” made of 18 different local stakeholders, in year 2012 Monte Rufeno Nature Reserve has been awarded by the Europarc Federation with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECST).



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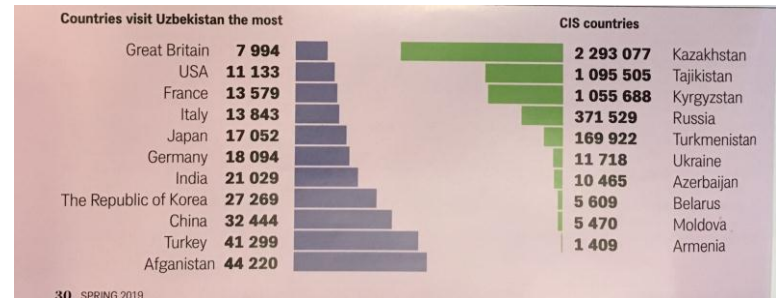
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Eco-tourism in Uzbekistan

Over 5 Million tourists arrived in Uzbekistan according to Uzbekturizm official statistics.



According to the forecasts of the World Tourism Organization, eco-tourism is gaining more and more popularity on global scale.

It is estimated that the share of eco-tourism in recent years has reached more than 10 % of the total volume of the global tourism industry. Furthermore eco-tourism growth rate is 2-3 times higher than the corresponding rates in the whole industry.

Uzbekistan has already identified a system of protected areas that includes: natural reserves, natural national parks, and natural monuments. In addition, the main tourist centers of the country Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Shakhrisabz, are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Investing to promote and develop eco-tourism in Uzbekistan can bring significant contribution to improve living standards, create new jobs at the local level, and to strengthen international relations.