Tourism Concern past and present

Tremendous thanks are due to everyone who has helped to shape Tourism Concern into what it is today, including…
editorial

AT 21 TOURISM CONCERN IS NOW A

mature charity with a lot of learning and experience under its belt. We may be small in size, but we still earn respect around the world and punch way above our weight as we campaign for the rights of communities negatively affected by tourism.

This special anniversary edition of Tourism In Focus reflects on the inception of this unique campaigning organisation and its many success stories. These are the culmination of the hard work of many committed individuals, but key figures have been brought together to share their first-hand experiences of some of our successful campaigns – Goa (page 6), Sun, Sand, Sea and Sweatshops (page 10), mountain porters (page 8), the Maldives (page 12) and international volunteering (page 9) are among those featured. We also present the perspectives of two tourism experts, Harold Goodwin of Leeds Metropolitan University and Caesar D’Mello of the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, on the extent of sustainable tourism’s progression and its future (page 14).

With our maturity and the changing face of the charity sector, we enter a new era. Special funding for a business plan has allowed us to appoint a new director with a specific business remit and a membership officer. With their help, we will work towards financial sustainability, and broaden our portfolio of income generation so we can drive forward our unique and important work.

We will continue to campaign – persuading UK travel and tourism associations to respect and protect human rights, and pushing the UK Government to take a more proactive approach to their responsibilities in countering the negative impacts of the outbound tourism sector. Our other main focus will be on tourism and water equity, research for which has already started with a case study from Bali. This will be followed by work in Kerala and, we hope, Zanzibar and Cyprus. In addition, our international volunteering code, so long in the waiting, will soon be out there to help the next generation of ‘gappers’ and volunteers choose a company that will benefit both themselves and the local community.

Our resources and educational materials are going from strength to strength, with the new schools pack selling well, Putting Tourism To Rights being used by universities across the UK and the second edition of The Ethical Travel Guide (page 17) riding the wave of its success. We are also pushing forward our work to develop a professional qualification for those working in the tourism industry.

Tourism Concern has a great deal to celebrate. Many challenges remain, but our energy and enthusiasm in confronting them are as great as ever.

With best wishes,
Stroma Cole, Chair

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Tourism Concern

The articles published in Tourism In Focus represent the individuals’ opinions and do not necessarily represent the views of Tourism Concern.
The road we’ve travelled

Much has been accomplished in the 21 years since Tourism Concern’s humble beginnings. Here we chart some of the people and campaigns that have shaped the organisation, and celebrate the achievements and successes.

1988 Tourism Concern is conceived by Alison Stancliffe, a development education worker in Newcastle, after contact with global campaigning groups that flag serious concerns about this rapidly expanding industry’s social, economic and environmental impacts (see page 6). Alison sets up a network with just six members, mainly from the education sector.

1989 Tourism Concern is officially founded as a membership organisation. Seed money is received from Christian Aid, CAFOD and Interface.

1990 Advocacy work begins, including a campaign to challenge tourism impacts in Goa, India; selling publications; public speaking; and lobbying key industry figures. Considerable media coverage is gained.

1991 Patricia Barnett takes over as co-ordinator and Tourism Concern is relocated to London.

The Himalayan Trekking Code – the first multi-stakeholder code of its kind – is devised with UK and Nepalese trekking companies and NGOs. Used for over 15 years, it formed the basis for its successor, The Trekking Porters’ Code, which is still in use today (see page 8).

1992 Tourism Concern publishes its first teaching pack for schools, Be My Guest. Hot on its heels is our first groundbreaking report, Beyond the Green Horizon: Principles of Sustainable Tourism, produced with WWF, which sets out key guidelines and principles of sustainable tourism for the first time. It was reprinted twice and translated into Spanish and French.

Tourism Concern’s global network of local partners begins to grow, prompting us to campaign on their behalves on a range of tourism issues, including golf tourism, backpacking, child sex tourism and water.

1995 The first major campaign is launched: Our Holidays, their Homes, focusing on people displaced by tourism, particularly tribal peoples in East Africa and the people of Burma. A public postcard campaign that challenges tour operators on their policies is met with anger, followed soon after by a willingness to collaborate with Tourism Concern to improve industry practices.

1997 In the run-up to Visit Myanmar Year, Tourism Concern joins forces with Burma Campaign UK to successfully persuade many UK tour operators to pull out of the country because of tourism’s links with mass human rights abuses. The UK Government also calls for tour operators to withdraw.

1998 Tourism Concern publishes Tourism and Human Rights to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This paves the way for work to begin with the UK Government to improve industry practices, culminating in the creation of the Travel Foundation in 2003.

1999 Looking Beyond the Brochure, a teaching video featuring tourism in The Gambia, is distributed to 5,000 teachers, schools and colleges. In-flight videos promoting ethical tourism are produced and screened on First Choice and KLM flights, as well as being available to download on ABTA’s website.

Plans for a proposed mega-development on Nungwi peninsular, Zanzibar, that would displace 20,000 people are scrapped following campaigning by Tourism Concern.

Tourism Concern establishes The International Fair Trade in Tourism Network, which includes NGOs, tourism consultancies...
and tour operators from around the world. Its foundation leads to the publication of Corporate Futures – the first-ever report on corporate social responsibility in the tourism industry.


2001 **SUCCESS** Concerned about the impacts of the burgeoning gap-year industry, Tourism Concern convenes a conference for travellers, the travel industry and the media. This culminates in the Travellers’ Code, 250,000 copies of which are distributed by gap-year companies, plus the production of our award-winning film, Your Place or Mine, to raise awareness of the issues.

2002 **SUCCESS** The Trekking Wrongs: Porters’ Rights campaign is launched. Following collaboration with porters’ groups in the Himalayas, Kilimanjaro and Macchu Picchu, as well as UK trekking operators, The Trekking Porters’ Code is launched and adopted by over half of UK operators (see page 8).

The Talking Travel speaker programme kicks off. Over 70 volunteers are trained as speakers and visit schools, travel shows and exhibitions across the UK.

Our glossy one-off women’s ethical travel magazine, Being There, is distributed in The Body Shop across the UK to great acclaim.

2003 **SUCCESS** Collaboration with London Metropolitan University to integrate sustainability into the tourism-related undergraduate curriculum leads to the publication of guidelines for universities.

**SUCCESS** Our Foreign Office Advisories campaign on the damaging impacts of unnecessarily prolonged FCO advice against UK tourists visiting certain destinations culminates in the formation of a permanent multi-stakeholder panel to review advisories regularly.

2004 **SUCCESS** Our Sun, Sand, Sea and Sweatshops campaign entails groundbreaking research into labour conditions in the tourism industry. Following a successful postcard campaign, the UK’s leading tour operators adopt policies on labour conditions for hotels they use (see page 10).

2005 After the December 2004 Asian tsunami, Tourism Concern researches the land-grabs and mass displacements of coastal communities to make way for tourism. This work underpins a new two-year programme with local partners in Sri Lanka and India to empower coastal communities to defend their land and livelihood rights against tourism-government land-grabbers.

Our Behind the Smile exhibition goes on show at the Oxo Gallery in London and travels the world.

2006 The first meeting of Tourism Concern’s Ethical Tour Operators’ Group establishes the viability of collaborating with tour operators to promote best practice.

Campaigning begins with Friends of Maldives to draw attention to that country’s state-perpetuated human rights abuses.

2007 **SUCCESS** Tourism Concern is invited to key UN meetings on tourism as an advocate of grassroots issues. Ongoing dialogues with the UN Environment Programme result in partnerships with both the Global Sustainability Tourism Council and the Global Tourism Partnership, which ensure that human rights issues are addressed.

2008 **SUCCESS** A pilot project to promote understanding of the social and economic impacts of tourism among community-based enterprises in Mexico is pioneered by Tourism Concern. The results are developed into a training manual for local NGOs.

2009 **SUCCESS** New research by Tourism Concern uncovers the links between luxurious resorts in Burma and members of its military regime. Renewed campaigning helps push the UK Government to update legislation, making it an offence to do business with members of the Burmese junta.

After years of campaigning against a mega-resort development on the tiny island of Bimini in the Bahamas, the Bahamian Government announces plans to establish a marine-protected area. This should halt construction of the planned golf course.

**SUCCESS** Tourism Concern launches Putting Tourism to Rights at the House of Lords. The report contains recommendations for governments and the international tourism industry, and lays the foundations for another 20 years of campaigning. The UN World Tourism Organisation and ABTA agree too work with Tourism Concern on the recommendations.

2010 **SUCCESS** Our photography exhibition, Destination Tsunami: Stories and Struggles from India’s Southern Coast, begins its UK tour. Work on empowering coastal communities in southern India to withstand the pressures of top-down tourism development continues.
IN THE AUTUMN OF 1989 I SENT OUT MY FIRST NEWSLETTER TO POTENTIAL members of a brand new organisation. I called it Tourism Concern because I wanted it to reflect the mindset of those it aimed to bring together – people who were concerned about the harmful impact that tourism was having on communities and environments. But I didn’t just want to get people talking – I wanted action. I was determined to do something about the injustice I’d seen on my own travels and, fortunately, the first members of Tourism Concern turned out to be just as passionate as I was to make tourism fairer for everyone.

At the time I started the new network, I was at home full time with two small children. My previous work in global education had brought me in touch with groups in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region who were already raising serious questions about tourism’s social and environmental impacts. Until then, there was no equivalent in the UK but, by the end of 1989, the fledgling network had successfully evolved into an organisation strong enough to take its place in the global movement and ready to make waves within the travel industry.

The most talked-about ‘winter-sun’ destination in the holiday brochures that autumn was the Indian coastal state of Goa. Locals were well used to laid-back travellers on the hippy trail who stayed for weeks or months in village homestays, but the holidaymakers stepping off the new charter flights were a completely different breed. With these tourists came demands for sea views and imported food, as well as a whole new level of infrastructure, putting pressure on local land and water resources and threatening to deprive coastal communities of their traditional livelihoods.

Goan community activists began campaigning against ‘charter tourism’ and asked us to raise their concerns with UK-based travel companies. We did just that, to the bemusement of the tour operators and press alike, both of whom were unused to the novel idea that the host community, as well as their clients, had needs. That was our first serious engagement with the travel industry and our first taste of how hard our road would be. Goa’s new resorts continued to grow with little heed taken of their impact, though we now know our solidarity contributed to fending off the worst excesses of tourism development.

In those heady first months, it often felt as though I were climbing a high mountain on an untried route. But I knew where I wanted to get to. This is what I wrote in that first newsletter: ‘I want quality of experience for those on holiday and quality of life for the host community.’

Twenty-one years on, I am incredibly proud to look back at how Tourism Concern has ceaselessly fought for the people living in the places where we take our holidays. We have never lost hold of that original ambition, but we are now much closer to achieving it.
WHEN I TOOK OVER AS CO-ORDINATOR OF TOURISM Concern in 1991, I had no idea I would still be here nearly 20 years later. I’ve known for years that it is far too long to stay in any job but because the job still isn’t finished, because I am still learning so much and because of the fantastic privileges it brings me when I am invited by grassroots activists to their events all over the world – I’m still here! Running Tourism Concern has been a tremendous learning experience. We are all finding our way in totally uncharted waters.

Our net has been spread far and wide since working with the strong and challenging groups in Goa. We are perceived by many as the leading campaigning organisation in the world and our website attracts nearly a quarter of a million hits a year from individuals in 184 different countries. People are still shocked when they know how few we are here at Tourism Concern and how, without our stalwart volunteers, it would sometimes be difficult to manage the load.

Our first campaigns were very much linked to requests for help across the world. However, as it became apparent that there were common issues for many coastal people, for fragile islands, for farmers and for people working in hotels, we made the decision to initiate our own campaigns that would look more widely at common themes such as labour conditions, displacement from land and livelihoods, and issues of water equity.

All of our work is directed towards tourism as a development issue. When Alison began, we used education as a means to share our knowledge and raise awareness about development issues through tourism. Tourism presents a fantastic opportunity to understand the relationship between north and south, east and west and also about citizenship. Teachers in schools and universities formed the backbone of our membership. Looking Beyond the Brochure, our video and teachers’ pack, was requested by three-quarters of the schools in the UK and has proved to be one of our greatest successes. But, to bring about change, it was important to tackle the tourism industry itself. Our first publication, Beyond The Green Horizon, opened up the debate about sustainable tourism and was written to ensure that it was readable by those who might least want to read it.

It’s taken us a long time, but we do feel that we are on the road to change. We are optimistic that by sticking to our ethical guns and by being constant, and by supporting the voices of destination communities who would otherwise not be heard, we can create paradigm shifts. It is important that we also work towards solutions and we are doing that with the industry itself. The tourism business is massive; we are tiny. But we are brave and determined.
Porters have long been key but somewhat invisible members of the tourism industry. Mountaineer Doug Scott looks at the movement that aimed to improve their working conditions and ensure their work would not be the death of them.

In most developing countries, those that work the hardest are often the least rewarded. Never was this truer than for Nepal’s porters 10 years ago – there were hardly any rules or regulations governing tourism’s labour conditions and certainly no-one to police them. Porters were paid rock-bottom wages to work in all weathers across wild terrain, often clad in just cotton and flip-flops and, after a hard day’s carry, still had to find their own shelter and food.

There were occasions when lowland porters or those from the middle hills – just as susceptible to the effects of altitude as westerners – would succumb to acute mountain sickness. Of no further use to the trek, they would be paid off and dismissed. Some were too debilitated to organise their return journey and, not knowing how important it was to descend, would linger too long in the thin, cold air, develop either cerebral or pulmonary oedema (fluid retention), pass out and die. During the big Himalayan storm of October 1997, many western trekkers perished in Nepal and Bhutan. But many more porters died – some only discovered days or even weeks later when the snow melted to reveal them face down on high passes, heavy loads on their backs, invariably ill-shod and poorly clothed.

Such incidents prompted Tourism Concern to tackle porter exploitation. It called upon its own expertise, as well as that of travellers, workers in the trekking industry and mountaineers, all of whom had been intending to improve the porters’ lot. Tourism Concern, becoming the focus of the fear for porters’ safety and anger at their exploitation, systematically set about campaigning for change. The most effective means of attack seemed to be naming and shaming those companies that had no stringent policies to safeguard their porters and extolling the virtues of those that did.

Organisations such as the International Porter Protection Group and Porter Progress have reinforced Tourism Concern’s work, while Community Action Treks Ltd (CAT) was established in 1989 primarily to improve working conditions in Nepal’s trekking industry. The only way to ensure conditions did improve and that local staff adhered to the policy was to carefully monitor the situation. A contract of employment between porters and CAT alerted the porters to their rights and reminded staff of their duties.

In the last 10 years many trekking organisations and expedition organisers have adopted similar strategies for improving the lot of porters, who have enabled so many of us to enjoy the high mountains of the world. Now, largely thanks to the good work of Tourism Concern, we can revel in the sheer majesty of these surroundings with a clearer conscience.

**KPAP: Making a difference**

Based on Tourism Concern’s code of conduct for minimum working standards, the Kilimanjaro Porters Assistance Project (KPAP), a Tanzanian NGO, has produced recommended Guidelines for Proper Porter Treatment. Climbing companies adhering to the guidelines on Kilimanjaro are highlighted in the Partner for Responsible Travel programme, run by International Mountain Explorers Connection, and monitoring activities performed by KPAP ensure guideline compliance. There are 22 local Partner companies and another 25 local outfitters undergoing KPAP’s monitoring process. KPAP’s porter survey indicates that the average minimum wage paid to the porters is improving, up from TZS4,500 (US$3) per day in 2008 to TZS6,000 (US$4) per day in 2009. The standard is not yet at the minimum wage of TZS8,000 (US$5.34) per day but the climbing public’s desire for fair treatment practices is helping to make significant changes on Kilimanjaro.

“Thank you for working on our rights. I remember our company was paying a very low salary. But now, because of KPAP, we are getting a better salary.”

Karen Valenti

Benny Mbukwa, porter, Tanzania
Many organisations would reject the concept that international volunteering has anything to do with tourism, but there are obvious parallels and the lines between the two have become blurred. In 2007, following reports of serious problems within the volunteering industry, Tourism Concern broached the issue. Former campaigner Simon Power reports.

BACK IN 2006, HAVING BEEN APPROACHED BY NUMEROUS INTERNATIONAL volunteers who were unhappy with their experiences, as well as industry professionals and experts, Tourism Concern was becoming increasingly aware of problems related to the popular practice of gap-year volunteering. Large companies were getting involved in international development projects by selling volunteer placements for profit. We heard many first-hand accounts from volunteers who felt that their placement was a waste of time. In addition – and far more seriously – we also discovered that many inexperienced volunteers were being sent to work in developing countries without having had their backgrounds checked, even though they were often working with vulnerable adults and children.

We decided to run a campaign to highlight these problems and work towards developing an industry code of practice. It was clear from early on that this was going to be a challenge. Fundraising was extremely difficult – the gap-year organisations worked in so many different areas of development it was hard to explain to funders who would benefit. We also experienced resistance to the project: I remember calling one funder, who became irate on the phone, denying there was a problem and disagreeing that volunteers working with children in Africa needed a Criminal Records Bureau check, as they would in the UK.

As the project gathered momentum, so did the resistance. Gap-year companies and trade associations did not want a code of practice that might restrict their money-making activities. A particularly heated debate with one industry member at a gap-year exhibition made us more aware than ever that there really was a problem. We became even more determined to develop a code.

There was some strong support for the code, however, and we set up a steering group of relevant experts, including Kate Simpson from Ethical Volunteering and members of the Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland (NIDOS). We sent out questionnaires to all the UK gap-year organisations and used the results to develop a set of guidelines. This was a complicated (and political!) process and involved several trips to Edinburgh for meetings with the steering group. It culminated in a conference, attended by over 40 members of the volunteering industry, where we presented our findings and the new code of practice.

Tourism Concern and NIDOS have now completed the code. It has proved difficult to fund its development into a fully audited tool for the international volunteering sector, but Tourism Concern continues to push forward with this. In addition, new funding has now been secured to support its nationwide launch next year.

My subsequent work as a volunteer co-ordinator in Cambodia allowed me to witness first-hand how certain gap-year providers offer their volunteers virtually no support in badly planned placements; this is a real problem when working with small, grassroots NGOs, who are frequently desperate for any assistance they can get and so are vulnerable to exploitation. There can be no doubt that the successful launch and implementation of the code of practice is now as vital as ever.

Gaps in Development is Tourism Concern’s 2007 report on the international volunteering sector.
It is available at www.tourismconcern.org.uk
This Tourism Concern campaign revolutionised daily life for exploited hotel workers across the world. Former campaigner Sue Wheat recalls its inception and how such important changes were achieved.
After the storm

Former programmes manager Guyonne James and Sumesh Mangalassery of Kabani look back at how Tourism Concern supported local communities in India and Sri Lanka in the wake of the 2004 tsunami that obliterated homes and livelihoods.

The 2004 tsunami was a very different tragedy from any other that had occurred in human history and, over the past six years, post-tsunami experiences have shown that its impact is manifold.

In our globalised world, some people take everything as an opportunity to protect and advance their own vested interests, which are often detrimental to the interests or well-being of the poor. Tourism is no exception – the industry wants to take advantage of everything, and its practices are in stark contrast to its so-called ‘principles’.

One year after the tsunami, a consultation organised by people’s movements and NGOs in Tamil Nadu, India, identified many conflicts and contradictions related to post-tsunami tourism development, as well as certain threats, along the affected coast. The groups predicted another tragedy – this time a ‘tourism tsunami’. One of the organisers of this consultation, Kabani, tried to bring these issues onto the agenda of various organisations working in the affected coastal areas. Sadly, however, the priorities of these organisations were different from what we had identified as ‘people’s needs’.

Tourism Concern collaborated with local NGOs Mctita and Kabani in southern India, as well as Monlar and the People’s Planning Commission in Sri Lanka, to help mobilise and empower local communities so they could find out about tourism development planning and devise ways to challenge it.

It was a hugely ambitious project – more so than we realised at the time – and we were all on a very steep learning curve. Sri Lanka, in particular, was not only recovering from the aftermath of the tsunami but the continuous civil war rumbled on throughout the project. This not only affected where the teams could work, but also the political climate in which they operated. We had our struggles in the early days but I am proud to have been part of it and prouder still that the project has shown its value by evolving and continuing on to a second three-year phase in India.

Emerging from the catastrophe, however, came a ground-breaking project.

Our ongoing work with Tourism Concern is an excellent opportunity to network with groups both domestically and on the international stage and provides a good deal of awareness and actions at various levels. We have been able to establish many networks through this collaboration, which have now started to take a stand against the negative impacts of tourism on communities and natural resources. Most of our work with Tourism Concern has long-term impacts and will definitely yield further results in the future.

Guyonne James

Sumesh Mangalassery
Having rid itself of an authoritarian dictator and made great strides in the fight against human rights abuses committed on its soil, the Maldives now looks set to appeal to ethical tourists. David Hardingham of Friends of Maldives looks at those issues that are now on the tourist agenda and what must be done to secure a brighter future.

IT IS THE DREAM OF ALL ETHICAL TOURISTS THAT THEIR ACTIVITY IS NOT JUST FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT, BUT ALSO contributes positively in some way to the country they are visiting. This is no truer than in a country like the Maldives, whose economy depends so heavily on tourism. Having recently ended a brutal 30-year dictatorship, this fledgling democracy is at the dawn of a new age and the newly elected president – former Amnesty prisoner of conscience, Mohamed Nasheed – has his hands full. Certain elements of the previous regime are keen to return to power and stifle further reform, but President Nasheed must meet the high expectations of the people who voted him into power and nurse the Maldives’ tourism industry back to health after a bruising couple of years.

Just what can be achieved is evident in the Maldives’ recent history. After a long struggle against dictatorship and human rights abuses, the first free and fair elections took place in late 2008 and ushered in a new era of liberal Islamic democracy. Friends of Maldives (FOM) and other international NGOs, including Tourism Concern, contributed to increasing worldwide awareness of the appalling human-rights situation in the country. This was instrumental in helping put international pressure on the regime to follow international standards of good governance and respect for human rights.

During the dictatorship, opposition political figures were tortured and abused on prison islands not far from some of the world’s finest luxury resorts – all without the international community seeming to care. FOM’s 2005 Selective Resort Boycott Campaign targeted resorts owned by leading members of the regime and was intended to put them under pressure while leaving the bulk of the industry unaffected. The significance of tourism in the country’s economy demanded that this pressure be applied with appropriate precision.

And what lies ahead? Tourism has already played a pivotal role in bringing democracy to the country; it will also be the means by which it achieves economic recovery. A new and exciting development is that of the family-owned guesthouse. This sector of the industry deserves whatever help it can get – not least because benefits will flow directly to those most in need.

The other vital issue that cannot be ignored is sustainability; the ethical tourist’s attention must turn to this as, unfortunately, much of the current tourism development does not seem sustainable in terms of its impact on either the economy or the environment. Preference, therefore, should be given to resorts that are making efforts at recycling, using alternative energy, and attending to environmental protection, particularly of the fragile coral-reef ecosystem. The government must be called to task on these issues.
Human rights and human wrongs

Human rights lawyer Baroness Helena Kennedy answers some key questions from journalist Polly Pattullo that highlight the problems that have been created or exacerbated by the tourism industry.

**PP:** What would you identify as the main human rights abuses in relation to international tourism?

**HK:** There are so many issues that it is hard to know where to begin. The central one is the exploitation of the poor for the gratification of the privileged. We are all conscious of the shocking sex trade of women and children in foreign countries, but, hidden from view, there are other forms of exploitation. Desperately low wages and around-the-clock working hours are human rights abuses that sustain some tourist spots. In some parts of the world, tourism does not even bring employment because workers are brought from elsewhere to be employed in gated tourist complexes. Then, just think of the water use in luxury hotels with spas, and the constant hot running water for showers, baths and laundry. But go for a short walk and you’ll see that often the people living in nearby shanty towns have no running water or sanitation – the water for the grand hotels has been diverted away from them. Local children are barred from their own seashores, which become private fiefdoms for the hotels. Often creating resorts has involved land grabs, with the state throwing people off their land and depriving them of their agricultural or fishing livelihood. A little research can tell you a bad story about the origins of some resorts.

**PP:** Have any of your holiday experiences made you realise the relationship between tourism and human rights abuses?

**HK:** Often. I have travelled in parts of India and Africa where I have wondered about the age of some of the workers, who were really children. Such things should discomfort us and move us to action.

**PP:** People in the poor South are often the victims of human rights abuses caused by exploitation by the rich North, but the connection with tourism and human rights abuses is rarely made. Why do you think this is?

**HK:** There are large vested interests keeping human rights abuses out of public debate. Who makes real money out of this? And tourists do not want to think of the human cost of their luxury holiday, for which they have longed and saved. They like to think that they are contributing to local economies. And often they are – but they have to question what is going on behind the facades of these idyllic resorts.

**PP:** What connections do you make between an increase in human rights abuses in tourism and globalisation?

**HK:** International corporations often soak developing countries of the profits that come from tourism. The money does not go to the local governments – not even in tax. It used to be that the West went to the developing world to extract its natural resources; now it has even more sophisticated ways of sucking its bones dry.

**PP:** Some leading UK tour operators send their customers to overseas resorts where working conditions are exploitative. How should the UK Government protect these workers?

**HK:** I would like to see this on the G20 agenda. We need better regulation of our tourist industries with obligations to inquire into human-rights standards.

**PP:** Tourism Concern is calling on the UK Government and the UK tourism industry to ensure the rights of local people in tourism destinations are protected in line with international law. How can we best work towards making this a reality?

**HK:** Lobbying. We all have to spread the word and become active on the issue. But just creating laws is rarely the answer – what we have to do is name and shame the companies and try to hit them in their pockets.
Sustainable tourism: looking

Caesar D’Mello of ECOT, Thailand, and Harold Goodwin, of Leeds Metropolitan University, offer a Southern and a Northern perspective on sustainable tourism over the last 21 years, and whether or not the concept is a viable option for the future.

When it comes to sustainable tourism, some progress can be noted: community based tourism initiatives have sprung up; the ‘pro-poor tourism’ concept has emerged, for which credit goes to Professor Harold Goodwin; research into backpacking and ethical travel has increased; and sustainability has entered tourism advertising. But, given the industry’s scale — international tourist numbers are projected to reach 1.05 billion in 2010 — these developments merely skim the surface.

In 1988 the UN World Tourism Organisation defined sustainable tourism as “leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life-support systems”. Bearing this definition in mind, we ask whether or not the tourism industry has imbibed the principles of sustainable tourism. Not when one considers its footprint.

While allowing for exceptions, tourism cannot be sustainable in the long run if it leaves communities poorer and divided as a result of:

- the diversion of resources, such as land and water, to make way for golf courses, resorts, and so on;
- the displacement of people and consequent violations of human rights and loss of livelihoods;
- conflict with the local community due to quarantining of land, beach, sea;
- a fragile ecology and damaged wildlife;
- global warming from air travel and high use of fossil fuels;
- prostitution and trafficking of women and children;
- ‘commodifying’ local and indigenous peoples and culture;
- health hazards such as HIV/AIDS and drugs;
- revenue lost through tax concessions, subsidised land, low wages, repatriated earnings;
- inflating prices beyond the reach of the local population, due to limited supply.

The Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT) is not against tourism as such but, while some in the business community may claim that NGOs are ‘out of touch with reality’, the fact remains that tourism is too big a sector, which involves too many lives, for its direction and impact to be assessed largely in the light of a pragmatic business arrangement. An urgent paradigm shift is called for if tourism is to be truly sustainable – and it is in the interests of the industry to develop a tourism that respects the community and the environment. Advocacy groups such as Tourism Concern, ECOT and others must continue to critique the tourism industry and engage it in dialogue, pointing to a better way.
Has sustainable tourism made significant progress in the last 21 years? The brief answer is no – but there is scope for optimism too. In a finite world, we are increasingly aware of the limits we confront in food supply, water and energy, so surely no-one can be content with the extent of the progress that’s been made in meeting the challenge presented by the oxymoron of sustainable development. This challenge is compounded by our inability to deal with pollution from plastics to greenhouse gases. We have not yet come to terms with the fact that we cannot afford to treat the oceans and the sky, the atmosphere we breathe and which determines our climate, as a dustbin.

Tourism is a part of the problem as it involves some of the most conspicuous consumption but, in order to make it sustainable, change is also needed in the industries and services that are consumed by tourists and by tourism businesses.

Much effort has gone into creating the myth that tourism is the world’s largest industry. This was achieved by counting all the goods and services purchased by consumers; tourism is a major consumption sector. It may be on holiday or while travelling that someone first encounters LED lights or a water-saving shower. The industry has begun to address sustainable consumption and draw attention to what can be done to reduce resource consumption and waste, and benefit local communities.

We have known for a long time what needs to be done – after all it was back in 1992 that Tourism Concern, together with WWF, published Beyond the Green Horizon. There have been some cul-de-sacs. Ecotourism was never the fastest-growing sector of the industry; it was, and is, merely a tiny fragment. The case for ecotourism was based on consumers being prepared to pay more and, the reality is, they are not prepared to pay very much more. There is increasing evidence in the UK that consumers expect the businesses to have addressed sustainability – economic, social and environmental – and it is becoming a core dimension of the product. Carbon offsetting was another diversion into a dead end – the point is to reduce carbon consumption, not to get people to pay more for it.

Tourism Concern played, and continues to play, an important role in raising awareness of the issues. However, the glass is more than half empty.

The challenge is large; we need a concerted effort and we need to accelerate delivery. Some independent travel companies such as Explore, Tribes, Rainbow and Exodus led the way; other larger companies like Thomas Cook and TUI are working to reduce their negative impacts and increase their positive ones. Most significantly, we begin to see the transparent reporting of the results. But we need more.
Our place in the world

Valere Tjolle of TravelMole and Vision on Sustainable Tourism finds out just what ABTA director, John de Vial, thinks of Tourism Concern

VT: What attracts you to Tourism Concern?
JdV: There is a real passion there, from Tricia, Rachel and all those who are involved. Tricia and her team are very well respected by those who take the trouble to get to know them. They are not anti tourism, they are simply anti bad tourism – anti exploitation – just as we all should be.

VT: How can Tourism Concern benefit the travel industry?
JdV: All mature, sophisticated industries value independent voices and critical friends. These are sometimes uncomfortable but, ultimately, they are beneficial.

VT: What is ABTA’s position regarding Tourism Concern?
JdV: We see it as a partner. Tourism Concern is within the circle of key stakeholders we value. We don’t always agree, but we do value and respect its views.

VT: In your opinion, what are Tourism Concern’s greatest achievements?
JdV: It has championed the social aspects of sustainability. Tourism Concern provides a tenacious voice for the poor who should benefit from, and not be further excluded by, tourism. In addition, the organisation has progressed these issues in partnership with others such as The Travel Foundation.

VT: And their biggest current challenges?
JdV: Funding in a difficult climate and getting smaller and middle-size companies on board. And getting the human rights’ agenda understood in the right context that is relevant to tourism – finding the method and platform to challenge without frightening people off.

VT: In worrying times, why should the industry support Tourism Concern?
JdV: Because it is important to all our futures – their agenda is part of our sustainable future as an industry. Our economic purpose is, first, to benefit the places we visit (why else would they welcome us?) and then, and only then, to benefit the visitor. If there are better places to live, there are better places to visit.

One of the mistakes that has been made has been to think of responsible tourism as a niche product, a premium-offer opportunity such as luxury eco-tourism. This agenda is about the whole industry and everything we do. ABTA research shows that customers do care about this and want to know what travel organisers are doing – responsibility and sustainability are ‘design and build’ quality issues, not optional extras. Human rights are just that – rights – and, as members of the tourism industry, we should be concerned that we fulfil the role of a powerful influence for good. That is our place in the world.
Promoting ethical tourism

SINCE ITS INCEPTION, TOURISM CONCERN HAD BEEN accumulating a unique wealth of knowledge and information about ethical tourism issues, especially community-based tourism (CBT). CBT aims to directly involve and benefit local communities, particularly in the global South and, in 2000, Tourism Concern published the first ever CBT compendium, The Community Tourism Guide.

In 2006, we wanted to produce something even more inspiring to intrepid, ethically minded travellers, which would capture the principles of our recently launched Avoid Guilt Trips campaign. The idea behind this campaign was to encourage people to holiday in a way that was more positive for locals, such as finding out about the culture, dressing appropriately and asking permission before taking photographs. We were thrilled that our message was taken up by so many consumers and wanted to build on the campaign’s momentum – The Ethical Travel Guide (ETG) was to contain not only listings, but also thoughtful and practical tools for travelling responsibly.

I was production manager, tasked with keeping the project together. Once the author and researcher were on board, the shoots of the guide budded into the dependable and trusted source of information that it is today. But it wasn’t all plain sailing. Not only did we have to secure funding for The ETG, there was also the challenge of deciding what – and who – should go into the listings. While compiling a questionnaire, which was sent to CBT initiatives far and wide, we produced a set of qualifying principles upon which the decision of whether to include an initiative would be based. This, of course, came with its own distinct problems, not least how to verify the accuracy of the information supplied.

This mammoth task was handled by the researcher, Orely Minelli, but without the knowledge of Tourism Concern’s members and the unrivalled contacts from our legendary ‘little black book’, it would undoubtedly have been much harder. That little black book contains an unmatched and invaluable collection of people and organisations – grassroots tour operators, communities both affected by tourism and involved in CBT, concerned individuals and other activists – that spans the globe. The ETG mirrors some of the aura of that book and is a solution-driven advocate for CBT projects and places the world over.

The ETG has been a great success – it even became Earthscan’s bestseller, leading to an even bigger, second edition being produced in 2009. Undoubtedly this success came about because CBT is an important tool that ensures each destination’s local communities get a fair share of tourism’s benefits. The old adage, and one of Tourism Concern’s earliest campaign slogans, ‘our holidays, their homes’, still rings true and consumers, it seems, are listening. As long as people go on holiday, there is a place for The Ethical Travel Guide.

Former outreach worker Michael Lomotey explains the ethos behind Tourism Concern’s ground-breaking Ethical Travel Guide and its subsequent success

To purchase your copy of The Ethical Travel Guide, 2nd edition, for the special 21st anniversary price of £7.50, visit www.tourismconcern.org.uk
Happy 21st Birthday
Tourism Concern

Congratulations on your wonderful work. Keep on challenging us to think about the lives we brush up against as we take our holidays. Human rights are about respect for the humanity of others. That stays true even on our days of rest.

Baroness Helena Kennedy

On behalf of the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT), I congratulate Tourism Concern on its 21st anniversary. Since Tourism Concern was established, we have both enjoyed a productive relationship.

Caesar D’Mello, ECOT

In today’s world, taking the side of the victim of injustice is an option that fewer and fewer people strain to exercise. Tourism Concern stands out as one of few courageous and visionary campaigners that has chosen to speak up and fight for the rights of tourism’s many anonymous victims – communities whose livelihoods have been threatened, whose cultures are denigrated, whose children and women suffer abuse, and where workers have been reduced to sheer objects.

Ranjan Soloman, Alternatives-Badayl, Goa, India

On its 21st anniversary, we would like to commend Tourism Concern for showing to the world that more fairly traded tourism is the only way this industry can contribute to environmental conservation and community development.

We salute its achievements and the positive impacts its devoted staff have had on the lives of countless communities and workers worldwide; its perseverance and commitment to sustainable tourism have been an important catalyst beyond frontiers. Tourism Concern has become an inspiration for all of us committed to sustainable tourism development.

Happy anniversary!
Ronald Sanabria, sustainable tourism vice-president, Rainforest Alliance

Happy anniversary, Tourism Concern. Human rights abuses are often the last thing on people’s minds when they take a holiday but, as more of us are jetting off to remote long-haul destinations, your campaigning has become even more important in the 21st century. Keep up the good work.

Jenny Kleeman, journalist, writer, documentary filmmaker

Congratulations to Tourism Concern on its 21st anniversary and on the wonderful job that it has done over the years to bring attention to the grave issues related to the ‘other side of the tourism’. Well done TC!!

We are particularly appreciative of your interests in Grenada and for your support in bringing our concerns and issues to the attention of the international public.

Sandra Ferguson, Citizens in Defense of Grenada’s Lands and Heritage

Congratulations on making bread out of stone for all these years!

Afzal Abdool, Tourism consultant and ex-director of Tourism for Dominica
Happy 21st anniversary to Tourism Concern. As an organisation, it has really led the way in making sure that tourism in this country is moving towards a more sustainable approach.

Harriet Lamb, executive director, Fairtrade Foundation

I first met Tricia Barnett in the Solomon Islands in the 1990s, while working with WWF. I invited her to give the keynote speech at the country’s first ecotourism conference, at which community leaders gathered to learn how small-scale village tourism could be a more sustainable option than logging or mining. She gave a dynamic and inspiring talk with examples of the pitfalls and opportunities that tourism can bring.

So, even though Solomon Islanders rarely celebrate a birthday beyond the age of one, and many rural dwellers are blissfully unaware of how old they are, I’m sure the conference participants, some of whom went on to start their own village guesthouses, would like to wish Tourism Concern “Hapi birthday. Twenty wan yia, hem long teem lelebet”. I doubt you need a translation but if you do: “Happy Birthday – 21 years, that’s quite a long time.”

Paul Miles, travel journalist and photographer

Happy 21st to Tourism Concern! Thanks for all of your help with getting the word out to the world about mega-development tourism that has wreaked – and continues to wreak – havoc on the mangrove and wetland habitats of the Bahamas.

Gail Woon, Earthcare

I got in contact with Tourism Concern back in 1995, at a time when Gambian tourism was going through difficult times due to travel directives issued by the British Foreign Office advising its citizens not to travel to the country.

Since then various initiatives on sustainable tourism advocacy work have been undertaken in The Gambia to help raise the awareness of tourists travelling from the UK as well as that of locals on their roles and responsibilities towards the sustainability of the destination.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Tourism Concern on its 21st birthday and wish the organisation well in its commitment for fairness and social justice in global tourism.

Adama Bah, Gambia Tourism Concern

We congratulate Tourism Concern on its 21st anniversary. During this time it has provided an important space for under-represented voices in the tourism industry.

Erika Harms, director, Global Sustainability Tourism Council

Congratulations on 21 years of holding the tourism industry to account for its impacts on local communities and destinations! Long may you continue to tell uncomfortable truths.

Justin Francis, ResponsibleTravel.com

Congratulations Tourism Concern UK!!
Kenya Tourism Concern was launched in 1995 through the help and guidance of Tourism Concern UK. It not only motivated us, but has also been the role model in our fight for fair trade, responsible tourism and promoting the Kenyan environment to sustain the industry for the benefits of our exploited indigenous people and future generations. We are what we are because of Tourism Concern UK and are very grateful indeed to have been associated with it.

Sam Munyi, Kenya Tourism Concern

Thanks for many happy memories and for the huge and valuable contribution that Tourism Concern has made on behalf of all of us.

Maurice and Geri, Asset, The Gambia

© Gail Woon

© Justin Francis

Thanks for many happy memories and for the huge and valuable contribution that Tourism Concern has made on behalf of all of us.
The Ethical Travel Guide, 2nd edition

This fully revised second edition includes more than 400 places in over 70 countries, many of which won’t be found in other guidebooks or on the internet. An essential resource for responsible travellers, the guide is packed with ideas for your next holiday. From trekking in Bolivia to luxury culinary breaks in Crete, there is something for every taste and budget. (Earthscan, 2009)

Usual price: £14.99  Offer price £7.50

Putting Tourism to Rights

A challenge to human rights abuses in the tourism industry

This hard-hitting report exposes the many violations of human rights that occur as a direct result of tourism. It marks 61 years since UN Declaration of Human Rights and 21 years of campaigning by Tourism Concern. The report calls for action to ensure that the rights of communities in destination countries are respected and protected. It challenges the UK Government and tourism industry to recognise that human rights are a fundamental element of any sustainable approach to tourism development.


The Tourism Teaching Toolkit

A great resource for teaching GCSE Geography, GCSE Travel and Tourism, BTEC and OCR Nationals, and the new Diploma in Travel & Tourism. The Toolkit covers a range of themes around sustainable tourism development, presented in a unique assortment of materials. These include a PowerPoint presentation; our ground-breaking Putting Tourism to Rights report; The Ethical Travel Guide, 2nd edition; and a film challenging students to see tourism from different perspectives. This perfect package offers a substantial saving on buying the items separately.

Usual price: £39.99  Offer price £20.00

Tourism Impacts and Issues

Tourism Concern Resource Material for Teaching Tourism & Leisure AS/A2 and Vocational Courses

This teaching resources pack contains material on numerous themes covered in vocational and AS/A2 courses, including: ecotourism; impacts and issues; and working in travel and tourism. It includes both printed text (48 pages) and a CD of images and exercises. (Tourism Concern, 2007)

Usual price: £9.99  Offer price £5.00

Visit www.tourismconcern.org.uk