

Paradise lost

What can be done to stop tourism destroying the object of its affection?

Maurice Chandler reports on the boom in world travel.

On the sun-soaked Mediterranean island of Majorca, the locals are angry. Too late.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, they cashed in on foreign nationals, mainly Germans, wanting to buy up property on their idyllic island.

Suddenly it occurred to Majorcans that the island no longer belonged to them.

They don't deny tourism's vital contribution to the local economy.

The industry has transformed Majorca from one of Spain's poorest parts to the richest in per capita income.

But the island's 630,000 inhabitants are increasingly convinced that the 14 million foreign visitors a year are far too much of a good thing.

Water is rationed, pollution is worsening, and there is no affordable housing left for them to buy.

On the other side of the world, 250 Filipinos were recently evicted from their homes.

Their lake-shore village of Ambulong was cleared by hundreds of police, who demolished 24 houses.

The intention of the authorities was to make way for a major business venture – not oil, logging, or mining, but an environmentally-friendly holiday resort.

A growth industry

Tourism is the world's largest and fastest growing industry. In 1950, 25m people travelled abroad;

last year it was 750m. The World Tourism Organization estimates that by 2020 1.6bn people will travel each year, spending over two trillion US dollars.

The effects of tourism

To millions of tourists, foreign destinations are exotic paradises, unspoilt, idyllic, and full of local charm. But many of the world's resorts are struggling to cope with relentless waves of tourists, whose demands for ever more swimming pools and golf courses are sucking them dry.

"The issue is massive and global," says Tricia Barnett, director of Tourism Concern, a charity which campaigns for more responsible approaches to travel.

"Tourists in Africa will be having a shower and then will see a local woman with a pot of water on her head, and they are not making the connection.

Sometimes you'll see a village with a single tap, when each hotel has taps and showers in every room. The problem is that tourists demand so much water. It has been calculated that a tourist in Spain uses up 880 litres of water a day, compared with 250 litres by a local.

An 18-hole golf course in a dry country can consume as much water as a town of 10,000 people.

In the Caribbean, hundreds of thousands of people go without piped water during the high tourist season, as springs are piped to hotels.

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Winners and losers

The host country may not see many benefits. In Thailand, 60% of the \$4bn annual tourism revenue leaves the country.

Low-end package tourists tend to stay at big foreign-owned hotels, cooped up in the hotel compound, buying few local products, and having no contact with the local community other than with the waiters and chambermaids employed by the hotel.

"Mass tourism usually leaves little money inside the country," says Tricia Barnett.

"Most of the money ends up with the airlines, the tour operators, and the foreign hotel owners:

These days the industry's most urgent question may be how to keep the crowds at bay.

A prime example of this is Italy, where great cultural centres like Florence and Venice can't handle all the tourists they get every summer.

In Florence, where the city's half-million or so inhabitants have to live with the pollution, gridlock, and crime generated by 11 million visitors a year, there's talk not only of boosting hotel taxes, but even of charging admission to some public squares. The idea is to discourage at least some visitors, as well as to pay for cleaning up the mess. The future For many poorer countries, tourism may still offer the best hope for development. "The Vietnamese are doing their best to open up their country," says Patrick Duffey of the World Tourism Organization. "Iranis working on a master plan for their tourism. Libya has paid \$1 million for a study. They all want tourists. And people like to discover ever new parts of the world, they are tired of mass tourism. Even if a country doesn't have beaches, it can offer mountains and deserts and unique cultures.' Yet if something isn't done, tourism seems destined to become the victim of its own success. Its impact on the environment is a major concern. In hindsight, tourist organizations might have second thoughts about what exactly they were trying to sell. As Steve McGuire, a tourist consultant, says, "Tourism more often than not ruins the very assets it seeks to exploit, and having done the damage, simply moves off elsewhere.' For poorer countries, tourism may still offer the best hope for development.

Read the text *"Paradise Lost"* (New Headway Upper-Intermediate Student's Book p 20–21) and choose the best alternative A, B, C or D. There is an example at the beginning (0).

0. Majorca has been
- A entirely abandoned by locals
 - B invaded by German tourists**
 - C overlooked by British tourists
 - D turned into a huge supermarket.
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1. Millions of tourists in Majorca have
- A affected the prices of real estate
 - B doubled the island's population
 - C had a devastating effect on the economy
 - D not contributed much to the local economy
2. Hundreds of ordinary Filipinos have
- A been demolishing old houses
 - B been employed by the government
 - C suffered from great injustice
 - D volunteered to tolerate hardships
3. Local residents of major tourist destinations find it difficult to
- A bear in mind ecological considerations
 - B fight off the huge hoard of foreigners
 - C maintain the idyllic local charm
 - D satisfy the growing needs of tourists
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4. Tourism Concern advocates
- A restricting the amount of global tourism
 - B sustainability in contemporary tourism
 - C considering the responsibilities of local residents
 - D unlimited availability of natural resources
5. The benefits the host country gains from mass tourism are
- A greater than expected
 - B often next to nothing
 - C outnumber the losses
 - D overwhelming

6. Probably the most urgent question of the tourism industry is how to
 - A discourage tourists from using public transportation
 - B keep the masses of tourists in coastal areas
 - C make a profit from selling tickets to local sights
 - D prevent the harmful effects of mass tourism

 7. Many poorer countries
 - A are afraid to open their borders to foreign visitors
 - B are not attractive enough to foreign tourists
 - C consider tourism to be profitable for their economy
 - D have less to offer than the great cultural centres

 8. Tourism has a tendency to
 - A be environmentally friendly
 - B fully exploit the host countries
 - C ruin the tourist organisations
 - D victimize ordinary tourists
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Read the text "*Paradise Lost*" (New Headway Upper-Intermediate Student's Book p 20–21) and find the words and expressions that match these explanations. There is an example at the beginning (0).

0. Extremely pleasant, beautiful or peaceful = **idyllic**

1. Poor, not having much money –
2. A traffic jam –
3. To get money from somebody –
4. The activity of cutting down trees for wood –
5. Extremely sunny –
6. A useful or valuable quality, skill or person –
7. An amount for one person –

8. An area surrounded by a fence containing a group of buildings –
9. A business activity which involves risk –

10. An ability to understand an event only after it has happened –
11. Continuing in an extreme way –
12. To be in a small closed space –