

Tourism has a complicated relationship with climate change. Not only is tourism likely to be dramatically influenced by climate change in the future, tourism also is an industry that significantly contributes to the human activity that is causing climate change. Particularly within the transportation sector,¹⁰ greenhouse gas emissions from tourism have been growing. Unfortunately, research shows that tourists are generally unwilling to voluntarily change their behaviors to lessen emissions, especially when it comes to limiting their air travel, and it is likely that change in the future will come in response to government regulations.¹¹

The threat of climate change has actually promoted irresponsible tourism for those who wish to see destinations and attraction that may no longer exist in the near future. One such example is “last-chance tourism” to view polar bears in Northern Canada where the impact of visitors is “loving tourism destinations to death.”¹²

Climate change is not only a concern for the environmental impacts of tourism. Because tourism is service-oriented, if destinations were to lose tourism demand it would result in job losses¹³ and potentially impact the local residents and their quality of life.



Native peoples can be harmed by the demonstration effect of tourism. Photo by Ron Hilliard

People

Many of the gains realized from tourism are economic and have often been short term in nature. The costs, however, especially to natural and cultural resources of an area, are more likely to be long-lived or even permanent. Too many times, nonlocal developers relying on “outside money” are the biggest winners, and when the area has become saturated and starts to decline, these developers move on to the next trendy destination with no concern for the damage that may have been done. The quality of life for the local residents can decline if they are not on the receiving end of the benefits that tourism can bring to a region through foreign ownership and leakage. The quality of life of the local residents can also be impacted by their social interactions with the tourists. Called the host-guest relationship, the behavior of the tourists can influence local residents regardless of whether they work in the tourism industry.

Tourism researcher George Doxey studied the effects that “outsiders” have on destination residents and developed an index of these sentiments called the *Irridex*. The *Irridex* describes the levels of irritation that locals may feel with the influx in the number of tourists and the changes brought about by this growth. Stage One is Euphoria. In the first phase of tourism development, locals welcome both tourism investors and travelers, recognizing the economic boom tourism can generate. Stage Two is Apathy, as residents begin to take tourism for granted, contacts with tourists become businesslike, and communications focus on marketing. Stage Three, termed Annoyance, develops when residents become “saturated” with