

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Green Food Service Alliance which has been certified by the National Restaurant Association are beginning to bring credibility to claims of sustainability.

## A Future of Sustainability

There is a recent debate about the difference between a tourist and a traveler. What is your initial reaction when you read the word *tourist*? Tourists are likely to take vacations that are characterized by elements found in mass tourism, with little awareness or concern for natural and cultural resources in the destination. Tourists are more concerned with convenience and familiarity and can be disconnected from the places and people they visit. Travelers, on the other hand, want to immerse themselves in the destination so they are actively experiencing a place rather than passively observing a place. Travelers will purposefully avoid “touristy” areas and seek authenticity by exploring remote places and meeting local people to appreciate the true meaning of the landscape and the culture. There is a stronger connection and sense of belongingness for a traveler and they are more likely to make a contribution to the destination based on their deeper understanding of its character.<sup>46</sup>

It may seem like an easy solution that everyone should be a *traveler*, get off the beaten path, and follow the ecotourism principles. However, that is not entirely the case and some argue that mass tourism has its own place if it is managed well. What if everyone got off the beaten path? That path could become a road, and that road could become a highway.<sup>47</sup> Ecotourism essentially promotes visitation to remote and fragile areas that are highly sensitive to the impact of tourists. Relying on ecotourism



People exploring the Everglades National Park on a guided boat could be labeled as soft ecotourists. Photo by Cathy Hsu