



# Tourism Scan

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“The Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism is a Chiang Mai; Thailand based coalition of Regional Ecumenical Organisations and over seventy secular and faith-based groups. It seeks to unite people around collective efforts that negate the undesirable effects of modern tourism and, in its place, institute socially responsible and ethically oriented tourism. It believes that tourism must be based on justice and sustainability for host communities and that, therefore, tourism planning and practice must be democratised. ECOT advocates respect for the protection and dignity of the human rights of women, children, indigenous peoples and workers in the tourist trade. It opposes tourism projects that create environmental devastation.”

## Editorial Comment

The tourism entrepreneur almost unfailingly never fails on one score – that when it comes to profits, they will stop at nothing. If the environment must be decimated in order to have a successful enterprise, then that is just what they will do. If children have to be sold into brothels and club houses as sex slaves to make tourism more attractive, then that is just what they make possible. If countries must liberalize sectors at the cost of peoples livelihoods, or their displacement, then the tourism industry will call on all its highly placed government bureaucrats and ministers to open up the trade spaces to be sure that the industry can go forward unimpeded.

A tourism delegation team under the banner of the GTIF, convened by ECOT, issued a statement at the WSF Karachi denouncing “the fact that tourism today is a multi-billion dollar industry that wields the clout to subjugate economies and dilute or subvert laws be it environment protection laws, labour laws, social laws – thus hijacking the very sovereignty of peoples and nations. It gave a call to fight the terrorism of the present day tourism model which fences out local communities’ access to the beaches, the forests, the waters while depriving them of their livelihoods, lifestyles and basic freedoms. It further stated that the tourism industry was also a means through which countries’ sovereignties were up for sale through the creation of exclusive economic zones, with people not having the right to say ‘no’ to such a tourism.” A fuller version can be found as the first piece of ‘scanned news’ in this issue of Tourism Scan!

Elsewhere in this issue are reports of the continuing and intensifying struggle in The Biminis where local groups in partnership with a number of global solidarity partners are trying to get the government of The Bahamas to bring to an end the planned disaster in the Biminis in the name of a tourism enterprise.

New forms of tourism must normally be somehow exciting. Like medical tourism, the notion of reproductive tourism, however, must raise eyebrows. An entire sector is thrown open to the rich tourist under the guise of medical tourism. You don’t need the brain drain to happen anymore as far as where qualified doctors go. They stay back at home, serve the posh customer in the posh hospital and make even 5-star comfort look weak! So, patients from all over the world visit India- and, indeed, several other developing countries, to get the best treatment at prices they could never even dream of in their home countries. And then- in the backyards of these expensive 5-star hospitals, the poor (who probably built the facilities) will die of hunger, disease, malnutrition simply because the ‘medical facility’ was not there?! Reports say that the Indian medical infrastructure is now being increasingly used by British nationals for reproductive purpose. Little wonder they ask: Is medical tourism a new pattern of colonialism? And so, we ask readers not to view our report on ‘reproductive tourism’ as news we report as an endorsement or a breakthrough we share with enthusiasm. We ask: What will the next thing in exploitative tourism practice be like?

And so, we join the call from our colleagues who were in Karachi who demand that we **Fight the Subjugation from Tourism; People, Not Profits need to be at the Center**

**Ranjan Solomon**  
Editor

## **Fight the Subjugation from Tourism; People, Not Profits need to be at the Center**

The Global Tourism Interventions Front convened by the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, in co-operation with Bailancho Saad – Goa (A women’s collective), India, Equations, Bangalore, India, and GLIDE, Sri Lanka, whose delegates were at the Polycentric World Social Forum at Karachi, today issued a statement titled “Fight the Subjugation from Tourism; People, Not Profits Need to be at The Centre”. The Statement highlighted the fact that tourism today is a multi-billion dollar industry that wields the clout to subjugate economies and dilute or subvert laws be it environment protection laws, labour laws, social laws – thus hijacking the very sovereignty of peoples and nations. It gave a call to fight the terrorism of the present day tourism model which fences out local communities’ access to the beaches, the forests, the waters while depriving them of their livelihoods, lifestyles and basic freedoms. It further stated that the tourism industry was also a means through which countries’ sovereignties were up for sale through the creation of exclusive economic zones, with people not having the right to say ‘no’ to such a tourism.

The statement also drew the attention of the participants of the World Social Forum to the lessons from the Tsunami experience about the vulnerability that people have been exposed to, firstly, due to the destruction of ecological barriers by the tourism industry and, secondly, due to the dependence on tourism. It also cautioned against the Tsunami being capitalized upon to impose the agenda of the predominant players of the tourism industry who now in the reconstruction process want to appropriate the lands now vacant.

Most importantly the statement underscored for the need for the joining of forces for a tourism and development where people and not profits are at the center. It called for an alliance between the trade unions, hotel workers’ unions, transport workers’ unions, fisher people’s unions, women’s organizations, child rights organizations, environmental organizations, cultural organizations, consumer organizations, fair trade organizations, forest dwellers, indigenous peoples and other civil society organizations.

The Statement has been endorsed by participants at World Social Forum including representatives of various organizations and unions from different parts of Asia, including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, as also participants from other parts of the world that are attending the Forum.

*Issued by: Albertina Almeida, BAILANCHO SAAD, Goa, INDIA, Aditi Chanchani, EQUATIONS, Bangalore, INDIA, Peter Rezel, GLIDE, Colombo, SRI LANKA*

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## **Guana Cay's mangroves last stand, or form stance against development**

*From: Erik Gauger, MAP News 168th Ed, March 2006*

Bad news seems to be the one constant for mangroves these days. But on one small island in the Northern Bahamas, an unlikely story is unfolding. The island of Great Guana Cay is fighting a foreign golf and marina mega-development that threatens to destroy the last remaining mangroves on the island. Great Guana Cay features a beautiful mangrove estuary and river, the island's only fishery, which helps to support a healthy coral reef on the Atlantic side of the island.

Although the developer has already destroyed a large portion of the island's mangroves, the islanders have formed a coalition (Save Guana Cay Reef) to fight the developer. They have taken the Prime Minister of the Bahamas and the developer to court. Due to actions in the Bahamian court, the developer has halted all environmentally-destructive development until the court case ends.

This may set a precedent that a small group of people who understand the value of their mangrove system may be able to defeat the short-term forces that so often disregard the important mangroves.

The Save Guana Cay Reef group's lawyer, Fred Smith, is arguing successfully in court that the developer and the Bahamian government ignored the necessary involvement of locals, local government and regulations in order to cheat the system.

Future court dates will concentrate on more specific environmental threats such as to the mangroves and its impact on the people whose families have inhabited the island for over 200 years.

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### **French unrest has tourism industry on guard**

*By Gene Sloan / USA Today*

Planning a trip to France in coming months? Keep your eye on the growing civil unrest sweeping the country, travel industry experts say.

With rioting turning violent and talk of strikes in the air, travelers "should be at least concerned," says airline watcher Terry Tripler of Cheapseats.com. If strikes occur, "the disruption of the transportation system in France could be minor, or it could be a real mess."

Unions and students protesting a new labor law have called for a limited strike on Tuesday, but tourist sites and transportation hubs such as airports are expected to remain open. Still, to be safe, Europe-bound vacationers should route upcoming flights through capitals outside of France, Tripler says.

A strike that shuts down airports or train lines is a bigger concern for travelers than the escalating violence. Police used water cannons Saturday to hold off rioters at Sorbonne University in Paris, and violence also erupted at the Place de la Nation; one protester was left in a coma. But the incidents were far-removed from most tourist areas, says Paris-based travel writer Heather Stimmler-Hall, who covers the city for Fodor's.

"Tourists using common sense and avoiding public demonstrations shouldn't worry," she says. "Unless you happen to be staying at a hotel right next to the Sorbonne, there's not that much (to) disrupt a tourist's stay."

Stimmler-Hall says the biggest effect on tourists so far has been blocked roads around the Sorbonne. "Driving has been more difficult on certain streets," she says. But driving in busy Paris is "never a good idea anyway."

Still, the protests, which spread to Paris' famed Luxembourg Gardens Tuesday, where rioters threw bottles and stones at police, has hotelier Olivier Chavy beginning to worry about a drop in visits to the world's most popular vacation destination.

"It's not a big event yet, but it could be a big event if it goes on for two or three more weeks," says the general manager of the Hilton Arc de Triomphe Paris.

Chavy says he hasn't had cancellations at the 486-room property, near the Arc de Triomphe on the Champs-Elysees. But continued TV coverage of the rioting, however removed from the city's core, eventually could have a harmful effect.

So far, tour operators haven't altered plans. "We haven't heard any concerns yet," says Allyson Quibell of Backroads, which has 43 trips scheduled in France this year starting next month. "Our France trip sales continue to be strong."

One reason, she suspects, is that travellers have learned to live with unrest: "There are always strikes - or threats of strikes - of some sort in France."

The law causing the unrest allows employers to fire workers younger than 26 in the first two years of employment without giving a reason.

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### **Reproductive tourism gains momentum in India**

*By Satish G. | eTN Asia*

As the concept of niche tourism gains popularity, a new trend 'reproductive tourism' is being related to India. Lending a new dimension to medical outsourcing, several British couples keen to have children have been travelling to India for surrogate mothers. Reports of couples from Europe and East Asia making flying visits in search of surrogate mothers have already been highlighted in local media.

"British couples desperate for children travel to India in search of surrogates" said a headline appearing in the UK-based publication Guardian. "Ethics under scrutiny as would-be parents are enticed by lower costs and relaxed laws."

Referring to the case of a couple from the UK travelling to India for the same, the report added that there is a flourishing trade in reproductive tourism in India, which has a more relaxed attitude to paying women for pregnancy, a practice prohibited in many other countries. Indian clinics report that the incidence of surrogacy has more than doubled in the past three years, with the demand driven by fertility requests from abroad and the decision by some professional women to delay trying for a family until their late 30s, it said.

"The treatment is becoming big business in India and is worth about 20bn rupees (£250m) a year. The increase in requests from abroad is partly fuelled by the relatively cheap costs. At about £3,000 in Britain, an IVF cycle costs five times what you might pay in India. In addition, in Britain, the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority (HFEA) has outlawed payments, but a surrogate can be reimbursed for a maximum of £10,000 to cover expenses; the payments often fall between £4,000 and £10,000," added the report.

It is being said that British patients waiting on long queues for normal operations travelling to India for speedier treatment is no longer news. But reports say that the Indian medical infrastructure is now being increasingly used by British nationals for reproductive purpose.

## West Papua: Biodiversity and freedom

Earlier this year, a rare thing happened: West Papua hit the headlines. The news was the discovery of a new species of honeyeater bird, a "lost" bird of paradise, a nearly extinct tree kangaroo, 20 new species of frogs, four new butterflies and five new species of palms. The species were found during an expedition to the Foja Mountains organised by Conservation International and the Indonesian Institute of Sciences. "It's as close to the Garden of Eden as you're going to find on Earth," said Bruce Beehler, co-leader of the group. His words were dutifully reported in newspapers around the world.

The fact that West Papua is an occupied land rarely makes the news. It should do. The 250 tribes who have lived there for around 40,000 years do not have the right to choose their own government. They have little control over their land and resources. The country is flooded with Indonesian soldiers on the look out for the slightest sign of resistance. Anyone suggesting that the Papuans should be free is tortured or killed. Filep Karma and Yusak Pakage are serving 15 and 10 year prison sentences for raising the West Papua flag. The country is closed to journalists and human rights monitors.

West Papua remained under Dutch control when Indonesia became a new nation state in 1949. It remained so until 1961, when West Papua held a congress and declared the country independent.

Indonesia invaded a few months later. John F Kennedy approved the Indonesian government's occupation, describing the Papuans as "living in the stone age". The UN intervened. In 1969, seven years after Indonesia invaded their country, West Papuans got to vote. That is, about 1,000 of them, handpicked by the Indonesian military to represent the population of one million, got to vote. Before the vote, the soldiers threatened them and their families with death if they voted the wrong way. The result was a unanimous vote for Indonesian rule. To its shame, the UN ratified the result.

Since then Indonesia has attempted to wipe out Papuan culture. Estimates of the numbers killed since the occupation range from 100,000 to 800,000. In an attempt to dominate Papuan culture, the Indonesian government has moved about one million people to transmigration camps cut into the forest.

Indonesia sold West Papua's oil, gold, copper, timber and gas to foreign or Indonesian companies. West Papua's forests cover an area of about 34.6 million hectares. Of this, Indonesia declared almost 28 million hectares as production forest. Logging companies moved in with military support and associated human rights abuses. In recent years the logging has accelerated as the forests of Sumatra, Sulawesi and Kalimantan are becoming logged out.

In December 2005, the Asian Development Bank approved US\$350 million towards a proposed US\$5.5 billion gas extraction and liquefied gas processing plant, which is being developed by multinational oil giant BP in Bintuni Bay. BP's project threatens mangroves, fisheries and local livelihoods. It is opposed by many Papuans on the grounds that Indonesia has no right to make decisions over the resources on their territory.

The Grasberg mine in West Papua is the largest gold and copper mine in the world. It is operated by a subsidiary of US-based Freeport-McMoRan. Freeport is the largest taxpayer to the Indonesian government. But few Papuans see any benefits.

Thousands of people have been displaced or killed to make way for the mine. People living near the mine suffer from human rights abuses carried out by the Indonesian security forces hired by the company to protect its operations. Freeport has removed a sacred mountain, leaving a vast crater and a poisoned river system.

On 16 March 2006, five members of the security forces were killed after a peaceful demonstration in the capital Jayapura against Freeport turned violent. A civilian was also killed. Reports on the TAPOL Indonesian Human Rights Campaign website indicate that the violence started when police shot at demonstrators, possibly with rubber bullets, and used tear gas and armoured vehicles to clear the demonstrators. At least 57 people were arrested. In the days following the demonstration, police shot

at student dormitories and beat people they had detained. About 1,200 students fled into the mountains around Jayapura to escape reprisals from the police.

In a message of support to the UK-based Free West Papua campaign, Noam Chomsky writes, "The crimes committed against the people of West Papua are some of the most shameful of the past years. The Western powers have much to answer for, and at the very least should use their ample means to bring about the withdrawal of the occupying Indonesian army and termination of the shameful exploitation of resources and destruction of the environment and the lives and societies of the people of West Papua, who have suffered far too much."

Perhaps Bruce Beehler, co-leader of the Conservation International and Indonesian Institute of Sciences expedition, should take a closer look at West Papua. He might then discover that the country looks a little more like hell on earth than the Garden of Eden.

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**Olive Co-operative offers the Al Aqsa Tour in partnership with Friends of Al Aqsa.**

Tour highlights include the opportunity to visit key religious and political sites, including Harem al Sharif in Jerusalem, Mosque of the Caliph Omar in Bethlehem's Manger Square, Mosque of Ibrahim in Hebron and tomb of Prophet Musa in Jericho; discover first-hand the current situation in Palestine; meet people and organisations working for peace with justice; experience the hospitality of Palestinian families; learn from experienced guides. Ismail Patel, Chair of Friends of Al-Aqsa:

"Many Muslims know the virtues of the Masjid Al Aqsa in Jerusalem, for example it is the only place on earth where all the messengers of Allah prayed at the same time led by our Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), however not many Muslims have taken the opportunity to visit. I would urge all those who have the means, to visit the holy land of Palestine, see numerous sites of religious significance and show solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are resisting daily occupation."

The Al Aqsa tour will be guided at all times by an experienced Olive tour leader. There will opportunity for prayers five times a day, including Friday prayers in Al Aqsa mosque for Muslim participants. The tour price of Pounds 495 includes all accommodation and breakfast, British and Palestinian tour guides, local transport and airport transfers. The price does not include flights, which are around Pounds 300 from the UK.

**Olive Co-operative places tour customer safety and security as its highest priority. Olive tour guides continuously monitor the situation on the ground using a wide range of contacts. All itineraries are subject to change due to local circumstances.**

Anyone interested in joining these tours should contact [siana@olivecoop.com](mailto:siana@olivecoop.com) or [leonie@olivecoop.com](mailto:leonie@olivecoop.com) Subject to demand, there may be a pre-tour meeting in London or the Midlands in May/June, for people considering participating in this tour. This will give the group a chance to meet each other and the tour guide, as well as the opportunity to discuss any hopes and fears they may have about the trip. For further info- booking forms and guidance notes please see [www.olivecoop.com](http://www.olivecoop.com)

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### **Mexico's El Cielo Cloud Forest- Story**

*by Emily Grey*

Last fall, 10 Americans drove 350 miles from McAllen, Texas into Tamaulipas, Mexico. Our weekend mission was to explore El Cielo, an International Biosphere Reserve per UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) guidelines. The cloud forest here exemplifies how humans and nature can coexist harmoniously.

The eastern escarpment of the Sierra Madres of El Cielo is a crossroads of North and South America. An amazing biodiversity flourishes year-round in this 300,000-acre oasis. Tropical and thorn brush plants such as mesquite, cacti and ebony grow beside sugar maples, sweet gum and other temperate zone trees. Millions of dragonflies migrate through every August.

As it lifts and banks along the mountain peaks, moisture from the Gulf of Mexico forms clouds. Rains come often and disappear quickly, resulting in over 10 feet per year.

An hour past the border, the landscape gave way to ponds, trees and interesting sights. Children along roadsides dangled chili peppers and jerky for sale. Billboards advertised dove, quail and waterfowl hunting at lodges. Cattle and horses roamed at will. A mariachi band and banquet awaited us our first night near Llera, the oldest town in the State of Tamaulipas. The next day, some of our group members kayaked while others hiked along the Guadalejo River.

Later, we dined on mango pie and fresh tilapia fillets and sautéed langustinos (prawns) raised in the eatery's concrete tanks. A memorable blue morpho butterfly fluttered by our picnic table. A gravelly road signaled adventure as we slowly ascended thousands of feet. Openings provided spectacular valley vistas with white clouds brushing the summits. Ninety minutes later, after paying the gatekeeper \$1 U.S, we entered the community of El Cielo.

A few rustic homes are scattered along this rugged terrain. Shy children, unaccustomed to strangers, hid behind their mothers' skirts as the elders prepared our dinner in the restaurant. Raindrops beat the tin roofs of our primitive adobes through the night while donkeys continually brayed. One morning, a glorious sunrise peaked through silhouetted Spanish moss. Several professional guides and trainees joined us at meals and outings. The June through October rainy season did not hinder our bird watching expeditions. Within a 50-foot radius, we counted nearly 30 species in a few minutes. A crested caracara, altimira oriole and elegant trogon perched in the treetops. Ten percent of the globe's fauna and flora are found in Mexico. At least 555 avian species, including 120 "charismatic" species, which cannot be seen in Canada or the United States, are found there.

Officials in Mexico are beginning to realize the value of the land and its wildlife watching resource. Tamaulipas is busily preparing birding routes, training guides and planning infrastructure and shuttles for its fall Nature Festival. Mexicans are eager to learn more about the natural world and work together to accomplish their goals. Representatives are seeking an alliance with the Texas Rio Grande Valley, a world-class birding and nature festival venue.

At our hosts' requests, we offered ideas on attracting nature tourists, developing programs and selling indigenous art. When El Cielo was designated a reserve in 1985, local women formed a co-op to sell homemade preserves and beautiful embroidery. Profits are used to help other poor communities tap their talents and become productive.

Timbering, once the major livelihood in El Cielo, has abated. Residents, who have learned the economic significance of nature watching tourists, are sparing more trees. An area farmer, interested in sustainability and responsible land stewardship, opened his catfish ponds, citrus groves and hiking trails to us. He also offers snorkeling, jungle trekking, kayaking and bird watching on his cattle ranch.

Mexico has a treasured resource in El Cielo, a conservation success for future generations. Here's hoping that our southern neighbor and the U.S. can effectively unify to preserve and conserve the valuable migrating birds, butterflies and other wildlife that we share.

Travelers interested in seeing El Cielo should plan to travel with a tour group. Guides can meet nature tourists at a central spot and lead them to select destinations. English is widely spoken except in isolated villages. For more information, contact the [McAllen Convention and Visitors' Bureau](#) or Sonia Ortiz of Aventur via [email](#) or phone, 011-(5281)8378-5926.

*Source: Sustainable Travel Report: The Responsible Tourism e-Newsletter*

## **Philippine media: Sex industry throbs with tourism boom**

*By Satish G. | eTN Asia*

“Sex industry throbs with tourism boom,” reads the headline of a report by Philippines-based publication Manila Standard Today, highlighting the spots and various ways the prostitution is flourishing with foreign tourists in the country. The report depicts the growing concern as Southeast Asia emerges to be one of the world’s top destinations for people seeking sex with children. “The tourism program of the government which aims to project the Philippines as a major tourist destination has increased the number of prostituted women. As more and more areas of the country are targeted for tourism, more and more women are driven to prostitution in desperation to ensure their family’s survival,” Gabriela says in the report. Gabriela, a women’s group, has blamed the tourism program of the government as a contributory factor to the growing problem of prostitution

It was recently mentioned that the Philippines has a law that protects children against all forms of abuse, but it needs to be amended to cover the pervasive problem of child pornography on the Internet, said Anjanette Saguisag, a child protection officer at the UNICEF office in Manila. On its part, the Department of Tourism (DoT) has denied any link between prostitution and tourism.

In the same report, Eduardo Jarque Jr., assistant secretary for tourism planning and promotion at DoT, says prostitution is not exclusive to the Philippines. “Other countries have the same problem. We just can’t control it,” he told the publication. He admits that foreigners are attracted to the caring attitude of the Filipinos. “Foreigners find us friendly,” he reportedly says. “With such a short time of stay in the country, foreigners’ quality of enjoyment here is very high.”

For his part, Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano insists that nobody is selling the country as a sex tourism destination. “We welcome everyone as long as they are legitimate tourists, but we do not condone prostitution,” he says. Prostitution, according to him, is not just a tourism issue, but a social issue that needs to be addressed by everyone, not only by the DoT. “We even discourage it. Families are the type of tourists we are bringing into the country,” he reportedly says. Durano even argues that the increase in tourist arrivals has been helping mitigate the problem of prostitution. According to the report, data showed that employment in hotels and restaurants alone grew by 50,000 to 866,000 in January 2006 from only 836,000 a year ago.

Other interesting aspects of the report include mentioning of areas such as massage parlors, “where customers choose who to have sex with from a roomful of girls”, in the guise of massage. “Casas (brothels), which are not considered legitimate establishments, offer sex services at more affordable rates. Then, there are also clubs, bars and KTVs where customers and GROs or bar girls can spend an hour or more at the VIP room with their customers for P1,500 to P2,000 and have sex for another P2,000 to P2,500,” adds the report. “Another form of prostitution is the so-called escort service, where the call girl accompanies the tourist to the places he wants to visit, including the hotel room where he stays. This has also evolved into a sex tour.”

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