



# Tourism Scan

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*"The Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism is a Chiangmai/Thailand based coalition of worldwide 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 human rights of women, children, indigenous peoples and workers in the tourist trade. It opposes tourism projects that create environmental devastation."*

## From the Editor

*Dear Reader,*

*The current TourismScan is published as we are preparing the first Contours Magazine in 2007. You will soon find the publication plan of Contours on our website [www.ecotonline.org](http://www.ecotonline.org), and your input and thoughts are welcome.*

*Last month, there were again challenging issues and we selected a few hoping to find your interest. If you have any issue you want to share and discuss within the worldwide network of ECOT, please let us know.*

*Due to a considerable media presence in the last month, we are sharing some insights of the TimTeam with you on the subject of POORISM, tourism to slums.*

*From there we jump to a rather exclusive /high end (tourism) project which has been recently opened in Dubai, the Palm Dubeira artificial islands, supposed to be the 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder of the World and a serious challenge in many aspects.*

*A threat in a different way is seen in Sri Lanka, the war-prone tear-shaped island in the Indian Ocean. Here, a tourism program funded by the UN has been announced just when the Ceasefire Agreement of 2002, after 5 years of hope and frustration, was officially announced to be 'dead'. And P.E.A.C.E. in its fight against sexual exploitation of children in tourism is seeking funds to continue and expand its programme.*

*With respect to the recent UN and Stern Report you find few selected news on Tourism and Climate Change. A long way lies still ahead in how to incorporate tourism and climate protection; possibly within the framework of corporate social responsibility as discussed by the tourism industry of sending countries.*

*In our office location Chiang Mai, the major tourism destination in Northern Thailand, we share the concerns of residents about increasing air contamination to which tourism transportation contributes. '**Insight Chiang Mai**' as a new section of TourismScan will deal with news from this district giving insights into tourism related issues of this interesting Asian destination..*

*What links all these articles is the question how different tourism stakeholders have to take action to solve the problems of the people living in those 'destinations'.*

*Julia Schonharl*

## How far will it go? Slums promoted as tourist attractions

It was an article by Andrew Cawthorne (a Reuters correspondent) about slum tours in Kenya reproduced by many newspapers around the world that revived the controversy on slum tourism, following a heated debate on the issue in India last year. According to the editor of the Tourism Investigation & Monitoring Team (tim-team), Anita Pleumaron, tour operators working in less developed countries are looking at this recently promoted form of tourism, namely slum-tourism. With a collection of e-articles she showed that more and more tour operators are turning the world's most well-known slums into tourist attractions, for instance, South Africa's townships, slums in Kenya, Brazil's favelas, and the 'homes' of India's most destitute people.

While proponents say such tours offer eye-opening experiences that may prompt action on the poverty agenda, critical voices are getting louder particularly in Third World destination countries. Slum tourism – also dubbed 'poorism' – is denounced by many commentators as a perverse invasion of privacy and shameless marketing of poor people's misery to rich consumers.

Anita Pleumaron found on [wordspy.com](http://wordspy.com/) <<http://wordspy.com/>> , that 'poorism' is defined as "travel that includes tours of or accommodations in slums or dangerous urban neighbourhoods"; and 'poorists' are described as middle-aged, middle-class and not especially trendy tourists who are seeking "safe-danger" or "controlled-edge" experiences. The industry considers poorism as a new hot and lucrative niche market: "Tourists jaded with the soft adventure of bungee jumping and white-water rafting will instead line up to tour violent fringe communities, or traipse through former combat zones and chat with child soldiers" (<<http://wordspy.com/>>).

Commercial slum tourism probably started in the early 1990s with tours to Soweto Township in South Africa. Then, authorities in Brazil decided to put Rio de Janeiro's largest 'favela', Rocinha, on the tourist map. Rocinha's proximity to Rio's famous Ipanema Beach was a major factor. The slum was next door to all the fancy Ipanema hotels - so instead of scaring tourists away, the idea was to bring them there – for a profit.

The Timteamclearinghouse editor then looks at the 'Exotic Tours' (sic!) which invites visitors to Rio to explore the largest slum in Latin America with students from the Rocinha Tourism Workshop. It says, "Your visit will help our project as well as create work opportunities within the community. Be assured this is an absolutely safe tour as the locals welcome tourists and visitors alike." The Favela Tourism Workshop has announced proudly that its Rocinha programme is "one of our most successful and requested sustainable (sic!) tours." Mrs Pleumaron feels that slum tourism provokes the deepest feelings as human beings. She says that by getting exposed to the lives of the Third World's most suffering people, one may share the suffering for a day and be happy to make a donation. Caring for the poor and getting involved in charity projects during those trips lets one forget the guilt one feels when travelling the Third World. "As 'responsible travellers' we feel guilty because - unlike the destitute people we visit - we have the freedom and the money to move on to more pleasant places and enjoy our holiday.

At the end of the slum tour - after being overwhelmed by the heat and the flies, the sight of drug addicts, AIDS victims and the homeless, the bad smells of urine and decay - our tour guide may take us conveniently and safely to a posh beach resort, a beautiful hill station or a winery village - as scheduled in our individual or package tour programmes." Pleumaron concludes her comment with the question if this is hypocrisy or not – and leaves the reader with a selection of 'poorism'-related case studies from Kenya, South Africa and India.

Source: 'Poorism' - tourism that cashes in on poverty.  
20-Feb-2007, timteamclearinghouse (timteam02@yahoo.com)

### **The 8th Wonder or the World – on the cost of Mother Nature**

It's supposed to be the 8th Wonder or the World - but at a closer look for now there are just lorry caravans carrying the 40,000 workers to their work site each morning. Some 3500 lorries, jeeps, and construction machines are working there to realize the biggest artificial island on the offshore of Dubai: "The Palm Jumeirah" (with the three separated island "The Palm, Jebel Ali", „The Palm, Jumeirah“ und „The Palm, Deira“). Time is running for the construction companies to provide the planned 32 Hotels, 1800 Villas, 7000 apartments, theme parks, shopping malls and else on time, i.e. in early 2008. Ten years ago, sheik Maktoum, Emir of Dubai and owner of the biggest construction company there, announced his plan to create three islands in form of palm trees and an archipelago in form of a world map. Today, the first island is almost completed. Isn't it incredible to imagine that on the same territory some 100 year ago Bedouin tribes lived their nomad life?

Nowadays, Dubai's population is growing by 100,000 per year; golf courts and duty-free shopping malls together with international financial services providers are now making more profit than the diminishing petrol sources... Dubai is expecting some 15 million tourist in 2010 in the new project. And in order to provide a paradise-like setting, it had to extend land and beaches: for the Jumeirah-Palm project, some 78 kilometer of new beach have been created by a Dutch specialist company (they have the experience from the Netherlands!). In total, the coastal line is extended by some 120 km. As desert sand was not appropriate, some 94 million cubic meters sand have been pulled out of the ocean and pumped on the artificial construction site.

As builders were afraid of protests from environmental groups they made an attempt to compensate the damage in the underwater world and created new underwater platforms (reefs) where the refugee fauna and flora is supposed to start a new life as their natural habitat has been completely covered by sand and severely damaged. In addition, the expected demand for scuba-diving may be satisfied! Also European tour operators, for instance TUI, have invested in hotels on Jumeirah (a Robinson Club and an Iberotel). Their clients' safety is guaranteed: high security means and guards are blocking the apartment blocks and hotel sites to ensure that no "non-client" can enter or get close.

Anthony Kendall, in his article "Your Own (Man-Made) Private Island" ([www.damninteresting.com](http://www.damninteresting.com), 31-01-2006) writes that humans have engaged in engineering on a massive scale for thousands of years, but only recently gained the ability to alter the face of the Earth building islands and expanding coastlines,

starting with the crannogs of ancient Scotland and Ireland, the floating islands used as homes by the residents of Lake Titicaca (Peru), and Tenochtitlan (Mexico), the capital of the Aztec empire, which was surrounded by a flotilla of small floating islands. In more recent times, artificial islands have been constructed to expand urban space in Europe and Japan, e.g. the Kansai International Airport in Osaka Bay, Japan, and also Chicago, New York, and Hong Kong have expanded into their waterways.

The changing of the Earth's surface dramatically raises environmental concerns as the natural living habitats of fisher folks are changed and projects close to the ocean usually do alter ocean currents and change the surrounding marine environment. Despite newly created/artificial reefs as in Dubai, the (pristine) ecological (bio-) diversity will undoubtedly suffer. As Mr. Kendall states humanity will continue to seek new living space in the seemingly limitless open space of the ocean and soaring property values in both wealthy and rapidly developing nations will increasingly make island construction more attractive. To what extent those projects can be sustainable and safe as new living spaces (for the rich and the poor) when looking at the increasing numbers of devastating natural phenomena due to the climate change, makes me leave you with Mr Kendall's words: "But in our ongoing effort to reshape our world, let us hope that we learn our lessons well, for Nature's forces can be powerful enemies."

Pictures available on: [www.thepalm.ae/](http://www.thepalm.ae/)

### **Sri Lanka : No more CFA but a UN tourism programme**

Is there much hope for the people in Sri Lanka? Earlier this month, the Internationally Committed Youth (ICY) of the YMCA of Pamunugama stated that the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) is today limited to a document not considered seriously by any party. ICY identifies as main reason for this the fact that the people were not taken into confidence when the document was signed. ICY thinks that CFA could have been corrected but the opportunity was missed. Raising suspicions about the motives of the agreement found a highlight in the fact that the Monitoring Mission was found guilty of being lenient with the LTTE and critical of the Government forces. Many Sinhala were made believe that CFA was something detrimental to the country. Even worse, the LTTE supposedly had not signed the agreement with any sincerity. How shall one judge the recent announcement of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support the development of sustainable livelihood opportunities through tourism in Sri Lanka with a fund of US\$ 275,000. According to the Asian Tribune, twenty five coastal zones, affected by the 2004 tsunami have been designated for the Greenbelt Redevelopment of Tourism Infrastructure Project.

Tourism as the islands most important sector was badly hit by the Tsunami. Efforts have so far been channelled to the tourism areas in the south and west. And now one more fund (even it its rather small) from the UN. Should tourism development be their priority? Isn't there rather the need for a holistic conflict transformation concept regarding tourism (domestic and international) as a means for conflict transformation? But according to Asiantribune Online the UNDP funded project aims at developing infrastructure facilities in the tsunami hit coastal zones supposedly in (usually) not war-prone areas.

Certainly, the project's focus to protect the interests of the local communities, strengthen their involvement in tourism related activities is much appreciated including setting up guidelines for rebuilding the coastal tourism infrastructure. But is it sufficient to meet the demands of the tourist industry without a further peace-through-tourism-vision?

Neglected beach communities in the East have to cope with increasing numbers of internally war displaced people and daily abductions of young people. Here, tourism has never been a big issue and the few initiatives (including in Pasekudah Beach) have almost all been destroyed by the civil war, terror and Tsunami. Wouldn't Sri Lanka be a challenging project for the idea of 'peace through tourism'? Despite the IIPTT (International Institute for Peace through Tourism) shows no interest, and despite the conflict goes on, it could be a sign showing solidarity to the people in the East, give them new hope to believe in their future and think about something else than how to protect their children of being abducted. A potential partner might be CIRO (*Committee of Integrated Rehabilitation Organizations, [www.ciro.lk](http://www.ciro.lk)*), a network of more than 80 local NGOs: they are keen to develop tourism as a means of cultural understanding and learning. Tourism as a means of building peace... Is there a chance to make the UN support such an initiative and give 'peace through tourism' a trial?

### **Sri Lanka - A Tourist Paradise, for whom ?**

Sri Lanka as a tropical island with a thousand miles (1600km) of coast line, its beaches in the West and South coast, and its mountainous Central Regions, is a popular holiday resorts. Over the past decades Sri Lanka has had a very high arrival rate of tourists especially from Europe, Japan, Australia and the United States. However, in recent times, mainly due to the civil war in the country the tourist arrival rate dropped. The Government as well as the Corporate Sector has invested heavily in tourism: in Five Star Hotels, Super Restaurants, Guest Houses, Rest Houses, Amusement Parks, Night Life etc. Every facility for a perfect holiday is to be found in this "tourist paradise". But there is a dark shadow over it all. Too many undesirable persons are entering the country on the tourist visa. Over the past years Sri Lanka has got a very sad and bad reputation as being a "paradise" for child abusers (pedophiles). Due to the easy availability, mainly of boy children from the poorest communities in the country, the numbers of local children abusers are higher than those of tourists. But the demand seems with no end as tourists can easily come and carry out their crime against children with impunity, especially in so-called Third World countries.

P.E.A.C.E. – ECPAT is part of an international campaign to combat the crime of CSEC (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children). P.E.A.C.E. has tried and tested methods to prevent prostitution and trafficking of victim children, aged 8 –15 years of which 70% are boys from underprivileged communities. Prevention methods include raising awareness, providing the means of education, vocational training for employment/self employment, skills training, health education, value education, leadership building and above all legal monitoring and pedophile investigation.

In these last two strategies P.E.A.C.E. locks horn with the crime itself, collecting data, liaising with the law enforcement authorities and the victims, providing lawyers to watch the best interest of the abused child in courts, providing support services of every kind to the child's family, counseling of the victim and the families and helping to rehabilitate the child after the abuser has been duly sentenced and the case is over.

After many years of work P.E.A.C.E. is able to claim that its greatest success in preventing CSEC has been through engaging in these two positive action programmes. There are many cases of child abuse, rape, incest and trafficking brought to the courts of Sri Lanka but lack of funds reduces the ability of the P.E.A.C.E. campaign to undertake as many cases as could be monitored.

Presently P.E.A.C.E. is monitoring 30 cases of grave sexual abuse of minor children and this is stretching its resources considerably. At least another 30 could be monitored if funds were available. The arrest, detention and sentencing of Child Abusers both local and foreign are the main deterrent of preventing CSE. P.E.A.C.E. is hoping for positive responses, and Chairperson Mrs. Maureen Seneviratne will provide further information.

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## **Climate Change and Tourism**

The following three articles in different ways show how tourism is affected by climate change.

While the first shows a very real consequence of climate change affecting tourism in Australia, the second one is about the welcomed though climate threatening diversification of Turkish Airlines. And the third shows that at least on an UN-level the cooperation of the Environmental and Tourism Program, are planned...

Please see also the WCC statement to support the global framework to fight climate change and the related report:

<http://www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu/grocc>

### **▪ Drought threatens tourism**

Tourism Writer Christine Flatley reported for AAP, drought is the current most important issue the tourism industry in regional Australia is facing. Rural areas are set to be hardest hit as water resources dry up. "The drought is not only affecting local water access, but it is impacting on major natural attractions such as the Murray River," the managing director Tourism and Transport Forum Australian (TTF) said. "Water-skiing, white-water rafting and fishing are no longer an option for local tourism operators." As the natural environment is a fundamental part of Australia's tourism industry, the tourism industry has to 'diversify' their products according to the new setting of droughts and other natural disasters which already caused tourist cancellations in one region.

Mr. Brown called the governments to undertake urgent reviews of the impact of the drought on the tourist industry. One possibility is to give "drought assistance" (for marketing purposes) to tourism enterprises, as farmers do already receive. The lack of water causing droughts in Australia results as a threat to the tourism industry. Looking at Europe, we see a comparable phenomenon: due to this winters lack of snow in the Alpine region of Germany, Switzerland and Austria, tourist enterprises seriously suffered from less customers and had to innovate new entertainment alternatives to their snow-awaiting customers – however, without a 'no-snow-assistance' support fund from their governments, though.

▪ **Flying tourists “within the framework of faith tourism”**

As Satish Gupta of eTN reports, Turkish Airlines (THY) is preparing to carry Christians and Jews to Turkey and Israel “within the framework of faith tourism.” With this new initiative, the airline aims to host Christians and Jews in Turkey and enable them to visit sacred places. “THY aims to assume the role of bringing civilizations together with this project,” said THY’s director in Cologne/Germany, Mehmet Kizilkaya.

“The best way to end clash of civilizations is to eliminate prejudices. I believe that we can also contribute this way to peace.” The airline also shared that it is continuing its successful transportation of Hajj pilgrims in the 2006-2007 season. Adding 750 flights this year for the purpose, Turkish Airlines aims to carry 180,000 pilgrims from 18 airports to the Saudi cities of Jeddah and Medina.

▪ **Tourism's Role in Climate Response**

Nairobi/Madrid, 6 February 2007/eTN - The Tourism Sector should be brought to the table in the global response to Climate Change, said UNWTO Secretary-General Francesco Frangialli, addressing the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) Governing Council in Nairobi, Kenya. Mr. Frangialli announced a work programme which will culminate in two major conferences in 2007. These meetings will intensify the follow up from the UNWTO 2003 Summit on Climate Change and Tourism, from which the Djerba Declaration and plan of action resulted.

"There is now unequivocal proof from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Stern Report that climate challenge is real and that we must all play our part in its resolution.(...) Like other key sectors, we play a part in the problem and we have to be responsive and responsible as temperatures, sea levels and other climactic conditions evolve. We will work even more closely with UNEP and other sister agencies (...), as well as the private sector, in exploring new patterns of consumption and conservation, as well as fast track strategies for adaptation", Mr. Frangialli said.

He highlighted that there will be two overriding considerations for UNWTO:

1. Promoting responsible growth of tourism to advance global trade, as well as strengthening the links between people and cultures which foster mutual understanding.
2. Ensuring that tourism remains a key tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and helping poor nations lift themselves out of the poverty trap.

UNWTO and UNEP have agreed to strengthen their cooperation in a number of ways - most immediately, UNWTO will join the billion tree planting campaign of UNEP and the environment agency will strengthen its support for UNWTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (...).The organizations will collaborate on the Tourism Climate Change Summits.

## Insight Chiang Mai

The residents of the city of Chiang Mai, North Thailand's main tourism place, are increasingly suffering from air pollution and urge for action to improve the situation. As posted in City-Life e-Magazine (Wed Dec 20, 2006 8:53 am), there are two major issues:

During the cities' well known floral show the pedestrian fair in the heart of Chiang Mai city became a harbor of pollution and sparked the frustration of local citizens who complained about the great crowd of visitors, noise pollution and traffic jam. The 4000 handicrafts and handmade products stalls currently installed in the Walking Streets registered by Office of Commerce, Industrial Promotion Centre and Municipality respectively, generate at least 30-40 million Baht income to sellers in a week. However, the number of traders seems to be growing out of control and the streets are beginning to lose its charm.

But Chiang Mai residents have to be even more concerned about the findings of environmental activists regarding the air pollution crisis in Chiang Mai. Due to its geographical feature, Chiang Mai's Muang district is a basin where hazardous dust produced from burning, vehicles and industrial activities can easily accumulate. According to the Pollution Control Department, the city already has a health-destructive volume of minute dust exceeding the global acceptable standard of 60 micrograms a cubic meter.

Transportation and tourism obviously do mainly cause that situation. The airport is very close to the city, and planes depart rising over residential areas of the south west. According to the resources, increasing traffic congestion during the high season and festivals and air pollution of tourist buses waiting with running motors, are but major polluters. Such contamination caused by non-modern means of transportation could be easily reduced, though. In Europe, a campaign requested transportation companies change their drivers' behavior and switch off engines when waiting.

The total lack of an environmental clean transportation in Chiang Mai, like gas or solar run public transportation instead of 20-year-old cabin taxis or stinky tuk-tuks, push bikes and rickshaws instead of noisy motor bikes etc., certainly are threatening factors for the trekking-and-nature image of the Northern capital. Why not declare the Moat as a whole as historic city center and pedestrian zones accessible only by push bikes? Businesses in European cities can prove that they did not suffer from a resulting income loss. Why not install an environmental friendly public (mass) transportation system from outside parking slots to serve residents and tourists?

Most importantly, residents of Chiang Mai must be sensitized about their transportation behavior and air pollution, and feasible alternatives have to be presented. Above all as the recent UN report on Climate Change is urging humankind to change energy consumption behavior as soon as possible.

### Selected links and upcoming events

- Tourism & Migration Forum: [www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/migration.html](http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/tour/migration.html)
- Christian Peace Witness for Iraq, March 16th: [www.sojo.net](http://www.sojo.net)
- MDG 3 & Tourism: [www.tourismgender.com](http://www.tourismgender.com) new launch of research website
- Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector, ADB Working Group Meeting, March 26/27, Ho Chi Minh City