

# Tourism Scan

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9/1, Rattanakosin Road, T Watget, Muang Chiang Mai 5000 Thailand

Tel/Fax.: +66-53-240 026 www.ecotonline.org E-mail: contours@ecotonline.org

Editorial & Layout: Julia Schönhärl

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## China to readjust holidays to ease tourism burden

China is planning to readjust its public holidays to relieve the increasingly heavier burden placed on its hot tourist attractions during the "Golden Weeks", officials from the China National Tourism Administration were quoted. According to a newspaper the administration had drafted a proposal suggesting several adjustments which will be submitted to the National People's Congress for discussion. Over the past eight years, the nationwide holidays 'Golden weeks' have brought about huge returns for the nation's tourism industry, but voices are calling now for its cancellation as travel numbers have posed big pressures on nationwide transportation, accommodation and environmental protection. Concerns were also expressed as holiday makers just blindly follow the overwhelming push to rush

Picture: Xinhua



to different sight-seeing spots without taking enough time to rest and relax – the mere idea of 'leisure tourism'. China is expected to generate huge numbers of domestic and international travels in the near future.

[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-10/08/content\\_6158187.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-10/08/content_6158187.htm)

## Uncontrolled tourism a major threat to fauna and flora

In Thailand, some rare fern species are on the brink of extinction as a result of tourism mismanagement, botanists have warned. They request to limit the number of tourist in ecologically-fragile zones as in some of the most popular national parks flora and fauna are severely disturbed by park visitors during the high season. If no immediate action was taken in highly sensitive ecological areas, some species would disappear from Thai forests forever said a scientist of a Thai Botanical Garden. As some local tour operators even started to provide motorcycle taxi services to go uphill, visitor numbers are rapidly growing. There is hope that a book will increase awareness about the fragile environments, but that might also lead to ever higher numbers of 'nature loving' tourists.

([http://www.bangkokpost.com/News/09Oct2007\\_news17.php](http://www.bangkokpost.com/News/09Oct2007_news17.php)).

A similar threat is found in the Parc des Volcans in Rwanda and the Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where due to high visitor numbers, a certain species of mountain gorillas is disturbed. The 331 square kilometer sized Bwindi park counts with 30 gorilla groups of which five are habituated and utilized for tourism and for research. The park was gazetted in 1992 and is now a Unesco world heritage site. On being gazetted, African Pearl Safaris is on record to have been the first indigenous tour operator to take clients to 'gorilla trekking' in Bwindi Forest. This activity provides over 50% of tourism revenue for Uganda. But even with conservation efforts to protect Africa's Gentle Giants, several media report that the species are on the decline. As BBC reported (September 2007) "Gorillas head race to extinction" because of the massive movement of people in the region and "insecurity" for the animals is increasing in the area. There is an urgent need for conservationists to help save these endangered animals (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200710080176.html>). These are just two examples demonstrating the negative impact of mass nature tourism: in many cases it will even lead to the extinction of the very species attracting visitors. Worldwide, there are 16,306 species threatened with extinction according to the IUCN Red List. The total number of extinct species has reached 785 and a further 65 are only found in captivity or in cultivation.

## Boom in Youth Tourism

Recent years have seen an amazing increase in not only the amount of youths travelling abroad yet also in the amount they have been spending. Nowadays, the average trip made by a youngster costs around \$2.600, a 39% rise on 2002. In total, the industry is worth a massive \$154 billion per year. So why are youngsters venturing abroad so much more than in years before? The first answer is in the availability of loans which provides youngsters with easier access to borrowed money. Secondly, borders are opening up around the globe and the general state of worldwide bureaucracy seems to be more favourable to foreigners than beforehand. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, more youngsters are using the internet to book trips and with more regularity than adults. Older generations often tend to prefer to visit high street travel agencies, whereas 80% of young travellers use the internet, up 70% on 2002. The most popular destinations for young people tend to be Australia, France and the USA, with the more adventurous backpackers venturing out to Thailand and New Zealand ([www.tourism-review.com](http://www.tourism-review.com)).

It certainly is a positive development that young people are interested in visiting other countries and cultures – but what approach drives these masses and how the world can cope with their carbon emissions, is beyond our direct influence.

## What will come after nuclear tourism?

Industrial Tourism, i.e. visits to working and relic plants for educational and/or recreational purposes, first emerged as a distinct subcategory of tourism towards the end of the 1990s. Working industries have welcomed visitors since the beginning of industrialization and once tourism is understood as an organized, standardized, repetitive, and even reductive undertaking, it can be viewed as an educational experience. In Germany, Italy, Great Britain, Sweden or France, this tourism form is increasingly used for the construction of corporate/brand lands with industrial entertainment destinations such as the AutoCities of car producers Volkswagen or BMW. The increasing interest for industrial heritage sites was dedicated as touristic routes displaying and interpreting formerly important industrial plants and infrastructure. Well-known is the 'Route of Industrial Heritage', inaugurated in Germany's former industrial power house region. Here, home stay tourism is offered where (former) 'working class' families give personal insights into work and history. In Italy, a so-called 'Power plant tourism' is offering a novel way helping visitors to see the region through the lens of industrial development and explaining the history of a region's industrial development (<http://www.centrovolta.it/laviadellenergia/inglese/turismo/index.htm>). But where will industrial tourism develop to in the future? Recently, [usatoday.com](http://usatoday.com) reported about a new tourist attraction: visiting the Richland/Washington located nuclear reactor, i.e. a weapon of war. This is a response to a growing interest in "nuclear tourism" ([eTN / eTurboNews](http://eTN/eTurboNews), 27-09-2007). So, what will come next...?

## Women demand Equality, Equity and Empowerment from tourism in Goa

Participants at a workshop organized by **Alternatives, Caritas Goa, Council for Social Justice & Peace and EQUATIONS** in Goa raised the point that although tourism does have the capacity to

empower women – economically, socially and culturally, it has not yet been able to fulfill this role effectively. International and national policies merely pay lip service to women's empowerment in tourism without providing specifics of how it will be achieved. Developing gender-sensitive policies, providing greater space for women in decision-making roles and changing the dominant patriarchal social outlook to demand gender sensitivity and justice are the first steps towards true empowerment of women. The meeting concluded that the condition of women in tourism in Goa is appalling and needs urgent and radical reversal of the situation. Participants agreed to set up a working group with a mandate to intervene both in policy spaces and at community levels to address issues raised at the meeting. For more information: Ranjan Solomon (ranjan.solomon@gmail.com) or Fr. Maverick Fernandes (csjp@gmail.com)

## **'Women in Tourism Trust' in Zimbabwe**

Is it really a step forward or just a 'fig leaf' activity? On World Tourism Day, the Tourism Authority announced the plan to establish the 'Women in Tourism Trust' with some \$3 billion to empower women in tourism. It is certainly welcome that the achievements of women leaders are acknowledged and used to motivate more women for their development, well-being and that of their families, ultimately linking up with the goal of poverty alleviation.

However, this activity has to be seen in the light of the overall devastated situation of conflict prone Zimbabwe. Ongoing trade distorting subsidies in agriculture are threatening the livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers in the region. Trade liberalization at the multilateral level continues to erode preferential margins of developing countries through loss of revenue. In September this year, Kenyan farmers and activists protested in Nairobi against 'unfair trade partnerships' pushed by the EU. The so-called EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements) are a further advancement of the Cotonou Agreement which is about access to European Union markets for 77 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe's situation must be described as 'chaotic': As a consequence of its economy's freefall, the living conditions of the 18.1 percent living with HIV/AIDS (the sixth highest prevalence in the world) are getting worse due to dire shortages of electricity and water. International donor agencies are predicting that by the end of the year a third of the population will require emergency food aid. So, can tourism bring the much needed foreign currency to import chemicals for treating water, maintaining power plants and reticulation systems?

[www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)

## **Trade Week of Action: will Tourism be addressed at all?**

Calling for alternatives to enforced free trade, churches and church-related organizations world-wide, along with other religious groups and community partners, are gearing up for the Trade Week of Action, 14-21 October. Planned events as the ones below have much to do with modern tourism, the world's fastest growing sector, and its impact on societies. But will tourism be addressed at all at those gatherings?

- India: "Hunger strike" will demonstrate solidarity with those stricken by poverty and hunger: The UNWTO ST-EP initiative aims at 'eradicating poverty through tourism'...
- Philippines: Pickets by Indigenous People, environmentalists and other concerned people at government offices: Indigenous populations are challenged by (eco) tourism development around the world...
- Finland: Creating rules for fair trade will be the focus of a seminar: The debates around Fair Trade and Fair (Trade) Tourism certification and labeling is going on...
- Brazil: A forum on biofuels has to address tourism's carbon footprint and 'soft mobility' issues to which the tourism industry has to respond.

The Trade Week of Action coincides with World Food Day (16 October), International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October), and the Joint Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (19-21 October). Trade Week of Action website: [www.tradeweek.org](http://www.tradeweek.org)

## Regulation needed!

Friends of the Earth, represented by lawyers from Earthjustice, is suing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for failing to meet a deadline to regulate AIR POLLUTION FROM LARGE SHIPS. EPA recently postponed indefinitely its commitment to set emissions standards for ship engines. The lawsuit and need for EPA action is critical in California where the courts stopped the state from imposing new clean fuels regulations on ships calling on its ports. Ocean-going vessels are among the largest mobile sources of air pollution in the world and no regulation is available regarding pollution from foreign-flagged ships, which comprise more than 80% of port traffic from large ocean-going vessels, they are exempt from air quality standards requirements by the U.S. law. Smokestack emissions from the global shipping fleet are projected to double in North America in the next decade, exposing communities to diesel exhaust that contributes to respiratory illness, cancer, heart disease, and premature death. The ships burn dirty, asphalt-like bunker fuel that is thousands of times dirtier than diesel used by trucks or trains, and most operate with engines that pre-date even weak international standards.

Background: <http://www.earthjustice.org/library/background/ocean-pollution-global-shipping-and-the-cruise-industry.html>

## Insight Chiang Mai

At the recent meeting 'Chiang Mai's Tourism Industry in 2008 and Beyond', the "Chiang Mai Charity Calendar" was launched - an promotional tool for the Lanna capital created by school children and local volunteers. The calendar is available for 100 Baht (some 3 US\$) and basically promotes the bright sites of the town, in the light of its desired image as a prime location for leisure, sports, conferences, medical tourism, high-quality shopping, and permanent retirement.

It surprises, however, that not much is shown of the most needed and difficult work of local and international NGOs in the surroundings and the city itself: HIV/AIDS, prostitution and sex tourism, poor health facilities in remote indigenous villages and refugee camps along the borderline with Burma among other issues are often minimized. The calendar reminds us that the city remained cut off from the world until 1972, but if its 'development' was just to its benefits is questionable. Chiang Mai, then a city with as much traditional architecture as Luang Prabang in Lao PDR (a UNESCO World Heritage town), has been spoiled by industrial developments and a uncontrolled construction boom eradicating most of that past beauty. Poor traffic and waste management raised major health concerns earlier this year. The "Children helping Children" calendar proceeds will be donated to charities for children when the production expenses are covered. <http://chiangmaicalendar.googlepages.com>

## Announcements

**Contours Magazine 'Tourism – a tool for Peace Building'** will be out soon! The magazine comprises articles from renowned authors and advocates for responsible tourism from around the world. Announcements of ECOT's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary activities will be highlighted. Your suggestions and comments are welcome.

To order your personal copy, write your postal mailing address to [contours@ecotonline.org](mailto:contours@ecotonline.org)

**The Final Call: In Search of the True Cost of Our Holidays by Leo Hickman (Author)** : A review of this much appreciated book is now available on [www.ecotonline.org](http://www.ecotonline.org). It should be a must-read for everyone who likes to travel, and should be translated into the languages of the world's tourism champions. It should also be a must-read for politicians and decision makers in development agencies to finally understand that tourism has lost the 'virginity' of a harmless leisure sector to develop into a dangerous global driving force which needs to be regulated and restricted.

*The Final Call: In Search of the True Cost of Our Holidays (Paperback)*  
Paperback: 416 pages, Publisher: Eden Project Books (January 22, 2008)  
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