

Issue 5 - February 2013

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## Best Practices in Sustainable Tourism 15

- The Frangipani Langkawi Resort & Spa, Langkawi, Malaysia
- Southern Cone Journeys, Santiago, Chile

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06

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Water (In)Equity in Tourism

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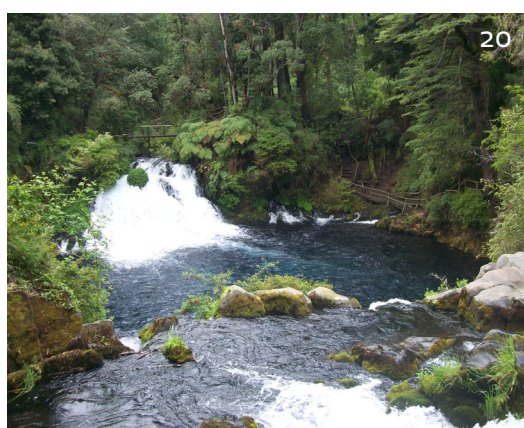
### Point of View

Being the Change



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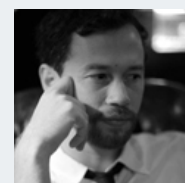
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Good for the Planet. Good for Business.  
**SOST**  
 Spotlight on Sustainable Tourism



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## ABOUT SOST

Spotlight on Sustainable Tourism (SOST) is a complimentary journal published by Market Vision, for internal circulation and to our clients and subscribers. It is available to our website visitors on [www.sostinternational.com](http://www.sostinternational.com)

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## Welcome to the fifth and first issue in 2013 of Spotlight on Sustainable Tourism, a journal for stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry.

SOST showcases destinations and travel companies which are making a conscious difference to the Planet with their sustainable business practices. In the current issue, we showcase The Frangipani Langkawi Resort & Spa, Malaysia's Greenest Resort, and Southern Cone Journeys, a responsible tour operator in Santiago, Chile in our feature *Best Practices in Sustainable Tourism*. In *Green Showcase*, we take you to Yangsum Heritage Farm, a small home stay in Sikkim in North-East India, which embodies the values and core principles of sustainability.

The Green Economy Report (2011) published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) makes an economic case for investing in the greening of tourism and provides guidance on how to mobilize such investments. Our lead feature *The Greening of Tourism*, based on the Tourism in the Green Economy Background Report (2012), reinforces the significance of the tourism sector as a key driver for economic growth, and highlights the expected effects from investments in Sustainable Tourism.

The right to water constitutes one of the most fundamental human rights. However, for many communities, particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), this right is being compromised by tourism development. Our second main feature *Water (In)Equity in Tourism*, based on Tourism Concern's research report 'Water Equity in Tourism: A Human Right – A Global Responsibility', highlights some of the pressing issues with respect to water access and equity, and presents the report's core recommendations for Governments, Industry and all Stakeholders.

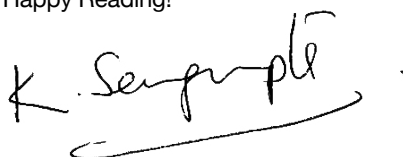
Chris Milnes, lawyer-turned-eco entrepreneur, makes a case for entrepreneurship to follow one's passion and make the world a better place, in his article *Being the Change*, for the column Point of View. In the research section, we bring you key findings from the 2012 *Global Green Economy Index* (GGEI) that evaluates the efforts of countries to create environmentally sustainable economies, and ranks them on perception and performance.

We are pleased to announce that SOST is media partner for World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) Global Summit & Tourism for Tomorrow Awards event to be held in Abu Dhabi, 9-10 April, 2013. We are thrilled to learn that El Nido Resorts, Philippines, featured in SOST September 2012 issue, is a finalist in the Community Benefit Award category of the 2013 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards.

Last but not the least, I'd like to inform you that we now have a website for SOST – [www.sostinternational.com](http://www.sostinternational.com), where you can download all issues of the publication and also subscribe to it. We are working on making it interactive! Meanwhile, I request all of you to visit the website and subscribe to SOST.

We hope you enjoy this issue. As always, we look forward to your comments and feedback. Let us know what else you would like to read about.

Happy Reading!



Kumud Sengupta

Managing Editor

Certified Assessor & Consultant for Sustainable Tourism

Founder-Director, Market Vision

*SOST's mission is to motivate stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry to adopt sustainable business practices with the message that sustainable tourism is 'Good for the Planet and Good for Business'.*

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# Feedback



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SOST was launched in March 2012. This is the fifth issue, the first in 2013. We wish all our readers a very happy and successful 2013.

SOST has gained quite a following among the travel trade and the tourism community at large. Since we launched our website earlier this month, our subscriber base is growing daily. Please continue to read SOST, and provide us with your feedback and suggestions. Thank you so much.

-SOST Team

*Great resource - Thanks for sharing!*

**Dr. Jonathan Day, Assistant Professor**  
Sustainable Tourism and Tourism Marketing  
Purdue University  
Indiana, USA

*Good content. SOST looks great and we would love to be included.*

**Michael Doliveck, Owner**  
Bali Floating Leaf Eco-Retreat  
Bali, Indonesia

*Thanks for sharing the latest SOST edition.*

*I was particularly interested in the brief poll on students wanting to learn more about sustainable tourism.*

**Emili Budell, Programme Coordinator, ITP & YCI International**  
Business Leaders Forum  
London, United Kingdom

*SOST is a good resource. Please add me as a subscriber.*

**Chaudry Farrukh Ahsan**  
Golden Tulip Hospitality Group  
Al Jubail, Saudi Arabia

*I have referred to the available editions of SOST and am impressed by its coverage and presentation. Efforts to bring out such a highly focused magazine with incredible quality are truly commendable.*

**Nahar Muhammed, Advisor (Tourism Development)**  
Gujarat Tourism Opportunity Ltd / IL&FS  
Ahmedabad, India

*Thank you for featuring us. The article looks really nice. We will make your issue reach our colleagues, guests and business partners through different ways. Thanks so much for your work and time.*

**Heidi Lei, Marketing & PR Manager**  
Urbn Hotels  
Shanghai, China

*Thank you for sending us the latest issue of SOST. It looks great! All the best.*

**Ayako Ezaki, Director of Communications**  
The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)  
Washington DC, USA

## Sponsorship and Advertising

SOST is read by a diverse audience consisting of professionals in the tourism industry, tourism business owners, destination marketers and academia. It has particularly found favour with those interested in sustainable and responsible tourism. SOST is promoted to (a) an internal database of nearly 10,000 travel and tourism industry professionals, and (b) online business networks with membership exceeding 90,000. It is also read by visitors to its newly launched website: [www.sostinternational.com](http://www.sostinternational.com)

Launched in March 2012, four issues of SOST were published in the year. From 2013, SOST has become a bimonthly publication (six issues per year).

For sponsorship and advertising details, please contact: [advertise@sostinternational.com](mailto:advertise@sostinternational.com).



## SOST launches a new website

Until now, SOST was being sent by email (as a pdf document) and was made available on the online digital publishing platform at <http://www.issuu.com/sost-tourism-journal> where it could be read as a flip magazine and could also be downloaded.

We are pleased to announce that we have launched a website for SOST -

[www.sostinternational.com](http://www.sostinternational.com), making it easy for you to subscribe, download and access all issues of the journal. SOST will still be available on Issuu to read.

Currently a very basic, simple website, we are working to make it interactive. While we work behind the scenes, do visit the website to subscribe to SOST. Thank you.



## SOST signs media partnership agreement with WTTC



We are pleased to announce that SOST has signed a media partnership agreement with the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) for its upcoming Global Summit and Tourism for Tomorrow Awards event in Abu Dhabi, April 9-10, 2013. SOST will cover the event in our next issue in April 2013.

### President Bill Clinton to keynote WTTC Global Summit

President Bill Clinton, Founder of the William J. Clinton Foundation and 42nd President of the United States, will deliver the keynote address at the Global Summit. Other speakers include more than 40 leading public figures, including Sir David Frost, British journalist and media personality, Daryl Hannah, American actress and activist, Sir Jonathon Porritt, environmentalist, David de Rothschild, adventurer and environmentalist, David Scowsill, President and CEO, WTTC, and James Hogan, President & Chief Executive Officer, Etihad Airways. The event is being co-hosted by Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority and Etihad Airways.



### World's leading sustainable tourism initiatives announced by WTTC's Tourism for Tomorrow Awards

The WTTC has unveiled the twelve finalists for its 2013 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. The Awards are one of the highest accolades in the global Travel & Tourism industry, recognising sustainable tourism best practices in businesses and destinations worldwide. Winners and finalists will be recognised during a Gala evening at the WTTC's Global Summit in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on 9th April 2013.

For more details, visit [www.wttc.org](http://www.wttc.org)

## El Nido Resorts featured in SOST makes it to the Finals

### El Nido Resorts, Philippines covered in SOST September issue is Finalist in the Community Benefit Award category

SOST is thrilled to announce that Ten Knots Development Corporation/El Nido Resorts, Philippines has been nominated as a finalist in the Community Benefit Award category of the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards.

Community Benefit Award nominees are those companies and organisations that directly benefit local people, supporting community development and enhancing cultural heritage. Finalists were selected by an international panel of independent judges chaired by Costas Christ, an internationally recognised expert on sustainable tourism.

For more details, visit <http://www.wttc.org/tourismfortomorrow/>



# The Greening of Tourism

The Green Economy Report (2011) published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) makes an economic case for investing in the greening of tourism and provides guidance on how to mobilize such investments. The objective is to motivate policy makers to support increased investment in greening the sector. This article is excerpted, with permission from the UNWTO, from the Tourism in the Green Economy Background Report (2012) which contains the background reports that were developed in the preparation of the tourism chapter of the original report.

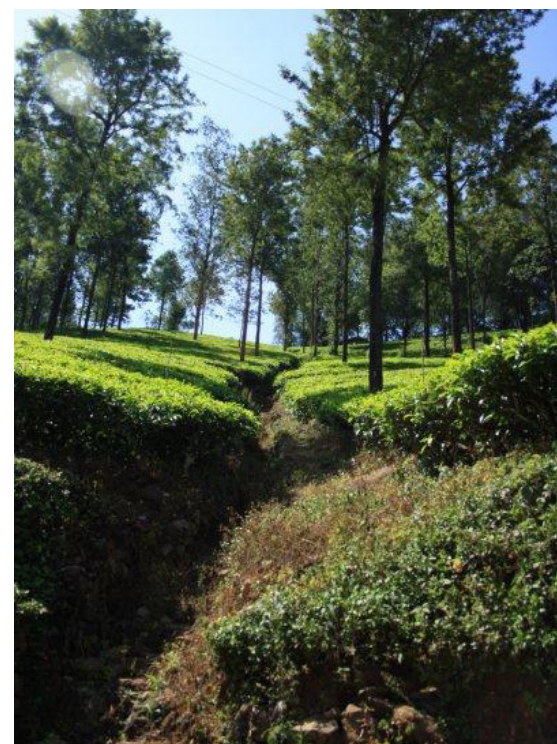
Tourism has significant potential as a driver for growth of the world economy. The sheer size and reach of the sector makes it critically important from a global resource perspective. Even small changes toward greening can have important impacts. Further, the sector's connection to numerous sectors at destination and international levels means that changes in practices can stimulate changes in many different public and private actors beyond the direct and immediate impact of tourism activity.

## ► Tourism has significant potential as a driver for growth for the world economy

The tourism economy represents 5% of world Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while it contributes to about 8% of total employment. International tourism ranks fourth (after fuels, chemicals and automotive products) in global exports, with an industry value of US\$ 1 trillion a year, accounting for 30% of the world's exports of commercial services or 6% of total exports. There are around four billion estimated domestic arrivals every year and in 2010, some 940 million international tourists were recorded. Tourism is one of five top export earners in over 150 countries, while in 60 countries it is the number one export. It is also the main source of foreign exchange for one-third of developing countries and one-half of least developed countries (LDC).

## ► The development of tourism is accompanied by significant challenges

The rapid growth in both international and domestic travel, the trends to travel farther and over shorter periods of time, and the preference given to energy-intensive transportation are increasing the non-renewable energy dependency of tourism, resulting in the sector's contribution of 5% to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which is expected to grow substantially under a business-as-usual (BAU) scenario. Other challenges include excessive water consumption compared with residential water use, discharge of untreated water, the generation of waste, the damage to local terrestrial and marine biodiversity and the threats to the survival of local cultures, built heritage and traditions.







### ▶ Green tourism has the potential to create new, green jobs

Travel and tourism are human resource intensive, employing directly and indirectly 8% of the global workforce. It is estimated that one job in the core tourism industry creates about one and a half additional or indirect jobs in the tourism related economy. The greening of tourism, which involves efficiency improvements in energy, water and waste systems, is expected to reinforce the employment potential of the sector with increased local hiring and sourcing and significant opportunities in tourism oriented toward local culture and the natural environment.

### ▶ Tourism development can be designed to support the local economy and reduce poverty

Local economic effects of tourism are determined by the share of tourism spending in the local economy as well as the amount of the resulting indirect economic activities. Increasing the involvement of local communities, especially the poor, in the tourism value chain can, therefore, contribute to the development of the local economy and to poverty reduction. For example, in Panama, households capture 56% of total local tourism income. The extent of direct benefits to communities and poverty reduction will largely depend on the percentage of tourism needs that are locally supplied, such as products, labour, tourism

services, and increasingly "green services" in energy and water efficiency and waste management. There is increasing evidence that more sustainable tourism in rural areas can lead to more positive poverty-reducing effects.

### ▶ Investing in the greening of tourism can reduce the cost of energy, water and waste and enhance the value of biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural heritage

Investment in energy efficiency has been found to generate significant returns within a short payback period. Improving waste management is expected to save money for tourism businesses, create jobs and enhance the attractiveness of destinations. The investment requirement in conservation and restoration is small relative to the value of forests, mangroves, wetlands, and coastal zones including coral reefs, which provide ecosystem services essential for the foundation of economic activities and for human survival; the value of ecosystems for tourists remains undervalued in many cases. Investment in cultural heritage – the largest single component of consumer demand for sustainable tourism – is among the most significant and usually profitable investments. Under a green economy investment scenario, tourism makes a larger contribution to GDP growth, while significant environmental benefits include reductions in water consumption (18%), energy use (44%) and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (52%), compared with BAU.

### ▶ Tourists are demanding the greening of tourism

More than a third of travellers are found to favour environmentally-friendly tourism and be willing to pay between 2 and 40% more for this experience. Traditional mass tourism has reached a stage of steady growth. In contrast, ecotourism, nature, heritage, cultural and "soft adventure" tourism are taking the lead and are predicted to grow rapidly over the next two decades. It is estimated that global spending on ecotourism is increasing at a higher rate than the industry-wide average growth.

### ▶ The private sector, especially small firms, can, and must be mobilized to support green tourism

The tourism sector involves a diverse range of actors. The awareness of green tourism exists mainly in a selection of larger-scale firms. Smaller firms are mostly outside this sphere and diverse supplier groups may not be connected at all. Specific mechanisms and tools to educate small and medium sized tourism related enterprises are critical and are most effective when they are accompanied by actionable items. The promotion and widespread use of recognized standards for sustainable tourism, such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), can help businesses improve sustainability performance, including resource efficiency, and assist in attracting additional investment and customers.





The majority of tourism businesses are SMEs with potential to generate greater income and opportunity from green strategies. Their single greatest limiting factor for greening, however, is lack of access to capital.

► Much of the economic potential for green tourism is found in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which need better access to financing for investing in green tourism

The majority of tourism businesses are SMEs with potential to generate greater income and opportunity from green strategies. Their single greatest limiting factor for greening, however, is lack of access to capital. Governments and international organizations can facilitate the financial flow to these important actors with an emphasis on contributions to the local economy and poverty reduction. Public private partnerships can spread the costs and risks of large green tourism investments. Besides reducing administrative fees and offering favourable interest rates for green tourism projects, in-kind support such as technical, marketing or business administration assistance, could also help.

► Destination planning and development strategies are the first step towards the greening of tourism

In developing tourism strategies, local governments, communities and businesses need to establish mechanisms for coordinating with ministries responsible for the environment, energy, labour, agriculture, transport, health, finance, security and other relevant areas. Clear requirements are needed in such areas as zoning, protected areas, environmental rules and regulations, labour rules, agricultural standards and health requirements particularly related to energy, emissions, water, waste and sanitation.

► Government investments and policies can leverage private sector actions on green tourism

Government spending on public goods such as protected areas, cultural assets, water conservation, waste management, sanitation, public transport and renewable energy infrastructure can reduce the cost of green investments by the private sector in green tourism. Governments can also use tax concessions and subsidies to encourage private investment in green tourism. Time-

bound subsidies can be given, for example, on the purchase of equipment or technology that reduces waste, encourages energy and water efficiency, the conservation of biodiversity and the strengthening of linkages with local businesses and community organisations. At the same time, resource and energy use as well as waste generation need to be correctly priced to reflect their true cost to society.

The effects of tourism can vary dramatically between destinations. More quantitative studies are necessary to clearly understand the reasons for such variations, to expand the evidence base at a national and sub-national level on tourism and local employment, procurement through local supply chains, poverty reduction, environmental benefits, and other relevant areas. Domestic tourism (in many countries the most important source of tourism income) should be further analyzed. Business performance and ROI on "green" investments are key variables to study.



## Expected Effects from Investments in Sustainable Tourism

Impact Key area	Business opportunities	Job creation	Investment and capital formation	Local development
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction of operating costs leading to bottom line profits.</li> <li>Potential for certification and differentiation based on energy performance.</li> <li>Productivity improvements through efficient equipment use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neutral net effect on job creation within the tourism sector from differentiation (consumers preferences would shift from one destination to another).</li> <li>Increased local job creation in energy efficiency technicians and related personnel.</li> <li>Indirect job creation in related businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment in retrofit of existing assets.</li> <li>Increased physical capital from investment in new energy efficient infrastructure and equipment.</li> <li>Reduced pressure in natural capital through less fossil fuels generated energy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased job creation in related businesses (energy retrofits and renewable energy production and installation).</li> <li>Energy efficiency in related businesses (across value chain, from suppliers to customers).</li> <li>Lower vulnerability of local economy to oil shocks.</li> <li>Contribution to climate change mitigation.</li> </ul>
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for certification and differentiation based on climate change strategy.</li> <li>Savings from fossil fuel substitution (reduced volatility, perhaps long-term savings).</li> <li>Local and global carbon markets.</li> <li>Integration with forest and biodiversity conservation projects.</li> <li>Payments for Environmental Services (PES).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neutral net effect on job creation within the tourism sector from differentiation (consumers preferences would shift from one destination to another).</li> <li>Indirect job creation in related businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment in low – carbon technology.</li> <li>Increased physical capital from fixed investment in low emissions technology.</li> <li>Increased natural capital depending on energy source being reduced.</li> <li>Intangible capital increases with knowledge and expertise in low-carbon efficiency, installation, operation and management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased job creation in related businesses (energy climate change mitigation).</li> <li>Contribution to resilience strengthening in local economy.</li> <li>Contribution to climate change mitigation projects.</li> <li>Attraction of investment for mitigation projects.</li> </ul>
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction of operating costs leading to bottom line profits.</li> <li>Potential for certification and differentiation based on water consumption and management.</li> <li>Integration with water resource management and conservation initiatives.</li> <li>Payments for Environmental Services (PES).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neutral net effect on job creation within the tourism sector from differentiation (consumers preferences would shift from one destination to another).</li> <li>Indirect job creation in related businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased physical capital from fixed investment in pipelines, dams and water production technology.</li> <li>Increased natural capital from water reservoirs maintenance and improvement.</li> <li>Intangible capital increases with knowledge and expertise in sustainable water resources use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased job creation in related businesses (water management).</li> <li>Possible reduction in water sales from local suppliers.</li> <li>Reduction of water stress.</li> <li>Lower prices of water services.</li> </ul>
Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction of operating costs leading to bottom line profits.</li> <li>Potential for differentiation based on clean site reputation.</li> <li>Market opportunities for biogas energy.</li> <li>Recycling business growth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neutral net effect on job creation within the tourism sector from differentiation (consumers preferences would shift from one destination to another).</li> <li>Indirect job creation in related businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased physical capital from fixed investment in sanitary landfills and energy cogeneration.</li> <li>Increased natural capital from water reservoirs maintenance and improvements.</li> <li>Intangible capital increases with knowledge and expertise in waste management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth of new businesses and jobs related to solid waste management, collection, disposal and recycling.</li> <li>Reduction of aquatic pollution and disease risk.</li> <li>Increase of safe water supply.</li> <li>Reduction of destination's sewage and clean-up fees.</li> </ul>

## Expected Effects from Investments in Sustainable Tourism (Continued)

Impact Key area	Business opportunities	Job creation	Investment and capital formation	Local development
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for certification and differentiation based on natural attractions and biodiversity conservation.</li> <li>• Payments for Environmental Services (PES).</li> <li>• Integration with biodiversity based businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neutral net effect on job creation within the tourism sector from differentiation (consumers preferences would shift from one destination to another).</li> <li>• Indirect job creation in related businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased physical capital from fixed investment in necessary infrastructure.</li> <li>• Increased natural capital from natural resources conservation.</li> <li>• Intangible capital increases with sound conservation attitudes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased job creation in related businesses.</li> <li>• Visitation of natural attractions in accordance to carrying capacity.</li> <li>• Protection of buffer zones.</li> <li>• Ecosystem restoration.</li> <li>• Mitigation of climate change impacts.</li> <li>• Investment on biodiversity based businesses (i.e. bioprospection).</li> </ul>
Conservation of cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for certification and differentiation based on cultural landscapes.</li> <li>• Increased business with traditional micro and small enterprises.</li> <li>• Increased business of authentic goods and cultural services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neutral net effect on job creation within the tourism sector from differentiation (consumers preferences would shift from one destination to another).</li> <li>• Indirect job creation in related businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased physical capital from fixed investment in necessary infrastructure.</li> <li>• Increased natural capital from cultural landscapes conservation.</li> <li>• Intangible capital increases with sound conservation attitudes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased job creation in related businesses.</li> <li>• Visitation of cultural attractions in accordance to carrying capacity.</li> <li>• Ecosystem restoration.</li> <li>• Investment on local culture based businesses.</li> <li>• Competitive positioning of authentic destinations.</li> </ul>
Linkages with local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of operating costs through local procurement and hiring.</li> <li>• Potential for certification and differentiation based on stronger community based business.</li> <li>• Scale effect on local business opportunities because of built reputation.</li> <li>• Reduction of turnover and better human resource management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive net effect on job creation within the tourism sector.</li> <li>• Indirect job creation in related businesses and support industries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased physical capital from fixed investment in infrastructure.</li> <li>• Increase natural capital due to sustainable clusters neutral environmental impact.</li> <li>• Intangible capital increases with knowledge and awareness to promote the sustainable use of natural resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of tourism clusters and strengthening of support industries.</li> <li>• Reduction of leakage and increase of income in the local economy.</li> <li>• Development of micro and small locally owned businesses.</li> <li>• Recruitment and training of local employees.</li> </ul>

Source: United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organization (2012), *Tourism in the Green Economy - Background Report*, UNWTO, Madrid.

Published with authorization from UNWTO

Reference: ©UNWTO, 9284400913





# Water (In) Equity in Tourism

The right to water constitutes one of the most fundamental human rights. However, for many communities, particularly those living in the global South, this right is being compromised by tourism development. This article, based on Tourism Concern's research report 'Water Equity in Tourism: A Human Right – A Global Responsibility', highlights some of the pressing issues being faced by destinations and communities in different parts of the world. The report's core recommendations are contained in the Principles of Water Equity for Governments, Industry and all Stakeholders.

The inequities of water access and consumption between resorts, large hotels and golf courses on the one hand, and local communities and small-scale tourism entrepreneurs on the other, are starkly played out in holiday destinations in some of the world's poorest countries.

A lack of access to clean water and sanitation both exacerbates poverty and is itself the result of poverty. More often than not, such water scarcity is not due to a physical absence of water, but is caused by inadequate or non-existent infrastructure, depleted or polluted groundwater supplies, and a lack of resources to secure water from other sources.

In many places, tourism's consumption of water is exacerbating poverty, curtailing socioeconomic opportunities and degrading the environment, while undermining food production, livelihoods and wider sustainable development. The research shows that extreme pressure on water resources to supply tourist demand is, in many instances, directly contributing to water scarcity and inequity, through the appropriation of public water supplies, overexploitation of aquifers, lowering of groundwater tables, and contamination of freshwater by saltwater and sewage.

In places, this scenario is leading to conflict and resentment among local people, while threatening the viability of the tourism sector. This also holds worrying implications given the heavy economic dependency on tourism in several destinations.

The potential for tourism to generate jobs, economic growth and foreign exchange, means it is harnessed as a development driver by countries all over the world. This includes many in the global South classed by the UN as 'least developed countries' (LDCs), as well as small island developing states (such as in the Caribbean).

However, the report argues that tourism cannot fulfil its potential as a contributor to poverty alleviation and sustainable development while it so often causes the exponential depletion, and inequitable appropriation, of freshwater resources. For tourism to be truly sustainable, its development and management must be premised upon a respect for human rights, including the right to water.

The following example provides an insight into the kind of challenges a destination dependent on tourism faces due to the inequity in water access.

## Defining Water Equity in Tourism

Based on the UN definition of the right to water and sanitation, use of the term 'water equity in tourism' refers to tourism development that does not infringe upon, or take precedence over, the right to water of communities in destinations for essential personal, domestic and livelihood needs. It implies the duty of states to uphold, fulfil and protect this right, including against abuses or unsustainable consumption by (tourism) businesses. The definition also includes the responsibility of tourism businesses to respect human rights, as clarified in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

([http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf)).



## Case Study: Zanzibar

Tourism is a major contributing factor to Zanzibar's economy and arrivals in 2011 reached an all-time high of 220,000 (ZATI, 2012), up from 19,368 in 1995. The industry has created many jobs, which have benefitted numerous sectors of society. However, despite tourism's on-going rapid expansion, almost half the population remain in poverty (UNDP, 2011) and just half of rural residents have access to a water source (DFID, 2011).

In the villages and popular resort areas of Kiwengwa, Nungwi and Jambiani, there are stark inequities between water access, consumption and quality for local communities and the growing numbers of hotels and guesthouses. All villages are facing increasing water scarcity and many residents report a daily struggle to access sufficient quantities.

Water infrastructure and supplies to the communities are inadequate, while the over-extraction of groundwater by the tourism industry is causing salination of local wells. On average, households across the three villages consume some 93.2 litres of water per day. The types of tourist accommodation in each village vary, but average consumption per room ranges from 686 litres per day for guesthouses, to 3,195 litres per day for 5-star hotels. This gives an overall average consumption of 1,482 litres per room per day: 16 times higher than average household daily usage.

Very few hotels surveyed in the area undertake water conservation measures. Just two practise rainwater harvesting and the majority change linen on a daily basis. Only one hotel treats its grey water sufficiently for garden use. A minority use sewage treatment plants, with most disposing of their sewage into soak pits. This widespread use of unlined soak pits means sewage is leaching into the water table, posing a threat to human health and marine ecosystems.

### ❖ Conflict in Kiwengwa

In Kiwengwa, residents widely reported conflicts with hoteliers over water.

*With swimming pools as standard, it is not surprising that tourist awareness of water scarcity in Zanzibar is low.*



Community wells have reportedly become salty since the arrival of tourism 15 years ago. Many residents say they must now buy water from private vendors who transport water in from elsewhere. However, not all can always afford to do so.

In the mid 1990s, two hotels were granted government permission to pump water from a cave on the condition that they also supplied water to Kairo, the closest neighbouring area of Kiwengwa. Local people report that the hotels have not always honoured the agreement, and would prioritise their own needs over those of residents. Anger at this provoked some community members to cut the hotels' water pipes and to hold public demonstrations. Cave water sources are now guarded 24 hours a day by hoteliers.

### ❖ Inequity in Nungwi

Wall-to-wall hotels and guesthouses surround the village of Nungwi. Water supply is hugely problematic. Local residents report that well water has become too saline for use. The one

remaining public borehole and pump are inadequate to service the area. This means most villagers must buy water transported from Channi, a town 20 kilometers away. Meanwhile, four of the larger hotels have sunk their own boreholes. The perceived water inequity between hotels and local residents has again resulted in conflict. Hotel water pipelines have been deliberately cut by locals. This has prompted some hotels to employ guards to patrol their pipelines.



*A boy washes clothes at a standpipe in Zanzibar. Groundwater levels have dropped as tourism development has intensified.*





In Zanzibar, guards now patrol some hotel water pipelines due to conflicts with the local community



A water tank provided by hoteliers in Jambiani.

The persistent low water pressure is widely attributed to the hotels using powerful pumps to siphon off water from the main public pipeline. Again, this is giving rise to anger and resentment among residents.

#### ❖ Health risks in Jambiani

In Jambiani, the majority of villagers do have access to piped water, either in their homes or through standpipes. Although the quality is reportedly good, water pressure is often low. Water distribution depends upon an electric pump, which occasionally breaks or stops working during power cuts. In 2010, Jambiani experienced a three month power cut, which meant that there was no piped freshwater. This led to a cholera outbreak in which at least four people died. Such an incident suggests that groundwater had become polluted with sewage from hotel soak pits. The persistent low water pressure is widely attributed to the hotels using powerful pumps to siphon off water from the main public pipeline. Again, this is giving rise to anger and resentment among residents.

#### ❖ Positive cooperation

In contrast, in the southern part of Jambiani village, there is positive

cooperation between tourism businesses and the community. One hotel maintains a community pump and buys in water when this is not working. Other hotels have reportedly exerted pressure on the water department to fix broken water infrastructure quickly. However, while such schemes can promote community water access, they leave villages subject to the whims of the hotels. Furthermore, many hotels close during low season, potentially leaving communities without water.

#### ❖ Tourist perspectives

Among the tourists interviewed across the three villages, less than half indicated that they were aware of water issues in Zanzibar. Although 60 per cent described themselves as committed to environmental sustainability, most delegated responsibility to their hotels. However, over half felt it would be acceptable to increase the cost of their holiday to pay for improved water infrastructure.

The report presents case studies on four other destinations that include Goa (India), The Gambia, Bali (Thailand) and Alleppey (Kerala, India).

Drawing on the findings of the research, Tourism Concern provides recommendations for government, industry and civil society stakeholders in order to encourage and support them to:

- Address the current water inequities in tourism development
- Promote and protect the right to water and sanitation of local communities
- Maximise tourism's contribution to poverty alleviation
- Ensure wider socially, environmentally and economically sustainable development in destinations

The core components of its recommendations are contained in the *Principles of Water Equity in Tourism*:

# Principles of Water Equity in Tourism

## Governments

### 1. The right to water and sanitation should not be compromised by tourism

Governments should uphold their international legal obligations to fulfil and protect the right to water and sanitation of citizens as a priority. Governments should issue guidelines to tourism businesses operating locally and overseas on their business responsibility to respect human rights.

### 2. Governments should implement clear regulations for sustainable and equitable water and tourism management

Destination governments should implement clear regulatory and institutional frameworks for sustainable, equitable, integrated water and tourism planning and management. Transgressors should be penalised; good practices should be championed.

### 3. Land use and tourism planning should be based on assessments of water resources

Land use planning should be based on assessments of water resources and infrastructure, and tourism carrying capacities established. These should take into account livelihood needs, food security, population growth, climate change, and wider watershed degradation.

## Industry

### 4. Tourism businesses should implement their business responsibility to respect the right to water

Tourism businesses should move beyond technical approaches and implement their business responsibility to respect the right to water and sanitation in their activities and supply chains.

### 5. Tourism businesses should abide by the law

Tourism businesses should adhere to national regulations governing water use and waste management, even where these are poorly enforced. This includes paying for what they consume.

### 6. Tourism businesses should reduce their water consumption

Tourism businesses should work towards reducing their water consumption and contributing to water conservation by making use of existing industry guidelines.

## All

### 7. Land use, tourism and water planning should be undertaken participatively

Land use, tourism and water planning should be undertaken transparently and participatively, with adequate community representation, particularly of women.

### 8. Governments and tourism businesses should be accountable to local communities

This includes providing access to redress where water rights have been adversely impacted.

### 9. Cooperation to further water equity should be pursued by all stakeholders

Cooperation and collaboration should be pursued by government, international donors, tourism and civil society stakeholders in resourcing and undertaking data collection, improvements to community water access, advocacy, capacity-building, technology transfer, and tourist sensitisation.

The full report *Water Equity in Tourism: A Human Right – A Global Responsibility* can be accessed online on:

<http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk/wet-report.html>

*The contents of this article have been extracted from the above report, with permission from Tourism Concern. References in the article may be checked in the full report.*

## About Tourism Concern

**TourismConcern** ACTION FOR ETHICAL TOURISM

Tourism Concern is an independent campaigning organisation founded in 1989 to challenge exploitation in tourism, particularly in the global South. It aims to increase understanding of the impact of tourism on environments and host communities among governments, industry, civil society and tourists; and to promote tourism development that is sustainable, just and participatory, and which is founded upon a respect for human rights. <http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk>



# In the Spotlight

*Frangipani Langkawi  
Resort & Spa,  
Langkawi, Malaysia*

*Malaysia's Greenest Resort*



Anthony Wong Kim Hooi, Managing Director, Frangipani  
Langkawi Resort & Spa

The Frangipani Langkawi Resort & Spa is a four-star beachside resort that opened in 2006 along one of Langkawi's best beaches, Pantai Tengah (the Resort operated under another name for several years before). It is owned by Malaysian company Tapak Pelangi Sdn Bhd. It is the first resort in Langkawi to implement Green practices to preserve the environment.

In this interview, Managing Director Mr. Anthony Wong Kim Hooi, an avid environmentalist and a champion for sustainable tourism, provides insights into best practices adopted by the resort which has the distinction of being the Greenest Resort in Malaysia.

**SOST:** The Frangipani Langkawi has the distinction of being the Greenest Resort in Malaysia. Please explain.

**Anthony Wong:** Langkawi's number one attraction is the water of the Andaman Sea and protecting this tourism asset was always of highest priority when the owners took over the resort. So the Resort set out from its inception to not only offer the best accommodation it could and with the best local service but the priority was to establish a green resort that would lower its footprint on the environment, and also be a working model for others to gain inspiration from and to emulate.

**Keep Langkawi Clean & Green.** That is our mission. The Frangipani has committed to keep the island clean and green from water pollution, air pollution and soil contamination by implementing Green practices throughout the resort.

We have an established sustainability policy encompassing 200 Green practices, covering all departments and all areas from day to day operations to architecture design of the building. The Frangipani practices energy and water conservation, composting, recycling, sewage treatment using water plants as natural filters, as well as an organic farm.

Our resort is an avenue to create awareness, educate and change the mindset of the industry and the public to find ways to conserve energy and be environmentally conscious of their actions. If we are able to inspire even one person, then all the time, effort and energy taken would have been worth it, as that one person can inspire others causing a ripple effect to the benefit of the environment and our Mother Earth.

**Save Water, Prevent Water Shortage.** From rain and air conditioner water harvesting to black and grey water treatment, the resort is trying to save the country from future water shortage.



We make a concerted effort to share our learning and best practices with industry, academia, students and the public around the world.

#### The Frangipani Langkawi Resort & Spa – Recognition & Awards, 2008–2012

- PATA Gold Award, 2009 & 2012
- Malaysian Tourism Award, 2008–2009 & 2010–2011
- ASEAN Green Hotel Award, 2012–2014
- Anugerah Langkawi Environment Award, 2010–2011
- Malaysia Nature Society, 2010
- ASEAN Green Hotel Award 2010–2011
- The Europa Award for Excellence, 2010
- ASEANTA Award for Excellence, 2010
- Libur Travel Award, 2008 & 2009
- Langkawi Geopark Tourism Award, 2008
- Virgin Holiday Responsible Tourism Award, 2008
- ASEAN Green Hotel Standard Award, 2008–2009

There will be a time very soon when due to population growth, economic development, climate change and global warming, Malaysia might face drought problem nationwide. The resort as a leader is championing for other hotels and industry to follow suit in preventing water shortage because we need total mobilization from all quarters to achieve this vision.

Our achievements have been recognized globally and we are the proud recipients of several environmental and industry awards such as the PATA Gold Award, Malaysian Tourism Award and the ASEAN Green Award.

SOST: The Frangipani is the only hotel to have a wetland inside its premises. What is the goal, and what does this mean from the point of view of sustainability?

Anthony Wong: The goal of the wetland is to prove that sewage treatment using water plants and microbes as natural filters is possible, and that wastewater encompassing grey water, black water and even some waste oil can be treated to make it reusable.

Our resort's wastewater enters float-switch activated septic tanks and is pumped to the on-site wetland area for treatment. A quality testing system is in place to monitor real time pond water

quality indicators. This water is currently being recycled and used for gardening and cleaning purposes.

From the point of view of sustainability, this means that we are not solely dependent on government water, and over time we hope to be self-sufficient so that we continue to function uninterrupted in the event that the nation experiences water shortage. As I mentioned before, this is a real possibility and we hope our efforts will inspire others in the industry to implement water conservation policies and practices.

SOST: Please tell us about your Green Hotel Concept - Local Action for Global Change.

Anthony Wong: As I mentioned, we have developed over 200 ways to save energy, water, waste etc. We believe our Green Hotel Concept can not only make an impact locally but also inspire national, regional and global action.

We make a concerted effort to share our learning and best practices with industry, academia, students and the public around the world. I have been teaching all across the Asian region - from India, Nepal, Cambodia and Laos to Singapore, Philippines and Japan. People come and learn from us here in the resort: hoteliers, architects, students from schools of architecture.





“The more we spread the message about what we do, and the difference we are making in terms of environmental protection while running a profitable business, the more we can influence and inspire people to make a change.”

Last year we had 64 architects from Denmark coming to see what we have done. I also talk to accountants in hotels on how to save costs. I have been speaking at several conferences and industry events over the past 14 years; last year I spoke at over 20 conferences about what we do, and the importance of adopting sustainable best practices.

I believe that the more we spread the message about what we do, and the difference we are making in terms of environmental protection while running a profitable business, the more we can influence and inspire people to make a change.

**SOST: The Frangipani embraces a leadership role in several sustainability initiatives in Langkawi, including involvement in a number of Community Outreach Programs. Could you enlighten us about these initiatives and programs?**

**Anthony Wong:** Working closely with non-government agencies like the Malaysian Nature Society, Kelab Amal Wanita Langkawi, the Langkawi Charity Club, Langkawi Artist Visual Association, Sai Baba Centre and others, we are slowly

embedding the seeds of environmental awareness and social consciousness among them, and exposing them to our mission of minimizing our impact upon the cultural, social and natural environment of Langkawi.

- Regular eco-walks are conducted for resort guests, local and international university students and the general public, to showcase the 200 Green practices in the resort.
- We organize beach cleanups with the MARA Junior Science College, a group of local boarding schools in Malaysia.
- Our environment staff gives talks on Plastic Pollution and conducts 'No Plastic' campaigns in schools and government agencies
- We hold seminars and workshops on water saving, energy conservation, recycling, composting etc, for hotels, schools, several social organizations and industry associations, and the general public.
- Seminars on sewage treatment system are also conducted regionally in Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal and China to promote a natural environmental friendly and cost saving sewage water treatment system.

We have an Environmental Code of Conduct for our resort guests, advising them about our Green policies and practices and their role in supporting them.



We recently launched Langkawi Live - One Earth Music Festival, a new event with a distinctive green theme. The two-day festival held in November 2011 and 2012 at The Frangipani, played host to an eclectic mix of local and international talents. There were day activities organized to show the resort's support for the environment.

**SOST:** You provide Environmental Education & Training to staff and also have an Environmental Code of Conduct for guests. Please provide more details about these initiatives. Also tell us about the Departmental Organic Garden and the Green Champion Award.

**Anthony Wong:** New staff members and trainees go through an orientation and taken for the eco-walk. They are briefed on the company policy and the 200 Green practices.

Each Head of Department must ensure

that his or her department employees comply with the rules and regulation pertaining to the Green practices at the resort. Regular talks and seminars are held as a reminder for all staff, scheduled by the Human Resource Department.

We have an Environmental Code of Conduct for our resort guests, advising them about our Green policies and practices and their role in supporting them.

The Organic Garden is managed by the Landscape Department, which sells the vegetable produce to the Kitchen Department through inter-billing. The Sustainable Department records the items sent for auditing purposes.

The Department Organic Garden is part of the Green Champion Award project. Each department plants vegetables in a special area, and the produce is sent

to the Kitchen. The department which produces the most items wins the Green Champion Award. The objective is to instil teamwork, commitment and motivation among the staff to plant more vegetables.

**SOST:** Please tell us about your labour policy. What percentage of your staff is local, and how does your business contribute to the betterment of the local community?

**Anthony Wong:** Almost 95% of the employees in the resort are local people and they comprise a mixture of all races. Discrimination and harassment are not tolerated. All employees, regardless of age, gender and race receive a fair performance assessment and are treated equally.

Training is constantly given to the employees to improve their skills and product knowledge either by internal trainers or external trainers.





Most employees are hired from within the local community, in the vicinity of the resort. As a result, the standard of living in the area has improved considerably. We also employ some mentally impaired and physical handicapped people, giving them a chance to become financially independent.

**SOST: What positive impact has being a responsible tourism company had on your business? What operational cost savings have been achieved? Could you provide specific examples?**

**Anthony Wong:** For us, positive impact means that we make profit and reduce costs, while ensuring we do not jeopardise the environment. Our conservation and efficiency measures have reduced our energy, water and other operational costs substantially, leading to a positive impact on the bottom-line, and minimal impact on the environment.

Our gross operating profit is more than 60%, while most hotels make about 40-50%. We make more because we save more, due to our practices. To give you some examples:

- ❖ Our energy conservation measures have resulted in reduction in average per room energy consumption from RM 18.9 (US\$6) in 2006 to RM 17 (US\$5.5) in 2012.

- ❖ Our water saving measures have led to reduction in average per room water consumption from RM4.35 (US\$1.4) in 2006 to RM3.62 (US\$1.2) in 2012.

- ❖ Organic food production at the resort saves us Composting has allowed us to save on purchase of fertilizers - a saving of RM 2 (US\$0.65) for every 1 kilogramme of compost prepared.

- ❖ The Resort's nursery where gardeners propagate approximately 200 plants helps us save at least RM 1,000 (US\$323) each month.

**SOST: How can the conflict between the need for environment protection and the**

**economic interests of tourism businesses be mitigated? What's your sustainability message to the travel trade?**

**Anthony Wong:** Without nature, clean beaches and beautiful waterfalls, tourists will not come to your destination, island, hotel or resort. This will affect the livelihood not only of people involved your business, but also of other local businesses such as restaurants, souvenir shops, taxi companies, tour operators, retail establishments.

The government agencies, local authorities, businesses, tourism players and public must work together to take care of our natural environment for economic interest.

## SOST Assessment

→ The Frangipani Langkawi is a model for sustainable tourism, demonstrating compliance with all indicators (and more) for certification under the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC).

→ Its Sustainability Policy and 200 Green Practices reflect a strong commitment to ensuring the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the resort and the Langkawi archipelago.

*SOST Assessment is based on the business's response (self-reporting) to a series of questions on sustainability policies and practices in line with GSTC-complaint criteria. It is undertaken by SOST's Managing Editor - a certified auditor for sustainable tourism. It does not purport to be a 'verified' third-party assessment.*

# In the Spotlight

## Southern Cone Journeys, Santiago, Chile



Marcela Torres, Co-founder and Sales & Marketing Manager,  
Southern Cone Journeys

**Southern Cone Journeys** is an independent, fully licensed responsible tourism operator based in Santiago, Chile. Its tours provide one with a unique opportunity to experience the country's natural and cultural heritage in depth.

Southern Cone's vision is to become the preferred responsible tourism operator in South America. Marcela Torres, Co-founder and Sales & Marketing Manager, shares with us the founders' motivation behind setting up the company, the underlying company philosophy that guides its efforts, and the sustainable business practices the company follows.

**SOST:** *Southern Cone Journeys provides travellers holidays in Chile that are economically, socially and environmentally responsible. Could you enlighten our readers on what that means, and what sustainable tourism business practices you follow?*

**Marcella Torres:** At Southern Cone Journeys, we design and operate our trips in a responsible manner, aiming to promote environmental, social and economic

sustainability. We provide all clients with the UN World Tourism Organization's suggested Code of Ethics for the Responsible Tourist and Traveller and encourage them to read our blog on responsible tourism (<http://southernconejourneys.blogspot.com/>), which provides useful tips on how to behave responsibly during their trip.

We also supplement this advice with information on the culture, customs, language, tipping, and appropriate dress code in the sites they will visit. Our guides are always ready to assist visitors with any questions they may have regarding their interaction with local communities.

We only organize trips for small groups (up to 11 people) to avoid overloading the local infrastructure, particularly in places that are environmentally sensitive.

We have a responsible waste/litter disposal and recycling policy and carry our own trash bags on our trips. By doing this, we are also contributing to social and environmental projects that benefit from recycling different materials in Chile. For example, The Committee for the Defense of Flora and Fauna (CODEFF) recycles glass to support conservation projects, while empty Tetra Pak containers are recycled by the A Roof for Chile Foundation to obtain funds for their campaign to build houses for families without a home.

In addition, we encourage our clients to use public transport during their stay, and ourselves use the subway (underground) as the mode of transport, rather than private transport, for several of our excursions.





**We actively look for locally-owned businesses as suppliers, with the aim of contributing to sustaining jobs for local community members. Likewise, the accommodations we work with are mostly locally-owned and hire local Chilean workers.**

We have clearly established guidelines for our clients on how to act in the natural environment and respect wildlife. For example, we urge them not to feed wildlife, not to buy products made from endangered species, and to stay within the defined trails to avoid trampling vegetation and soil when visiting natural areas.

In order to contribute to the social sustainability of the destinations we visit, we provide an insight and understanding of the host culture and community to our clients so that they can gain more from visiting them.

We also work closely with our providers. Many of them own small businesses in the countryside and do not have much experience promoting themselves in international markets. We offer them the benefit of showcasing their high-quality services and giving them input

on how to improve their offer. In many cases, we spend time figuring out with them what works best in terms of responsible tourism and provide advice on commercial, marketing and sustainability topics.

In order to support the economic sustainability of our destinations, we actively look for locally-owned businesses as suppliers, with the aim of contributing to sustaining jobs for local community members. Likewise, the accommodations we work with are mostly locally-owned and hire local Chilean workers and the restaurants we work with are all locally-owned and offer traditional Chilean cuisine.

We promote typical Chilean handicrafts through our tours, taking our guests to shops that offer high-quality authentic products. In some of our tours we include visits to the stores owned by the Artisans

of Chile Foundation, which is run by the First Lady and showcases products from small artisans throughout the country. This is in line with our policy to build links with locally-based projects that aim to support and produce a positive impact on local communities.

Through our trips to the countryside, we are contributing to local economies by helping small business owners sustain jobs and avoid moving to urban areas. We are working with them to show the value of countryside lifestyle and products, such as handicrafts and typical native foods.

In addition, we apply the fair trade principles. We advise our clients about local bargaining customs and provide guidelines on reasonable prices. Along that same line, we do not bargain with our providers to the point they feel exploited, which happens fairly often in the tourism industry.





We offer over twenty different types of half-day, full day and longer itinerary tours and also organize customized tour programs for our clients. The important thing is that whichever tour they opt for, people travelling with us are guaranteed an authentic experience and lots of fun!

**SOST:** What motivated you to focus on sustainable tourism in your business?

**Marcella Torres:** After years of working for several large inbound tour operators in Chile, first as guides and then in other office roles, my sister Paula and I realized that these companies all offered pretty much the same itineraries and destinations, including the same attractions (wineries, museums, etc).

We found that tourists were eager to try something different. Instead of visits to fancy jewellery and gift stores at the end of a city tour, most tourists preferred to visit a local handicraft market where they could also see the artisans at work. They also wanted to taste local food and meet the natives to experience the local culture first hand. Very few travel companies offered such experiences to tourists, while behaving responsibly towards the local environment and its people.

So, we decided to establish a new company

that would offer unique and authentic travel experiences in Chile, while ensuring we adhered to the principles of responsible tourism.

**SOST:** Can you tell us about the different kind of tours and experiences you offer your customers?

**Marcella Torres:** With our tours to the countryside and the coast, as well as to other regions in Chile, we take our guests to places that are not usually on the radar for foreign tourists. Trekking with Llamas in the Atacama Desert, enjoying a traditional meal cooked in a solar oven in the Elqui Valley, learning to make typical Chilean pastries in the Curacaví Valley, seeing how an artisan works with lapis lazuli and copper or just spending quality time with locals from north to south are all part of our offer.

As an example, our excursion to the Curacavi Valley is unique and special. Apart from normal sightseeing, travellers get to

see life in the countryside and learn how some of Chile's best traditional foods are produced at small-scale factories owned by local community members. The local community has created a tourism route to attract visitors to the area, but so far we are the only tour operator who is actively working with them and supporting their project.

Similarly, in the High-Andes of northern Chile, our guests can participate in a traditional Aymara sunrise ceremony, enjoy a soft trekking experience accompanied by a herd of Llamas, and spend the night at the home of local villagers, sharing a traditional meal with them.

We offer over twenty different types of half-day, full day and longer itinerary tours and also organize customized tour programs for our clients. The important thing is that whichever tour they opt for, people travelling with us are guaranteed an authentic experience and lots of fun!



More and more travel suppliers are highlighting their sustainability practices and that's a very encouraging sign. It is our belief that, eventually, this philosophy will permeate the traditional tourism companies.

**SOST:** In what ways do you/your business provide individuals with a chance to make a contribution for the sustainable development of Chile?

**Marcella Torres:** Since we mostly work with locally-owned businesses, all of our tours contribute to the sustainable development of Chile. Some itineraries involve a direct contribution to an organization or community project. For example, we support the El Bordo Park conservation project, in Zapallar, by donating part of our incomes from tours to the area. The Corporación Bosques de Zapallar, Chile's first land trust, created El Bordo Park, which protects almost 70 hectares (173 acres) of this unique and highly threatened forest. Thus, by booking this tour, our guests are helping contribute to the conservation of this fragile environment.

We also encourage travellers to contribute to the Let's Reforest Patagonia campaign, which we have highlighted in our blog. The initiative was launched by several governmental institutions and non-governmental environmental organizations in response to the forest fires that affected Torres del Paine National Park in 2011 and 2012. For each US\$4, people making donations will be able to have a tree under their name in Patagonia. A grid is displayed on the campaign's website with green trees and burnt trees. To make a donation, a person must click on a burnt tree. Once the transaction has been made, the person receives a certificate with the coordinates of the place where the tree will be planted.

**SOST:** What trends do you see for the travel and tourism industry in the future? Is sustainable tourism gaining ground among holiday goers?

**Marcella Torres:** I'm not sure if the demand for sustainable tourism is actually growing or if it's more a matter of a new way of doing business for providers. Although we've been in business for nearly two years, most of the requests we receive from individual travellers are for the usual types of tours.



One of the big issues is that tours focussed on responsible tourism tend to be more expensive than traditional tours, which consist of just sitting on a comfortable bus and taking pictures of the main landmarks. We assume that people with a greater conscience will be willing to spend more to enjoy a more meaningful vacation; however, with the recession in Europe and the economic constraints in the United States, the main outbound markets for this type of tourism, travellers are watching their expenses, which is only logical.

Having said that, more and more travel suppliers are highlighting their sustainability practices and that's a very encouraging sign. It is our belief that, eventually, this philosophy will permeate the traditional tourism companies. We don't expect traditional mass tourism to disappear altogether, but do believe that an increasing number of companies will begin to include at least some measures of sustainability in their business, even if the motivation is to improve their public image. Eventually, this will help expand responsibility in tourism to a wider range of customers.

**SOST:** What are the long term benefits tour operators can expect from being involved in sustainable tourism? What message would you like to give them? What does it take to start on this journey?

**Marcella Torres:** As in any kind of business, tour operators must understand that being sustainable actually makes business sense. Aside from accessing the niche international market for responsible tourism, sustainability measures usually not only contribute to protecting the planet and boosting local economies, but also help in making important savings.

For instance, when we contact potential suppliers and ask about their sustainability measures some of them apologetically say that they don't have any. So we tell them that it's fine and that they can start slow, for example, replacing their traditional light bulbs for energy-saving bulbs. If they save on water or energy consumption, their bills will also be smaller.

They can take baby steps and progressively move on to more significant contributions to sustainability. All it takes is the will to begin!





**SOST:** How do you promote your business locally and internationally?

**Marcella Torres:** We have several channels to promote our business. The first and basic one is our website ([www.southernconejourneys.com](http://www.southernconejourneys.com)), which showcases the tours we offer throughout Chile. In 2011, we developed a blog to support the World Responsible Tourism Day campaign, and have since continued to maintain it as people enjoy reading it and claim to be inspired by it.

In addition, we have participated in some trade events as visitors and/or speakers, such as the World Travel Market and the Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference (ESTC), organized by The International Ecotourism Society. I was actually honoured to be chosen as speaker at the ESTC conference in 2012, where I presented a case study on an ecotourism project I helped develop in the Atacama Desert in northern Chile.

We have also paid memberships to several

international organizations and responsible tourism associations and post our tours on many websites that contribute to promote sustainable tourism in the United States and Europe.

Last but not the least, we are fairly active on the social media platform using Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to promote our business, and to engage with our audiences.

**SOST:** Do you have any sustainable tourism certification or awards to your credit?

**Marcella Torres:** We are a fairly new business, so a long way to go before we win any awards! On the certification front, we are in the process of obtaining the STEP eco-certification from Sustainable Travel International (STI). It's important for us as a responsible tourism operator to have an independent certification of our standards in sustainability.

As there are no eco-certification schemes

currently in place in Chile, we opted for STI's program which is recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) and is quickly becoming the gold standard for the industry. Hopefully, we will soon be the first Chilean company to achieve this certification.

**SOST:** Finally, what are your company's plans for the future? Any special initiatives planned?

**Marcella Torres:** We want to begin offering voluntourism in Chile. It's true that the country is among the most stable and thriving economies in Latin America, but that doesn't mean that there isn't room for contribution to social and environmental projects.

We also want to expand our network of contacts with wholesalers and outbound operators based in the United States and Europe in order to grow and offer more jobs here. And gradually, we hope to expand our reach in other parts of the world.

**We want to begin offering voluntourism in Chile. It's true that the country is among the most stable and thriving economies in Latin America, but that doesn't mean that there isn't room for contribution to social and environmental projects.**

## SOST Assessment

→ Southern Cone Journeys demonstrates compliance with several indicators for baseline certification under the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC).

→ An energy reduction plan, water conservation policy and usage tracking, and a system for monitoring customer feedback are some of the areas that need to be worked upon, in order that the tour operator may be certified as a GSTC-aligned sustainable tourism business.

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# Being the Change

Our contributing writer for the column Point of View is **Chris Milnes**, lawyer-turned-eco entrepreneur. Chris was a full time lawyer and linguist who worked in the European Parliament for four years before deciding to quit his job, to follow his passion for the outdoors and belief in sustainable tourism. Currently, he is working on developing an ecolodge in Greece.



Ever had a travel experience that made you consider changing your career? I have. A trip to Nepal two years ago sent me on a different kind of journey - a journey to change myself, my life and hopefully, the world around me. More and more people are contemplating taking that same leap of faith towards a new career path. Becoming an entrepreneur is not easy, and I feel I still have so much to learn. But my journey over the last 18 months has taught me some important lessons and I'd like to share them with those contemplating a similar path of discovery and change.

My passion for the outdoors and nature stems from my childhood days spent mountaineering with my father, who used to take me on trips to the nearby national parks in the UK. However, it wasn't until many years later when I travelled to Nepal and witnessed the positive effects of ecotourism on local communities and the environment that I felt this great urge to embrace my childhood passion and build a sustainable business around it.

Today, more and more people travel the globe than ever before. The exponential growth in travel coupled with the ever-increasing commercialization in the tourism industry is causing the destruction of some of the most beautiful areas in the world. The need for sustainable,



ethical and responsible tourism is being acknowledged by governments and industry stakeholders, and encouragingly there are a number of destinations and tourism businesses that are adopting the triple bottom line approach, addressing environmental, socio-cultural and economic impacts of their business activities. The sustainability movement is indeed gaining momentum.

My decision to become an eco-entrepreneur combines my love of the outdoors with my strong belief in the principles of sustainability. My goal is to develop an ecolodge that is accessible and affordable to all those who have a love for nature and the environment, and seek to contribute to the well being of the local community; it is not meant to be a luxury eco-resort for affluent travellers.



Before embarking on the entrepreneurial journey, take time to understand your motivation for wanting to do so. It's not easy to turn one's back on a steady job and income. It's even harder to enter into a field one knows very little about. You need to be passionate, committed and willing to start from scratch if necessary.

Passion is a prerequisite – but, as with any new project, doing your homework first is important. A feasibility study is necessary to assess the viability of the planned project. For me, the greatest issue was I did not even have a place in mind for my ecolodge. All I knew was that I wanted to create an eco-friendly lodge somewhere in Europe, offering affordable vacations in a purely natural location, while providing maximum benefit to the local community. I envisioned the lodge to be set in a place that offered amazing natural beauty, rich cultural heritage and a mild climate.

After much research, I honed in on Greece, as it seemed to offer the perfect match with my desired criteria. I have since made several trips to the country, spoken to several people in the ecotourism field and have visited potential sites to assess the viability of the project. Is there demand for it? How will the local community react? Are there many competitors? How are they doing? Is there a gap in the market for the kind of project envisioned? What will it cost? Is there financing available? What kind of revenues can be generated? These are some of the questions that need to be answered as part of the feasibility assessment.

Textbooks can provide you with theoretical and background knowledge, but nothing prepares you better than talking to someone who has already successfully done what you aim to do. Reaching out to people through industry associations is

an excellent way to start. In my case, I joined The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) and attended its annual conferences where I was able to connect not only with ecotourism professionals whose advice I could seek, but also with eco-entrepreneurs who talked about the opportunities and challenges in their business. This warm and welcoming eco-tourism community has been my biggest support network in my journey thus far.

The various industry-related groups on LinkedIn are also an excellent way to connect with experts and like-minded entrepreneurs. You'll be pleasantly surprised at the number of people who are willing to offer their advice, guidance and support. Equally, attending conferences, seminars and networking events can be very useful in upping one's knowledge of the industry and benchmarking best practices, especially if one is contemplating entering a relatively unfamiliar field.

Every expert I have spoken to has emphasised the need to get out and gain some experience in the field, prior to setting up the business. Through contacts I made at TIES' Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference in 2011, I was able to gain invaluable work experience at Cayuga Sustainable Hospitality in Costa Rica and Maho Bay Camps in the US Virgin Islands.

Whilst at Cayuga I worked in every department of two luxury sustainable hotels (Cayuga manages 9 hotels in Costa Rica and Nicaragua). This first-hand experience gave me an excellent overview of how sustainability practices can be successfully implemented across a hotel's operations. Working with the management at Maho Bay Camps taught me that ecotourism doesn't have to be expensive and how it is important to be flexible and

ready to adapt to customer and staff needs. The biggest advantage of these work opportunities has been that I now have a clearer idea of the kind of project I want to create, and the sustainability policies and best practices that I must adopt at my ecolodge in order to make a real difference in the world.

If you want to be an entrepreneur but have no experience or knowledge about owning and operating a business, I assure you that there is nothing more valuable than gaining work experience in an enterprise similar to the one you are contemplating. Not only will you gain first-hand experience of running such a business, you will understand the challenges, risks and rewards associated with such an endeavour.

Eighteen months into this amazing journey of discovery, I am currently working on my business plan and shortly expect to finalize the site for the ecolodge. I am aware that the months and years ahead will be full of challenges, but my passion for the outdoors and my belief in sustainability drive me on in this uncharted territory.

The sustainable tourism movement is slowly but surely gaining momentum, and sustainable travel is becoming more mainstream. I wish to be part of this change movement, because I want to see a better world. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "You must be the change you want to see in the world."

Join the sustainability movement. **Be the change** you want to see in the world.





# The 2012 Global Green Economy Index

*New Zealand tops perception and performance rankings on sustainable tourism*

The Global Green Economy Index (GGEI) produced by Dual Citizen Inc., a Washington DC-based consultancy, evaluates the efforts of countries to create environmentally sustainable economies, focusing on efforts to invest in clean energy technology, sustainable forms of tourism, and improved domestic environmental quality. It also seeks to capture how the performance of these countries is perceived internationally.

Results from the 2012 GGEI that evaluated 27 countries, show that expert practitioners perceive Germany as the top national green performer, while an index defined by 32 datasets scoring country performance places Denmark on top.

Government efforts to promote sustainable tourism are vital to green economic growth. Results on sustainable tourism indicate that:

- New Zealand tops both the perception and performance rankings for the third year in a row
- The United Kingdom is tied with New Zealand at the top of the performance index but remains under recognized by experts for its merits in the realm of sustainable tourism.
- Most nations covered in the GGEI have failed to formalize green tourism accreditation schemes, reinforcing the notion that 'sustainable tourism' is abstract and hard to quantify.
- Most nations do not emphasize sustainable tourism adequately through their national tourism websites, representing a missed opportunity to attract this growing sector of travellers.

The 2012 GGEI also incorporated the first-ever survey measuring green city reputations, which ranked Copenhagen #1, followed by Stockholm, Oslo, Amsterdam and New York.

This city survey ranked perceptions of green performance in the main urban area associated with each of the 27 nations tracked in the GGEI.

## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Perception	#1 New Zealand	Performance	#1 New Zealand
	#2 Australia		#1 United Kingdom
	#3 Norway		#3 South Africa
	#4 Canada		#4 Sweden
	#5 Sweden		#5 Denmark
	#6 Germany		#6 Netherlands
	#7 United Kingdom		#7 Germany
	#8 Denmark		#8 France
	#9 Iceland		#9 Japan
	#10 South Africa		#10 Italy



# Yangsum Heritage Farm, West Sikkim, India

By Sriparna Saha



Thendup Tashi with his family

Located in West Sikkim, North East India, [Yangsum Heritage Farm](#) is a 44 acre mountain farm, situated in the remote countryside with a backdrop of the famous Khangchendzonga (or Kanchenjunga) mountain range and the skyline of the Singalila Ridge, known for offering one of the best treks in the world.

The Yangsum Heritage Farm deservedly features in our Green Showcase, as it embodies the values and core principles of sustainability.

Originally built in 1833, it was restored and remodelled in 1966 into a four-bedroom home stay by Thendup Tashi, the great grandson of the owner.

Thendup who manages the farm along with his wife Pema, led the remodelling project and is instrumental in ensuring the farmhouse follows the environmental best practices, and engages with the local community to contribute to their social and economic development.



To build more rooms, I will have to cut down the trees to create space, which I have no intention of doing. I don't intend to replace their growth with mine, which anyway would not be growth, but greed.

## Restoration features

- Local carpenters and masons were employed to reconstruct the stone walls using locally available materials and the traditional dry-stack technique of construction. The stone walls retain the sun's warmth, an important consideration as the farm is at an altitude of nearly 1900 metres
- The indigenous style of architecture has been retained to preserve and honour the culture and heritage of the century-old farmhouse building
- The guestrooms have been repurposed from the erstwhile warehouse that was used for storage purposes. These have been decorated in the traditional Sikkimese style.
- Locally sourced wood has been used for wall panelling, flooring and ceiling, to provide insulation against the cold
- The kitchen is a converted barn that was once used to prepare fodder for the farm animals
- Overall, modern intervention has been minimal, restricted mainly to the bathrooms for better functionality and hygiene standards
- Guests are served filtered spring water in jugs and glasses instead of mineral water in plastic bottles
- Bone china crockery and glass items are mostly used for serving purposes. Packed lunch is provided in hot cases with banana leaves serving as plates, to avoid use of aluminium foil and plastic ware
- Separate dustbins are maintained for depositing bio degradable (like paper) and non biodegradable (like plastic) waste.
- Organic solid matter generated at the farm is treated on-site by anaerobic bacteria in a septic tank. The soak pit, a covered chamber filled with coarse rocks and gravel, facilitates natural filtration as its bottom is lined with sand.
- The solid waste gets converted into organic fertilizers which are used for growing vegetables in the farm, and biogas produced as a by-product during the manufacture of organic fertilizers, is used for cooking purposes and for heating water.
- Grey water (from the kitchen) is used for watering the cash crops at the farm, mainly ginger and cardamom plants

## Green practices

Green is the reigning mantra at Yangsum Heritage Farm, with environmental, operational, purchase and labour policies and practices reinforcing sustainability.

- Energy efficient practices include the use of CFL bulbs and keeping the geyser thermostat at minimal temperature
- Eco-friendly bamboo foot mats are used in all guest rooms
- A no-plastics policy is adhered to, to minimize plastic waste
- The farm grows a wide range of crops, fruits and vegetables, and has a mixed forest of pine, Himalayan alder, schima, chestnut, magnolia, rhododendrons, cherry and other plant species. It is fully organic, and self-sufficient to meet the needs of its staff and guests.
- Local staff is employed to run the farm house, and is fully trained in the doctrine of energy efficiency.
- Guests are made aware of the 'do no harm' environmental policy of the farm house, and encouraged to dispose waste in appropriate dustbins, switch off lights



and power points when not in use, and to walk / trek / hike to nearby places (rather than use motor vehicles)

Thendup Tashi is committed to maintaining the authenticity of the guest experience at his farm house, and to practicing responsible tourism. Despite the farm house's increasing popularity, he has no intentions of capacity expansion.

Thendup firmly states, "To build more rooms, I will have to cut down the trees to create space, which I have no intention of doing. I don't intend to replace their growth with mine, which anyway would not be growth, but greed. Preserving the natural environment and the cultural history and heritage of this place for my children's future and for the future of our Mother Earth is of paramount importance to me."





The remodelled farm house, retaining the indigenous architecture to preserve heritage of the century-old farmhouse building



Locally sourced wood for panelling the interiors and the exterior of the farm house



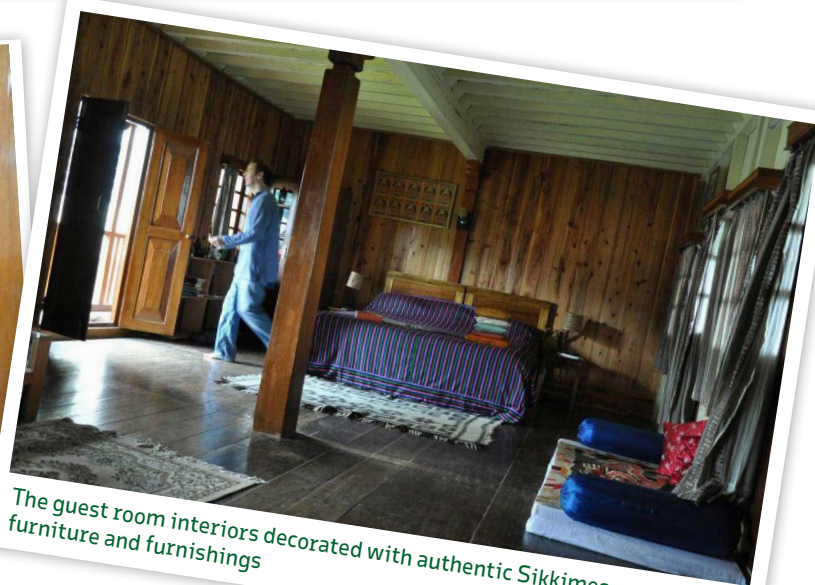
The stone walls reconstructed by local carpenters and masons using locally sourced materials



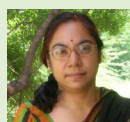
The fully organic and self-sufficient farm, with a wide range of fruit-bearing trees, crops and vegetables



The balcony of the guest room, restored with wooden floors and walls by local carpenters



The guest room interiors decorated with authentic Sikkimese furniture and furnishings



This article has been written by Sriparna Saha, an Indian architect who is associated with a number of sustainable tourism initiatives. She also loves travel writing and writes for a number of travel and tourism publications in India and overseas.



# Travel & Tourism Research & Consulting

Established in 1997, Market Vision is a research and consultancy firm with specialization in the tourism & hospitality sectors. We undertake research and consulting assignments across the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) and Asia markets, and globally in collaboration with an international network of research and consulting partners. Our tourism & hospitality consultants & associate global

partners have in-depth experience in various aspects of tourism development, developed over decades of professional work experience in the industry.

We have vast experience in travel and tourism research, and undertake market, trade & consumer studies on behalf of international trade organizations, national tourism boards,

tourism development organizations and organizations in the travel trade viz. hotel groups, travel agencies, timeshare developers, resort developers, airlines, etc.

Market Vision's directors and consulting partners are regular speakers at various international travel & tourism conferences and events. ●

## Sustainable Travel Development – Advisory Services

**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM** development embraces the triple bottom line of environmental protection, social responsibility, and economic health. Simply put, business practices that protect and enhance the environment and support community development are more profitable and competitive in the long-term.

Market Vision, along with its strategic partners, provides strategic planning, technical

assistance, and implementation support to destination management companies and travel and tourism businesses of all sizes. We start with a single focus: to improve your triple bottom line and help you achieve substantial resource savings by leveraging untapped opportunities and implementing a sustainable path to profitability through immediate and long-term return on investment.

By staying focused on high priority areas and

improving your organization's positive impacts, you'll quickly discover that sustainability equates to profitability. Our team includes accredited auditors and consultants who will help you prepare for and achieve GSTC-recognized independently-verified eco-certification.

Contact us to find out how we can help you gain competitive advantage and increase profits through the more productive use of resources. ●



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