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*INDIGENOUS TOURISM:
MORE AT STAKE THAN JUST "TOURISM"*

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According to the United Nations, there are more than 370 million indigenous peoples in some 90 countries worldwide. Reports presented at the UN 7th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues in April 2008 indicate they hail from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, but also share challenges such as: lack of basic healthcare; limited access to education; loss of control over land; abject poverty; displacement; human rights violations; discrimination and economic and social marginalization.

Travel & tourism offers an opportunity to address some of these challenges. Indeed, promoting indigenous tourism offers a one-stop-shop opportunity to uphold a national culture and also address broader issues such as extinction of languages, preservation of ancient wisdoms as well as poverty alleviation, climate change and migration.

Indigenous peoples trace their roots back to an era when nature, not money, was the real treasure. Time was measured by seasons, not seconds. For hundreds of years, they lived off the land, free of modern-day gadgets and gizmos. However, just as the world begins to realise the value of the ancient traditions in health and wellness, so too is it learning to value the original creators of those traditions. There is growing realisation that losing species of wildlife, flora or fauna can be equally as damaging as losing traditions, languages, customs and rituals.

In recent decades, the promotion of indigenous tourism has gained higher prominence in the product development and marketing policies of just about every country. However, indigenous tourism operators have a long way to go. Often divided amongst themselves and badly organised, many admit to having a hard time retaining their culture and transmitting it on to today's glitz-and-glamour younger generation.

Who Are The Indigenous Peoples?

Indigenous Peoples can be found all around the world. They are mainly tribespeople, rich with artists, musicians, writers, storytellers, and many more. Take for example the „Orang Asli,“ the indigenous groups found in Peninsular Malaysia. They are divided into three main tribal groups: Negrito, Senoi and Proto-Malay, each of which has its own language and culture. Some are fishermen, some farmers and some are semi-nomadic. More indigenous groups can be found in Sarawak such as the Dayaks, the Iban, Bidayuh and Orang Ulu. Dayak is used as a blanket term by the Islamic coastal population for over 200 tribal groups. Typically, they live in longhouses, traditional community homes that can house 20 to 100 families.

Forming roughly 5.5% of Sarawak's population, there are over 100,000 different Orang Ulu tribes. According to Tourism Malaysia, they are arguably Borneo's most artistic people, „their large longhouses are ornately decorated with murals and superb woodcarvings; their utensils are embellished with intricate beadwork; and aristocratic ladies cover their bodies with finely detailed tattoos.“



Such indigenous peoples and tribes stretch from Latin America to the native Americans of the North, the aborigines of Australia and Maoris of New Zealand and the numerous bedouins and tribes of Africa and the Arabian deserts. The website http://www.nativeweb.org/resources/native_travel_eco-tourism/ lists a large number of superb travel and eco-tourism opportunities developed by or for indigenous peoples.

For example:

- A Bedouin experience in the high mountain region of Sinai, Egypt
- Indigenous Tribes & Aboriginal Groups tours & eco tours in Panama.
- Native-owned and -operated tours in South Central Alaska, offering VIP tours on Alaska & Native history
- Native-owned tour companies that teach visitors about Northern New Mexico and the history of the Pueblo people
- Tours to Amazon Lodges run in conjunction with or wholly by indigenous people in Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru
- Maori tours in New Zealand, where guests stay and trek with New Zealand's indigenous peoples
- Inuit-owned and -operated Arctic sea kayaking adventure tours in Canada's high Arctic country of Nunavut
- Customised tours to all Sioux Reservations in South Dakota, USA.
- Locally-owned and -operated ecotours specializing in homestays in remote (and not so remote) tribal villages in the Chittagong hilltracts of Bangladesh
- Navajo-owned tours to over 2,700 archaeological sites in Arizona
- At the Chief Bald Eagle Ranch in South Dakota, guests stay in tepees, learn Indian traditions and tour historic areas
- In the Ecuadorian Andes, guests visit four indigenous communities, share in their ancient traditions, taste traditional foods, delve into their knowledge of medicinal plants and meet the shamans
- Village Homestay accommodation in local indigenous Fijian communities
- Fairtrade tours in Peru with the Quechua community (horse-supported treks to Machu Picchu)

The Issues They Face



Over the past few decades, the linkage between indigenous peoples and tourism has been intensely discussed. One recent publication is „Tourism and Indigenous Peoples“ [Edited by Richard Butler, Professor of Tourism, Deputy Head of School (Research), University of Surrey, U.K., and Tom Hinch, Associate Professor, Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, University of Alberta, Canada]. The publication defines Indigenous Tourism as „tourism activities in which indigenous peoples are directly involved through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction. Tourism attractions which are both controlled by indigenous peoples and which feature an indigenous-themed attraction clearly fall within the scope of it.“ The definition excludes other activities such as casinos owned and controlled by indigenous peoples.

The book uses case-studies to compare tours such as „campfire“ programmes in east Africa, and the employment of indigenous peoples as guides, amongst other cases. It discusses host-guest relationships, conflicts within communities and contrasting strategies and results of tourism in indigenous villages in South Africa. It focuses on issues such as authenticity, religious beliefs and managing indigenous tourism in a fragile environment. Also covered are tourism education, tourism and cultural survival and examples of the policy and practice of indigenous tourism.

Professors Butler and Hinch argue: „Given the complexities of globalisation, indigenous cultures and tourism, the range of debate that surrounds indigenous tourism is not surprising. The reality is that there are a range of both opportunities and threats that indigenous peoples may encounter if they choose to become involved in tourism. The exact blend of these opportunities and threats tend to be unique in time and space, although some common patterns and themes exist. They are influenced by both external factors over which indigenous peoples have little control and by internal factors which indigenous peoples have at least some opportunity to influence.“

According to the professors, „Western-based economic rationale remains the primary motivation for engaging in the businesses of indigenous tourism. The essence of this argument is that income generated through tourism will help eradicate the shackles of poverty and social welfare and lead to more cultural pride and economic self-determination.“ It is better for the indigenous peoples to develop tourism than, say, cut down timber in rainforests, the editors argue.

They stress: „A symbiotic relationship is possible to the extent that cultural survival contributes to economic success and economic success contributes to cultural survival.“ At the same time, indigenous tourism „also helps promote relationships between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples and increases the mainstream populations' understanding of the plight of indigenous peoples, and hence creates a more just and equitable relationship.“

However, the professors are realistic enough to note: „The travel trade is dominated by an increasingly global culture that operates at a worldwide scale and responds to shareholder interests. (Indigenous) operators who specialise in it present a very small



segment of this group and must normally work within the parameters of the tourism industry as a whole if they hope to remain solvent."

Mexico: Indigenous Communities Battle Mega-Tourism

In many parts of the world, indigenous communities find themselves at the receiving end of the consequences of „mega-tourism.“ According to one report, [<http://ww4report.com/node/6684>], „leaders of the Raramuri (Tarahumara), a small indigenous community of Bacajipare, in Mexico's northern Chihuahua state, claim to have been the target of death threats and bullets because of an escalating land conflict related to a planned adventure park in their ancestral lands.

To counter the purported attacks, some of the Raramuri leaders have filed a legal complaint with the Chihuahua state attorney general's office. „The threats are in response to community demands over the fences that are put up to profit from the sale of lands to tourist project investors," they charged in a public document.

According to the website report, the mega-project is part of a cross-country network of „magic towns" envisioned by Mexican tourism promoters. Reportedly backed by Spanish investors, the Chihuahua state government is supporting the tourism industry expansion, says the report. Previous efforts to expand tourism in the Copper Canyon region have sometimes clashed with the desire of indigenous communities to control their lands, their cultural resources and their local economies.

„When projects of this kind are announced, it is always claimed there will be development and economic benefits for the residents," Mexican environmentalist and columnist Ivan Restrepo was quoted as writing. „Experience shows they end up dispossessed of their best lands and working as gardeners and minor employees in hotels and other businesses."

Meanwhile, in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, bordering Guatemala, another indigenous movement to take control of tourism is reportedly gathering steam. According to the same website report, „On December 28, 2008, indigenous supporters of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) stepped up demands that Mayan archaeological ruins and popular tourist parks be managed by local communities. Arriving in four trucks, a group of protesters entered the legendary Palenque archaeological site and painted slogans on museum and administrative walls. A few of the slogans read: „The Country is Not for Sale," „Death to the Capitalist System" and „Long Live the EZLN."

Policy Challenges Facing Indigenous Tourism Enterprises In Kenya

According to recent research by Dr Geoffrey Manyara, Welsh School of Tourism and Leisure Management, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, Kenya's pursuit of foreign investment as a tourism development strategy has resulted in a high level of ownership



of tourism resources by non-indigenous Kenyans. Consequently, he says, „ involvement of local communities in tourism development and the benefits accruing have remained minimal. This is due to a lack of focus on investment in indigenous tourism enterprises.” Currently there is a drive to get indigenous people involved in tourism development by organisations such as the World Bank and UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), laying emphasis on small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs). Kenya’s draft national tourism policy also supports this endeavour.

Interviews with indigenous Kenyan tourism entrepreneurs, community members, community leaders, managers of community-based tourism initiatives, government officials, members of academia and representatives of support organisations led to the Dr Manyara’s conclusion that indigenous tourism entrepreneurs face significant challenges in terms of literacy and numeracy skills, tourism skills and knowledge, product development and marketing, tourism awareness, empowerment and access to capital.

Moreover, he concluded, „ indigenous Kenyans view the tourism industry in terms of ownership of resources and clientele as a ‘mzungu’ white (people) affair, and hence do not regard themselves as potential owners of such resources. Nonetheless, indigenous tourism enterprises can contribute significantly to local livelihoods and also provide opportunities for tourism product diversification in Kenya.” The paper concludes that the Kenyan Government needs to review its tourism policy to create a conducive environment for the development of indigenous tourism enterprises.

Survival Of Indigenous Peoples Is A Global Issue

The good news for indigenous peoples is that their fate and future has now become a global issue. August 9 is marked annually as the UN International Day of the World’s Indigenous People, usually observed with panel discussions, art exhibits and cultural performances. This is also the Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People, which runs from 2005 to 2015.

UN Declaration On The Rights Of Indigenous Peoples

On 13 September 2007, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by a UN General Assembly Resolution. Drafted and debated for more than 20 years, the landmark declaration emphasises “ the rights of indigenous peoples to live in dignity, to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue their self-determined development, in keeping with their own needs and aspirations.” A majority of 144 states voted in favour, with 4 votes against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) and 11 abstentions (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Samoa and Ukraine).



The Declaration affirms their contribution to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, and expresses concern that „indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources." Among some of its key points, the Declaration gives indigenous peoples the right to:

- self-determination in terms of their political status and free pursuit of their economic, social and cultural development
- practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature
- revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons
- maintain their traditional medicines and their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals
- maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources
- redress, by means that can include restitution or, when this is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation, for the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent
- maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions

Seventh Session Of The Permanent Forum On Indigenous Issues

Not long after the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted, more than 2,500 indigenous participants from all over the world, including Bolivia's President Evo Morales Ayma, met at the UN HQ in New York from 21 April to 2 May 2008 for the 7th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The session ended by issuing clear recommendations in a range of areas considered critical for the



physical, cultural and spiritual survival, identity and well-being of indigenous peoples. Forum members heard from delegates on the multiple ways in which their countries could take measures to implement the Declaration.

The session's main theme was „Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges“ .

This is a subject of great relevance to the travel & tourism industry at large.

Effects of climate change on indigenous peoples

Papers and presentations at the 7th forum stressed that indigenous peoples are vital to, and active in, the many ecosystems that inhabit their lands and territories, and may therefore help enhance the resilience of these ecosystems. Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Chairperson of the Permanent Forum, said that both the problem of climate change and its solution were concerns for indigenous peoples who -- according to a World Bank report -- contributed the „smallest ecological footprints“ on Earth, but suffered the worst impacts from climate change and mitigation measures, such as the loss of land to biofuel production. Indigenous peoples are among the first to face the direct consequences of climate change, owing to their dependence upon, and close relationship with the environment and its resources.

Examples include:

- In the high altitude regions of the Himalayas, glacial melts affecting hundreds of millions of rural dwellers who depend on the seasonal flow of water is resulting in more water in the short term, but less in the long run as glaciers and snow cover shrink.
- In the Amazon, the effects of climate change include deforestation and forest fragmentation, and consequently, more carbon released into the atmosphere exacerbating and creating further changes. Droughts in 2005 resulted in fires in the western Amazon region. This is likely to occur again as rainforest is replaced by savannas.
- Indigenous peoples in the Arctic region depend on hunting for polar bears, walrus, seals and caribou, herding reindeer, fishing and gathering, not only for food to support the local economy, but also as the basis for their cultural and social identity.
- In Finland, Norway and Sweden, rain and mild weather during the winter season often prevents reindeer from accessing lichen, which is a vital food source. This has caused massive loss of reindeer, which are vital to the culture, subsistence and economy of Saami communities.
- Rising temperatures, dune expansion, increased wind speeds, and loss of vegetation are negatively impacting traditional cattle and goat farming practices



- of indigenous peoples in Africa's Kalahari Basin, who must now live around government-drilled bores in order to access water.
- As sea levels rise, Kiribati and a number of other small Pacific island nations could disappear during this century. High tides and stormy seas have also caused problems recently in the Marshall Islands, Cook Island, Tuvalu and low-lying islands of Papua New Guinea.

Responding to climate change

Fortunately, UN reports indicate, indigenous peoples interpret and react to the impacts of climate change in creative ways, drawing on traditional knowledge and other technologies to find solutions.

For example:

- In Bangladesh, villagers are creating floating vegetable gardens to protect their livelihoods from flooding. In Vietnam, communities are helping to plant dense mangroves along the coast to diffuse tropical-storm waves.
- Indigenous peoples in the Central, South American and Caribbean regions are shifting their agricultural activities and settlements to new locations which are less susceptible to adverse climate conditions. For example, indigenous peoples in Guyana are moving from their savannah homes to forest areas during droughts and have started planting cassava, their main staple crop, on moist floodplains which are normally too wet for other crops.
- In North America, some indigenous groups are striving to cope with climate change by focusing on the economic opportunities that it may create. The increased demand for renewable energy using wind and solar power could make tribal lands, such as in the Great Plains, an important resource for such energy, replacing fossil fuel-derived energy and limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

Other papers presented at the 7th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues highlighted more challenges facing the indigenous peoples.

Indigenous Languages:

Linguistic diversity is being threatened around the world, and this threat is acutely felt by indigenous peoples. According to UNESCO, approximately 600 languages have disappeared in the last century and up to 90 percent of the world's languages are likely to disappear before the end of this century if current trends continue. Moreover, fewer and fewer children are learning indigenous languages in the traditional way, from their parents and elders. Hence, much of the encyclopedia of traditional indigenous knowledge that is usually passed down orally from generation to generation is in danger of being lost.



Migration:

Deforestation, particularly in developing countries, is pushing indigenous families to migrate to cities for economic reasons, often ending up in urban slums. They often face double discrimination as both migrants and as indigenous peoples. For example, 84 percent of New Zealand's Maori peoples live in urban areas. Most are in the main metropolitan centres: a quarter live in the region, of Auckland, New Zealand's largest city. The urban migration of Maori has been described as one of the most rapid movements of any population. This also puts further pressure on the cities and urban areas with negative environmental consequences, including a demand on local resources.

Tourism Impact And Solutions

There is unanimous consensus that travel & tourism focussing on indigenous peoples can be a part of the solution. Considerable work is being done in Australia where organisations such as Aboriginal Tourism Australia and the Indigenous Tourism Leadership group engage with public sector agencies, training organisations, and the tourism industries to develop and deliver programs which encourage participation while recognising the need to address barriers and manage culture and community. One recent development in 2008 was a new, improved web portal which offered Australian indigenous tourism companies the following: News stories, events and case studies; An 'easier to search' database of latest training, assistance and funding available to tourism operators; A comprehensive 'how to guide' to visitor feedback; Specific information for artists & art organisations, tour operators & tour guides, Accommodation operators and tourism restaurants. It also offered a how-to guide on effective business management; a how-to guide on record keeping & administration tips, and; Tools and tips on understanding tourism and industry associations.

At ITB Berlin 2008, one of the ToDo! awards was conferred on the Perth-based Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Committee (WAITOC). In his rationale, Studienkreis jurist Christian Adler noted that the Aborigines' contemporary history has been a long ordeal which is only gradually coming to an end. In 1967, the indigenous population of Western Australia was finally granted Australian citizenship, and legal equality was established. "Earlier, white Australians had been allowed to take children of Aborigine background from their parents, to take them to unknown places and have them grow up in missions and children's homes in order to subject them to forced assimilation.

„ This practice, however, was stopped only in the early 1970s, and recently Prime Minister Kevin Rudd officially apologised to the Australian Aborigines for the many years of unworthy treatment. This helps forces in Australia who are intensively working to heal the wounds of the past and to build bridges to a common future, similar to the situation in South Africa," Mr. Adler wrote.

As the indigenous population of the Australian continent, Aborigines today constitute a minority of two percent of the Australian population. Of the roughly 400,000 Aborigines

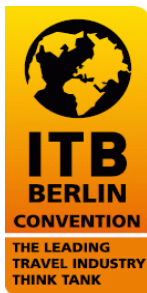


left, 70,000 are in Western Australia. Only five percent of Australia's tourism enterprises are managed by indigenous entrepreneurs, according to WAITOC. However, for 45 percent of the visitors to Australia surveyed, encounters with Aborigines constitute the main motive for their stay. 150,000 visitors per year book cultural programmes with indigenous communities, WAITOC reports.

WAITOC's goal is to improve the profile of small indigenous enterprises and to help Aborigines to get more employment in the tourism sector. It provides consultancy services for governmental institutions and organisations on all aspects related to indigenous tourism. In order to increase the share of indigenous entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, the state tourism authority Tourism WA also runs its own programme to promote indigenous tourism and supports the projects of WAITOC.

Another global group, Indigenous Tourism Rights International (ITRI), organized the International Forum on Indigenous Tourism in Oaxaca, Mexico in March 2002 as an alternative and necessary space for indigenous peoples to conduct a critical review of their experiences with ecotourism. Nearly 200 indigenous representatives and leaders from 19 countries attended and produced „The Oaxaca Declaration,“ which calls on indigenous peoples to „strengthen strategies of coordination and information sharing both regionally and internationally, in order to assert participation in initiatives like the IYE“.

ITB Berlin's Indigenous Tourism Day is a small contribution to the effort.



ITB Berlin Convention 2009 takes place from March 11 to 14, 2009 in halls 7.3, 7.1 a and 7.1 b. The *ITB Indigenous Day on March 14* within *ITB Destination Days* presents successful projects from all over the world, followed by an expert panel discussion.

11.00 – 13.30 Uhr: *ITB Indigenous Day*

Moderated by: Imtiaz Muqbil, Executive Editor, Travel Impact Newswire

Speakers: Dominique Bearune, New Caledonia

Luc Collin, Quebec Aboriginal Tourism Corporation (STAQ)

Kevin Eshkawkogan, Manager, Great Spirit Circle Trail,
Ontario, Canada

Prof. Dr. Igde Pitana, Secretary General, Clan Warga Pasek, Bali

Brian Zepeda, Seminole Tribe of Florida, AIANTA Board Member

For further information please visit: www.itb-convention.com

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