

The Double-Edged Sword: Sustainable Tourism and Local Communities

Topic: Sustainable tourism and local communities

Level: C1

Duration: 6-7 minutes

Accent: British English

Teacher notes

Este audio está diseñado para practicar la comprensión de ideas abstractas y matices de opinión. El nivel de vocabulario es elevado, típico de un examen C1, con un acento británico estándar para facilitar la transición a contextos académicos.

Before listening

- Discutid en parejas: ¿Qué significa para vosotros que un destino sea 'sostenible'?
- ¿Cuáles son los principales problemas que causa el turismo de masas en vuestras ciudades?
- ¿Es posible equilibrar el beneficio económico con la preservación de la cultura local?
- Anotad palabras relacionadas con 'environment', 'economy' y 'community'.

Listening

Audio URL: </generated/experimental/audio/experimental-sustainable-tourism-and-local-communities-mp3>

Questions

Task

1. What is the main reason for the instability mentioned by Dr. Thorne?
 - A. The lack of interest from international tourists.
 - B. The heavy reliance on seasonal employment and infrastructure pressure.
 - C. The decrease in government tax revenue.
2. How does the surge of visitors affect local residents according to the speaker?
 - A. It provides them with stable, year-round employment.
 - B. It strengthens the social fabric of the community.
 - C. It leads to an increase in the cost of living, such as housing.
3. What does Clara Vance suggest is often ignored in economic reports?
 - A. The displacement of local residents.
 - B. The total amount of GDP growth.
 - C. The potential for new infrastructure development.

4. What is the risk of a 'hollowed-out' community?
 - A. The loss of the authentic experience tourists seek.
 - B. An increase in the variety of local businesses.
 - C. A more efficient use of local resources.
5. What does Dr. Thorne propose as an alternative to top-down planning?
 - A. Increased involvement of international hotel chains.
 - B. Community-led solutions and local agency.
 - C. A complete ban on all international tourism.
6. What is the potential consequence of failing to manage tourism levels?
 - A. A permanent increase in government budgets.
 - B. The total loss of the destination's unique appeal and future visitors.
 - C. A more diverse and resilient local economy.
7. What does the term 'extractive model' refer to in the context of the talk?
 - A. A model that focuses on building new infrastructure.
 - B. A model where resources and profits are taken without giving back.
 - C. A model that encourages more people to travel.
8. What is the ultimate goal of 'regenerative' tourism according to the discussion?
 - A. To ensure tourism leaves a place better than it was found.
 - B. To maximize the number of visitors every year.
 - C. To replace all local businesses with tourist-centric ones.

Answer key

1. 1. B — Dr. Thorne explicitly mentions that the scale of seasonal employment and infrastructure pressure are the primary drivers of instability.
2. 2. C — The speaker notes that the surge in people drives up the cost of living, making it hard for locals to stay.
3. 3. A — Clara mentions that the human element, specifically the displacement of residents, is often sidelined.
4. 4. A — The speakers discuss how losing the local population destroys the authenticity of the destination.
5. 5. B — He suggests that the community needs agency through community-led solutions.
6. 6. B — Dr. Thorne warns that if the character or beauty is lost, tourists will stop coming, leading to catastrophe.
7. 7. B — The speaker defines the extractive model as one where resources and profits are taken out of the community.
8. 8. A — The speaker states that regenerative tourism aims to leave a place better than it was found.

Key vocabulary

- Windfall — Golpe de suerte / Ganancia inesperada. Used to describe the sudden economic boost from tourism.
- Precarious — Precario / Inestable. Describes the unstable nature of seasonal jobs.
- Fray — Deshilacharse / Debilitarse. Used metaphorically to describe the social fabric breaking down.
- Sidelined — Dejado de lado / Marginado. Refers to how human issues are ignored in favor of economic data.
- Agency — Capacidad de actuar / Autonomía. Refers to the power of the community to make their own decisions.
- Reconcile — Reconciliar / Hacer compatibles. Used regarding the conflict between economic needs and preservation.
- Deplete — Agotar / Agotar los recursos. Refers to the reduction of local resources due to tourism.
- Resilience — Resiliencia / Capacidad de recuperación. The ability of a community to withstand economic fluctuations.

Transcript

Narrator: Welcome to 'Global Perspectives'. Today, we are delving into the complex relationship between the tourism industry and the communities that host it. We are joined by Clara Vance, an investigative journalist, and Dr. Aris Thorne, a specialist in sustainable development.

Speaker 1: Thank you for having me. It is a timely discussion, as many of the world's most iconic destinations are currently at a breaking point.

Speaker 2: Indeed, Clara. We are seeing a shift from traditional tourism to something much more nuanced, but the transition is far from smooth.

Speaker 1: Let's start there, Aris. For decades, the economic windfall from tourism has been seen as an unqualified success. Local governments would invest heavily in infrastructure to accommodate visitors, often seeing an immediate boost in GDP. But we are now seeing the cracks in that model. What is the primary driver of this instability?

Speaker 2: I believe it's the sheer scale of seasonal employment and the resulting infrastructure pressure. In many coastal or historical towns, the economy becomes entirely dependent on a few months of the year. This creates a precarious situation for local residents. You have a surge of people, which drives up the cost of living, particularly housing, making it impossible for locals to stay in their own communities. The social fabric begins to fray when a town becomes a mere backdrop for holidaymakers rather than a living, breathing community.

Speaker 1: That's a vital point. We often hear about 'overtourism', but the human element—the displacement of residents—is frequently sidelined in economic reports. If the local population is pushed out, what remains of the 'authentic' experience that tourists are supposedly seeking?

Speaker 2: Exactly. It becomes a hollowed-out version of itself. This is why we need to pivot towards community-led solutions. Instead of top-down planning where large international hotel chains dictate the landscape, we need models where the community has agency. This means diversifying the local economy so it isn't solely reliant on tourism, and ensuring that the revenue generated stays within the community through local cooperatives and small-scale enterprises.

Speaker 1: But isn't there a conflict of interest? Governments rely on the tax revenue from large-scale tourism to fund public services. If they limit visitor numbers to protect the environment or the local way of life, they might face a budget deficit. How do you reconcile that?

Speaker 2: It is a delicate balancing act, certainly. However, we must consider the long-term cost of inaction. If a destination loses its unique character or its natural beauty due to mismanagement, the

tourists will eventually stop coming altogether. The economic loss then would be catastrophic. Sustainable tourism isn't about stopping travel; it's about managing the footprint. It's about ensuring that the presence of visitors enhances, rather than depletes, the local environment and social structures.

Speaker 1: So, it's about resilience. Building a system that can withstand the fluctuations of global travel trends.

Speaker 2: Precisely. We need to move away from the 'extractive' model of tourism—where resources and profits are taken out—and towards a 'regenerative' model. We want tourism to leave a place better than it was found. That requires careful regulation, investment in sustainable infrastructure, and, most importantly, the active participation of the people who live there year-round.

Speaker 1: A challenging but necessary shift. Dr. Thorne, thank you for your insights.

Speaker 2: My pleasure.

Narrator: You have been listening to 'Global Perspectives'. Join us next week as we explore the ethics of artificial intelligence in the workplace.