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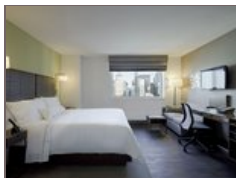
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Ecotourism and Responsible Tourism in China



Alex Pasternack
Living / Travel
November 20, 2007

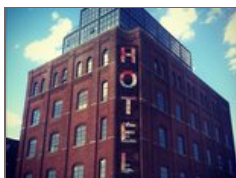
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With China's tourism [booming](#) ahead of the 2008 Olympics, its ecosystem in need of smart, ground-up solutions, and its rural areas eager to build their GDP, [ecotourism](#) seems like a no-brainer. The [Wenhai Ecolodge](#) in stunning Yunnan province is one famous example. But as usual, attempts at sound ecological approaches are rarely supported by local or central governments, and are even stymied by government policies and a strong emphasis on quick profits. Making matters more complicated of course is the [loose definition](#) of ecotourism, which, in places like scenic Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, can sometimes mean nothing more than a resort near some trees. Meanwhile, the tense dance of tourism and development means that even the sincerest ecotourism sites face the threat of their own success.

Julie Perng [reports](#) at China Development Brief (the Beijing office of which was

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[shut down](#) by authorities last summer) on eco-tourism at four sites in Yunnan:

None of the sites has seen much government investment in eco-tourism, nor do they have much control over their own land or landmarks.... [And] as a result of government interventions and the drive to maximise profits, the villages described here may never be able to sustain a true "eco-tourist" label. Nevertheless, individuals and groups in all of these sites are working to realise their own notion of eco-tourism.

On a trip to the south of Yunnan province last year, in the sub-tropical Xishuangbanna region near Myanmar, friends and I eagerly undertook a trek only to discover that the path had become a large dusty road. Here we competed for space with large machinery preparing to pave the way, apparently, to eventually accommodate tourist buses. Our hopes of discovering wild China had been dashed by thousands of similar hopes. It was a quick lesson in the state of tourism in China, and it was a powerful one.

In the face of such development, Perng identifies some key ingredients to a successful ecotourism project in a place like China: local management of eco-tourism, reinvestment of profits back into the community and certain infrastructure development, training of locals by experienced NGOs, ecological education of visitors, support (or non-interference) from regional government, and small bureaucracy. In the quiet villages of **Yuhu** and **Shaxi**, where locals mostly manage eco-tourism and where NGOs have lent a helping hand, Perng finds relative success stories.

Another project, in the village of **Jisha**, shows the potential for smart eco-tourism growth in the area--and the pitfalls that lie ahead. After the Kunming-based [Center for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge](#) (CBIK), a local NGO, spearheaded an eco-tourism development as a way to stimulate the village economy following a national logging ban, a large developer moved in with [other plans](#): an "eco-development" atop the central mountain with a number of hotels and a cable car running up the side. Locals [petitioned successfully](#) against the project, a first in China.

"[Community-based eco-tourism](#) is ideal in these mountain communities, but resource conflicts, inadequate access to information, and lack of transparency put those communities in a bad situation," says Li Bo, who led the CBIK project.

Meanwhile, in the village of **Dimaolou**, within the famed Three Parallel Rivers region, eco-tourism is proving productive (although the looming threat of a controversial [series of dams](#) could easily dash its dreams).

"We need outsiders who love this place" to show villagers how to love and appreciate it, one villager says. Just as the presence of curious visitors in your hometown can help you better appreciate it, so eco-conscious visitors to China's provinces might indirectly help promote a sense of environmental awareness among locals. But that sort of awareness really begins with the [responsible tourist](#).

Feng Yongfeng, in a piece at China Dialogue about Yunnan's Yushi village,



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19 Incredible Human Accomplishments

reminds tourists from China and overseas of our own responsibility in eco-tourism -- in any tourism really:

Travellers who go abroad to learn and share experiences are being replaced by narrow-minded tourists who are only interested in consumption...

So when we complain about eco-tourism operators failing to attract visitors, perhaps we should take some time to consider the visitors themselves -- because if a tourist is unwilling to become an eco-tourist, then any amount of careful planning and good intentions will be wasted.

via [China Development Brief](#)

Links

Some recommended eco-tourism destinations and resources in China include [Lashihai and Wenhai](#), near Lijiang (including [Wenhai Ecolodge](#)), Alou's lodge in [Dimalou](#), the [Lashihai Xintuo Ecotourism Company](#), Conservation International's [Green Travel Guide](#) and [Wild China](#), which runs tours in western China. (Thanks to Lexi Tuddenham)

[China Daily](#) and [WWF](#) on ecotourism in China

See also Conservation International's [China Green Travel](#) and China's [Biodiversity Clearinghouse](#)

Photo by [Engtat](#)

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Grant • 3 years ago



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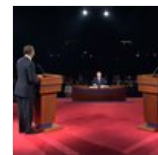


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TreeHugger talks with the Green Party candidate for president, Dr Jill Stein about ...

by Mat McDermott in Environmental Policy

12 Green Questions I'd Ask If I Were

To consider yourself an eco-tourist destination, hotels, resorts or operator, you need not only to consider one aspect of the place but rather, the way it is designed, the way it is built, the way it incorporates the local community, the way it educates far outside its own borders and the way it challenges the paradigm beliefs of traditional experiences. Check out www.nakedretreats.cn

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Some passing questions about green issues may make it into the upcoming presidential ...

by Mat McDermott in Environmental Policy



Eric • 4 years ago

Hi All,

There is a good news for you guys.

In order to protect the environment , we just opened another eco-hotel opened in Yangshuo.

We are proud to be the first boutique hotel in Yangshuo, as well as one that contributes to sustainable Yangshuo tourism. In our guestroom design, we have focused on creating an intimate feeling, and one that reflects both the minority and Han culture of Yangshuo. Our Yangshuo hotel is a joint effort between China entrepreneur Chris Barclay, a long-time China resident, and the Yu family of Moon Hill Village (Li Cun). The result is a cozy, family-style experience that is unique among Yangshuo hotels.

In addition, we exclusively use solar hot water and recycled wood products in our rooms, as well as natural gas. Active solar panels on our roof help power fans and vents. Unlike other Yangshuo hotels, we do not burn any coal. In our guestrooms you will find all our furniture is custom made from local bamboo - the most sustainable wood available. We believe our guests will appreciate our thoughtful design and care for the environment in yangshuo China

More info, please visit: [http://www.yangshuoguesthouse....](http://www.yangshuoguesthouse...)

Also, if you have any better ideas on how to protect the environment , please feel free to contact us. Many thanks. Hope you like our eco-hotel.

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Bio Tourism • 4 years ago

great adventures buddy!

for more biotourism information about

wild adventures in natural places

just check biotourist.com

biotourist.com

Hope this helps someone!

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Guillaume Foutry • 4 years ago

Thanks for all this links to ecotourist projects in China. The only vision we have through mass media is a booming economy that destroys

everything, it is always good to put forward the natural and cultural beauty of this country.

0 ^ | | v • Reply • Share ›



Ben • 4 years ago

The Wenhai Ecolodge is a great idea especially in a country that is more renowned for its pollution than ecological measures. That said, there is a movement in China at the moment (albeit slow) of eco accommodation providers springing up.

One that has been in operation for 7 years is this

Yangshuo hotel near Guilin in Guangxi Province. The hotel was one of the first of its kind in China and has won international recognition over the years. In 2007 they reached the finals of the Virgin Holidays Sustainable Tourism Awards and have been entered into the Conde Nast World Saver Awards for 2008. For the thousands of travellers that descend on Yangshuo to admire the breath taking scenery and experience life in rural China the Yangshuo Mountain Retreat offers an eco alternative to staying in the many hotels and guesthouses in the county.

Another hotel which is part of the URBN Hotels group is the first carbon neutral hotel in Shanghai. Another small accommodation provider this 28 bedroom hotel fuses Western and Chinese influences and a host of green-minded practices to create an urban eco-oasis for tourist and business travelers.

These small players such as the Wenhai lodge and the Yangshuo Mountain Retreat are helping to change opinions and perspectives within China and act as models for the larger businesses in the tourism industry. The question is, will the big players take heed and listen before it's too late?

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