Tips & Tricks for planning an ecotourism trip
Creating a shared vocabulary

ECOTOURISM
“Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.”

- The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), 1990

GREENWASHING
“Promoting ecotourism while effectively doing the opposite ... giving the appearance of ecotourism without the substance of sustainability.”

- International Business & Economics Research Journal, June 2010

PRINCIPLES OF ECOTOURISM
- Minimize impact.
- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.

-TIES website (www.ecotourism.org)
But how can we tell if a company is truly using sustainable practices?

**PROS**
- Environmental conservation
- Money to finance conservation
- Appreciation of cultural integrity
- Education
  - Travelers
  - Host communities
- Economic boost for local economy and communities

**CONS**
- More tourists = more traffic
- Lack of economic benefits
  - Leakage
- Negative impact on environment
  - Animals
  - Plants
  - Native vs. Invasive species
- Pollution from travel
Is it ecotourism... 
...or greenwashing?

- Does it have any kind of “ecotourism” certification?
  - Are they listed on the TIES website?
- What sustainable practices do they engage in?
- What are their policies concerning restricting visitor numbers, recycling, energy, etc.?
- What do they do to protect native plants and animals?
- Do they practice the “leave no trace” policies?
- How to they contribute to the management of invasive species and diseases?
- What are they doing to fight poverty in local communities?
- Do they hire local employees?
  - Are tour operations locally owned?
- Do they offer educational opportunities and resources, such as interpretive guides?
  - How do they inform visitors about the area’s wildlife, culture, and history?
- Does it provide financial support for conservation efforts?
- Do they economically benefit the local communities?
- Who evaluates or audits the performance results?
Who can help me?

At WWU...

- International Programs and Exchanges
  - 360-650-3298
  - www.wwu.edu/ipe
- Recreation Program
  - 360-650-3782
- Office of Sustainability
  - 360-650-2491
  - www.wwu.edu/sustain
- Associated Students Environmental Center
  - 360-650-6129
  - as.wwu.edu/earth

Other Resources...

- Rainforest Alliance
  - www.rainforest-alliance.org
- The International Ecotourism Society
  - www.ecotourism.org
- Ecotourism Australia
  - www.ecotourism.org/au
- Crooked Trails
  - www.crookedtrails.org
- Evergreen Escapes
  - www.evergreenescapes.org
- UNEP Green Passport
  - www.unep.fr/greenpassport