

## Exploring Of Another Kind

While numerous remote and non-traditional locations have joined in the growth of ecotourism, one example shows just what can be done with the correct plan. In Arsal, Lebanon, ecotourism has been alive and well for a decade.

People began to travel to this large village in the north east of the country, primarily to improve the relationship between the local population and the Association for Rural Development in Arsal. This agency is a huge contributor to the development and environmental activities in this Middle East nation. As a non-governmental organization (NGO) the association is working as a partner to the Reforestation Network, introducing the area's culture and habitat to those who might be both friends and contributors to Arsal's well being.

One tangible result of these efforts is the increased revenue that remains with local residents, though much remains to be done. As with all-important efforts there is still a need for organization and planning, to take the programs to another level. However, the growth of the region's ecotourism activity is a sign that this type of travel can be combined with a package holiday to benefit everyone involved.

While this may not be traditional exploring in the minds of many adventurers, ecotourism trips to another country, to experience a different culture, is exploration too. A well-planned campaign, combined with good management might mean excellent services and enjoyment for those who visit.

According to the fledgling histories of the ecotourism field, Green Line put work in motion that was fundamental to the birth of the industry. In 2000, a campaign involving youth, NGOs and community leaders stimulated agro-tourism, with new programs for olive oil production, bee keeping businesses and fruit growers. Numerous regions of the Middle East began to see benefits from the idea of visitors bringing labor and revenue to the traditional products and systems of the location.

With this type of major effort, ecotourism was increasingly being seen as a way to travel and learn, combined with a way to conserve natural resources. Yet, the most important benefit in the long term, may be the possibility of local populations earning enough to remain in their traditional homes. Coordinating the efforts of ecotourism providers, the various communities, government agencies and NGOs was a huge effort. But a network has formed around the ecotourism philosophy.

Among the achievements of the campaign in the Mediterranean region are guidelines for assessing sites and developing new sites as ecotourism destinations. Expert teams have been able to secure financing to further study, develop such locations and make food recipes, while working closely with local populations.

The campaign and its organizers have also been able to put a Training of Trainers system into operation, with workshops that pass critical knowledge on to local teachers, to administrative staff and to parents of school children. Such ecotourism efforts give hope to developers, ecotourism planners and local populations alike. Conserving natural resources in widely scattered regions of the world, while providing sustaining work programs for indigenous populations is not only possible, it is reality.

## About the Author

Ken Morris is writing normally for <http://www.alicante-spain.com>, a web publication on the topic of sangria and white sangria. On his site one can find his writings on [white sangria and sangria recipe](#).

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