

Project Eco-Agritourism

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By rekindling travelers' interest in nature, cuisine, and culture, Eco-Agritourism provides unique visitor experiences, and helps rural communities preserve their distinctive cultural and natural heritage.

Eco Agri Alliance (EAA) www.EcoAgriAlliance.com partner projects introduce Travelers to residents, farmers, fishermen, winemakers, artisans, chefs, lodge owners, historians, and nature conservationists. Travelers can connect with local residents, spend time in their farms, vineyards, and villages and enjoy a leisurely meal together.

Before you eat the bread, you will learn from local farmer how grains are cultivated. Before you drink the wine, you will learn from winemakers about the wine making process. Before you sample olive oil, you will meet the farmers at their groves and factories. Before you sample cheese, you will meet shepherds to discover how his or her flocks live – roaming the slopes and eating wild plants. You will discover how wild plants are used in cooking and natural medicine, during hikes in the countryside and cooking demonstrations. You will learn about traditional cuisines. Every chef will tell you that they are only as good as their ingredients. The foundation of our concept is fresh, local, organic food, clean water and environment. Both visitors and residents benefit from community-based programs. Careful consideration and strong alliances are required to sustain these programs. We celebrate heritage in an ethical manner and offer visitors opportunities to discover information that can enrich their own lives.

Tourism and Agriculture are primary industries in many countries around the world. The majority of tourism programs support generic services. Our programs are unique - each program is designed to benefit local communities in terms of providing financial stability or protecting cultural and natural heritage. Many residents in these communities are involved in Agriculture, such as olive oil, wine, cheese etc. production. These industries compete for increasingly scarce natural resources, such as water. EAA programs educate travelers via nature, cuisine and culture. As food is an integral part of culture, these programs center on the work of farmers and interrelated preservation work to serve several purposes at once.

Industrial agriculture is comprised of cooperatives, some of which represent hundreds of families cultivating a variety of produce on small plots of land. Slowly, some cooperatives and individuals are converting to organic production. A growing number of specialized farmers incorporate Eco-Agritourism into their work to promote their products, share their knowledge and generate supplemental income. Not all producers are collaborating with residents involved in interrelated

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preservation work that can enhance the quality of Eco-Agritourism and the quality of life for residents.

Implementing Responsible Travel in the Case of Eco-Agritourism

The fact that a destination has excellent cuisine and nature reserves does not mean that communities are able to open up the area to visitors. Before residents invite visitors to their villages and farms, they need to consider how they will present and sustain their programs and protect their communities.

Since most of us are not farmers, we don't know what to expect from an Eco-Agritourism experience. Eco-Agritourism is meant to support farmers and their communities. In the case of organic agriculture, it also helps to protect our environment. Eco-Agritourism can make a difference as part of the bigger picture of preservation and responsible travel. Organic farming is a lifelong commitment. Supplying the world with excellent food and wine is more challenging than we might ever know or appreciate. While it's a lovely notion if farmers or fishers could take the day off to entertain us, we are asking for the world. The time they devote to sharing their knowledge with us is a rare privilege. Eco-Agritourism travel can cover a lot of ground today. There are interrelated categories – eco, sustainable, ethical, green, geo, etc. The bottom line is that people are actively working to support and protect the communities in which they live, work or visit. Responsible travel is part of the solution to a growing number of global issues relating to social inequality, exploitation, cultural preservation, food safety and environmental protection. It's a fine theory, embraced the world over, yet the practice is challenging. While the number of responsible travel practitioners increases, the number of travelers partaking in such beneficial programs is minimal. Many people say they prefer "real" or "ethical" travel experiences, yet they are unaware that local communities must justly benefit from the services they provide. It is the responsible travel practitioner's job to develop valuable programs and create awareness of that value, which will be offered at a fair price. Preservation work is a partnership between providers and beneficiaries. Enjoying an action-packed series of cultural activities requires the participation of many local people. It must be financially rewarding, otherwise the arrangement is not mutually beneficial or ethical.

Sharing the Benefits of Responsible Travel

By tailoring small-group travel programs in harmony with the seasons, cultural and environmental impacts, availability of residents and interests of attendees, CEC has the advantage of flexibility. In consideration of our collective and individual projects, we serve a dual purpose - to support local preservation work and share those benefits with visitors. We link farmers with other members of the community through:

- 1) education
- 2) staying in locally-owned lodges and eco-lodges
- 3) providing training and referral services
- 4) global promotion of projects
- 5) sharing revenues with communities

Many travelers benefit from community-based preservation work. We stress that communities must benefit the most if we expect to enjoy such services, including excellent fresh, local cuisine.

EAA acts as a gateway for communities to expand or create their own Eco-Agritourism programs. There are established Agricultural Cooperatives, producing and selling traditional products within their communities or beyond, depending on their resources and support for their work. There are

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also excellent home cooks, gardeners and food artisans that do not have the resources to join cooperatives or host visitors. We invite residents from varied backgrounds to participate in EAA programs. By collaborating with the community, Eco-Agritourism stretches beyond the boundaries of a single farm. Communities maintain their way of life as they choose, rather than altering it to suit an outsider's vision of foreign travel. Eco-Agritourism must be advantageous for communities. Otherwise, there is no incentive to provide these valuable services or expand production. Our approach can be implemented anywhere in the world. Eco-Agritourism is a business run by accomplished professionals. All beneficiaries – the public and private sectors, the media and travelers – need to be aware of the value of these programs. We promote responsible travel programs, and organize workshops for colleagues and our success has encouraged others to follow our lead.

Responsible Travel

EAA aims to contribute to the well being of local people and their environment. Small-scale practitioners cannot afford advertising, nor are they certain to benefit from it, as the coverage is rarely specific to their work and could be subjective.

We take small steps to launch a small-scale programs building them from the ground up in collaboration with other local businesses, advocacy groups and public agencies. With the rapid interest from travelers and growth of responsible travel advocacy groups, entrepreneurs' participation in programs is increasing. Responsible Eco-Agritourism is not a trend; it is a necessity.

EAA provides a wide range of benefits to communities and visitors. It provides an opportunity for entrepreneurs and small business owners and travelers to be active participants in sustainable development programs. EAA is a community of individuals and organizations delivering tangible returns on investments and helping preserve and build sustainable communities. We aim to build meaningful careers for future generations and protect the very reason why people join EAA partner projects - to discover, preserve and promote nature, cuisine and culture.

Reference

Agriculture

<http://www.chamberofecocommerce.com/partnerprojects/agriculture.html>

Aquaculture

<http://www.chamberofecocommerce.com/partnerprojects/aquaculture.html>

Tourism

<http://www.chamberofecocommerce.com/partnerprojects/tourism.html>

Food Security

<http://www.chamberofecocommerce.com/partnerprojects/foodsecurityhub.html>