

Ecotourism: See the World While Saving It ?Imagine vacationing in a place of stunning, natural beauty. Picture yourself relaxing on a pristine beach in Belize, exploring the desert on a camel in Riyadh, or following lions and zebras in Kenya. It provides an economic incentive to preserve the environment and raises money to help protect it. ?It creates financial opportunities and jobs for the local population. "We wanted to explore a country that was largely unspoiled by development. And, boy, did we get what we were looking for. We saw beautiful beaches, lush rainforest, and exotic wildlife." ?Ecotourism destinations focus on recycling, water conservation, and using renewable energy sources. ?Stacy Davison is one of the three million tourists who chose to visit Costa Rica this year. Stacy is especially enthusiastic about a wildlife refuge she and her husband visited during their trip. Now imagine that while enjoying these experiences, you are also helping to preserve the environment, protect wildlife, and support local communities. At one time, Costa Rica had the highest rate of deforestation in all of Latin America. Costa Rica is now the world's top ecotourism destination. Such vacations are part of the fastest-growing trend in the travel industry. ?While ecotourism was almost unheard of before the 1990s, it has quickly become a multi-billion dollar industry. ?These are some of its characteristics: ?It involves travel to natural, often remote, destinations. ?It builds environmental awareness. ?Costa Rica was one of the first !ecotourism success stories. It isn't