

Sustainable Ecotourism  
in the Guiana Shield region

A working document for the Guiana Shield Initiative

Kike Olsder

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The black spider monkey (*Ateles paniscus*) is one of the many primate species which can be seen in the Guiana Shield.  
Photo: Amy MacKinven

## PREFACE

It would be a shame to keep one of the most beautiful and spectacular landscapes on Earth away from visitors from elsewhere in the world. The Guiana Shield region is just that; a beautiful and spectacular landscape: pristine, seemingly endless rainforests with emergent mysterious table-top mountains, clear rivers and spectacular waterfalls cutting through the forests and savannahs, incredibly rich fauna and flora to be found nowhere else and, the region's greatest asset, the strong indigenous communities - the day-to-day managers of this unique part of the global ecology.

The Guiana Shield Initiative, presenting this report on tourism in the region, promotes a just and fair regional economy. An economy which does not compromise the ecological and cultural integrity of the Shield, but, on the contrary, rewards the inhabitants for maintaining its integrity.

With 10-15% of the world's fresh water reserves, a virtually uninterrupted stretch of 2.5 million km<sup>2</sup> of tropical rainforests and biodiversity that exists only in this region, the Guiana Shield performs vital functions for the world's climate, the regional hydrology and the preservation of biological capital. Keeping these functions intact definitely deserves compensation by the rest of the world and International environmental law already contains many clauses pointing to this kind of compensation.

Revenue from tourism, from visitors enjoying the wonders of the Guiana Shield should be a sizable part of the economy of the Guianan region. However, this industry must be developed with full respect for the nature and culture of the region and with the proceeds and employment fairly distributed over the various stakeholders. This report aims to give a first overview of the tourism potential and options in the region. It contains also a brief analysis of the concept of ecotourism, clearly the kind of tourism most applicable to the Guiana Shield. In this respect, it is befitting to mention here that a Post-Graduate Course on Ecotourism was recently set up at the *Universidad Nacional Experimental de Guayana* in Ciudad Bolívar, Venezuela. Out of this course more detailed guidelines for establishing tourism programmes and facilities in the Guiana Shield will emerge.

The main function of the report lying before you is therefore to alert the policy-makers in and outside the region to ecotourism as a key factor in a truly sustainable economy of the Guiana Shield ecoregion.

Prof. Nico Visser  
Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries  
Advisor to the Board of the Netherlands Committee for IUCN

## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

*1.1 The Guiana Shield and the Guiana Shield Initiative*

The Guiana Shield eco-region, extending from western Colombia to north-eastern Brazil, is a two billion-year-old Precambrian crystalline rock formation, upon which is one of the largest tracts of undisturbed forest in the world. The diverse habitats, such as pristine rainforests, fresh and saltwater swamps and grassy savannahs, support an abundance of wildlife, including numerous species unique to the region. The ecosystems of the Guiana Shield perform vital ecological services, such as carbon sequestration, regulation of hydrological cycles, and the preservation of biodiversity, for the region and the global community as well as local communities. Biodiversity, clean air and a stable climate are all services provided at no apparent economic cost to us, meaning that those managing these ecosystems do not receive any direct economic benefit for keeping the ecosystems intact.

The countries of the Guiana Shield share their biological richness, but they also share economic activities which threaten the integrity of the relatively intact ecosystems. Economic hardship has created pressure on governments to increase logging and mining activities. Poorly managed, these activities are detrimental to the environment, the indigenous cultures and to human health. Although conservation activities have started across the Guiana Shield, there is no overall strategy to tackle trans-boundary problems. Tackling such trans-boundary problems was an impetus to the development of the Guiana Shield Initiative (GSI). The GSI has the objective to promote ecologically, socially and economically sustainable management in the Guiana Shield region. One of the underpinning aims of the GSI is the generation of sustainable livelihoods for the local inhabitants of the Guiana Shield based on sustainable ecosystem management. The GSI strives to work with existing initiatives, relevant actors such as governments, NGOs, universities, local communities and international donors. Currently, the GSI is partnering with the UNDP to prepare a proposal to the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

*1.2 The Guiana Shield Initiative and ecotourism*

As well as developing a regional framework for compensation for the provision of ecological services, the generation of sustainable livelihoods for local inhabitants of the Guiana Shield based on sustainable ecosystem management is also a fundamental aim of the GSI. One of the methods of generating income for local communities is through the development of sustainable ecotourism. This is not a



A Maroon from French Guiana demonstrates to tourists how to make a typical boat of the region. Photo: Dave Zwaan

new concept, as ecotourism has been the focus of many development projects over the last decade. Ecotourism is perceived as an effective way of combining conservation efforts with economic development.

### 1.3 *This report*

In this report commissioned by the GSI, recommendations will be made regarding sustainable ecotourism development in the Guiana Shield region. It will also provide background information investigating the feasibility of ecotourism as an economic alternative to more destructive activities, such as mining, for the Guiana Shield eco-region. Ecotourism developments must be compatible with the aim of nature conservation. In this report criteria and guidelines for the development of sustainable tourism or ecotourism<sup>1</sup> are given. It includes a general description of current tourism patterns in the countries of the Guiana Shield, a description of a number of current ecotourism projects, lessons learnt and recommendations for the region.

While reading this report a number of observations and questions should be kept in mind. Large areas of the Guiana Shield are not inhabited or used for human activities. Is it desirable to develop ecotourism in such regions? Is human presence needed in these areas to conserve nature and biodiversity? Is it possible to manage important biological areas without turning to human activities (although sustainable) as a means to do so? If the development of sustainable socio-economic activities does seem an advantageous way forward, what would be a reasonable scale of such activities? And finally: do local populations have a sufficient say in possible developments in the region?

These are important questions that need to be researched in more depth when considering the specific issues related to sustainable management in the Guiana Shield region. While contributing information for some answers to these questions, this report, however, primarily describes the general conditions and potential for tourism in the Guiana Shield region.

<sup>1</sup> The concepts sustainable tourism and ecotourism are often used as one and the same, but in this report are two different concepts. Ecotourism is a form of tourism that takes place in natural areas, contributes to conservation of nature and the well-being of local people and has an educational component for the tourist. Sustainable tourism is broader and can apply to any form of tourism, when the tourism product is set up in such a way that effects on environment, nature, local communities and culture are prevented.

## CONCEPT OF ECOTOURISM

### 2.1 *The tourism industry*

Tourism is one of the largest industries and largest employers in the world. It currently accounts for 10.7% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and employs 260 million people. In 2000, almost 700 million tourist arrivals were recorded globally<sup>2</sup>. This is an enormous increase from just 25 million in 1950, amounting to a 7% annual growth rate. During 2000, nearly 50 million more tourist arrivals were recorded globally compared to the previous year. This is the same quantity of tourists that visit Spain in a year. The World Tourism Organization has predicted that by 2020 1.6 billion people will be undertaking foreign travel each year. At the same time, international tourism revenue has also risen steadily. Globally, the tourism industry generated an income of US\$ 460 billion in 2000, an increase of 17% compared to 1995 (Tearfund, 2002).

International travel to developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America is growing rapidly, and at a rate faster than other locations. International tourism arrivals in developing countries have grown by an average of 9.5% per year since 1990, compared to 4.6% worldwide (WTO, 2002a). Between 1980 and 1992, the income which tourism generated in developing countries increased from 3% to 12.5%, an average growth rate of 8.4% per year (WTO in Burns and Holden, 1995). Visits to developing countries now account for more than 30% of all international tourism (WTO, 2002a).

### 2.2 *Ecotourism*

Due to the aforementioned growth in the tourism market, many countries now see tourism as an interesting industry to help develop their national economies. Although tourism impacts the destination countries in many ways – not only economically, but also socially and environmentally – the tourism industry is still perceived as being a relatively 'clean' industry. When a travel destination has a legal tourism framework and tourism developments are planned well, tourism offers opportunities for income, whilst safeguarding the concerned country's cultural and natural attractions.

<sup>2</sup> World tourism is measured in tourist arrivals to a country. In some countries tourism is also measured by the number of international arrivals into the country. This, unfortunately, is less indicative because it also includes business travel.

It is important to emphasize the crucial role that good management of development plays. In practice, however, the legal framework is often lacking, and development is often not planned and managed well. All too often, development occurs when prospectors see a relatively easy way to make money. In fact, in the last few decades, the negative consequences of unregulated development became clear. For instance, along Spain's coastline, problems often occur relating to water and energy scarcity during the high tourist seasons. In this context, the terms 'ecotourism' and 'sustainable tourism' have started to be used. As opposed to mass tourism, with ecotourism or sustainable tourism the impacts of development are, supposedly, taken into account. Since its appearance, the concept of ecotourism has been seen as a means to help reduce the negative effects of tourism, while enhancing its positive effects.

One definition of ecotourism is that it is "environmentally responsible, enlightening travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations." (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996). Other definitions for example, from the International Ecotourism Society, also mention travel to protected areas, and educational aspects of such travel for the participating tourists.

There are hardly any statistics available concerning the ecotourism market. Estimates are, therefore, often made based on 'nature travel'. Nature travel, however, should not be confused with ecotourism: nature travel is travel to natural areas, but it does not necessarily include any contribution to nature conservation or to the well-being of local populations. Ceballos-Lascuráin (1996) reports a WTO estimate that nature tourism generates 7% of all international travel expenditure. This translates to approximately 45 million nature tourist arrivals, worldwide, in 1998, and 70 million expected for 2010. To this, one must add the substantial number of domestic visitors that visit natural areas (Epler Wood, 2002).

The World Resources Institute (1990) found that, while general tourism has been growing at an annual rate of 4%, nature travel is increasing at an annual rate of between 10% and 30% (cited in TIES, 2000). While visiting natural areas is not defined as ecotourism, the trend of visitors to national parks can give an indication of the growth in ecotourism. Surveys from the early 1990s are registering a dramatic growth in tourism to national parks.

### Visitation Rates to Nature-based destinations

Country	1990	1999	Total % increase	Annual average
South Africa	1,029,000	6,026,000	486%	19.3%
Costa Rica	435,000	1,027,000	136%	9%
Belize	88,000	157,000	78%	6%
Ecuador	362,000	509,000	41%	3.2%
Botswana	543,000	740,000	36%	3.1%

Source: (WTO, 2000)

Recognizing the growing importance of ecotourism, the UN General Assembly in December 1998 declared 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism. The objectives were to generate greater awareness of the effects and potentials of tourism to degrade or conserve nature and well-being of populations, disseminate methods and techniques to make ecotourism an instrument that can make a positive contribution and promote exchanges of experiences in the field of ecotourism. The concept of ecotourism is, however, the subject of many discussions. Some argue that ecotourism is not the solution it promises to be, and that it often has negative effects, just as more general tourism has. Nevertheless, ecotourism can be a sustainable means of socio-economic development, provided that it is implemented in a sustainable way.

### 2.3 Benefits and threats of ecotourism

The development of tourism, particularly ecotourism, can generate multiple benefits, at the national, regional, and, especially, the local levels. Economic benefits are often the reason for local communities to turn to tourism development. It is, however, not easy to find quantified information on actual economic benefits for local communities associated with ecotourism development.

Information on economic benefits can be found in a study of six cases of *pro-poor* tourism projects (Ashley, Roe and Goodwin, 2001). The concept of *pro-poor* tourism overlaps with the concept of ecotourism, but it focuses mainly on poverty relief for the communities involved in tourism development. The cases that are compared are two initiatives of private companies in Ecuador and South Africa, two government programmes in Africa, one International Development Aid Agency project in Nepal, and one community association programme in St. Lucia.

The financial impact of *pro-poor* tourism projects is determined by local earnings, i.e. the actual financial injections into poor households. Local earnings are the collective community income and wages of the employed, in the form of casual earnings from small enterprise, casual labour and informal sector sales, such as handicrafts, for example. In the case of these six *pro-poor* tourism proj-

ects, the wages for those in regular employment oscillated between US\$ 1,000 and US\$ 4,000 per worker per year. Such earnings are sufficient to bring the core group of earners, and their families, within a project community (usually less than 20 people) above the poverty line. Furthermore, these case studies found out that these workers would not otherwise have been employed, because there were few other viable economic activities in the areas that were examined.

Casual and small business earnings per person are generally lower than earnings from regular employment, though they show very high variability: from US\$ 6 – US\$ 10 per year to thousands of dollars per year. There are, however, far more people involved in tourism on a casual basis than on a regular basis. This can amount to 4-10 times the number of employees, without taking into account the multiplier effects of re-spending tourism earnings. In the six cases that were examined, the earnings of one person supported many more: anything between 5 and 30 people were supported by the income of one member of staff or casual worker. In most cases, regular wage earners were relatively skilled and educated; they knew, for example, how to drive or were able to communicate in English. Sometimes jobs were only available to those who were ‘connected’. The lesser skilled and the poorer did, however, have possibilities for casual employment (Ashley, Roe and Goodwin, 2001).

Besides the direct financial impacts in the form of earnings, there were also specific impacts on livelihood. Every case study noted positive impacts on human capital (such as skills, education, and health), improvements in infrastructure, improvements in financial impacts (such as access to credit and collective income), strengthening of community institutions, better management of natural resources, and better access to information. In addition, they reported less tangible effects, such as optimism, pride and participation. However, negative effects also occurred, such as intra-community tension, dependence on external assistance, and difficulties in involving the very poor, women and the landless (Ashley, Roe and Goodwin, 2001).

On a more general scope, the following benefits are often mentioned as a result of tourism developments (Galan and Orjuela, 1998):

- Employment opportunities, particularly for young people, women and ethnic minorities in the region. Employment can be directly related to tourism activities, like guiding and offering accommodation to tourists, or indirectly, in areas of agriculture, fishing, handicrafts, etc. where the presence of tourists creates a demand for other services;
- Creation of new markets for local products and stimulation of domestic industries;
- Increased interest from different levels of government, thereby contributing to developing local infrastructure in the areas of education, health care, transport, etc.;

- Stimulation of local cultural activities;
- Contribution to nature conservation, through the generation of income directly related to the natural attractions of a particular area (WTO/UNEP/IUCN, 1992).

The development of tourism, however, also poses a certain number of threats. If it is not planned well and/or discussed sufficiently with all stakeholders involved, the following can occur:

- Development can lead to congestion of traffic and overcrowding;
- Contamination of land and water due to improper disposal of waste;
- Restricted access to certain attractions (theatres, parks, etc.) for local residents;
- Deterioration of cultural and natural heritage due to uncontrolled access for visitors;
- Difficulties with inequality when profits and benefits are not experienced by local residents;
- Degradation of local culture due to commercialization and unsettlement of community structures.

#### 2.4. Tourism and ecotourism development and planning

When a country, region or town looks towards tourism as a potential development strategy, it should be realized that, because of the wide-ranging effects tourism can have on a destination, planning of the development is essential. Tourism development has both negative and positive impacts, which are described in the *destination life cycle* concept (Butler and Waldbrook, 1991). This concept suggests that the evolution in tourism of all destination areas follows several predictable stages:

1. Exploration: small numbers of adventurous tourists visit the destination, attracted by the area’s natural and cultural attractions. There is little or no infrastructure for tourism;
2. Involvement: local investment in tourism and tourism advertising starts. Visitor numbers begin to increase and government agencies start to develop the infrastructure;
3. Development: there is a rapid growth in visitor numbers as the destination becomes heavily advertised. The type of visitor changes to the less adventurous. Fabricated attractions replace natural and cultural ones. External investment replaces local;

4. Consolidation: Growth in visitor numbers begins to slow. Tourism becomes 'mass market', and advertising is aimed at attracting new markets and correcting seasonality;
5. Stagnation: The destination area is no longer fashionable as peak visitor numbers are reached. There is a heavy reliance on repeat visitors. The limits of the carrying capacity (maximum of usage that resources can endure without degradation) are reached. Occupancy rates are low and there are frequent changes in tourism business ownership;
6. Decline: The tourism infrastructure becomes run down as visitor numbers decrease. External investors begin to pull out;
7. Rejuvenation: New attractions are developed or new natural resources are used to reverse the negative trends in visitor arrivals.

Much of the Guiana Shield can be placed in the stages of exploration and involvement; the areas surrounding the region's capitals are in the involvement stage, while the more interior areas are in the exploration stage.

An important message of the destination life cycle concept is that the development of destinations for tourism can also carry the ingredients for the downfall of the destination. There are examples of destinations that form an exception to the rule; destination life cycles can be extended if change is anticipated and if steps are taken to adapt to change. Planning of development is vital; tourism planning helps the destination make better choices for the future.

Tourism is often seen as an answer to economic and social problems. In many cases, however, tourism is not the answer, and not every community should pursue it as a viable solution. Nevertheless, in some areas of the Guiana Shield, tourism might prove to be a good opportunity for sustainable development. In this ecologically rich area, it can serve as an alternative form of development, as opposed to other, more destructive, forms of economic activities. Where the decision is made to develop tourism, it will be more successful if detailed planning is carried out beforehand.

Tourism planning needs to occur on international, national, regional and local levels. In fact, tourism planning has proven to be most effective when it is highly participatory; a wide range of stakeholders should be actively involved in the (planning) process. Stakeholders can be government tourism officials, local community residents, non-profit organizations, tourism organizations, tourism business operators and tourism consultants.

The steps that need to be taken in the planning process are:

1. Background analysis
2. Detailed research and analysis
3. Synthesis and visioning
4. Goal-setting, strategy selecting and objective setting
5. Plan development
6. Plan implementation and monitoring
7. Plan evaluation

It often happens that tourism plans are written, but not implemented. To avoid this pitfall, responsibility for tourism objectives must be clearly allocated to specific organizations or people. Funds must be available to successfully carry out the activities and programmes in the plan (Mill and Morrison, 1998).

When looking at tourism and ecotourism in the Guiana Shield as a development tool and alternative economic activity, planning is essential. The overall coordination of tourism planning should be the responsibility of a governmental tourism agency. In several countries of the Guiana Shield, tourism plans have been written. Guyana, for instance, has a National Plan for Ecotourism Development, dating from 1997. A tourism plan for Suriname was developed in 1998, but with recent changes in Government the implementation of that plan has been hampered. Proposals from an European Union tender procedure for a new tourism strategy in Suriname have been reviewed by different Suriname stakeholders in 2002. Finally, in the Brazilian Amazon region, the Ministry of Environmental Affairs is coordinating the first phase of a strategic ecotourism development plan called ProEcotur (see Section 3.1.1 Brazil).

When local communities want to start tourism initiatives, it is important to take into account tourism plans that already exist for the area, the larger region or country, and to coordinate activities with tourism or governmental institutions.

## 2.5 Criteria for ecotourism development

### 2.5.1 General tourism potential

When identifying possibilities for developing ecotourism, the first step is to assess the potential for tourism in the chosen area. A practically oriented set of criteria for assessing tourism potential is the following:

- Do tourists currently frequent the region? (Where do they go? How many km/hours from the project area do they travel to? How many tourist visits per year? What services do they use?)
- What kinds of tourists visit the area? Are they organized or not organized? Are they day-trippers, groups or individuals?

- What attractions in the project area are worth visiting? (For whom?)
- What are the existing services (including accommodation, transport and food) in the area?
- Are there facilities for the tourists?
- Is the area easily accessible?
- Are relevant organizations willing to support the programme?
- Does the local population have the skills to manage such a programme? If not, how will they be trained?
- Is the area politically stable?
- Where do the necessary energy sources come from?
- How many tourists are needed for ecotourist development to be economically feasible?  
(Caalders and Cottrell, 2001)

Following up on the criteria mentioned above, it is generally agreed that good accessibility, sufficient infrastructure such as availability of accommodation and comfort level of accommodation (private bath, drinking water, cooling systems), first aid post, restaurant, observatories, local guides, a complementary offer of different activities, as well as safety in the region are crucial for successful tourism development (Biosintésis Boletín, 1999).

When the aforementioned questions can be answered positively, it is necessary to carry out a more thorough exploration of the potential. It would be useful to carry out the following analyses:

- *Background analysis* to clarify the origin of the idea and assess the interest of the local people in developing a tourism project. Do they believe in the project and do they want to invest time and money in the project?
- *Tourism product study* to analyse the current tourism product and tourism flows in the area.
- *Market survey* among local travel agents, foreign tour operators and individual tourists.
- *Infrastructure analysis* to define accessibility and services that can be offered to tourists (regarding accommodation, food, first aid, etc.)
- *Study of government tourism policy* to obtain information on necessary licenses, costs of acquisition, and taxes.
- *Actor analysis* to explore opportunities for cooperation. This provides an overview of the organizational field in which a tourism project must operate.
- *Field survey* to determine which attractions are worth visiting and what type of service locals can provide.
- *Risk analysis* to determine, for example, the return on investment and the possible negative impacts on the social, cultural, and natural environment.  
(Caalders and Cottrell, 2001)

When planning tourism development, it is also important to determine what type of tourists should be targeted. For example, day-trippers and stay-over visitors have different needs and preferences. Targeting both groups does not always work well. For a more elaborate checklist for assessment of tourism potential, see Annex 2.

#### 2.5.2 Criteria for sustainable tourism or ecotourism development

When tourism potential has been assessed as a first step, it is necessary to look into the conditions and criteria that are necessary for developing a sustainable tourism product. Possible negative effects of tourism development have to be avoided. These include: overcrowding, which leads to environmental stress; disturbance of wildlife because of recreation (powerboats, foot safaris); pollution (litter and noise); feeding of wildlife; vegetation damage by vehicles; fragmentation of habitats because of increasing infrastructure; and destruction of habitat because of souvenir and firewood collection (WTO/UNEP/IUCN, 1992). When trying to avoid or minimize such negative impacts of tourism development, it is important to determine the carrying capacity of a certain area. The carrying capacity is the level of visitor use an area can accommodate with both high levels of satisfaction for visitors, and low impacts on the area's natural resources. The major factors in estimating carrying capacity are environmental, social and managerial factors.

Environmental factors to consider in determining carrying capacity include: size of area and usable space; fragility of environment; wildlife resources; topography and vegetative cover; and specific behavioural sensitivity of certain animal species to human visitation. Social factors to consider include: viewing patterns (distribution of visitors over area); visitors' opinions; and the availability of facilities. Visitors' opinions are to a degree influenced by topography and vegetation cover. Sense of overcrowding occurs earlier in open spaces, when visitors are able to see each other. Management procedures which can be used to increase carrying capacity are: partitioning off, or zoning, areas for different types of use; designing trails for even distribution of tourists; providing adequate information and interpretation services; and designing facilities for off-season use (WTO/UNEP/IUCN, 1992). A last important factor that determines carrying capacity is the behaviour of the individual tourist. Communication of guidelines for behaviour and information on special assets of the natural area are important to regulate effects of tourist presence.

Examples of tourism development where carrying capacity plays a significant role can be found on the Dutch Antillean Islands of Curaçao and Saba. The results of a nature study being carried out by the environmental department of the Antillean Government to assess the state of the coral reef at the 'Saba Bank' will be used to determine the interest and capacity of the 'Saba Bank' for the development of diving tourism. On Curaçao, a private company is developing the former

plantation of Porto Mari into an ecotourism resort. Before plans for building lodges were made, the local nature conservation organisation, Carmabi, was asked to do a study of the different vegetation zones at the plantation and to assess in which areas building would be least damaging.

While an assessment of carrying capacity tends to focus on environmental impacts and visitor experience, ecotourism development also needs to consider the relationship between tourist development and local communities in the area, as well as potential benefits for these communities.

A set of guidelines, or principles, to follow in ecotourism include:

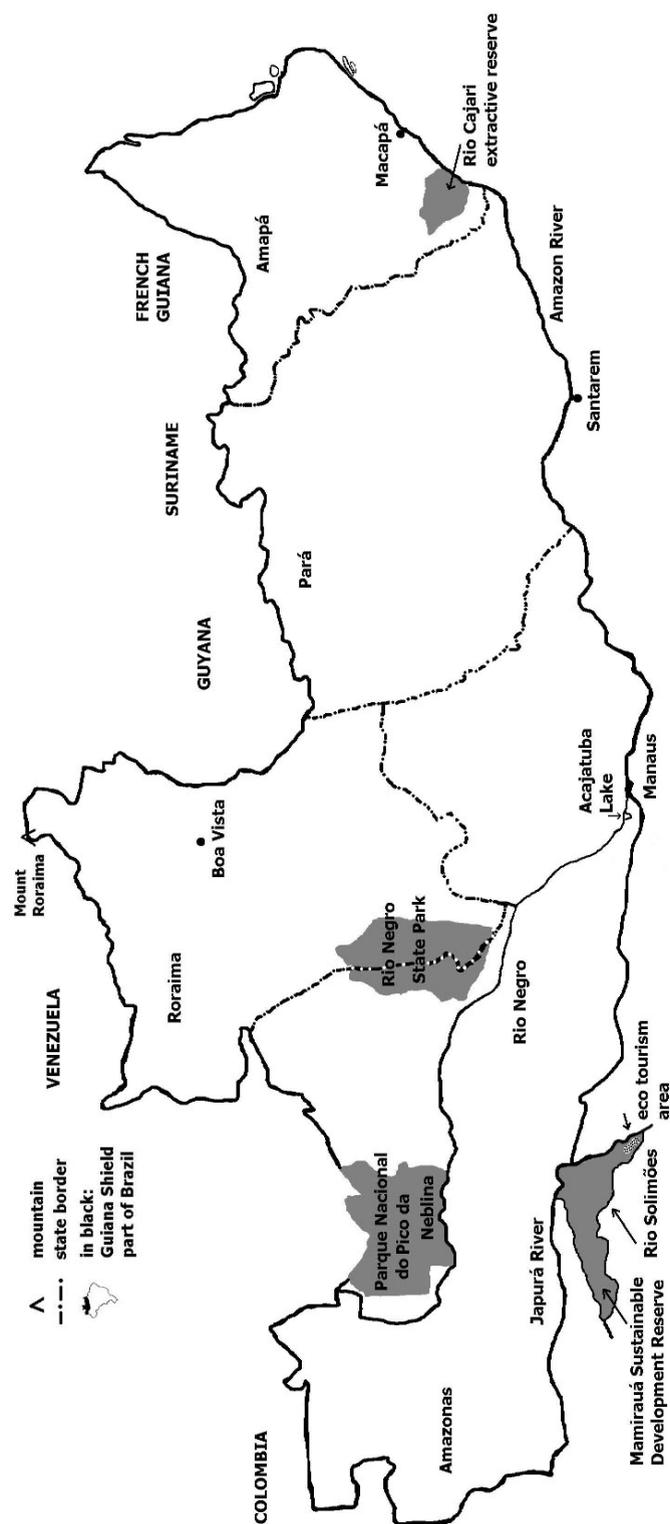
- Minimize the negative impacts on nature and culture that can damage a destination.
- Educate the traveller on the importance of conservation.
- Stress the importance of responsible business, which can work cooperatively with local authorities and people to meet local needs, and deliver conservation benefits.
- Direct revenues to the conservation and management of natural and protected areas.
- Emphasize the need for regional tourism zoning and for visitor management plans designed for either regions or natural areas that are slated to become eco-destinations.
- Emphasize use of environmental and social studies, as well as long-term monitoring programmes, to assess and minimize impacts.
- Strive to maximize economic benefits for the host country, local businesses and communities, particularly for the people living in, and adjacent to, natural and protected areas.
- Seek to ensure that tourism development does not exceed the social and environmental limits of acceptable change<sup>3</sup> as determined by researchers in cooperation with local residents.
- Rely on the infrastructure that has been developed in harmony with the environment, minimizing the use of fossil fuels, conserving local plants and wildlife, and blending with the natural and cultural environment. (Epler Wood, 2002)

<sup>3</sup> Limits of Acceptable Change (Stankey *et al.*, 1985) is a process that requires deciding what kinds of conditions are acceptable in recreational settings, and then prescribing actions to protect or achieve those conditions. The objective of the LAC system is not to prevent change but rather to control it, and to decide what management actions are required to maintain or enhance the desired conditions.

Important questions regarding the relation between the development and the community are:

- What guarantees that the project will remain sustainable, and that unwanted social effects of the development of ecotourism on the community will not occur?
- How will tourism revenues be distributed? (Caalders and Cottrell, 2001)

With these environmental, social and community criteria and guidelines in mind, an overview of tourism patterns in the Guiana Shield is given in the following chapter.



CURRENT TOURISM ACTIVITIES

3.1 Tourism Patterns per country of the Guiana Shield region

3.1.1 BRAZIL

The part of Brazil that is considered to be part of the Guiana Shield are the states of Amapá and Roraima, and the state of Pará (north of the Amazon River) and Amazonas (north of the Amazon, Solimões, and Japurá Rivers).

Tourism industry

It is difficult to find visitor numbers for those Brazilian states belonging to the Guiana Shield. Visitor numbers for the whole of Brazil are however increasing rapidly. Brazil received less than 2 million international visitors annually up to 1994, but by 1998 this figure reached 5 million people annually and is still increasing. To address the environmental threat of rapid tourism growth, the Brazilian government established the Inter-ministerial Ecotourism Task Force in the early 1990s. Guidelines were formulated and the Ministry of the Environment took the lead in implementing these ecotourism policy guidelines. Nine Amazon states were used to test the guidelines. The remoteness and vast size of the Amazon have hampered efforts to protect the biodiversity. Protected areas tend to be scattered in hard to reach locations, understaffed and without management plans or infrastructure to allow visitation. At present the average stay of a tourist in the Brazilian Amazon is just 3.5 days because of the reasons mentioned above (Epler Wood, 2002).

Government policies

In 2000, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) loaned US\$ 13.8 million to the Brazilian government to establish a framework for implementing necessary investments in the nine Brazilian Amazonian states. This was part of a project to responsibly prepare them to manage selected ecotourism areas. This project, ProEcotur, can be seen as a pre-investment for a major effort to develop the country's Amazon region for ecotourism. In the first stage of ProEcotur it is intended to provide essential pre-requisites for the successful implementation of a second stage. These pre-requisites address the need for careful planning of selected ecotourism areas, assessment of market demand, the establishment of a legal framework, basic training, technical assistance and key investments at the local level. In the second stage the public infrastructure and different projects will be developed. In each state a priority area for ecotourism development has been chosen, based on accessibility and available infrastructure (MMA/SCA, 2002).

*Itineraries in the States of Amazonas, Roraima, Pará and Amapá*

Most visitors to the Brazilian Amazon fly into Manaus, from where they make a jungle trip by boat on the Amazon river, Rio Negro or one of the tributaries with a local operator. In the vicinity of Manaus there are a number of eco-lodges, which offer accommodation, food and activities. The activities are guided boat tours, visits to Amerindian villages and viewing of wildlife, mostly from observation towers or canopy walks. In 1999, there were 14 lodges in the state of Amazonas, with a total of over five hundred rooms. Just over one third of the lodges are concentrated in the lower Rio Negro, within an 80 km radius of the state capital Manaus. Regional boats with cabins also operate on regular departures for one or two week trips up the Rio Negro. One of the scheduled activities both for boats and lodges is a visit to a local community (Prince Nelson, 2000).

An example of one such trip is in the Acajatuba Lake region along the Southern Rio Negro. In this region, there are four jungle lodges and activities; tourists who stay at the lodges mostly visit a protected area within the Rio Negro State Park and the community of Nossa Senhora de Perpetuo Socorro. The community receives two tourists groups a day, varying in size from 2 to 30 people. Visits are not scheduled with the residents. Economic benefits of the visits for the community generate from the sale of handicrafts, food and beverages.

Addressing the question of whether this type of tourism should be considered to be ecotourism, it is obvious that it has a lot of necessary aspects, but it does not necessarily fulfil any sustainability criteria. Many of the jungle lodges are deficient



Near Manaus tourists can witness the *meeting of the waters* where the Rio Negro (right on the picture) and Rio Solimões join to become the Amazon River. Photo: Dave Zwaan

in their contributions towards conservation, interpretation or natural and cultural aspects and community participation.

Specific types of tourists that have a mission to fulfil during their stay, might venture further than Manaus and its surroundings. Groups of botanists, researchers of certain biotopes such as the *tepuis* (table mountains), jungle expeditions and game fishers organize their own trips. The only route available by road is the road from Manaus to Boa Vista. To get to the specific areas of interest, e.g. the *Parque Nacional do Pico da Neblina* in Northern Amazonas, groups have to find guides locally who are willing to transport them by boat or small aircraft to where they want to go. There is no further infrastructure, accommodation developments or organized services involved.

The State of Roraima is visited in the North as a spin-off from people climbing Mount Roraima. Mount Roraima lies exactly on the border with Venezuela and Guyana. The main route to Mount Roraima is through the Gran Sabana in Venezuela. A rough estimate of people who climb Mount Roraima is 80 persons a day in the high season. Climbing Mount Roraima can only be done with a local guide.

In the states of Amapá and Pará there are extractive reserves that might have tourism potential, such as the Rio Cajari extractive reserve in Amapá. Belém, south of Amapá, is a city that is frequently visited by international tourists, and some tourists continue their trip by plane or by boat to Macapá and Santarém. There are no visitor numbers available, but the numbers are likely to be very small.

3.1.2 COLOMBIA

The Guiana Shield region of Colombia is roughly bounded by the Japurá-Caquetá River to the south-west, the Sierra de Chiribiquete to the west and the Orinoco and Guaviare Rivers to the north-west and north.



Total numbers of arrivals and receipts

Colombia	1998	1999
Tourist arrivals (overnight visitors)	674,000	546,000
Arrivals by leisure, recreation & holidays		135,000
No of bed places in hotels and similar establishments	101,357	103,060
International tourism receipts (US\$ Million)	929	928

Arrivals per source region

Colombia	1999
Arrivals from North America	183,935
Arrivals from South America	204,432
Arrivals from Northern Europe	14,349

(WTO, 2002b)

The statistics above apply to the entire country. Most travellers to Colombia visit the capital Bogotá and the coastal areas. Cartagena is an important tourism hub. There are no statistics available for visitor numbers to the interior, the Amazonas and Llanos Orientales areas, which are the focus of this study. If there had been official numbers, it would be clear that numbers of visitors who travel to the interior are very small. Travelling in the interior is extremely risky. The US State

Department warns that ‘there is a greater risk of being kidnapped in Colombia than in any other country in the world’. More than 3,000 people are abducted every year – these are just the official figures. Overland travel between urban areas, no matter what the mode of transportation, is incredibly dangerous. (Lonely Planet website, 2002)



Entry of the Caquetá River, Colombia. Photo: Wouter Veening

The town of Leticia, south of the Guiana Shield, close to the borders with Brazil and Peru, does have some tourism activities. There are about a dozen tourist accommodations within the town, as well as a number of restaurants. Flights from Bogotá to Leticia are fairly expensive, and overland travel is not considered safe because of guerrilla activities. Most people who visit Leticia, therefore, come by boat from Manaus in Brazil or Iquitos in Peru. Adventurous jungle tours of the Amazonian interior can be arranged in Leticia. There are numerous well-equipped guides and tours of up to 10 days can be easily arranged. A national park which can be visited from Leticia is National Park Amacayacu, which has a visitor centre as well as accommodation for overnight visitors. It is 75 km upstream from Leticia.

The National Park system in Colombia is well-organized, and there are a number of parks and reserves that can be found within the Guiana Shield area: the National Park of La Serranía de Chiribiquete, and the National Reserves of Nukak and Puinawai. The National Park of Cahuinari lies directly at the south border of the Colombian part of the Guiana Shield.

3.1.3 FRENCH GUIANA

French Guiana is totally considered to be part of the Guiana Shield.



Tourism industry

Total numbers of arrivals and receipts

French Guiana	1998	1999
Tourist arrivals (overnight visitors)	68,000	70,000
International tourism receipts (US\$ Million)	50	51

(WTO, 2002b. Note: In this study it is not investigated whether increase in tourism receipts results from inflation)

French Guiana is an overseas department of France (*departement outre mer*), and its tourism development is very much focused on visitors from France. The *Comité du Tourisme de Guyane* (CTG), the national tourism board, lists fifteen French tour operators that offer roundtrips in French Guiana. The CTG lists seven incoming tour operators based in Cayenne, Kourou and St. Laurent. A distinction is made between inland lodges, several of which are *Gites Panda* certified (see box p. 29), which is a French quality and environmental certification system, and hotels in the larger towns. Due to the strong French connection, there are a number of hotels which belong to French or international hotel chains such as Novotel, Mercure, and Best Western. Novotel and Mercure belong to the Accor group, a hotel group with high environmental standards.

French Guiana is expensive, with costs comparable to those in metropolitan France. Travellers will spend close to US\$ 100 per day for accommodation and food. Also transportation, especially to the interior, is very expensive.

Travelling to and in French Guiana

French Guiana has decent air links with Europe, especially with France. Within South America, there are flights to Brazil, Ecuador, Suriname and Venezuela. Flights to the US are mostly to Miami via Guadeloupe and Martinique. It is possible to cross-over to Suriname from St. Laurent du Maroni by taking the passenger ferry to Albina. Air Guyane has scheduled flights to St. Georges, Saül and Maripasoula from Cayenne. There is a daily bus service from Cayenne to St. Laurent du Maroni via Kourou, Sinnamary and Iracoubo. *Taxis collectifs* (minibuses), which are faster, much more comfortable and only slightly more expensive, run along the same route. Cars and motorcycles can be rented in Cayenne, Kourou and St. Laurent. River transport into the interior is possible, but it requires patience and good timing.

Itineraries

Although it is possible to enter French Guiana from Suriname by ferry over the Maroni River (known in Suriname as the Marowijne River), most trips in French Guiana start in Cayenne, the capital. Cayenne offers lodging, and there are a number of interesting neighbourhoods and attractions such as museums and old forts.

The town of Kourou, 65 km west of Cayenne, is visited by all types of tourists. Kourou is a small settlement, but hosts the European Space Program and its Satellite Launching pad. The space program contributes to about 15% of the country's economic activity, employs about 1,000 people, and eight or nine launches are conducted every year.

The former prison colony of Devil's Island (known for the famous prisoner Papillon) was located on the Îles du Salut (Salvation Islands), which are 15 km north of Kourou. Today, the atmospheric ruins are the islands' main attraction, but their abundant wildlife – including macaws, agoutis and sea turtles – provide another good reason to visit. The Îles du Salut are accessible by boat from Kourou.

St. Laurent du Maroni is on the east bank of the Maroni River, which forms the border with Suriname. It was once a reception camp for newly arrived convicts and the town retains some picturesque colonial buildings. One can arrange boat trips up the river to visit the area's Maroon and Amerindian settlements.

Kaw is one of French Guiana's most accessible wildlife areas, some 65 km south-east of Cayenne. Kaw is reached by paved and dirt highways, then by launch across the Kaw River, or by catching a launch downstream from Régina. Basic lodging is available.



Along the Maroni River it is possible to visit Maroon villages. Photo: Dave Zwaan

Another area which is visited by tourists who are looking for natural attractions, or by scientific researchers is Saül. Saül is a village in central French Guiana, which can be reached by airplane from Cayenne. Several individuals have developed moderately successful local tourist businesses and the village recently constructed a rustic hotel. For the most part, visitors sleep in hammocks, and meals are available in a few small restaurants. Tourists, mostly from France, visit the region to see undisturbed rainforest and hike the nearly 100 km of trails around the village.

#### *Ecotourism in French Guiana*

The forests of central French Guiana have potential for ecotourism. The presence of undisturbed rainforest with high species richness of relatively well-known plants and animals; a basic infrastructure already in place for the accommodation of tourists; a relatively healthy environment; friendly inhabitants living in a politically stable department of France; and reliable and safe means of transportation make central French Guiana an attractive place to visit, study, and learn about tropical environments.

If proper regulations are promulgated, i.e., the control of farming, ranching, hunting, and human population, the forests of central French Guiana could yield a much higher income for local, national, and international economies as a result of ecotourism than if they are cut and converted to other uses. At the same time,

ecosystem services provided by undisturbed forests, such as the protection of French Guiana's three principal watersheds, will continue unabated (Mori *et. al.*, 1999).

French Guiana also has marine turtle nesting grounds. Bordering the beaches of Galibi on Suriname, where tourism activities have already been developed, are the beaches of Awala-Yalimapo in the Amana Nature Reserve. On these beaches great numbers of leatherbacks come to lay their eggs each year (Girondot and Fretey, 1996). This beach is easily accessible by car from the major cities in French Guiana, making for a large potential to develop marine turtle ecotourism, and to increase the number of people visiting the beach. Traditional social systems and values are still maintained in the small Amerindian villages of Awa:la and Ya:lima:po (Amerindian writing of the names). Recently, several conservation projects dealing with sea turtles in French Guiana have expressed interest in developing ecotourism on different beaches, from Montjoly beach in Cayenne to Awala-Yalimapo beach. (Godfrey and Drif, 2001)

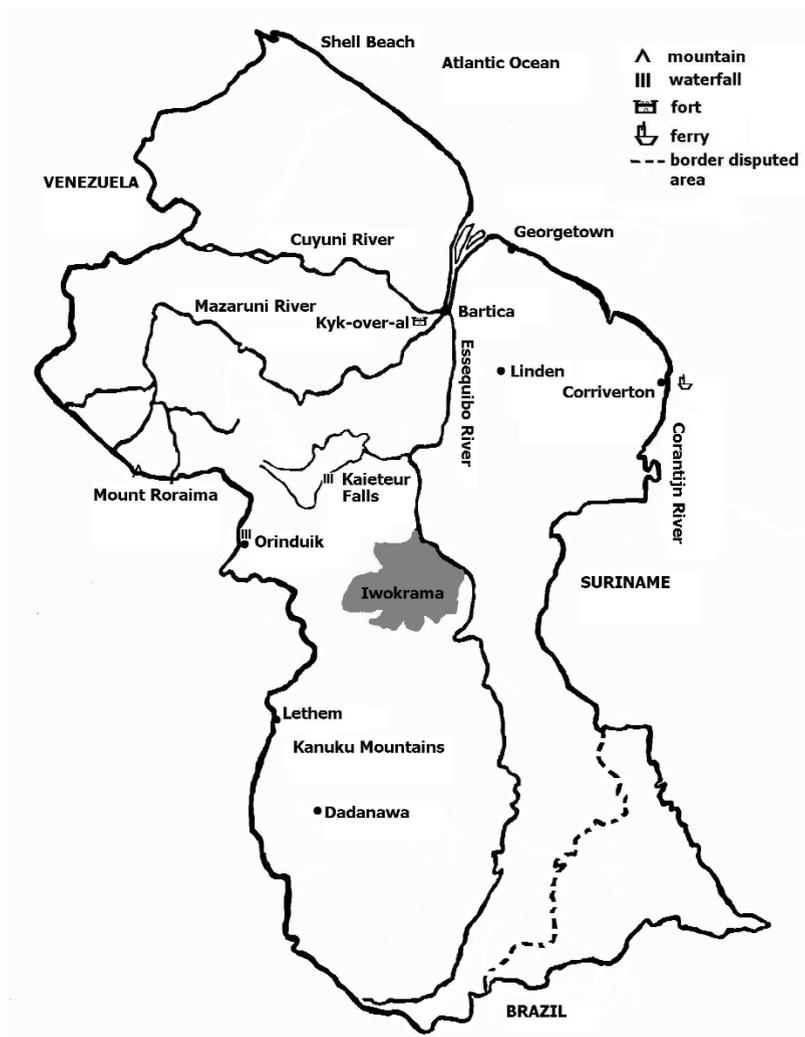
#### *Gites Panda Tropiques*

In 1993 the WWF and the Organisation of *Gites de France* (an association of lodges) created the label *Gites Panda*, which was awarded to lodgings that implemented certain regulations concerning respect for the environment. In 2000 this label was exported to French Guiana, under the name of *Gites Panda Tropiques*. The *Gites Panda Tropiques* can serve as a means to develop tourism in French Guiana according to the criteria of ecotourism. In 2000, three lodges had already received the label; the lodge owners implemented a code of operation regarding amongst others, waste management, a no hunting policy and environmental interpretation activities.

(Source: [www.wwf.fr/pdf/panda81f.pdf](http://www.wwf.fr/pdf/panda81f.pdf))

3.1.4 GUYANA

The entire country of Guyana is considered to be part of the Guiana Shield.



*Tourism industry*

Although the potential for tourism is often said to be high, currently tourism is still low in Guyana. Most travel and tourist sources mention the existence of ten hotels and apartment complexes in Georgetown, about fourteen resorts, lodges and ranches in the interior, and three national incoming tour operators. In 1997, Guyana offered approximately 700 rooms, of which about 350 met the standards of international travellers (Organization of American States, 1997).

There is a Tourism & Hospitality Association of Guyana (THAG), and the Guyanese Government adopted a National Plan for Ecotourism Development in

1999, which is part of the National Development Strategy of Guyana. It focuses on the development of a National Park system. Other attractive tourism themes are considered to be the Guyanese culture with its history as an English colony, slave trade and Amerindian communities, the ranch culture in the Rupununi, and its very rich biodiversity.

**Total number of arrivals and receipts**

Guyana	1997	1998	1999
Tourist arrivals (overnight visitors)	76,000	68,000	75,000
International tourism receipts (US\$ Million)	52	60	Not available

**Arrivals per source region**

Guyana	1998
Arrivals from North America	42,909
Arrivals from South America	7,795
Arrivals from Northern Europe	4,337

(WTO, 2002b)

*Tourism Planning*

Guyana has gone through a series of consultancies to develop a policy framework for the sector, principal amongst them the *Developing Tourism for Guyana: Policy and Strategy Plan* (Kelly, 1989). This study by the European Union made broad recommendations on consultations for development of the tourism sector, fiscal incentives, infrastructure development and other areas deemed critical for positive development. These recommendations were accepted by the Guyanese Government, but many have not yet been fully translated into practice.

In 1998, a project commissioned by the Government of Guyana, and executed by consultants from the University of Guyana, resulted in the drafting of a Tourism Policy document. The document was compiled with strong input from both the Government and the Private Sector involved in tourism. It has been discussed at the Cabinet level, but still awaits formal approval and adoption, as well as development into a plan for implementation.

More recently, the Government of Guyana took the initiative of developing a ten year National Development Strategy (NDS), through a broad based and consultative approach. The NDS endorsed 11 broad policy areas which were defined in the study from 1998 in its strategy recommendations. The NDS appears to be the course that is now being followed in Guyana.

Recommendations and the current state of activities in the NDS include the establishment of a National Tourism Board, and the establishment of a separate ministry for Tourism and Environment. In 2001, the Guyanese President declared that a Ministry of Tourism and Industry will be created, but no further details

have been forthcoming. Revision of the existing Incentive Package for Investors in the Tourism Sector was recommended. In order to access the incentive package, a number of criteria must be met, amongst them an Environmental Permit after completion of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Referring to local and community involvement, according to the Environmental Protection Act 1996, all tourism projects in the hinterland need to carry out environmental and social impact assessments, involving discussions with stakeholders including Amerindian communities. In reality however, many projects go ahead without complying with the requirements of the EIA.

Activities, establishing a Protected Area System, has been stalled several times due to conflicts with Indigenous land rights. The areas recommended for protection in the NDS, according to broad categories that warrant protection, are Shell Beach, Mount Roraima, Orinduik, Kanuku Mountains and an area in Southern Guyana. The NDS strategy mentions several recommendations towards building and developing a network of ecotourism facilities. Although several private enterprises have excellent ecotourism facilities, no extra activities resulting from the NDS seem to have taken place. (Nokta, 2001)

#### *Travelling to and within Guyana*

Most travellers arrive from North America or the Caribbean, and less frequently from Venezuela (via Trinidad) and Suriname. There are no direct flights from Europe. Overland crossings can be made to/from Brazil at the Lethem-Bomfin crossing point. The border with Venezuela is closed. A passenger ferry crosses the Corantijn River at Corriverton (Springlands) to the Surinamese town of Nieuw Nickerie.

Guyana Airways has scheduled flights between Georgetown and Lethem plus a few other interior destinations. Minibuses and collective taxis link Georgetown and most towns on the coastal belt. Guyana's road network, apart from a paved two-lane stretch from the capital to Linden, is poor. With almost 1,000 km of navigable river, travelling by boat is a good and frequently used alternative.

#### *Itineraries*

Not many international tour operators travel to Guyana and there is no standard travel route through the country. There are, however, a number of main attractions, to which the tour operators offer a number of trips, varying in length and in theme. Most travellers start in Georgetown.

West of Georgetown, along the coast, one finds Shell Beach, a long stretch of beaches that are important marine turtle nesting grounds. Visitors stay in the Amerindian village of Santa Rosa on the coast and then travel onwards to Shell Beach, which lies close to the border with Venezuela. Accommodation is in huts of palm thatched-roofs under which tents are hanged.

South of Georgetown is the town of Bartica, located at the confluence of the Essequibo and Mazaruni Rivers. Bartica is accessible only by boat or ferry from Parika. It is the hub for the mining communities in the North West of Guyana. From here miners and tourists can trek further into the interior. The Essequibo River is a tourist attraction in itself. Once the seat of the Dutch Government of the colony of Essequibo, the fort Kijk-over-al was built in 1616. All that remains now are the ruins of this former stronghold, which formerly guarded the junction of the Mazaruni and Cuyuni Rivers.

Further inland is an attraction that is considered a trademark of Guyana: Kaieteur Falls, one of the highest single-drop waterfalls in the world. The Potaro River runs from the Kaieteur Falls. Located near the Brazilian border are the Orinduik Falls, where the Ireng River drops over steps and terraces.

There are nine Amerindian Nations throughout Guyana's hinterland. The Amerindian villages vary widely in their setting and style of architecture as each Nation has its own traditions, customs and ways of life. To a large extent, however, Amerindian culture and the traditional methods of hunting, fishing and farming have been preserved intact. Some of the villages are visited by tourists.

In the South West of the country are the North and South Rupununi Savannahs. The Rupununi is an extensive area of rolling grasslands with sparse trees, termite mounds and wooded hills. The region is scattered with Amerindian villages and a few large cattle ranches which date from the nineteenth century. These cattle ranches – with Dadanawa Ranch, as the largest, and Karanambu Ranch, famous for its giant otter conservation project – cater to tourists. They offer lodging and excursions.

#### *Characteristics of tourism*

Most of the attractions found in Guyana consist of natural or indigenous attractions. Conservation of these attractions is essential for the development of tourism, and is often already integrated in current tourism activities. Examples of this integration can be found at the ranches in the Rupununi. The cultural lifestyle of ranching is the main attraction tourists come to experience. The ranches began offering lodging to tourists as a means for additional income – an income which ensures continued survival. Tourist expenditures make sure that the ranches can continue to stay in operation, and their interest for the *vacqueros* life stimulates the ranchers to maintain this lifestyle.

The natural values of the Rupununi are the beauty of the savannah and the abundant wildlife. Karanambu ranch combines cattle ranching with lodging and with otter conservation. The latter is a great attraction for tourists, whose expenditures finance the project.

A similar situation can be found at Shell Beach, where the Marine Turtle Conservation project is combined with tourist activities from the tour operator Shell Beach Adventures. The turtle nesting grounds are one of the main attractions Guyana has to offer, and tourists pay well to visit these grounds. The tour operator works together with local Amerindians, who guide tourists and provide lodging. Tourist interest thus generates means for further conservation and income for the local people.

WWF - Guianas is supporting a project to promote sustainable tourism in the Kaieteur National Park area, by supporting the Chenapau Amerindian community. They are currently constructing and furnishing a guesthouse, providing river transportation and building tourism capacity within the Chenapau village (WWF Guianas, 2002). Another example of ecotourism in Guyana has been described in Chapter 4: The case of the Iwokrama Forest.

### 3.1.5 SURINAME

The entire country of Suriname is considered to be part of the Guiana Shield.



### Tourism industry

Tourism to Suriname is steadily growing. The international arrivals can be divided into three categories: business, family visits and tourists.

#### Total of arrivals and receipts

Suriname	1998	1999
Tourist arrivals (overnight visitors)	54,000	63,000
Arrivals by leisure, recreation & holidays	34,000	No statistics available
International tourism receipts (US\$ Million)	44	53

Source: WTO, 2002b

More than three quarters of the international arrivals are Dutch citizens, virtually all of them with historic or family ties to Suriname (but the numbers of general tourists and trainees/students from the Netherlands are increasing dramatically). Their visits are characterized by long stays with low expenditures. True tourists who chose Suriname as their holiday destinations among other destinations, probably number no more than 3,000 annually (Hitchcock University, 2000).

In 1994, 70 hotels and pensions, mainly in Paramaribo and Nieuw Nickerie, were counted. The number of rooms in 1997 was 615. In 2000 the Government aimed at an annual 10% growth in tourist arrivals (with holidaying as a purpose) and a total number of international arrivals of 60,000 (including travel for business, holidays and family visits) as a starting point (Lobles, 2002).

In 2001, according to the Suriname Tourism Foundation, there were 16 incoming tour operators. The number of tour operators and tourist accommodation is growing, but the success of these developments depends on the actual arrival of tourists. The Government of Suriname does not have an active tourism policy. The Suriname Tourism Foundation does not actively represent the tour operators, or market Suriname actively as a tourism destination either. In the spring of 2002, the European Union began a tender for a programme aiming at developing sustainable tourism in Suriname.

### Itineraries

Most people travelling in Suriname make roundtrips, starting and ending in Paramaribo, the capital. There is a set of attractions and in-country destinations that appear in most roundtrips. These attractions are mostly small in scale. Accommodation that is located inland can sometimes host a maximum of 20, but more often around ten people. Accommodation is mostly in cabins with beds or hammocks.

Visited areas are the Marowijne area (the coastal area on the border with French Guiana), the area of the Upper Suriname River and further inland areas along the Tapanahony River. When the Marowijne area is part of the itinerary, tourists sometimes cross to St. Laurent du Maroni in French Guiana for a day trip. The main attraction in the Marowijne area is Galibi, a village with sandy beaches, famous for being a nesting ground for marine turtles. Galibi is accessible overland, but the road from Paramaribo goes only as far as the town of Albina, south of Galibi, and the last stretch to Galibi has to be completed by boat (1.5 hrs). The Government has been planning to extend the road to Galibi, but the Galibi community is opposed to this development. Making Galibi more accessible by road would mean that control over visitor numbers would decrease, potentially threatening the typical Carib character of the area. The Galibi community is relatively well organized, where tourist facilities are owned by members of the community.

In the area of the Upper Suriname River people visit the Creole towns of Jaw Jaw, Bigi Ston, Gunsí, Danpaati, Kumalu and Awaradam. These towns can be reached by bus and boat (korjaal). Activities are boat trips, and hikes to experience the rainforest, visits to the Creole communities to encounter the Creole culture (for example, through traditional song and dance).

An area that is considered the heartland of Suriname is that along the Tapanahony River. When tourists travel this far inland they fly from Paramaribo to Palumeu. The Indian village of Palumeu lies in the territory of the Trio and Wayana Indians. Trips from Palumeu go to the Kasi Kasima Mountains. Tourists trek through the rainforest, experience the Amazon and stay in camps with hammocks.

Other attractions are the old plantations along the Marowijne River, the Brownsberg National Park bordering the Brokopondo reservoir which contains Tonka Island, the Raleigh Falls/Voltzberg National Park and the towns of Nieuw Nickerie, and Wageningen along the coast towards Guyana. Daytrips can be made from Paramaribo to Brownsberg, and to Jodensavanne – ruins of the first Jewish synagogue of the Western Hemisphere. The demand for bicycle trips in and around Paramaribo is increasing and cycling is considered a good way to see some of the main attractions of the country.

#### *Tourism Planning*

In 1997, the Suriname Government identified tourism as a priority development sector of the economy. A National Tourism Policy was established, with the main objective being the promotion of the development of sustainable tourism for the overall benefit of the community. The National Tourism Policy was not, however, adopted by all stakeholders, and many recommendations have not been carried out. In 2002, preparations were being made for a follow-up of this tourism development plan. The emphasis now needs to be placed on the implementation of the

principal recommendations of the Tourism Development Plan, with a focus on the sustainability of the developments.

Constraints that impede tourism development include the lack of tourism legislation, poor access to many locations and tourist facilitation; the weak institutional and organisational structure of the private sector; limited product range and quality; low local involvement in tourism; lack of training for and awareness with people working in the industry and ineffective marketing. An important impulse for the further development of nature-based tourism was, however, the establishment of the Central Suriname Nature Reserve in 1998. This reserve protects more than four million acres of pristine Amazonian rainforest on the Guiana Shield. Suriname is now engaged in developing such specialty nature-based tourism. Parties involved are the Ministry of Transportation, Communication and Tourism, the Suriname Tourism Foundation, Conservation International, and STINASU (the Foundation for Nature Conservation in Suriname).



Tonka Island, eco-tourism resort in the Brokopondo Reservoir. Photo: Amy MacKinven

#### *Travelling to and within Suriname*

Travellers are from The Netherlands, North America, the Caribbean, Guyana, French Guiana and Brazil (Belém). There are direct flights from Europe and North America. Overland crossings (by ferry) can be made to/from Guyana at the Corantijn River at Nieuw Nickerie to Corriverton (Springlands). Crossing the border to French Guiana, one can cross the Marowijne River from Albina to St. Laurent du Maroni.

(Mini)buses and taxis link Paramaribo and most towns on the coastal belt. The south and centre of the country has poor or no road infrastructure. Travel can be done by boat and/or aircraft. Several small companies fly to the interior.

#### *Characteristics of tourism development*

Almost all tourist facilities, except for a number of hotels in Paramaribo, are small scale and locally-owned. Though there is no clear planning of development, the characteristics mentioned above indicate that tourism in Suriname lends itself well to sustainable development. There are no large foreign tourism companies that can exploit particular destinations; developments are small-scale and local communities are often involved. The indigenous culture of these communities, as well as the flora and fauna of the rainforests are the main attractions for tourists.

For example, the flora and fauna tourism activities are organized by tour operators, while STINASU facilitates buildings, infrastructure, staff, etc. in all the Nature Reserves/Parks. They are supported by the Government and World Wildlife Fund-Guianas (WWF-Guianas). STINASU has developed tourism activities to three destinations: Galibi, Brownsberg, and the Raleigh Falls. STINASU manages these three protected areas and has also committed itself to community-based development. They work together with the indigenous Carib villages bordering the Galibi Nature Reserve, the Saramaccan Maroon community at the foot of the Brownsberg Nature Park and the Kwinti Maroons on the Coppename River close to the Raleigh Falls/ Voltzberg Park in the Central Suriname Nature Reserve. In Galibi, STINASU operates the Warana Lodge. In the case of Galibi, an Amerindian local managed foundation, 'STIDUNAL', provides all transports by boat with tourists to the reserve. The majority of tourists will only go to the village Galibi (Langamankondre/ Christiaankondre). At night you can make a trip to the nesting beaches and most of the time the Indians will bring you to Amana Nature Reserve, French Guiana.

STINASU operates also lodges in Brownsberg and Raleigh Falls/Voltzberg. New tourism activities are planned in Kaburi Creek, where giant otters live. This region will receive protected status in the near future.

The numbers of visitors to the three protected areas are as follows: Galibi Nature Reserve received more than 2,000 visitors in 2001; Raleigh falls/Voltzberg Park received just over 2,700 visitors in 2001, of which almost 1,500 visitors visited the research camp within the reserve. The Brownsberg Park was visited by almost 18,000 visitors, of which almost 10,000 guests stayed overnight. Approximately 70% of the visitors are Surinamese and the number of visitors increased by 40% compared with the previous year.

STINASU reaches potential clients through flyers in hotel lobbies in Paramaribo, through their website [www.stinasu.com](http://www.stinasu.com) and through mentions in travel books. In

Paramaribo, STINASU owns a Tourism Information Centre. STINASU is also represented at international tourism fairs, and focuses on the market for Dutch, German and American tourists. They also recruit eco-volunteers who help with the conservation of marine turtles in Galibi and wildlife monitoring in Brownsberg.



Hatchling leatherback turtles on the move at Galibi beach. Photo: Maartje Hilterman

3.1.6 VENEZUELA



The parts of Venezuela that are considered within the Guiana Shield are the States of Bolívar, Delta Amacuro and Amazonas. The northern border is formed by the Orinoco River, from its delta to the town of Puerto Ayacucho near the border with Colombia.

**Total number of arrival and receipts**

Venezuela	1997	1998	1999
Tourist arrivals (overnight visitors)	814,000	685,000	587,000
International tourism receipts (US\$ Million)	1,086	961	656

(WTO, 2002b)

Most itineraries in Venezuela take tourists to Caracas, the coastal areas including the Orinoco delta, Merida, from where tourists can venture into the Andes, and to Ciudad Bolívar. Isla de Margarita is popular with sun and beach tourists.

Flights to Caracas are readily available from the USA and Europe. Flying into the country from other South or Central American destinations can be problematic and/or very costly. Entry by sea is possible via the USA, where travellers can take a cargo ship from one of several ports on the Gulf of Mexico. Alternatively, ferries run from the Lesser Antilles. By land, there are road connections from Colombia and Brazil, but not from Guyana. The El Amparo de Apure-Arauca border crossing or the Puerto Páez-Puerto Carreño crossing into Colombia is considered dangerous because of Colombian guerrilla attacks on Venezuelan army posts (Lonely Planet website, 2002).

*The State of Bolívar*

*Tourism industry*

An indication of the size of the tourism industry is the number of tour operators and amount of accommodation available. According to the *División de Planificación y Desarrollo Turístico* of Bolívar, there were 235 accommodation establishments in Bolívar, with 5,251 rooms and 8,566 beds in the year 2000. In the same year, there were 95 travel agencies in Bolívar. These numbers indicate that there is a well-developed tourism industry in the State of Bolívar.

The following statistics are available on the number of visiting tourists:

		Canaima	Gran Sabana	Cuidad Bolívar	Total for Bolívar
2000	National	6,063	21,038	-	-
	International	25,918	13,516	-	175,321
	Total	31,981	34,551	-	-
2001	National	8,416	36,551	7,894	-
	International	21,641	11,990	110	214,461
	Total	30,057	48,541	8,004	-

(Dirección de Turismo del Estado Bolívar, 2002; – indicates that the figures are not available)

Most visitors to Ciudad Bolívar are en route to Canaima, a town located on the Río Carrao, known for its waterfalls. Nearby, on a tributary, is Salto Angel (Angel Falls), the world's highest waterfall, with an uninterrupted drop of 807 m. The World Heritage Canaima is an important tourist attraction, with a visit to the Angel Falls as the highlight. Most organized tours from international tour operators spend a couple of days in Ciudad Bolívar, from which tourists can make a facultative trip to Canaima and the Angel Falls. They are flown into Canaima with a chartered plane; there are no scheduled flights.

Tourists, who travel with national incoming tour operators, as well as independent travellers, will venture further and spend more days in the region. Many of these trips continue south-east to the landscape of the Gran Sabana, with its *tepuis*. Another highlight in the Gran Sabana region is Salto Apongua, but it is rather difficult to reach for tourists.

On the border with Brazil lies the town of Santa Elena de Uairén. This town is also visited by tourists who are en route to Mount Roraima on the border with the State of Roraima, Brazil. Straddling the borders of Venezuela, Guyana and Brazil is a 280 km<sup>2</sup> plateau that has become increasingly popular with travellers interested in trekking and naturalists. The roundtrip hike takes five days, and, by custom, tourists are required to hire a local guide for the last two days. (Lonely Planet website, 2002)

#### *Transport in Bolívar*

The airport of Puerto Ordaz (Ciudad Bolívar) operates more than 8 daily flights to Caracas, and there are buses to all big towns and cities. Canaima can only be reached by air with a chartered airplane; there is no land link. Daily flights operate to and from Caracas, Porlamar and Puerto Ordaz, and less frequent flights to Santa Elena de Uairén and Ciudad Bolívar.

The Angel Falls can only be accessed by boat (during the rainy season between April and November) or airplane. Planes fly from Canaima, pass over and circle the falls. Boat trips take 1-3 days, and go from Ucaima to the base of the falls. The airport of Santa Elena de Uairén has connections to Puerto Ordaz, as does the bus terminal, which also runs daily to places like Puerto Ordaz, Ciudad Guayana, and over the border to Boa Vista. A good road network facilitates easy visits to nearby settlements, and jeeps or cars can be hired to explore the Gran Sabana independently.

#### *The State of Amazonas*

##### *Tourism industry*

The internal civil war in Colombia has affected the border areas between Colombia and Venezuela. As a result, tourism to Amazonas has substantially declined.

According to a Venezuelan online tourism directory ([www.think-venezuela.net](http://www.think-venezuela.net)), there are 36 registered accommodations (hotels, lodges, camps, etc.) in Amazonas. These statistics are, however, subject to change.

##### *Itineraries*

Tourists who visit the Amazonas region visit the town of Puerto Ayacucho. Located about 70 km south of the convergence of the Orinoco and the Meta rivers

the town has the only overland link with Amazonas and is the commercial hub of the region. Puerto Ayacucho has a museum, a cathedral and local markets selling Indian handicrafts of every description. Within walking distance are two popular hills, Cerro Perico and El Mirador, both of which have panoramic views of the rapids of the Orinoco (Rapids of Atures). Parque Tobogán de la Selva is also in the area – a natural waterslide and popular weekend destination among locals. Also nearby, are the beautiful waters of Pozo Azul and the pre-Columbian petroglyphs of Cerro Pintado. Puerto Ayacucho is the only place to organize tours into Amazonas. Accommodation is easy to find and there is a good selection of tour operators offering a wide range of trips to a number of locations.



When visiting the Orinoco Delta, one can encounter a *palafito*, a structure built on poles over the river, which is used by the Warao Indians. Photo: Peter and Jackie Main

Tours in Amazonas also operate from San Fernando de Atabapo and San Carlos de Río Negro, both of which can be reached by air from Puerto Ayacucho. In the north-east, San Juan de Manapíare has accommodation and offers tours to the surrounding region. Visiting the upper Orinoco is only possible with special permits as it is part of the protected Yanomami homelands.

The four national parks of Amazonas (Yapacana, Duida-Marahuaca, Parima-Tapirapécó and Serranía La Neblina) together protect 6 million hectares of the region. All have, however, restricted access and can only be entered by those undertaking scientific research.

##### *Transport in Amazonas*

Puerto Ayacucho can be reached overland by bus or by air from Caracas, Ciudad Bolívar and San Fernando de Apure. Light aircraft also fly to smaller settlements

in the region. Brazil can be reached by river via the Rio Negro, and Colombia by boat to Casuarito, opposite of Puerto Ayacucho.

### *The State of Delta Amacuro*

#### *Tourism industry*

One can find accommodation in the capital town Tucupita and in the Orinoco Delta itself (lodges, camps, etc.).

#### *Itineraries*

The main attraction in the Delta Amacuro is the Orinoco Delta. Because the Orinoco River deposits sediment into the ocean, the Delta extends some forty meters per year over the coastline. In the Delta one can find more than sixty *caños* (waterways) and forty rivers. There is clear, black, white and brackish water. The swamps in the area include palm swamps. The Mariusa National Park is 2,650 km<sup>2</sup> in size. The Orinoco Delta offers abundant wildlife. Native inhabitants of the Delta are the Warao Indians (some 24,000), which is one of the largest tribes in Venezuela.

The (small) capital of this state, established in the 1920s, is Tucupita. Tours to the Orinoco Delta can be arranged in most tour agencies around Venezuela. The towns of Tucupita and Barrancas have several agencies specializing in these trips.

#### *Transport in Delta Amacuro*

Besides travelling by boat in the Delta, one can drive to Tucupita from Ciudad Guayana or from Caracas (more than 700 km), but there are not many roads in Delta Amacuro. Tucupita has an airstrip, one of the possibilities is to arrive from Isla de Margarita, probably Venezuela's most important island for tourism.

### *3.2 General overview of patterns*

#### *Tourists*

Tourism in the Guiana Shield region is mostly small scale. There are, however, a number of attractions and cities. Manaus, for example, is an important hub for tourism in the surrounding Amazonas region, where many tourists go for tropical rainforest experiences. Tourists mostly fly into the capital of the country they visit, and then make a roundtrip within the country.

It is important to distinguish between different categories of tourists that visit the various countries in the region and destinations within these countries. Generally speaking, tourism evokes ideas about international or foreign visitors. However, when one looks at the visitation numbers of tourist attractions, it appears that a large proportion of visitors actually consist of national inhabitants. These visitors travel to a destination – often, it is close-by and travel is cheap – for the weekend,

or for a special holiday. The annual rodeo in Lethem, Guyana, is an example of such an attraction; *vacquero's* (cowboys) and their families from all over the Rupununi region gather at this event for a couple of days.

With regards to international arrivals, there are different categories of travellers. Independent travellers can be distinguished from travellers who buy package deals from tour operators. Independent travellers book a flight in their home country and, once at their destination, create their own programme, taking daytrips, or booking trips of several days through incoming tour operators. The duration of their stay is generally between 2 and 4 weeks. A separate category of independent travellers are backpackers. Backpacker trips usually last for a month or more, and generally consist of making a circuit of several countries. According to a Colombian study of the European tourism market, this type of traveller visits on average 2.79 countries during one trip (Humboldt Institute, 1999).

Tourists visiting via international tour operators buy package deals in their home countries, and these deals include flights, accommodation and excursions. International tour operators from source countries often work through national tour operators at the destination level.

In the Guiana Shield countries there is also a market for specific tourism for botanists or research groups, who come to the area because of its rich biodiversity. These groups tend to organize specific itineraries with the aid of local operators.

#### *Accessibility*

One factor that determines the development of tourism within the countries of the Guiana Shield to a very large extent is the availability of infrastructure and roads.

In the three Guianas, tourists can travel along the coast by road. Along the coast, border crossings can be made by ferry or by merchants' barges across the Marowijne and the Corantijn Rivers.

Travelling inland, there are a number of roads that can be used, but the general rule is that when travel duration is longer than 3 hours, tourists will be brought to their destination by aircraft or river. Inland attractions are, therefore, mostly visited by airplane or boat.

In Guyana, tourists who visited the Rupununi Savannah in the south can continue by road to Brazil through the border crossing at Lethem. This road goes to the town of Boa Vista in Brazil – an important hub for transport in the Guiana Shield. From Boa Vista, roads lead south to Manaus in the Amazon, and North to Santa Elena de Uairén and the border crossing to Venezuela. Tourists to Venezuela, who visit la Grand Sabana in the south-east, often cross the border with Brazil to visit Mount Roraima.

The south-east part of Colombia is considered to be outside the Guiana Shield. Leticia, on the border with Brazil and Peru, is however a small tourist hub. Even so, visitors do not very often arrive there by plane from Bogotá, because of expensive airfares. Leticia is more cheaply reached by boat over the Amazon River, from either Manaus, in Brazil, or from Iquitos, in Peru.

In the northern Amazon states of Brazil, most tourists go to Manaus. From Manaus they go on boat tours into the jungle for a couple of days, either up the Amazon River, Rio Negro, and sometimes smaller river tributaries in the vicinity.

#### *Planning*

The enormous biodiversity and Amerindian culture found in the countries of the Guiana Shield form important ingredients for tourism development. In the Guianas, tourism to Venezuela and Brazil is indeed recognized as an industry with a large development potential. Governments throughout the Guiana Shield region have commissioned tourism development plans, and some have even started to carry out national ecotourism strategies. For example, Suriname started with formulating a Tourism Development Plan in 1997, funded by the European Union. In 2002, a new national tourism planning project was commissioned, focusing on implementing the principal recommendations of the first Tourism Development Plan. Another example is Guyana, which has gone through a series of consultancies to develop a policy framework for the tourism sector, principally amongst them is Kelly's 1989 report *Developing Tourism for Guyana: Policy and Strategy Plan*.

Although Guiana Shield Governments do recognize the potential and the need to plan sector development, most plans and strategies have not reached the implementation phase. Tourism is developing, often through achievements of private entrepreneurs, but, in most countries, a clear political framework for tourism lags behind.

#### *Trans-boundary tourism*

Despite the proliferation of backpackers and tourists travelling to more than one country within the Guiana Shield region, most tourist itineraries created by tour operators are confined to specific areas within one country. An explanation for this is that there is no coordination of tourism planning in the different countries and travelling between different countries is difficult because of the very limited road and transport network.

Looking at the itineraries of international tour operators that offer package holidays in the Guiana Shield, it appears that tour operators all offer similar roundtrips: tours that focus on several attractions close to the coast, some along the big rivers as the Marowijne and the Corantijn, and one or two in the hinterlands. During some trips to Suriname, daytrips into French Guiana are optional.

Some proposals have been made to combine the tourism assets of the different Guianas. An example of this was presented at the CTO Sustainable Tourism Conference in Georgetown, Guyana, in 2000, where the Suriname Tourism Foundation (Essed & Lefrancois, 2002) proposed 'The Guyanas Trail': a complete tourism package featuring tourism products from each of the Guianas. The products will be linked functionally, operationally and through marketing. In this way the Guianas will be able to compete with the large emerging global ecotourism market in Amazonas, Brazil. 'The Guyanas Trail' is still in the planning stage, and is a part of a tourism development programme, implemented by the Chamber of Commerce, Suriname (Karin Tojo Lachmising, pers. comm., 2004).

### *3.3 Ecotourism in the Guiana Shield region: success factors and bottlenecks*

The countries in the Guiana Shield region appear to have many of the ingredients necessary for the development of ecotourism. The most important factor is the richness of their ecosystems. These countries' natural attractions, the rainforest with its inhabitants, are of interest to many international travellers.

Tourism in the Guiana Shield area, however, is still just starting its development. In most areas there is not much of a tourism infrastructure, and the number of tourist companies per country is relatively small. Developments, so far, are not only mostly small in scale, but most developments and projects also seem to be in local hands. There are hardly any large international tourism chains operating, or looking to operate, in the countries of the Guiana Shield. The small scale and local ownership of tourist services means that important aspects for development, such as accessibility, and certain standards of facilities for international tourists, have yet to receive special attention.

Several regions in the countries of the Guiana Shield have some kind of protected area status. In a number of cases, infrastructure is being organized to receive tourists, who can experience the wilderness and the necessity to conserve the areas. An example is the Central Suriname Nature Reserve. This reserve, created by the Government of Suriname together with Conservation International, links three existing reserves (Raleighvallen, Tafelberg and Eilerts de Haan Gebergte) to form a protected area of more than 1.6 million hectares. A small fraction of the entire reserve will be accessible to tourists. The necessary tourism infrastructure is being planned and developed in cooperation with STINASU, the national Suriname nature conservation organization. STINASU has previously had experience with setting up ecotourism facilities in the Galibi area, amongst others. Another example is the Iwokrama forest in Guyana, described in more detail as one of the cases in the following chapter.

## ECOTOURISM CASE STUDIES

Illustrating the current situation of ecotourism in the Guiana Shield, this chapter looks into a number of case studies. All the case studies are examples of small scale projects, and most projects are linked to conservation research stations, which receive additional funding for conservation, on top of income from tourism. If, in the long-term, ecotourism projects are to be commercially successful, they need to succeed in competitive tourism markets.

This study found that most ecotourism projects are small-scale operations, but this does not mean that this type of project is the only one that fits the ecotourism profile. It might be very interesting to initiate a different type of project, which is perhaps normally associated with mass tourism. For example, when a community, organization or institution succeeds in building a large hotel or resort with amenities and the comfort level found in mass tourism resorts, and requests every guest to donate US\$ 1 per day to a collective fund, many of the conditions of ecotourism can be met. From the resulting fund, community and conservation projects could be financed. A large resort also means that many tourists are concentrated in one central location, where effects like waste and sewage can be more efficiently controlled.

The following, however, concentrates on existing ecotourism projects; the case studies present an ecotourism project in each one of the Guiana Shield countries.

#### 4.1 Brazil: Mamirauá

The Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve (RSDM) was created in 1990 as an Ecological Station by the Governor of the State of Amazonas. In 1996, with the completion of the management plan, its status was changed to that of a Sustainable Development Reserve, again by the State Government. The Reserve's objective is the protection of biodiversity with participatory management of the *várzea* ecosystem at the confluence of the Solimões and Japurá Rivers, near the town of Tefé.

*Várzea* are floodplains in the forest, i.e. forest which is annually flooded by rivers rich in sediments and nutrients, which can remain under water for more than four months each year. With a total area of 1,124,000 hectares (almost a third of the size of Belgium), up to 80 km<sup>2</sup> of forest can be submerged between the courses of these two important Amazonian rivers.



Uakari Lodge in the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve. Photo: Marcos Amend

The RSDM runs an ecotourism programme. There is a lodge in the reserve, which is a floating building. Innovative techniques specially designed to suit the realities of the flooded forest were used, and environmentally friendly techniques for operation are implemented. These include solar power, sewage filters and natural ventilation. The lodge consists of five units, and the total capacity is 20 people.

The number of visitors is still small, with an average of about 300 annually. Visitors to the lodge are groups of students and international eco-tourists. The sources of income are visitor fees and subsidies from the federal Government. The programme is currently subsidized until there is a greater flux of tourists. The main activities are day or night guided hikes, and wildlife watching. Contact with the guides is essential. They are members of the Caboclo population from the area.

A very important factor in the successful undertaking of this programme was the institutional and financial support from the Mamirauá Institute. Bottlenecks experienced during the implementation of the programme included the lack of specialized personnel (which made it difficult to provide very good services to visitors) and marketing the product.

The RSDM ecotourism programme has, however, been successful, up until now, due to the good product it offers. The unique aspects of this area are: the wildlife and the conserved ecosystem, as well as contact with the local population, and the chance to see sustainable development projects.

#### 4.2 Colombia: Siempre Colombia

The Humboldt Institute, a biodiversity research institute in Bogotá, started cooperating with a Colombian tour operator, Siempre Colombia, in 2001. It is a cooperation falling under the Humboldt programme of *Biocomercio Sostenible* (Sustainable Biocommerce, a program which focuses on income generating possibilities of biodiversity).

Siempre Colombia generates considerable income for the Colombian National Park Amacayacú, south of the Guiana Shield, by organizing trips to this park.

Visitors sleep in the park's accommodation, which is run and organized by the park management. Siempre Colombia also works with inhabitants of the local community near Amacayacú. When the profits generated by Siempre Colombia are over a certain level per year, a percentage is donated to a local fund for projects for the local communities. Siempre Colombia is still a young, small organization, so the fund will not be that big. It is, however, a good impulse for the remote area that Siempre Colombia operates in.

The Humboldt Institute has further helped Siempre Colombia with designing its environmental and social policies, and by establishing a monitoring system for the impacts of Siempre Colombia's visits to the park (A. Ramos, pers. comm., 2002).

#### 4.3 French Guiana: Emerald Jungle Village



Emerald Jungle Village. Photo: Gea Bartelds

Emerald Jungle Village is a lodge in Montsinéry not far from Cayenne and the coastal areas. It is a small, family-owned enterprise, which was founded in 1989. The owner, originally Dutch, has been living in the Guianas for almost 30 years. The lodge was based on the tourism activities of STINASU (see 3.1.5 Suriname). Besides lodgings,

Emerald Jungle Village also offers visitors guided hikes, botanical trails, biking and canoeing, nature education, and research and reserve management. The lodge is located close to the Trésor Nature Reserve. Emerald Jungle Village attracts about 1,000 tourist nights per year. Thanks to the owners speaking Dutch, English, and other languages, the guests at Emerald Jungle Village also come from non-French-speaking countries. Visitors to the Village mainly are naturalists and researchers. The income generated by the guests is sufficient to cover the costs of operation.

Emerald Jungle Village has many contacts with local authorities, such as Hunting Management (ONC), Nature Management (DIREN), the herbarium (IRD) and Forest Management (ONF), as well as with local foundations, such as Sepanguy Cayenne and the WWF-Guianas, for example. Emerald Jungle Village occasionally works together with members of the Amerindian village of Santa Rosa de Lima. The Amerindians help with setting-up campsites and, sometimes, play a part in recordings of video publications for nature education about the region.

The bottleneck that Emerald Jungle Village experiences in its operations is not directly related to its ecotourism activities; the main problem is the increasing criminality in French Guiana (Joep Moonen, pers. comm., 2002). From an ecotourism perspective, it has to be mentioned that because of the small scale of Emerald Jungle Village – there are no employees – the direct economic benefit for the region is marginal. Visitors travelling to the area do, however, create indirect benefits through their requirement for transport, food and beverage needs.

#### 4.4 Guyana: Iwokrama

In 1989, the Government of Guyana offered to set aside the Iwokrama Forest for the international community. The intention was for the forest environment to be set aside for conservation as well as sustainable and equitable use. The aim is to research the potential value of tropical rainforests. As part of this research project, ecotourism has been developed, allowing visitors to experience the rainforest in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.



Road through Iwokrama Forest. Photo: Amy MacKinven

Accommodation is in the form of dormitory-style, thatched-roof cabins near the field station of the research centre. Activities consist of guided wildlife walks, fishing trips, and visits to Fair View village, an Amerindian settlement located close to the field station on the Essequibo River. Tour guides are Iwokrama forest rangers; they are members of the local Amerindian community, speak English, and have good scientific and technical knowledge of the forest.

The tourism staff of the Iwokrama research centre work closely together with communities in the vicinity. Surama and Aranaputa villages in the North Rupununi are developing new tourism products as Iwokrama continues to work with these local communities under a CIDA funded sustainable tourism project. The products will be marketed jointly as a package of Iwokrama Forest and the North Rupununi. Iwokrama has been working with the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB) to support the development of community tourism products through training and providing financial means. Iwokrama and the NRDDB initiated two revolving fund agreements with Surama and Aranaputa Villages. The Surama project is the development of a new lodge to enhance the village's capacity to entertain visitors. Work is already well advanced on this project. The project is supported through the organization of village self help teams and support from Youth Challenge Guyana. Aranaputa is developing a mountain nature trail near the village which will be completed in 2004. The trail will include signage, reinforcement to avoid erosion, and the building of eco-friendly shelters for resting and observation.

An important tourist attraction is the 154 metre Iwokrama Canopy Walkway. The walkway, situated at Maushiparu in the south of the Iwokrama Forest, includes four observation towers and five suspended bridges set 30 metres above the forest floor. Visitors to the Iwokrama Forest are able to see the upper canopy of the rainforest including species that are normally more often heard than seen.

Two tour operators and a village community (Wilderness Explorers, Rock View Lodge, and Surama Village in the North Rupununi) manage and market the canopy walkway. The concession to manage the walkway, granted by Iwokrama, is the first private sector-community partnership for tourism development in Guyana. The Centre is now working with the consortium to finalize best practice agreements for the concession. The involvement of local and national partners ensuring appropriate benefit sharing from the concession builds on the Business Partnership Principles and Intellectual Property Rights, Access and Benefit Sharing protocols and agreements being developed by the Centre.

At the time of writing of this report the Iwokrama tourism project did not yet generate much revenue, because the numbers of visitors are still relatively small. Ecotourism is not (yet) common in Guyana and transport costs to the area are high. However, the prospects of the Iwokrama tourism activities appear to be good, as Iwokrama starts to cooperate with private sector tour operators who know the tourism market well.

#### 4.5 Suriname: Danpaati Eco Lodges

In the town of Danpaati, on the Upper Suriname River, the tourism project of Danpaati Eco Lodges (formerly Suriname Eco Lodges) was founded in 2000. The project is part of the Foundation Improvement Interior of Suriname (*Stichting Bevordering Binnenland Suriname*, SBBS). The Danpaati Eco Lodges are part of a larger project which focuses on the creation of structural healthcare services in the Danpaati region. With financing from a Dutch insurance company, a healthcare station was established. Other socio-economic activities in the region are supported in the same project to guarantee continuity in healthcare and other developments.



Accommodation at Danpaati Eco Lodges. Photo: Danpaati Eco Lodges

The whole project was set-up in cooperation with the local community, consisting of Saramaccaners. Members of the community are part of the steering group. Ownership belongs to a foundation, and community representatives are part of the foundation's Board. In this project, training sessions are organized for local community members, regarding healthcare, literacy and the other activities.

The tourist facilities include eleven two-person lodges, and group hammock accommodation. Danpaati can be reached from Paramaribo, by bus and boat in 4 hours, and by airplane and boat in 1.5 hours. Excursions for visitors consist of boat trips and community visits, in which specific highlights of Saramaccan culture are highlighted.

Arrangements were made with regards to the environmental friendliness of the operation, for instance there is no drainage, instead septic tanks are used, and organic waste is separated for composting. Energy is generated with a diesel generator. Possibilities for using solar and water energy alternatives have been investigated, but investments are not yet feasible.

In establishing the Danpaati Eco Lodges, many bottlenecks, mostly of a logistical nature were encountered. Marketing is also proving to be difficult: as yet Suriname is not very focused on tourism, and however different tourism companies within Suriname did not work together a few years ago, this situation has improved (Stanley Rensch, pers. comm., 2004).

The concept of the Danpaati Eco Lodges has been quite successful and at this time the lodge is self-supporting. The aspects of community building and promotion of healthcare make this project very interesting from an ecotourism point of view.

The local community from the villages is involved in the management of the lodges.

#### 4.6 Venezuela: ORPIA

In 1999, the pilot ecotourism project of the *Organización Regional de Pueblos Indígenas de Amazonas* (ORPIA) was set up. This pilot project was the result of a research project funded by ORPIA and the Canadian National Aboriginal Tourism Association (CNATA). The aim of the research project was to investigate the potential for indigenous tourism in the Amazonas region; the ORPIA hoped to bring a sustainable flow of tourists to the Amazonas region.

ORPIA was established in 1993 to defend the rights of 19 indigenous groups living in the Amazonas region. Eight communities volunteered to participate in this tourism pilot project, which had been planned since 1995. Ingredients of the trip included rafting down rivers, visits to local communities, watching traditional dances, the sale of handicrafts and dining on local specialties.

The pilot trip, which was experienced by seven tourists (one of which was appointed to evaluate the trip), revealed that developing ecotourism in this manner had potential. It also revealed, however, that the type of tourism offered by the ORPIA communities appealed to a very small niche of the travel market. In this case, it is crucial to attract the right type of (adventurous) tourist. The pilot trip further revealed that some of the participating communities needed more technical assistance to meet the needs of ecotourists. The very concept of 'ecotourism' was foreign to these communities; they would certainly benefit from training in business management, basic accounting, accommodating special diets and the English language, to avoid these communities being dependent on foreign tour guides. The community members, however, appeared to adapt to the visitors fairly quickly, probably due to past experiences with outsiders. It was stressed during the evaluation of the pilot trip that ORPIA and its consultants wanted to ensure that the participating communities retained control over any ecotourism initiatives in and on their lands (Shore, 1999)

After inquiries by the author in early 2002, it appeared that the project had been discontinued. ORPIA could not be reached to comment on this discontinuation.

## RELEVANT DEVELOPMENTS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

### 5.1 Certifying ecotourism: Tourism Stewardship Council

Efforts to certify ecotourism are in their infancy. As ecotourism further defines itself through its stakeholders and in the marketplace, many questions remain about how well ecotourism can be certified, especially given that ecotourism businesses are small, highly dispersed and regional in character. Certifying ecotourism industries involves gathering data from companies on their environmental and social performance, and then verifying these data. Many ecotourism projects are, however, found in developing countries, where monitoring and even communications systems may not be available. As ecotourism enterprises are operating on a small scale, they are probably best evaluated using criteria designed for their style of enterprise. (Epler Wood, 2002)

- Indicators for sustainability must be arrived at by research of appropriate parameters based on current best practice.
- Indicators for sustainability must be reviewed and approved via a stakeholder process.
- Indicators for sustainability must be arrived at for each segment of the industry, e.g., hotels, tour operators, transportation systems, etc.
- Indicators for sustainability will vary according to region and must be arrived at via local stakeholder participation and research.
- Certification programmes require independent verification procedures that are not directly associated with the entity being paid to certify. University involvement is ideal for this process.
- Certification programmes, particularly for the small ecotourism business sector, are unlikely to pay for themselves through fees, and will need national, regional or international subsidization.
- Certification programmes can be given to the operating entity, but should specify the products or locations that fulfil relevant criteria as certified.
- Certification should be ground-tested before fully-fledged implementation to ensure all systems are properly in line, due to the difficulty of verifying appropriate performance standards without advance testing.

(Epler Wood & Halpenny, 2001)

**Proposed guidelines for successful Ecotourism Certification***Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC)*

Although certification in ecotourism is in its infancy, there are many certification schemes that focus on one or more aspects of the sustainability of tourism. In Europe, for example, there are more than 40 certification schemes relating to the tourism industry (EcoTrans, 2002). Different schemes are started by different organizations (e.g., NGOs, the private sector, national as well as local governments, etc.) and each scheme develops its own evaluation criteria. This fragmentation is an obstacle in turning certification into an effective tool to 'green' the tourism industry. The US-based Rainforest Alliance is, therefore, currently coordinating a feasibility study, an organizational blueprint and an implementation plan for a global Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC), with the explanatory subtitle of an Accreditation Body for Sustainable Tourism Certifiers. The project's objectives and focus areas have been grouped in four clusters: stakeholder participation; market demand; financial sustainability; and organization and implementation. The (tentative) criteria that should be addressed by all sustainable tourism certification schemes, following from a STSC workshop in 2000, can be found in Annex 2. The results of the feasibility study for an STSC, were provided to the international community during 2002, the United Nations International Year of Ecotourism (STSC Project Summary, 2002).

*5.2 Sustainable modes of transportation*

Transport is always the weak spot in any attempt to make tourism more sustainable. To travel to their tourism destinations, tourists need to use a mode of transport, which undeniably leads to pollution (although different modes of transport pollute to different degrees). In Europe, a number of stakeholders (among which a private entrepreneur and an NGO platform) are working towards the introduction of the zeppelin as a mode of transport that can be used for tourism. A number of prototypes have been built. Zeppelins can already be used for cargo transport, and tests will be done in the near future with an eye to transporting passengers. Due to its cruising speed, panoramic opportunities and the absence of extensive infrastructure, the zeppelin might be a future mode of transport for use in the Guiana Shield region.

*Zeppelins in the Guiana Shield?*

Currently, a new generation of airships (zeppelins) is under construction in both Germany and the United Kingdom. These new airships are safe, multifunctional and environmentally friendly; they can be used for tourism and passenger transportation, as well as for cargo and heavy lifting. At the moment, Zeppelin NT is offering a tourism airship with a seat capacity of 16 persons. Within three years, other companies, such as ATG and Airtrain, will be offering airships with seat capacities of between 20 and 50.

The opportunities for using airships are:

- Passenger and cargo transportation
- Ecotourism
- Observation and monitoring
- Platforms for data transmission such as GSM, internet, etc.

The benefits of the use of airships compared with other modes of transportation are, among others:

- Low energy use;
- Low emission levels;
- Low noise levels;
- Low altitude operation levels;
- Limited infrastructure requirements;
- Multi-functionality;
- Great panoramic views and great observation capacity;
- Sufficient workspace and comfort;
- Speeds up to 140 km/h;
- Airborne for over 48 hours;
- Flight radius over 600 km.

The feasibility of the use of airships in specific regions, such as the Amazon, depends on, among others:

- Specific costs of investment, versus the use that different parties can make of the airship;
- Flight permits by local authorities;
- Climatologic characteristics: turbulence and frequency of lightning above different areas in the Guiana Shield.

Current costs:

Depending on the specific situation, the costs of airship operation and purchase can be economically feasible. Derived from financial figures of airship operations for law enforcement in the U.S.A. and Europe, the purchase or lease of an airship can be compared with the operation costs of a helicopter.

Additional information:

[www.luchtschepen.nl](http://www.luchtschepen.nl)  
[www.cargolifter.com](http://www.cargolifter.com)

(G. Hoogenstrijd, pers. comm., 2002)

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the tourism inventory in Chapter 4 and the case descriptions in Chapter 5, a number of conclusions can be drawn regarding ecotourism in the Guiana Shield region. Although in some of the areas of the Guiana Shield the tourism sector is rather developed, for example in the state of Bolívar in Venezuela, in general it can be said that tourism developments are in their infancy. The countries of the Guiana Shield are visited by a number of independent travellers, a growing (but still small) number of adventure tour operators from the U.S.A. and Western Europe, and parties with a special interest, like botanists or researchers. Most tourist developments in the region are independent (not part of international chains), small-scale, and the transport network, in general, is such that travellers need to be persistent and then can still perhaps only reach certain areas.

Interest among travellers to visit the region appears to be increasing. At tourism conferences and fairs in Western Europe, the Guianas are better represented in the last number of years, thereby attracting more customers every year. Since tourism in the Guiana Shield region is in the early stages of development, lessons learned in the sustainability of other holiday destinations can be implemented. Most importantly, the Guiana Shield already possesses the ingredients for ecotourism: the specific natural heritage of the Northern Amazon basin, as well as the cultural heritage of indigenous tribes and other cultural groups.

A number of development issues did, however, come to the fore in the case studies that were described. A bottleneck often is that not all relevant stakeholders are involved in the development, which can for example lead to deficiencies in carrying capacity with local inhabitants or in marketing of the product. It is thus very important to involve all the concerned stakeholders in the developments. Stakeholders that need to be taken into consideration are: travel agents; outbound tour operators; inbound tour operators; the owners of eco-lodges; NGOs; communities, including indigenous communities; women; regional and national governments; and development agencies. When a project is developed in isolation from its stakeholders, it becomes extremely difficult to generate the social carrying-capacity that is needed for continuity in the project.

**Ownership and management** play an important role in developments. When considering developing sustainable socio-economic activities, it is crucial that local communities take the initiative, carry out, and own these developments. In practice, this is often not the case. In the six cases that were described in Chapter 5, cooperation with local communities was sought in every case, but in only one

of the cases (ORPIA in Venezuela) did the initiative for development actually come from the local communities. That project, perhaps coincidentally, is the only project that is currently no longer operational.

Many ecotourism initiatives come from foreigners (who might have lived in the region for many years), who were familiar with the concept of tourism and what it entails: catering to tourists, necessary standards of comfort level, customer expectations and satisfaction, etc. If ownership and management by local community members is sought after, **training** in tourism operations for them is crucial.

A bottleneck that is often mentioned with regards to ecotourism projects is **marketing**. Such projects are usually small-scale and developed in remote areas, making it difficult to reach potential future customers. In fact, a number of the projects described in Chapter 5 can only survive with outside support; only one operates solely on customer revenues. To reach independent tourists, project representation in the capital cities of the Guiana Shield countries, through a tourist information office or through a shared project office, becomes very important. To reach tourists travelling with tour operators, ecotourism projects have to market themselves to national incoming tour operators. This would enable ecotourism projects to more firmly guarantee continuity in visitors. When working with tour operators, communication is crucial; a project needs to be able to be reached by telephone and/or fax.

In general, regarding the potential benefits of ecotourism, it can be said that ecotourism must be planned and managed to successfully offer its key social and environmental objectives. This requires:

1. Specialized marketing to attract travellers who are primarily interested in visiting natural areas.
2. Management skills that are specific to accommodating and guiding visitors in protected natural areas.
3. Guiding and interpretation services, preferably managed by local inhabitants, that are focused on natural history and sustainable development issues.
4. Government policies that earmark income from tourism to generate funds for both the conservation of wild lands and the sustainable development of local communities and indigenous people.
5. Focused attention on local people, who must be given the right of prior informed consent, full participation and, if they so decide, be given the means and training to take advantage of this sustainable development option.

(Epler Wood, 2002)

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## ANNEX 1

## A checklist for exploring tourism potential

It is important that expectations regarding tourism development are realistic. To make a full description of the tourism possibilities the following checklist can be followed (SNV, 1999):

- a. **Describe the attractions.** An overview of the attractions in the area, natural and cultural, should be presented.
- b. **List the various activities that can be carried out.** An overview has to be made of the various activities that the tourists can carry out in the area, for example hikes, cycle tours, safaris, project visits, etc.
- c. **Indicate how unique the area is.** Which features are unique, and which similar features can be also found elsewhere?
- d. **Indicate how well known the area is.** Is the area well known? Has it been described in travel guides and other publications? This determines to a certain degree whether or not tourists will visit the area.
- e. **Describe the location towards tourist centre/route.** Areas that are located nearby a tourist centre or on/nearby a tourist route are more likely to be visited by tourists. It is always an advantage if an area can be included in a roundtrip.
- f. **Describe the facilities.** An overview has to be presented of the existing facilities for tourists in the area, like campsites, hotels, restaurants.
- g. **Communication.** What are the possibilities to communicate with the area (preferably by phone or fax), so that bookings can be made?
- h. **Accessibility.** How can the area be reached, and how long does the journey take? This depends on the quality of the road, and on reliable modes of transportation.
- i. **Availability of qualified local people.** Qualified people are needed to make the tourism project successful. 'Qualified' refers to basic skills in providing services to tourists: ability to speak a language in which one can communicate with the tourists, knowledge of tourist expectations (regarding food, comfort, etc.), knowledge about the local environment, culture and history.
- j. **Local Organisation structure.** Describe whether there are any existing organizations in the area, like a women's group or a local NGO, that could provide (a part of the) services to tourists.
- k. **Starting point.** Indicate whether there is a clear place in the area which could function as a starting point, as well as a focal point for tourists – a place where they can get information and can be assisted.
- l. **Possibility for cooperation.** Are there organizations in the area, that could assist in developing and promoting the project (possibly facilities which will also benefit from extra tourist presence)?
- m. **Risk of competition.** Describe whether there is a risk that individuals or organizations (tour operators) will start competing with the project. This depends on the presence of existing tourism projects in the area, and how easy it is to copy the project.
- n. **Conservation of natural resources.** The natural resources in the area are often the most important tourist attractions. Tourists and tour operators are often concerned about conservation of natural resources. Efforts for conservation as well as threats have to be described.
- o. **Carrying capacity.** How many tourists could visit the area without causing negative impacts on the local culture and environment?
- p. **Security.** Describe if one could expect any threats to the security of tourists in the area.

## ANNEX 2

## Criteria for sustainable tourism certification

The Rainforest Alliance is implementing a project to investigate the possibilities for an Accreditation Body for Sustainable Tourism Certifiers (Rainforest Alliance, 2001). The criteria used for sustainable tourism certification should address at least minimum standards in the following areas:

## General

- Environmental planning and impact assessment has been undertaken and considered social, cultural, ecological and economic impacts (including cumulative impacts and mitigation strategies);
- Environmental management commitment by tourist business;
- Staff training, education, responsibility, knowledge and awareness in environmental, social and cultural management;
- Mechanisms for monitoring and reporting environmental performance;
- Accurate, responsible marketing leading to realistic expectations;
- Consumer feedback.

*Social/Cultural:*

- Impacts upon social structures, culture and economy (on both local and national levels);
- Appropriateness of land acquisition/access processes and land tenure;
- Measures to protect the integrity of local community's social structure;
- Mechanisms to ensure rights and aspirations of local and/or indigenous people are recognized.

*Ecological:*

- Appropriateness of location and sense of place;
- Biodiversity conservation and integrity of ecosystem processes;
- Site disturbance, landscaping and rehabilitation;
- Drainage, soils and storm water management;
- Sustainability of energy supply and minimization of use;
- Sustainability of water supply and minimization of use;
- Sustainability of wastewater treatment and disposal;
- Noise and air quality (including greenhouse emissions);
- Waste minimization and sustainability of disposal;
- Visual impacts and light;
- Sustainability of materials and supplies (recyclable and recycled materials, locally produced, certified timber products, etc.);
- Minimal environmental impacts of activities.

*Economic*

- Requirements for ethical business practice;
- Mechanisms to ensure labour arrangements and industrial relations procedures are not exploitative, and conform to local laws and international labour standards (whichever are higher);
- Mechanisms to ensure negative economic impacts on local communities are minimized and preferably there are substantial economic benefits to local communities;
- Requirements to ensure contributions to the development maintenance of local community infrastructure.

Additionally, in any *ecotourism certification* programme the standards should address the same areas as for sustainable tourism certification plus at least minimum standards in the following aspects:

- Focus on personal experiences of nature to lead to greater understanding and appreciation;
- Interpretation and environmental awareness of nature, local society, and culture;
- Positive and active contributions to conservation of natural areas or biodiversity;
- Economic, social, and cultural benefits for local communities;
- Fostering of community involvement, where appropriate;
- Locally appropriate scale and design for lodging, tours and attractions;
- Minimal impact on and presentation of local (indigenous) culture.