



Overtourism: A Growing Concern for Global Destinations

Introduction

Discuss as a class or in pairs/groups of three. If working in pairs, ask for some students to report back.

1. In what ways can overtourism disrupt local communities and economies in the long term?
2. Do you think that travel restrictions, such as tourist caps or seasonal bans, could be effective in reducing overtourism? Why or why not?
3. How can tourists strike a balance between enjoying a destination and minimizing their impact on the environment and local culture?

Vocabulary

Match the words from the text with their definitions.

1. Overtourism – D. The excessive number of tourists visiting a destination, leading to negative impacts
2. Saturation – H. The state of a place being so full of tourists that it impacts the quality of life for locals and the visitor experience
3. Exploitation – F. The act of using resources or people in an unfair or unethical way, often for profit
4. Carrying capacity – E. The maximum number of visitors that an area can sustainably support without causing harm
5. Regenerative tourism – I. Tourism that focuses on rebuilding and improving local environments and cultures
6. Mass tourism – C. Tourism that involves a large number of visitors, often leading to overcrowding
7. Displacement – J. The forced movement of residents due to changes in their community, often caused by tourism
8. Environmental degradation – A. The process of destroying or damaging the environment
9. Cultural homogenization – G. The replacement of local culture with a more universal, commercialized version to satisfy tourists
10. Resilience – B. The ability of a destination to recover from the negative effects of tourism



Speaking

Look at the photos, what can you tell about them? Use the vocabulary from the previous exercise - the photos are located in a separate file, remember to download!

Reading

Complete the text with the words below.

tourists loss awareness niche environmental consequences
concern fragile overwhelmed mass regenerative responsible
booming pressing satisfaction

Overtourism has emerged as one of the most (1) pressing challenges facing global tourism today. While tourism undeniably brings economic benefits, including job creation and increased revenue, it also creates substantial challenges that affect everything from local economies to (2) environmental sustainability. Popular cities like Barcelona, Venice, and Amsterdam are among the most heavily impacted, as their historic sites, natural resources, and infrastructures strain under the weight of millions of visitors each year.

One of the primary (3) consequences of overtourism is the saturation of both urban and rural environments. Cities once celebrated for their rich cultural offerings and architectural beauty are increasingly becoming (4) overwhelmed by the sheer number of tourists. This saturation often leads to the displacement of residents, as housing prices rise to unsustainable levels and communities are forced out by the influx of temporary visitors. (5) Mass tourism not only drives up the cost of living but also degrades the very essence of the places tourists come to experience. In some cases, local businesses shift their focus from serving the needs of residents to catering exclusively to (6) tourists, thereby altering the character of neighbourhoods.

The environmental degradation resulting from overtourism is another critical (7) concern. In areas where nature is a central draw, such as national parks, beaches,



Reading

and mountain regions, tourism contributes to the destruction of (8) fragile ecosystems. Waste generation, pollution, and resource depletion are among the most immediate issues, with some destinations struggling to manage the environmental impact of their (9) booming visitor numbers. Beyond the physical destruction, overtourism can also undermine the resilience of ecosystems, leaving them less able to recover from natural disruptions.

Cultural homogenization is another insidious effect of overtourism. As tourist demand drives local economies to prioritize visitor (10) satisfaction, traditional practices, languages, and lifestyles are often diluted or altered to fit the expectations of outsiders. This shift toward creating experiences tailored to international tourists often leads to the (11) loss of authenticity and local flavour. Moreover, the commodification of culture can result in the exploitation of local communities, reducing their cultural heritage to a marketable product for global consumption.

To mitigate these negative consequences, a shift toward (12) regenerative tourism is gaining momentum. Unlike traditional mass tourism, regenerative tourism focuses on restoring and enhancing the environment and local culture, ensuring that tourism is a force for good. By promoting (13) responsible travel, limiting tourist numbers, and supporting local initiatives, regenerative tourism seeks to create a more sustainable future for both destinations and the people who live there.

Despite its potential, regenerative tourism remains a relatively (14) niche concept. The global tourism industry still largely operates on a model that prioritizes growth and profit over sustainability. However, there is hope that as (15) awareness of overtourism's far-reaching impacts grows, both travellers and industry leaders will adopt more sustainable and regenerative practices, ensuring that future generations can continue to experience the world's most treasured destinations without compromising their integrity.



Comprehension

True or False? Read the statements and decide if they are true or false.

1. Overtourism benefits only the local economy and has no negative consequences. - FALSE
2. Mass tourism causes a shift in local economies, often prioritizing tourism over local needs. - TRUE
3. The environmental degradation caused by overtourism primarily affects cities, not rural areas. - FALSE
4. The displacement of local residents is a common result of the saturation caused by overtourism. - TRUE
5. Regenerative tourism focuses on enhancing the environment and local cultures, rather than exploiting them. - TRUE
6. Local businesses always benefit from overtourism, as they cater to the needs of tourists. - FALSE
7. The tourism industry largely prioritizes sustainability and responsible travel practices. - FALSE

Speaking

Discuss in pairs, groups of three or as a whole class.

1. Overtourism is a direct consequence of the tourism industry's focus on growth and profit.
2. Displacing local residents to make way for tourists can never be justified.
3. Cultural homogenization makes travel less meaningful and authentic.
4. Travelers should be responsible for minimizing their environmental impact by supporting sustainable tourism.
5. The rise of overtourism has made certain destinations less enjoyable for both tourists and locals.
6. Tourist destinations should implement stricter regulations to control visitor numbers.
7. Overtourism affects not only popular tourist sites but also rural and less-visited areas.
8. The tourism industry needs to rethink its approach and prioritize the preservation of cultural and natural heritage.