

## Ecotourism

Ecotourism, ecological tourism, has been around since the late 1980s and is said to be the fastest growing form of tourism since its inception. Ecotourism has a number of goals, while its overall goal is to build environmental and cultural awareness and respect, its other, equally important goal is to minimize the impact humans have on nature. Ecotourism, at least when done properly, is about encouraging local business and teaching people about the local flora, fauna and cultural heritage of a region.

In Atlantic Canada and Maine many forms of ecotourism exist. One form is museums, whose focus is on educating people about a certain region (Southern Nova Scotia) or ecological industry (blueberries). Most of our ecotourism though takes place outdoors with hands on, eye witness learning. There is no limit to the number of different things one can learn from outdoor ecotourism, some of companies or individuals hold hikes to find edible foods or for bird watching, there are hikes through sugar bushes and berry wine farms and even camping trips.

Ecotourism is vastly important. It turned tourism, something seen as sometimes detrimental because it is often done at the expense of locals, into a positive. It gives locals the opportunity to use their own knowledge of a region to make some profit for the community and to educate people on what our forests really hold. More importantly perhaps ecotourism allows families, couples and friends to go out together and while spending time with one another, learn and get some exercise.