



Slow Tourism in Protected Areas. Case of Toubkal National Park - Morocco

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Abstract

When we speak of slow tourism or slow tourism, we are referring to an alternative mode of tourism that emerged in the 1990s and is centred on the discovery of nature and the protection of the environment.

Keywords: Slow tourism; Protected areas; Morocco; Toubkal national park

Slow Tourism

It all began in the late 1980s when Italians created Slow Food in response to the acceleration of modern life and junk food. The association now has one hundred thousand members in 150 countries in the 1990s. The trend is spreading with the formalization and popularization of the principles of sustainable development - principles that citizens are increasingly taking on board - the evolution of consumption patterns, the generalization of environmental concerns and the desire for a more authentic, more responsible and closer to nature holiday, all of which combine to make slow tourism a practice with high growth potential. Prismo tamo' the expression means traveling slowly. In fact slow tourism is a state of mind that aims to fight against two excesses of our society: stress and race against time. It is a concept that invites us to re-appropriate time to travel; otherwise, of course, it integrates an ecological and the human dimension. Slow tourists take the time to discover rather than travel thousands of kilometers; which on the floor; these kilometers they do by bike, horseback or boat often associated with sustainable green tourism or Slow tourism slow tourism is the opposite of mass tourism all studies show that it is a deep and global societal trend. According to an Ipsos survey: "a French polling company and an international opinion marketing company", eight out of ten Europeans intend to slow down their pace of life in terms of tourism: 53% of French people say they want to take their time when they visit a country, a city or a region and according to the World Tourism Organization, slow tourism has been increasing

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between 10 and 20% in recent years. To these figures should be added the aging of populations, the right to disconnect or the rise of local consumption, 'locavore': a movement advocating the consumption of food produced within a radius of between 100 and 250 kilometers from home. A locavore is a person who adheres to the locavorism that promotes this movement. The latter is characterized by the limitation of its ecological footprint environmental education and support for biodiversity conservation programs sustainable tourism aims to make travelers responsible and aware in order to preserve the environment. Slow tourism is an economic activity that aims to educate people by bringing them ecological awareness. It is to give tourists a unique experience, a direct contact with nature in a safe and thoughtful way always oriented towards local development.

Case of Toubkal National Park – Morocco

The high atlas receives much of this precipitation in the form of snow; the high peaks can be covered with it for five to six months of the year. The national park of Toubkal, the first national park created in Morocco offers many possibilities for hiking or sporting intentions. Created in 1942, the first national park in Morocco is the National Park of Toubkal extends over the central part of the High Atlas, between the valley of N'Fiss in the west and that of Ourika in the east. The site is currently very popular with tourists. With about 40,000 visitors per year, Toubkal National Park remains the privileged site of mountain tourism in Morocco. The presence of a network of mule tracks and

organized networks of tourist guides (guides, muleteers, and porters) facilitates the access of visitors to the various points of interest at the site. The protection of the Mouflon, an emblematic species of which only a few a hundred individuals remain, is one of the main missions of the park. The Toubkal National Park Ecomuseum project started in 1999 but officially opened its doors to the public on 9 July 2012 on the occasion of the international celebration of cooperatives. As a museum of the Toubkal National Park, it represents a showcase of this protected area, it allows an interpretation of the Toubkal National Park and its region, it is also a great tool for environmental education and communication of the strategy of the High Commission for Water and Forests and the fight against desertification concerning the management of protected areas in Morocco.

The priority objective of the department responsible for the creation of the museum is to encourage and promote the development of sustainable tourism in Morocco's protected areas, particularly in the Toubkal National Park. This decision is more than a choice; it is a real duty for the department. It should be noted that the development of sustainable tourism in the Toubkal National Park is the only conceivable solution for further developing the department's strategy on the territory. Sustainable tourism, beyond the words of a strategy, of a vision, it is a real approach for better development and real creation of concrete action in the field in question as well as to offer sustainable tourist products of quality since Morocco as a country abounds in real environments and spaces for the evolution of sustainable tourism. Morocco is a territory where sustainable tourism is starting its way. The idea of the Eco museum is a real process for a better representation of the Park itself and the protected areas. The Toubkal National Park Eco museum was offered a Morocco Sustainable Territory trophy in 2016 by the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism. The Toubkal National Park Eco museum is the only known Eco museum in Morocco. To do so, the Park has developed several collaborations with partners, local associations, cooperatives, and all the actors present on the territory. All these efforts are helping to achieve better development of sustainable tourism in Morocco. As a mountain park, the Toubkal National Park stands out for its original characteristics: powerful relief, landscapes of exceptional beauty and remarkable biological diversity. Numerous rivers originate in the park area and provide irrigation in the valleys and plains of the foothills: the Nfiss, the Rherhaya, the Ourika, and the Souss. It protects the biodiversity and the beautiful landscapes offered by the highest mountain massifs of all North Africa, in the middle of which jbel Toubkal or Adrar N'Dern (the mountain of mountains) culminates at 4.167 m.

The cultural heritage, the picturesque natural landscapes and the wealth of flora and fauna, as well as the presence of the Lfni Lake at an altitude of 2,600 m, give Toubkal National Park great slow

tourism potential. The main points or activities sought by visitors to the park site are: the Toubkal summit, the discovery of High Mountain landscapes, the Berber mountain culture and sports activities (hiking and climbing).

Benefits and Threats of Slow Tourism

Slow tourism is an effective tool for the management of protected areas, and we will cite some of its advantages:

- Adapted strategy to reduce the pressure of tourism on biodiversity.
- Generates direct income for the protected area (admission fees).
- Improves the relationship between local communities and protected area administrations.
- Maybe a better option than other rival economic activities (deforestation, poaching,).
- justifies the existence of protected areas

This responsible tourism management, which is called slow tourism, has many advantages and strengths that can help to improve the place where it is practiced in a responsible way that is among others:

- An asset for local communities
- Establish a sustainable income: direct job creation in protected areas, development of local crafts, restoration...
- Improves services: the creation of infrastructure (transport, education, health, etc.)
- Cultural affirmation of the inhabitants through the interest and respect is shown to them by visitors.
- The other side of the medal always presents the less brilliant points and here we refer to the potential threats of slow tourism
- Degradation of protected areas: too large an influx of tourists, even "responsible" ones, disrupts ecosystems.

Rising prices local people have to pay the same price as tourists to access services. Demographic instability, linked to a massive influx of populations attracted by financial "mane". In order to avoid these problems, it is necessary to study all these impacts beforehand and draw up a management plan to minimize them. It is a relatively complex sector with which protected area staff and communities need to become familiar in order to form partnerships, the common denominator of which between mass tourism and other types of tourism is to: achieve economic benefits.

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