

# Eco-tourism: A win-win-win for visitors, locals, and nature

January 12 2023, by David Bradley

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Research in the *International Journal of Tourism Policy* on sustainable ecotourism has new insights from the case of Kakum National Park and Bobiri Forest and Butterfly Sanctuary with implications for the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that run such sites.

Ecotourism and sustainable visitor attractions are moving higher up the environmental agenda as external and internal pressures on regions increases. Understanding the needs of different groups, or stakeholders, with a vested interest in tourism, and ensuring sustainability of their activities, is key to moving forward in this area without compromising targets on emissions, recycling, and other efforts.

The work, carried out by Fatima Eshun of the University of Environment and Sustainable Development in PMB Somanya, Eastern Region, Ghana, focuses on the position of NGOs as research in this area has so far been lacking. Given that many such sites are generally run by government organizations in the developing world, this is perhaps not surprising.

Sustainable ecotourism is important to the developing world. Fundamentally, it will provide [economic benefits](#) to the [local communities](#) supporting the visitor attraction in question, create employment opportunities, and generate income for [local residents](#), such income could come direct from activities such as guiding, transport, and accommodation, but also indirectly from the owners and employers of a particular visitor attraction.

Looking to a [sustainable future](#) also means the conservation of natural and cultural resources become a priority and promoting an understanding and appreciation of those natural and cultural resources will feed into their wider appreciation among tourists and visitors and perhaps even the local communities themselves. This can underpin wider development goals in a region and contribute to poverty reduction and social inclusion.

Eshun's study has its own specific implications for sustainable ecotourism. She recommends that the [public sector](#) enact policies, strategies, and frameworks to drive institutions to empower residents to ensure ecotourism sustainability. By contributing to ecotourism knowledge her study has practical policy implications for the empowerment of residents towards sustainable ecotourism.

There will be many individuals and other organizations that could benefit from Eshun's findings. For example, other researchers and academics in Eshun's field as well as tourism, sustainability, and [environmental studies](#)

It could be that ecotourism eschews the mass tourism of previous generations of holidaymakers so that the focus is on small-scale, low-impact tourism, wherein the negative impacts of overcrowding and any resulting environmental degradation are minimized. Indeed, its aim should be not simply to reduce the detrimental effects of tourism, but if it is to be truly sustainable it should improve conservation.

**More information:** Fatima Eshun, Roles of institutions in empowering residents towards sustainable ecotourism in Ghana: insights from Kakum National Park and Bobiri Forest and Butterfly Sanctuary, *International Journal of Tourism Policy* (2023). [DOI: 10.1504/IJTP.2022.10053171](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTP.2022.10053171)

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