Climate Change and Tourism

Background
Climate change will have a range of direct impacts on the tourism industry by changing the environment of resorts (e.g., sea-level rise, temperature, etc.) and it will increase the vulnerability of the tourism industry to other direct changes. There will also be a range of indirect impacts, for example: raising conflicts in water resources; health effects; impacts on the built environment; and detrimental impacts on the local environment. Tourism through increasing emissions (aviation emissions, impacts on the built environment; and detrimental impacts on the built environment) is in turn having an impact upon the climate system. Therefore, the introduction of GHG mitigation policies will have an impact upon the climate system. These interactions between climate change and tourism have to date not been examined on a large scale.

Tourism is globally the largest, fastest growing and one of the most important economic sectors.

The study of effects and impacts of the complex interactions between climate change and tourism is a new and emerging scientific discipline which is starting to attract the attention of stakeholders and policy makers.

As tourism as an industry is rapidly growing there is, therefore, a pressing need to provide the infrastructure to researchers so as to ensure a research framework is in place that will allow for the investigation of the direct impacts of climate change and the indirect impacts through a range of policy scenarios upon the environment. The eCLAT Network has been established to address these issues.

Tourism has a strong international dimension and is sensitive to any changes of climate that alter the competitive balance of holiday destinations. Developing countries, which rely upon their natural resource base to attract visitors are likely to be vulnerable to climate change and the implementation of climate change mitigation policies.

The eCLAT community is open and welcomes the participation of other researchers, scientists and stakeholders. The eCLAT network and community will from the outset help disseminate information, exchange ideas and facilitate the collection and exchange of data.

Actions and the Way Forward
The range of scientific disciplines represented by the eCLAT community is wide ranging, transdisciplinary and includes a number of stakeholder organisations. eCLAT through a European Science Foundation (ESF) funded workshop has identified a range of actions that it recommends should be addressed by both the stakeholder and research communities, these are:

Stakeholders and Policy Makers
Take the effects of mitigation policies into account when planning for tourism.

Whilst some impacts of climate change may appear long-term, it is likely that the effects of climate change mitigation policies will be felt in the near-term.

Stakeholders, assess your own vulnerability to climate change.
Stakeholder organisations need to be aware of their vulnerability to the direct impacts of climate change and indirect impacts.

Press the IPCC to give tourism a higher profile.
To-date the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has not yet addressed the issues that surround the interactions between climate change, the environment and tourism. We urge governments, intergovernmental organisations (e.g., WTO, UNEP etc.), NGOs and stakeholder organisations to press the IPCC to give tourism a higher profile in the AR4 and to produce a Special Report on Tourism and climate change.

Tourism Industry needs to be aware of new opportunities.
Whilst it may appear that climate change may pose many threats to the tourism industry it will also create new opportunities. The tourism industry, therefore needs to be aware of how changes in climate may develop new opportunities for tourism development.

Address the impacts on small island states and developing countries.
For many small island states and developing countries tourism is an important means to generate economic growth. There is a need to investigate how emission reduction policies implemented by developed countries may raise the price of energy and transport, and thus have a negative impact on the number of tourists visiting developing countries.

The Research Community

The establishment of an international research network.
The study of the interactions between climate change, the environment and tourism is an emerging research area. In order therefore, to enhance and develop this area, the eCLAT (A Network for the Study of the Interactions between Climate and Tourism) has been established.

Identify the current baseline conditions.
The identification of the current baseline conditions is a pre-requisite for the identification of any future changes and impacts.

Carry out assessment studies.
There is a need to undertake studies to assess, identify and quantify the possible impacts of climate change on tourism, tourist destinations and tourist’s perceptions.

Develop a database of indicators.
There is a need to develop a database of indicators and Visual Observed Impacts to help provide advice and information to the stakeholder community (including individual tourists).

Develop and apply methodologies.
There is a need to develop and apply methodologies that would enhance early warning for the impacts of climate change on tourism at all scales. These kinds of methodologies may include computer models and explorative scenarios.

Develop and identify links with other organisations.
Develop and identify links with national and regional governments; international programmes (e.g., WTO, UNEP, IPCC etc.); and stakeholder organisations.

Be consistent with the IPCC.
Future research that is undertaken should be in the context of, and be consistent with, the IPCC. That is, adopt the recommendations and make use of any guidance material and data provided by the IPCC.

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