

Nom del diàleg: Turisme, diversitat cultural i desenvolupament

Data: 16 Juliol

Sessió: "El turisme en un planeta viu"

Ponent: David Bellamy



Natural History is Survival

(Sustainable tourism and the Green Renaissance)

by

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Slide One: Natural History is Tourism

It is my considered opinion that neither terrorism nor, so-called global warming, is the main threat to the future of human kind. The real problem is the continued destruction of soil and the diverse vegetation and animal communities that goes with it. Few if any lessons have been learned from the decades of destruction and rain forests, rangelands, coral reefs and sustainable farming communities are still being destroyed at a frightening rate.

This must stop and ever larger areas must be stitched back into more natural working order using local know how and local genetic stock. It is my considered opinion that tourism, now the worlds largest business, has an important part to play in helping this to come about - speeding what I like to call the Green Renaissance. Hence the title of my keynote for this, I believe, is what we are here to discuss.

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Slide Two: Difficult Questions

Over the past three years my eldest grandson who has just broken through the teen barrier and has already traveled the world with me, asked me two particularly difficult questions.

Question one; Why do we laugh? Apart from the knee jerk answer, "because we are happy", I had to say that I didn't know and started to think in Darwinian terms about the selective advantage of laughing. We have discussed the problem since and have at least agreed that we are glad we do it and we do laugh more when we are on holiday.

Question two; If the renaissance had not happened we wouldn't have to spend so much money looking after old buildings would we?

As we both enjoy live history lessons while visiting old buildings we both agreed that we were glad we did and that we looked at more on holiday.

Hence the title of my keynote. "Natural History is Survival" Tourism is already helping to lead the Green Renaissance. The only trouble is that good news is rarely of interest to the media.

Slide 3: A Visionary Dialog

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It has taken organic evolution over 3.6 billion years to create a living world suitable for Barcelona to come into being and for society to know that, for the sake of their grandchildren this renaissance city just had to hold this visionary dialog.

The frightening fact is that there are today about 6.4 billion people many of them within reach of a mobile telephone or a cyber café who once they know of its existence will want to come and see this amazing city for themselves. Where does sustainability begin and destruction take over?

Without making any direct comparisons, but to prove my point most children I meet around the world both rich and poor, tell me of their dream, to make a trip to Disney Land. What is more most of the saga set oldsters, age challenged or whatever the politically correct word is for the over sixties, also crave to do the same, although often using the excuse of taking the grand children.

You will all know that I am not ‘taking the Mickey’ when I say that a mouse spearheads the advertising, and he’s older than me.

Slide Four: Taking the Mickey

Homo sapiens, that includes you and I (and what a biodiverse crowd we are (one fact that makes travel so fascinating) only appeared on this earth about 125, thousand, note thousand, years ago and there are already over 6 billion of us trying to make a living off space ship Earth.

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Ever since Eve squatted down somewhere in the Rift Valley her descendants have been on the move searching for new Gardens of Eden. In their travels they developed the worlds cuisines and a range of architecture to protect them from the elements while at home at work or at play.

At first, holidays were rest days taken on the home patch and were related to spiritual ceremonies. Pilgrimage extended the portfolio as did the Grand Tour, the prerogative of the rich, with lucky servants tagging along.

The Package holiday is a phenomenon that has only taken the world by storm over the past half century and it began its rampage not a million miles from here. But how fit is society or come to that planet earth to survive its impact?

Slide Five: We Must Ask Ourselves

The signs are not that good at the moment and so we must ask ourselves can tourism be made fit enough to help provide part of our stratagem of survival?

I firmly believe it can if it is approached in the right way. But there are immense problems

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Slide Six: The Pressure of Numbers

The number of human beings trying to make a living from this planet is increasing by 74 million a year, which means that a city capable of supporting a million souls should be being built every 5 days.

We can only hope that each one will be a city worthy of the name and not a grid locked slum in which most people cannot develop the full capabilities of theirs let alone their family life.

If the former is true and the people living in those environmentally friendly cities are all rich enough to become tourists, that mean that we should be laying the foundations of say 10 new Disney Lands or something like them every year. Shock horror I can hear some saying

Slide Seven: Conservation Through Good Business

However there is no need for tourism to adversely affect the sustainability of world heritage of any sort, in fact handled in the right way it can be the main driver to work towards that goal. This is what I call "Conservation through good business."

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Slide Eight: From Dump to Disney

Before anyone gets too hot under the collar, remember the Disney Brothers led the way when they chose a site of agricultural dereliction in Florida to create their theme park. Run down cattle ranches and citrus orchards, drenched with the chemicals of pre Silent Spring Days to be exact. The lake in the middle was so polluted that it had to be drained and dug out before Tinkerbell in the form of mother nature came to the rescue and refilled it with clean spring water, unbottled of course.

The result is the mother honey pot of mass tourism creating thousands of local while jobs across the full spectrum of the hospitality industry while attracting talent from around the world to put WOW into the experience.

The expertise of their landscape architects not only drew on the biodiversity of the world's flora to beautify the park but turned its attention to the major part of the site, restoring a great chunk of the everglades back into more natural biodiverse order. A nature reserve for all our futures - and a future of thousands of species.

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Slide Nine: Learning at the Animal Kingdom

The next feather in that particular Disney Cap was the opening of what is an environmental education centre, Animal Kingdom. There the visitors learn that as they are part of the problem they must take on the responsibility of being part and parcel of the solution. Tourism shares the same credentials.

Oh yes, you may think I am naive and don't want to believe in all the anti Disney hype that flies about. Be that as it may and in the light of the knowledge that jealousy breeds much more than contempt and as a grandfather I am still an optimist.

Slide Ten: Mareeba Wetlands

Sun City in South Africa and The Mareeba Wetlands In Northern Australia www.mareebawetlands.com: just two of the entrants of the British Airways Tourism for tomorrow awards now in their 11th year and many more followed on, teaching millions of people about the importance of protecting what remained of local natural history and local lifestyles while creating semi natural habitat overflowing with native biodiversity as a key part of the development.

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Slide Eleven: BA Tourism for Tomorrow Awards

The easy winners that became the role models were those that developed their dreams on brown field sites where immense damage had already been done to the natural or rural environment. There were some rare exceptions.

Slide Twelve: Skyrail

Sky rail again in Queensland showed how to move, marvel and motivate large numbers of people through a world heritage rain forest causing little or no damage and providing hands on education for the visitors.

The owners of thousands of pairs of tramping boots that would otherwise have been destroying the forest floor as their owners grumbled about the mud and the rain and the fact that the trunks of most trees look much the same. Now ride high in silent gondolas, up in the canopy where all the wildlife action is, they have no hassle and do no damage to the infrastructure of the forest.

If you haven't 'done' the Sky Rail experience, then take a ride and experience it for yourself. Then make up your own mind for some people don't agree.

A good news story from China.

I was enjoying a fabulous banquet all based on local Chinese food much wild gathered, on a trip to see one of the rarest primates in the world, the

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Yunnan Snub-nosed Monkey. When an official of the region that boasts the record of being the most biodiverse part of the Northern Palaearctic, warned me that very soon there would be 2 million long haul tourists heading out of China every year; many hoping to meet Her Majesty, Queen of England in Buckingham Palace. Are we ready for the influx?

Slide Thirteen: The China Challenge – Part 1

A regal complication maybe? But just think about it, if only one percent of China's population became long haul tourists that would mean an extra 14 million people flying around the world pouring much more than water vapour out into the earth's protective blanket.

Slide Fourteen: The China Challenge – Part 2

One of my reasons for making the trip to Yunnan was to look at the future of the fantastically diverse forests in which this amazing primate lives, for a major road was about to smooth and speed what had been a 4 hour journey along rutted roads and cart tracks to its last remaining habitat.

What does the future hold for the forest of the Snub-nosed monkey? A constant stream of logging lorries exporting the foundation pillars of its habitat or a constant stream of tourists paying ever-higher prices for the last chance to photograph the animal before it ends up in a zoo.

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Think positive along the lines of: A major new, world-class zoo theme park (the animals well separated from the rides) top of the range captive breeding programmes for endangered species close to the Yunnan's major airport. This would cater for the vast bulk of those locals and visitors who dislike the inconvenience of altitude, land leeches, cold mist and rain. That is as far as they would need to go.

But what about the people of the mountains, how do they continue to make a living?

With adequate home stays for back packers and others who want the 'in the wild experience' all adequately controlled and serviced by well trained rangers and local guides. This is surely a better route than further ruination of the upper catchment which smoothes the flow of water down the Yangtze, by any further logging.

Such a 'think positive' course of action would then become a driver for rehabilitation of more and more of the monkeys forest home. Making it easier to control floods and droughts and accommodate more tourists in the future by which time a Sky Rail might be in order.

Recent study by the conservation biologist Yazhen Gong shows that, without local people being compensated, new plans for the National

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Park in the region will make conflict between locals and the reserve management almost inevitable. yzgong@interchange.ubc.ca

Slide Fifteen: Paying for Conservation

To find a way to pay for possible future compensation, researchers have found out whether people living in the province around the reserve would be willing to pay. These people benefit from conservation in the reserve, but at present pay nothing towards it. The researchers found that they would be willing to pay an 'eco-tax' that could be used to compensate farmers excluded from the reserve area, home of the monkey. The good news is that the amount that could be collected would more than enough to cover the cost of this payment.

The report concludes that a compensation scheme funded by an eco-tax could be a viable solution to conflict resolution in many of China's (and indeed the world's) protected areas.

Fortunately this is a trend that is being put into rapid action around the world

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Slide Sixteen: The Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership

Take the English Lake District as an example, in World terms this is but a tiny slice of rural real estate that attracts 23 million day and 18 million stay visitors a year all helping, someone in the tourist industry to make a profit. But who pays to keep the landscape looking as the poet Wordsworth described it and as tourists expect it to look? The real answer is the farmers and Non Governmental Organisations including our National Trust who own the land.

But now things are changing thanks to The Lake District Tourism and Conservation Partnership. Customers are asked to add something onto their bills to help pay for management of the landscape.

Small sums of money that the businesses match from their own profits. A sort of adding value tax that supports a whole range of conservation tasks in the area.

The uptake by the customers is over 90% and the English Lakes including that host of golden daffodils, immortalised by Wordsworth are getting more than a spring clean. www.lakespartnership.org.uk

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On a much larger scale, Europe is now revising its common agricultural policy that has to date subsidised farmers to produce as much food as possible with devastating effects on the biodiversity of the countryside and hence on its value to the tourist industry. This old CAP is being rejuvenated by a diverse scheme that rewards farmers for farming in a much more environmentally friendly way. **In effect by profiting from growing biodiversity along with their crops.** www.jordans-cereals.co.uk

Slide Seventeen: The Agriculture Conundrum

One thing the whole world of commerce including tourism has got to face up to is the repercussions of the only incontrovertible law of economics first spelt out by A German 19th Century economist. **Herr Engels observed that, as economies grow, the share of agriculture in the total economy declines. Prices for food do not rise, as people do not buy any more potatoes or radishes as they get better off, they buy luxuries, dare I say holidays.**

The only way for the modern farmer to keep in the 'luxury holiday set' is for him to constantly seek expansion. To get bigger he must adopt new technology quicker than his neighbours, forcing them out of business and buying their farms. This is the story of British agriculture under the CAP. It has now been destroying the British (and European) countryside for

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decades and the adoption of GM technology can only accelerate this, by seeking to make food cheaper still and the ecological ravages of industrialised agriculture unavoidable. We can only hope that the recent shock revelations from around the world will be warning enough, ianpaton@aol.com

One answer is that all tourist operations should rely on as much locally produced food as possible using systems that reward the farmer in the field, while saving on food miles. This, above all will help save the rural landscapes, the stuff of tourist brochures and havens of local biodiversity.

Slide Eighteen: Camping and Caravanning

So onto a more home based part of the tourism industry, camping and caravanning. One operator in Britain proudly boasts that his chain of parks provides 4 million people with holidays each year and all of them come into an environment that is rapidly putting its business into biodiverse sustainable order. Thanks to an annually audited environmental awards scheme, now looked upon as a brand leader.

A scheme that is not just a paper tiger but helps all participants to move up the scale of environmental excellence. Already 542 parks are in the scheme catering for over 10 million visitors a year. And more are joining in. Why?

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Because it is good for business as people now are showing a preference for parks (some of which have as many as 9000 tourists on park in the height of the season) in the scheme. www.davidbellamyconservation.org . There is now a similar scheme called The Gum Nut Awards - with a name like that where else but in Australia.

Holidays based at or as near home as possible were a thing of the past and with obvious environmental restrictions looming on the horizon have to become a thing of the future.

Slide Nineteen: The Billion Dollar Question

THE BILLION DOLLAR QUESTION. What about all those air miles?

Avigas is a finite untaxed resource and one day it is going to run out. Long haul tourism is going to feel the effect of this more than any one else.

So down on your knees and pray that science can solve the problem.

It looks as if the hydrogen economy could save the day with the hydrogen produced from well researched alternatives, tidal current, wave power and solar arrays appearing to be the most promising.

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Slide Twenty: An Ill Wind

Wind power may have had all the hype in recent years but now the truth is coming regarding intermittency, inefficiency, grid stability and the need for massive back up out the big investors are thinking more than twice. What is more the economies of both Denmark and Germany the world leaders in this technology are beginning to feel the pinch as is their tourist industry.

www.countryguardian.org

For those of you who have stayed on island resorts with add on wind power will know that when the wind stops blowing on come the fossil fuel generators and if they don't off go the air conditioning when you need it the most. Also when the wind is blowing low intensity noise and strobing can ruin the holiday experience.

Fortunately many countries are now subsidising energy efficiency giving them breathing space to make the right choice. www.globeenergy.com

So we can only hope that long before all the fossil fuels are used up the right mix of alternative sources of energy will be on stream not only to provide us with the energy for commerce home and transport but for an alternative to avigas.

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Car engines that burn hydrogen are already being produced by BMW we can only wonder when they will be available for aeroplanes.

Slide Twenty One: A Hydrogen Future?

The problem is that a hydrogen economy may solve the problem of noxious emissions from billions of exhaust pipes but it will not solve grid lock especially around airports.

Disney apart, it is another dream of most people to sit on a tropical beach taking in the delights of a 'sundowner'.

Sadly there is no getting away from the fact that mass tourism has hastened the demise of coral reefs The Worlds most biodiverse marine systems and natures own solar powered, self repairing sea defences putting key resorts in grave danger of tidal surges.

Slide Twenty Two: The Coral Challenge

At least one third of the reefs of the world are dead and another third are heading down that same dark tunnel. Real trouble ahead for resorts and

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coastal communities alike less for snorkellers and divers to see and less for the local fishers to catch.

The good news is that while we still have pristine reefs around the world brimming with the biodiversity of all the corals and other animals and plants that build and repair those reefs given a chance and a little bit of help the sea life will return. www.coralcay.org. As will the local fishers.

So never ever propose or agree to condone the building or even think of making use of a new resort in an area where the reefs are still in good condition. These are the mother lodes of biodiversity that if given a chance can repair the golden egg. Once they are gone they are gone forever.

Codes of practice exist for integrated coastal management that highlight what must be done to turn the tide of coral destruction and hasten rehabilitation. These range from, tertiary treatment and nutrient stripping on all sewage outfalls, use only fixed mooring buoys, to no snorkelling at low tide and perfect buoyancy and no gloves when diving on reefs.

If you could accomplish that alone, the reefs would revive and fast.

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And remember as tourism is the worlds biggest business it has real political clout and so can bring real pressure to bear to stop over-fishing across the world especially of the big sharks (over 80% have already gone) for without them the balance of the marine food chain including those all important reefs is impaired and rehabilitation of those islands in the sun will take much longer, if it happens at all.

Slide Twenty Three: Cruising to a Solution?

One last point and that is cruising. This is a big growth industry and if it follows all the strictest principles of environmentally friendly tourism including adequate recompense for all the stakeholders of the resource they enthrall and educate their customers about in every port of call then the mass tourism industry will be heading for sustainability.

Ladies and gentlemen if tourism doesn't get its act right than you really are gambling on the future not only of your business but on the future of the world. Yes natural history is that important and we must begin to learn that just as there are limitations in the natural world there must be limitations in the man made world.

Slide Twenty Four: The Bedrock of Sustainability

The bedrock of sustainability is saying, time to stop.

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Yes tourism is part of the problem but it is also an important part of the solution. Conservation through good business

So when you are cruising or holding your next virtual conference, log on to www.ladbroke.com/bigbirdrace and take a bet on the Big Bird Race,

the ultimate flutter. A mad idea of my Queensland-based colleague Tim Nevard now coming to fruition thanks to the world's biggest bookie, Ladbrokes agreeing to fund the saddling up of 18 of the worlds rarest albatrosses (who pioneered long hall flights long before the jet engine got in on the act) with electronic satellite tracking devices.

Slide Twenty Five: Gambling on the Future

All profits raised in this and the following years races, (for it is an annual card of events for the 'Duke of Edinburgh's Challenge Cup') will go into research on the worlds endangered birds. Vital information to keep up the pressure on all governments to sign up to the global environment treaty, that aims to conserve and manage avian, marine and terrestrial migratory species, as well as their habitats throughout the range of their migration.