

## LESSON 3 Student Sheet A

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### What is Ecotourism?

**If you could visit the grasslands of Africa or a rainforest in South America or the snow-covered Arctic, you would want to, wouldn't you? It would be exciting to travel to distant lands and see and do things that you can't do at home. It would be amazing to see the plants and animals that live in wildernesses around the world.**



Let's say you that you travel to a South American rainforest. To explore it safely and to see the animals and to know where you were going, you'd need a guide. You'd also need some way to get around, a place to sleep, food to eat and so on.

The business of providing for visitors, or tourists, when they are in wild places is called "ecological tourism" or "ecotourism." It is a business all over the world.

Ecotourism can benefit a wild place as well as the people, plants and animals that live there. Tourists spend money on lots of things when they come to visit, including food, housing, guides and souvenirs. The money helps local people make a living and helps local governments provide for the community. If tourists are willing to spend money to visit a wild place, then the local people and government may decide to protect the area and the plants and animals that live there. This, of course, is good for the wild place and good for the wildlife.

On the other hand, ecotourism can change a place – and sometimes make it worse. Too much construction or too many vehicles can harm the wilderness. More people can mean more pollution, fewer resources to go around and disturbances to wildlife.



### Some examples of ecotourism are:

- Visits to Central American rainforests
- Going on an African safari
- Taking a cruise to the Antarctic
- Visiting a national park such as the Grand Canyon

We are going to be studying tourist visits to Churchill, Manitoba, Canada to see polar bears.

### Keep these questions about ecotourism in mind:

- Who does it benefit and how?
- Does everyone benefit?
- Does it hurt anyone or anything? If so, how?
- Are there ways to lessen the impact of ecotourism? How?
- How do you measure success?

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The company was nominated for the Ecotourism Award by a guest who witnessed firsthand its daily routines and practices on the tundra. The company earned the Sustainable Tourism Award because of its environmentally safe practices. These include having its Tundra Buggies travel on existing trails rather than create new ones (the original trails were created by the Armed Forces during the 1950s); contributing to research and education programs that benefit polar bears; using biodegradable wash products; and having a field operations manager to ensure that all policies, guidelines, rules and conventions are followed by all the staff.

## Who Decides?



There are many different organizations that watch ecotourism companies.

For example, Frontiers North Adventures, which runs the Tundra Buggy® Adventure, works closely with the Mayor of the City of Churchill; the scientists and policy managers of Manitoba Conservation and Parks Canada; the Canadian Tourism Commission; the Manitoba Ministers of Conservation and Tourism; the conservation group Polar Bears International; and many others to make sure that its tours follow practices that don't harm polar bears or their habitat.



The Tundra Buggy® Adventure has earned awards for its respect for wildlife and the environment. Travel Manitoba, the provincial tourism department, presented the company with its Ecotourism Award in 2006 and its Sustainable Tourism Award in 2007.