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Ecotourism in rural developing communities

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Abstract

This paper considers the *ad hoc* development of ecotourism at Ostional, Costa Rica, and the potential benefits for the local community in the absence of government planning or intervention. In 1995, only four percent of Ostional households identified tourism as a source of income; however, this was substantial in comparison to that derived from other economic activities. While most Ostional residents had positive attitudes toward tourism, they had limited awareness of employment or investment opportunities. Lack of awareness, along with increased activity by outside investors, suggests that, in the absence of formalized planning or intervention, the possibilities for the community at Ostional to further benefit from tourism development will be limited.

Résumé

L'écotourisme dans des communautés rurales en voie de développement. Cet article examine l'évolution improvisée de l'écotourisme à Ostional au Costa Rica et ses avantages potentiels pour la communauté en absence d'organisation et

d'intervention gouvernementales. En 1995, seulement quatre pour cent de la population d'Ostional signalait le tourisme comme source de revenu, ce chiffre était pourtant considérable par rapport aux revenus obtenus de toutes autres activités économiques. Bien que la plupart des habitants d'Ostional se montraient favorables au tourisme, ils faisaient preuve d'une conscience limitée d'occasions pour l'emploi et pour les investissements économiques. Cette conscience limitée, ajoutée à une activité financière intensifiée des investisseurs extérieurs, suggère que, sans planification ou intervention formelles, les bénéfices possibles du tourisme pour la communauté d'Ostional seront limités.



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Keywords

alternative ecotourism; community participation; wildlife conservation

Mots-clés

Éco-tourisme alternatif; participation communautaire; la défense de l'environnement

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Lisa Campbell (Department of Geography, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada N6A 5C2. Email lcampbe@julian.uwo.ca) is Assistant Professor in Geography. She is interested in strategies for reconciling the objectives of wildlife conservation with those of rural development, and in the role of local communities in implementing such strategies, particularly in developing countries.

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