



SPREP

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme

WASTE, POLLUTION AND TOURISM

How important is tourism to the Pacific region?

Tourism is one of the significant industry sectors contributing to the economy of the region, generating substantial foreign exchange inflows, creating employment and a large contribution to government revenue.

In January 2010, Samoa recorded an increase of 7.3% on its tourist arrivals in comparison to January 2009 figures. The increase was due mainly to an increase in the number of visitors from Asia, New Zealand, Australia and American Samoa.¹

Fiji recorded 631,868 visitors in 2010, with the majority (75%) travelling to Fiji for a holiday. The total tourism earning to the country was approximately USD\$550 million during this period. This was a 9% increase from 2009².



What attracts tourists to the Pacific?

■ UNIQUE CULTURE

The Pacific's hospitable people, diverse cultures with at least 1000 distinctive languages, cultural artifacts, traditional dances, fire walking ceremonies, and kava ceremonies draw visitors.

■ RICH BIODIVERSITY

The Pacific is home to a diverse range of unique creatures. PNG in particular contains almost 7% of the world's biodiversity, which is concentrated into just 0.6% of the world's total land area. The Western Pacific is acknowledged to have the highest marine diversity in the world with up to 3,000 species found on a single reef.

■ TROPICAL CLIMATE

Pleasant temperatures throughout the year with averages of 24–31°C with only a few degrees drop at nightfall are irresistible to visitors.

■ RECREATION

Hiking, sightseeing, snorkeling, scuba diving, swimming are just a few of the many recreational activities that visitors can enjoy.



Traditional art of weaving © J. Bassett

How does waste and pollution threaten the tourism industry?

- Poorly managed waste and litter are unsightly, leaving visitors with a negative view of the country
- Poor waste disposal breeds mosquitoes and other vectors that can lead to disease outbreaks
- No one wants to spend their holiday swimming, surfing, or snorkeling with ocean litter
- Pollution and waste kill coral reefs and marine life - dead coral reefs do not attract visitors!

¹ Samoa Tourism Authority News: www.samoa.travel/blog/xm04xy2010/April-2010

² Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics – The Official Statistical Agency for the Fiji Government www.statsfiji.gov.fj/Tourism/tourism_earning.htm

How does the tourism industry contribute to waste and pollution?

- Operation of hotel septic tanks and swimming pools generates liquid wastes including sewage and sludge which, if untreated prior to discharge, can lead to unsafe bathing waters and coral reef death.
- Existing sewage treatment plants can potentially be overloaded during peak tourist times which can result in overflows into surrounding waters.
- Hotels often generate solid waste such as packaging materials, kitchen and garden waste, old furniture and equipment, and potentially hazardous wastes such as asbestos and solvents.
- Transport by air and road is continuously increasing to cater for rising number of tourists in the Pacific. The increase in use of fossil-fueled transportation contributes to greenhouse gas emission, persistent organic pollutants, as well as severe local air pollution.

What can the Tourism Industry do to help?

Policy

- Each hotel can develop a *Green Hotel Policy*, which includes actions to reduce and better manage solid waste and pollution.
- Establish a "Green Tourism Award" to recognize those in the tourism sector that are doing a good job, and to motivate those that are not doing so well.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

- Encourage guests to reduce the use of shopping bags and the amount of packaging materials when they go out shopping. Provide a complimentary reusable bag to each guest, or make them available for purchase.
- Take a reusable bag whenever you go shopping.
- Recommend guest actions to reduce water and energy consumption (such as "turn off all lights, TC and air conditioner when leaving your room").
- Serve meals on reusable cups and plates and avoid the use of disposable cups and plates and eating utensils.
- Serve food buffet-style using banana leaves, breadfruit leaves and coconut shells.
- Enjoy readily available fruits like coconuts.



Enjoy readily available fruits like coconuts

What can tourists do?

- Always take a reusable bag or knapsack with you to avoid the use of plastic bags.
- When buying products, choose the option with the least amount of packaging if possible.
- Buy products that use recycled materials.
- Choose local fruit and vegetables over imported ones.
- Turn off all lights and air conditioners when not in use.
- Reuse towels for a couple of days before placing them in the laundry.



For more information, contact: Waste Management and Pollution Control Division, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), sprep@sprep.org



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VISION: The Pacific environment – sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.

Westpac