

Journey towards becoming a Sustainable Tour Operator

A Presentation by Alan Dixson
UNIGLOBE Lets Go Travel
At Green Tourism Summit 2017
13-15 June 2017
Park Inn by Radisson
Nairobi, Kenya

About LGT

- Started in 1979
- An IATA Travel Agent worldwide.
- Safari and Holiday planner for East Africa.
- Specialized in small groups, families and out of the way and different destinations.
- Personalized and budget conscience.
- Dynamic and changing with technological programs and processes.

Our Sustainable Tourism Achievements

- Conservation
- Travelife and Sustainability Learning
- Education
- Livelihood – Keep Her in School
- Safari and Happy Projects
- Winner of Eco Warrior Award 2014
- Runner up in 2015
- Winner of Eco Warrior Award 2016
- Travelife Certified 2016



HOW WE DID IT

Early Engagements- How/what did LGT do?

- Eco Tour in 1973
- Ecotourism in 1982
- Eco Tourism Society of Kenya (ESOK)-1996
- Ecotourism Kenya
- Green Tourism or Eco rating in 2003

Conservation Organisation Memberships

- East African Wildlife Society (EAWLS)
- Wildlife Clubs of Kenya
- Ecotourism Kenya
- Nature Kenya
- Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF)
- Ngare Ndare Forest
- Kenya Green Building Society

Ecotourism Leaders- what did they do and how did LGT engage?

- 1990 one of the first - Borana Lodge
- 1992 a farmers organisation Laikipia Wildlife Forum formed.
- 1996 – Il Nwesi Lodge – the real first Eco – Lodge
- Got Laikipia known as the new “tourism frontier”
- 1998 – Base Camp, Masai Mara – later becoming first Eco Gold rated lodge
- 2002 - Ol Gaboli, on Ol Motiok group ranch in Naibunga, Laikipia.

Emergence of Community Based Tourism- How did LGT get engaged/support

- 2003 - KEKOBAT was formed as a membership organisation representing the interests of Community Based Tourism in Kenya.
- 2005 - Eco Tourism Conference held by Ecotourism Kenya in Nairobi. LWF was given the opportunity to present Laikipia Tourism Development Plan.

Examples of LGT engagement with CBT

- 1985 or so Uniglobe Lets Go Travel (ULGT) booking agents for Kitani and Ngulia self catering lodges in Tsavo West; Meru Mount Kenya Lodge, Mount Kenya. Camel safaris west of Lewa.
- Then bookings and promoting community developments like Ololokwe donkey trips up the mountain, Il Ngwesi Lodge and Tassia Lodge next to Lewa. Community bandas up in Kakamega; also Kasigau near Voi.

Recognition

- On the board of EU Funding to Community Development Tourism – Shompole; Lumo; Malewa;
- it was in those days started developing itineraries like Nbo – Malewa – Ol Pejeta – Il Ngwesi – Mara

International Networking

- In Sept 2013 The International EcoTourism Society (TIES) held the Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference (ESTC) at the Safari Park Hotel Nbo – and at that I attended a Travel Life familiarisation of their ethos.
- In 2015?? ETK/KATO encouraged a meeting/workshop of interested Tour Operators – 22 attended, and of those 8 were awarded certification in October 2016, us being one.

International Recognition

- Travel Life – certification as Travel Life Partner.
- - having successfully completed Travelife Partner sustainability management, reporting and compliance obligations.
- Next moves – do more?

Advocating for Sustainable Tourism

- More “sustainable” itineraries, better lodges and hotels using responsible and better practises – follow a lot of the Eco rated lodges.
- Asked contracting lodges and hotels in 2017 to complete a “Checklist for Sustainable Goods & Services” .
- Clients and Operators asking more

Stronger Unity – the way forward

- “The Strength Of Private Sector Community Gets Real” – LWF newsletter of 11.4.17 LWF Forum Focus Issue 12
- Private sector tourism in Laikipia has taken a strong move forward. Earlier this month, our county tourism service providers approved the formation of the [Laikipia Tourism Association \(LTA\)](#) – a collection of all types of tourism facilities and providers in the County with the aim of becoming the number one sustainable tourism destination in East Africa. A Managing Committee of the LTA was appointed...

Defining Sustainable Tourism

- Comment from Laikipia Tourism Association (LTA) “Sustainable tourism is all about a commitment to doing business that benefits us financially, environmentally, socially, and culturally. It’s business that respects people and the environment in which we live and operate. And it seeks strong Public-Private-Partnerships.”

Trends worth noting- what does it mean for Tour Operators?

- Fourteen conservancies have gathered together to form an association, the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA) that envisions community conservation as the savior of the ecosystem. – can they DO IT?
- A paved Mara Highway – will that be better?! (Serengeti Highway...)

Tour operators can be sustainable- here is how?

- Seek to know by engaging, supporting and networking
- Remain committed and consistent, follow and work with sustainability leaders
- Benchmark using available local or international standards e.g. Travel life
- Engage all staff - have champion
- Build staff capacity through training
- Develop a green checklist for suppliers
- Design green/ sustainable itineraries
- Seek professional support
- Promote what you do to clients and business partners
- Write sustainability annual reports to evaluate your performance and share your commitments
- It comes with a cost- invest

My Personal Contribution

- Started planting trees up in Eburru, near Naivasha about 30 years ago?
- Largely Acacia of different types and Eucalyptus.
- Have planted another 7,000 indigenous trees up near the Loldaiga Hills, beyond Nanyuki.
- Drive our Sustainable practises of ULGT.

Sustainable Conservation through Education – Kalalu Secondary School 9th June '17

