

**COUNTRY REPORT TO BE PRESENTED AT SEMINAR ON SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM IN PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES:  
17-18 OCTOBER 2001, FIJI**

**BY**

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**1. Economic Impact of Tourism**

Tourism is an increasingly important sector of the Samoan economy. Tourism offers opportunities for foreign exchange generation and employment creation throughout the economy, both in resorts, village tourism and in tourism services.

Samoa is a small, relatively remote, multi-island destination in the South Pacific. The basic dimensions and characteristics of the country's tourism industry are indicated by the following figures:

- All arrivals (2000): 87,688
- Holiday arrivals (2000) 28,433 (32%)
- South Pacific Market Share (1999): 8.5%
  
- Rate of Growth in Arrivals:
- **Samoa (1995-2000)**
- All arrivals 5.6% pa
- Holiday arrivals 5.2% pa
  
- **South Pacific (1995-2000)**
- All arrivals 5.7% pa

Tourist development in Samoa is at a youthful stage, being increasingly recognized by Government as a source of economic development:

- GDP (2000): 6.9%
- Tourism Employment (2000): 8.4%

Total Foreign visitor arrivals recorded over the last three years are presented in the Table below.

## FOREIGN VISITOR ARRIVAL: 1998-2000

	Foreign tourist arrivals	% change over previous year
1998	77,926	-
1999	85,124	9.2
2000	87,688	3.0

Top Foreign Exchange earnings realized over the three year period of 1998-2000 are presented in the Table below.

### TOP FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNERS (Remittances, Exports and Imports) 1998 - 2000

	Foreign exchange earnings US dollars 1998	Rank	Foreign exchange earnings US dollars 1999	Rank	Foreign exchange earnings US dollars 2000	Rank
Remittances	32.9	2	39.0	2	41.1	1
Tourism	38.3	1	41.7	1	39.8	2
Exports, fob	18.4	4	18.1	4	13.5	4
Imports, cif	-94.9	6	-115.4	6	-104.3	6

Note: Foreign earnings in millions

## 2. Current state of ecotourism and potential of further expansion.

### a) Definition of ecotourism as it is perceived at both national and local levels.

- Ecotourism as defined by IUCN – The World Conservation Union – is “environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy, study and appreciate nature (and any accompanying culture features – both past and present), that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations.” (Cellallos-Lascurain, 1996)
- There are different ways of looking at ecotourism

#### 1) Historically

Ecotourism emerged in the wake of increased concern about the impacts of mass tourism on the environment and cultures of particularly developed countries. It can be considered under the umbrella term 'alternative tourism' as a niche activity the characteristics of which include: being small scale, community owned and managed, providing and educational

opportunity for tourists, having less detrimental impacts than other more 'intensive' forms of tourism

## 2) Shades of Green

Different forms and definitions of ecotourism abound. All are focused on nature activities some specifically on making a positive contribution to tourism in protected natural environments, others say nature tourism is any type of tourism that takes place in the natural environment.

So at one end of the spectrum it is envisaged as a type of 'community welfare system'. It involves spreading the benefits of tourism locally like in Saanapu-Sataoa and at the other end its a business opportunity like ecotour Samoa with its broad focus on educating tourists, soft adventure and exploration whilst not harming the environment (too much).

## 3) Criticism

Ecotourism is widely criticised in tourism literature as being a marketing bandwagon, under the precept that anything green sells. It has also been considered elitist, focusing on high income high educated tourists as opposed to the hordes. Furthermore it has wrongly been considered an alternative to mass. How can small scale local tourism ever replace mass....the numbers just don't add up.

## 4) Sustainable tourism

Partly as a result of criticism of various alternative, low impact forms of tourism like ecotourism, increasingly researchers have turned from finding a sustainable form of tourism to trying to make all forms of tourism more in line with the principles of sustainable development. In the Samoa sustainable tourism indicators project we interpreted these as being tourism that was comprehensive in scope; looking at the linkages between the environment and tourism as well as economy and culture, was place-specific: needed to be interpreted in the context of the specific situation in Samoa was stakeholder-driven; involved a high degree of stakeholder participation and finally was adaptive; recognised tourism was dynamic and any management systems had to be able to cope with change through monitoring, review and adaptation. As a result we came up with a set of 12 objectives outlining what we saw as the goals of Sustainable tourism development. From there we worked on ways of measuring progress towards these objectives using indicators. The results from the indicators are then used to help manage and plan for tourism in Samoa in a way that is comprehensive, stakeholder-driven and adaptive.

**b) Principal ecotourism products offered.**

- Samoa offers a range of ecotourism products including kayaking, bush walking, diving, snorkelling, surfing and bike tours.

**c) Principal threats to the sustainability of ecotourism and ecotourism products.**

- Lack of planning in the past of the development of tourism.
- Damage to the environment caused by tourists that is not being monitored. E.g. reef damage by snorkelling.
- Lack of regulations pertaining to development.

**d) Challenges and opportunities for the expansion of ecotourism.**

- Challenge: the expansion of ecotourism that is sustainable.
- The development of regulations and laws for this purpose.
- The Education of tourism operators at all levels.
- Opportunities exist in all realms of ecotourism as it has not reached its potential in Samoa. The effects of tourist activities on the environment is relatively minor at the moment therefore there is scope for increase numbers provided that the planning and implementation of environmental controls are in place.

Broader external uncertainties result from:

- Volatile civil aviation environment
- Regional instability
- Economic conditions in the major markets: USA, Australia, NZ

**2. Role of government, policies and initiatives**

Preparations of the 2002-2006 Samoa Tourism Development Plan is timely.

Other related Plans and Projects are being prepared:

- Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2002-2004
- Urban Plan, Marine Protected Area, Infrastructure Project, Port Development

Samoa's Sustainable Tourism Development Indicators show that although there are warning signs in areas such as waste water disposal and efficiency of water usage, if these areas are addressed there is still scope for further tourism development.

### **3. Recommendations for the development of ecotourism**

**Same as 2(d) –**

**Will add upon more upon arrival.**

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