

Destination Development as Consultancy Work: Content and Quality Demand, International Experiences

Canopy Tourism (Baumwipfelpfade)

Examples from Costa Rica, Malaysia and Rwanda



What is Canopy Tourism?

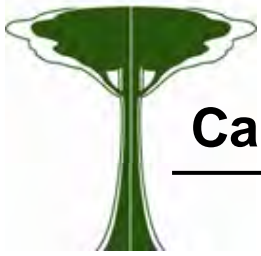


What is Canopy Tourism?



Basically every way to bring tourists up into the forest canopy to create an experience which is considerably different from the one on the ground.

Canopy tourism can be understood as a flagship attraction which can be used as a tool to benefit protected areas/ destinations.



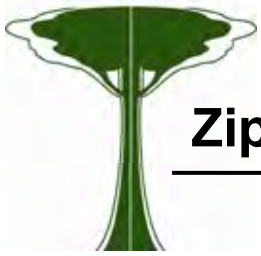
Canopy Walkways



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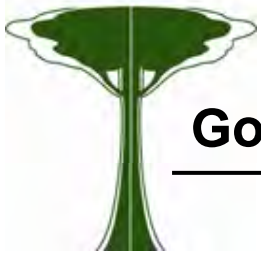


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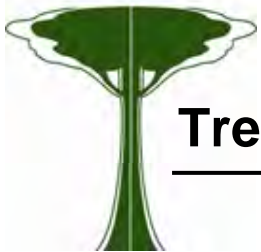
Ziplines





Gondolas





Treetop Platforms



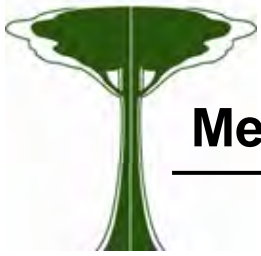
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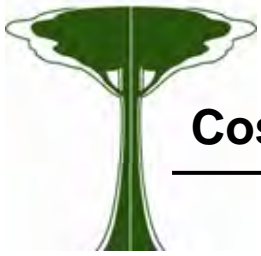


Metal Poles/ Towers





Case Studies
Examples from Costa Rica, Malaysia and Rwanda

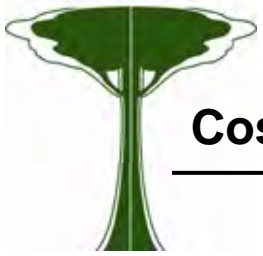


Costa Rica - Overview



- 90 – 110 canopy tourism facilities exist in Costa Rica, most of them are so called Canopy Tours (zip lines)
- Assessment of nine different facilities offering canopy tourism as a stand alone product in 2005

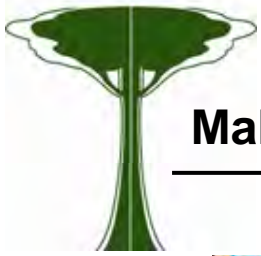




Costa Rica - Outcomes



- **Costa Rica can be considered one of the pioneering countries in canopy tourism - canopy activities are offered as stand-alone product.**
- **All facilities are privately owned and run – the majority is thrill-based (ziplines, tarzan swings etc.) and built with heavy infrastructure.**
- **According to the ministry of tourism about 25% of Costa Rica's foreign visitors take part in a canopy activity.**
- **Canopy tourism in CR is a highly lucrative market, a two-three-hour tour costs between 40 and 70 US\$. Canopy tourism can be considered a significant contribution to the country's tourism economy.**
- **At the same time canopy tourism is a highly unregulated market. Little requirements for security are made by the governmental authorities; hardly any regulations and no eco certificate exist for environmental matters.**



Malaysia - Overview



- 10 canopy tourism facilities exist in Malaysia, all of them in public protected areas
- Evaluation of two protected areas in 2008 with canopy tourism as one of various tourism activities offered



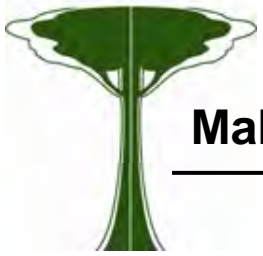
Malaysia – Taman Negara NP



Taman Negara National Park

- One of the oldest rainforests in the world
- 530m tree platform walkway
- 71,000 – 81,000 visitors/year from 2005 to 2008

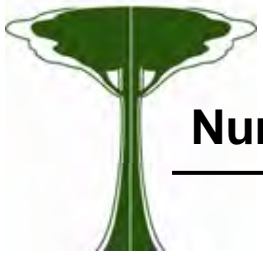
Malaysia – Borneo Rainforest Lodge



Borneo Rainforest Lodge (BRL)

- Dipterocarp lowland rainforest
- 260 m tree platform walkway
- 2,000 – 3000 visitors/year from 2005 to 2008





Numbers from Malaysia

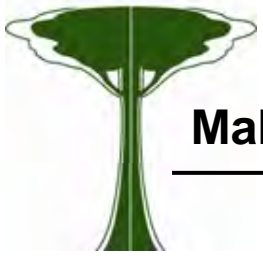


- **75% of the visitors felt that it was important to experience the rainforest, see wildlife and be directly and actively involved with natural environment.**
- **Experiencing the tree tops was rated one of the main reasons to choose the destination by 50% of the visitors.**
- **The majority of the visitors thought the best thing about the walkways was experiencing the thrill of maneuvering the walkway itself.**

Even though only half of the tourists knew about them beforehand, the overall majority visited the walkways in Taman Negara and BRL.

Source: Shahwahid, Seibel 2009



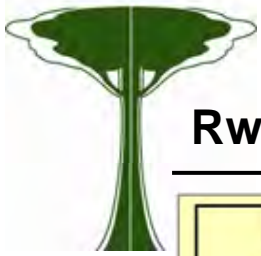


Malaysia - Outcomes



- **Malaysia can be considered one of the pioneering countries in canopy tourism – nevertheless canopy tourism is not offered as a stand-alone product.**
- **Accordingly, the potential of canopy tourism to use it as a tool for sound ecotourism destination management is not fully recognized.**
- **On a more general level there is a lot of disagreement in Malaysia about aims, definitions and regulations of ecotourism.**
- **Reasons for this can be found in insufficient interaction of stakeholders over different spatial levels (local, regional, national) as well as different sectors (private, governmental, NGOs)**
- **A major outcome of this scenario is, that even existing management plans and regulations are not implemented successfully.**

Therefore, many of the existing canopy tourism activities are not embedded into effective destination management.



Rwanda - Nyungwe Forest National Park

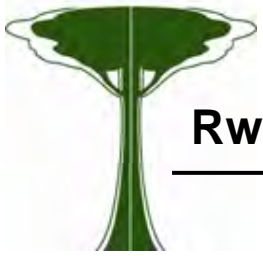


Evaluation in 2009



Nyungwe Forest National Park

- High altitude montane rainforest
- Biggest in East Africa
- 5000 – 6000 visitors/year from 2007 - 2008
- 200m walkway with three towers
- To be finished by the middle of 2010

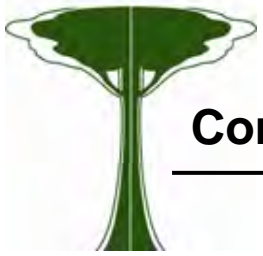


Rwanda - Outcomes



- **No canopy tourism exists in Rwanda yet – the walkway in Nyungwe National Park will be the first in East Africa and the actors involved have high expectations regarding the success of the facility.**
- **Regarding its size and natural heritage, the park is under-marketed and under-visited.**
- **The USAID-funded *Destination Nyungwe Project* aims at changing this scenario – part of this project is the implementation of the Nyungwe Forest Canopy Walkway.**
- **Since the large part of Rwanda's tourism offer is nature-based, the actors involved have a sound understanding of ecotourism.**
- **Nyungwe National Park therefore has good potential to be integrated into a national sustainable tourism strategy.**

Therefore, chances are good that the Nyungwe Forest Canopy Walkway will be embedded into effective destination management.



Conclusions



- **Canopy tourism has great potential to provide a special rainforest experience.**
- **Canopy tourism facilities can work as a major tourism draw**
- **In most cases this potential is not fully used.**
- **Reasons for this can be found in the inexistence of sound management plans and a lack of understanding how to use this potential.**
- **It is difficult to separate canopy tourism from other rainforest tourism which makes it difficult to establish clear connections between this tourism segment and benefits to the environment or local communities.**

Therefore, canopy tourism should be understood as a flagship attraction among other rainforest tourism activities which should be integrated into effective destination management.



Thank you!