

# *ECO INSTINCT*

*Partners in Eco Agritourism*



## **Preserving Environment, Cuisine, and Culture**

The benefits of Eco Agritourism can help rural communities preserve their distinctive cultural and natural heritage. CEC supports the efforts of travel industry to develop Eco Agritourism. CEC's team of experts, collaborate on a range of dynamic Eco Agritourism partner projects. By rekindling visitor and resident interest in nature, cuisine, and culture, we can simultaneously help sustain communities, encourage expansion of agriculture and provide an extraordinary visitor experiences.

### Introduction

CEC introduces savvy travelers to residents, farmers, fishermen, winemakers, artisan food producers, chefs, lodge owners, historians, nature conservationists and many other residents who maintain their farms much like their ancestors, using sustainable methods. It seems so natural to connect with local residents, to spend time in their villages and enjoy a leisurely meal together. Before we eat the bread, we learn from farmers how grains are cultivated. Before we drink the wine, we learn from winemakers about the grapes and wine making process. Before we sample olive oil, we meet the farmers at their groves and factories. Before we sample cheese, we meet shepherds to discover how his or her flocks live – roaming the slopes and eating wild plants. We discover how wild plants are used in cooking and natural medicine, during our hikes in the countryside and cooking demonstrations. The renowned traditional healthy cuisine is not a phenomenon; it's a matter of respecting the land and the bounties it provides. Every great chef will tell you that they are only as good as their ingredients. The foundation of the diet concept is fresh, local, organic food and a clean water and environment. Both residents and visitors benefit from community-based preservation programs. Careful consideration and strong alliances are required to sustain these programs. CEC celebrates heritage in an ethical and professional manner. Residents are investing their time and money to share their valuable knowledge. CEC offers visitors a rare opportunity to discover information that can enrich their own lives.

Tourism and Agriculture are primary industries in many countries around the world. The majority of tourism programs support generic services. CEC partner projects are unique - each program is designed to benefit local communities in terms of providing financial stability or protecting cultural and natural heritage. Many residents in these communities are involved in Agriculture, such as olive oil and wine production. Both industries compete for increasingly scarce natural resources. CEC promotes the benefits of educational experience via the window of traditional food ways. As Agriculture is an integral part of culture, our programs center on the work of farmers and interrelated preservation work to serve several purposes at once.

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Industrial agriculture is comprised of cooperatives, some of which represent hundreds of families cultivating a variety of produce on small plots of land. Slowly, some cooperatives and individuals are converting to organic production. A growing number of specialized farmers incorporate agritourism into their work to promote their products, share their knowledge and generate supplemental income. Not all producers are collaborating with residents involved in interrelated preservation work that can enhance the quality of Agritourism and the quality of life for residents.

## Implementing Responsible Travel in the Case of Eco Agritourism

The fact that a destination has excellent cuisine and nature reserves does not mean that communities are able to open up the area to visitors. Before residents invite visitors to their villages and farms, they need to consider how they will present and sustain their programs and protect their communities.

Since most of us are not farmers, we don't know what to expect from an Agritourism experience. Agritourism is meant to support farmers and their communities. In the case of organic agriculture, it also helps to protect our environment. Agritourism can make a difference as part of the bigger picture of preservation and responsible travel. Organic farming is a lifelong commitment. Supplying the world with excellent food and wine is more challenging than we might ever know or appreciate. While it's a lovely notion if farmers or fishers could take the day off to entertain us, we are asking for the world. The time they devote to sharing their knowledge with us is a rare privilege. Eco Agritourism travel can cover a lot of ground today. There are interrelated categories – eco, sustainable, ethical, green, geo, etc. The bottom line is that people are actively working to support and protect the communities in which they live, work or visit. Responsible travel is part of the solution to a growing number of global issues relating to social inequality, exploitation, cultural preservation, food safety and environmental protection. It's a fine theory, embraced the world over, yet the practice is challenging. While the number of responsible travel practitioners increases, the number of travelers partaking in such beneficial programs is minimal. Many people say they prefer “real” or “ethical” travel experiences, yet they are unaware that local communities must justly benefit from the services they provide. It is the responsible travel practitioner's job to develop valuable programs and create awareness of that value, which will be offered at a fair price. Preservation work is a partnership between providers and beneficiaries. Enjoying an action-packed series of cultural activities requires the participation of many local people. It must be financially rewarding, otherwise the arrangement is not mutually beneficial or ethical.

## Sharing the Benefits of Responsible Travel

By tailoring small-group travel programs in harmony with the seasons, cultural and environmental impacts, availability of residents and interests of attendees, CEC has the advantage of flexibility. In consideration of our collective and individual projects, we serve a dual purpose - to support local preservation work and share those benefits with visitors. We link farmers with other members of the community through:

- 1) education
- 2) staying in locally-owned lodges and eco-lodges
- 3) providing training and referral services
- 4) global promotion of projects
- 5) sharing revenues with communities

Many travelers benefit from community-based preservation work. We stress that communities must benefit the most if we expect to enjoy such services, including excellent fresh, local cuisine. CEC acts as a gateway for communities to expand or create their own programs. There are

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established Agricultural Cooperatives, producing and selling traditional products within their communities or beyond, depending on their resources and support for their work. There are also excellent home cooks, gardeners and artisan producers that do not have the resources to join cooperatives or host visitors. CEC invites residents from varied backgrounds to participate in our programs. By collaborating with the community, Eco Agritourism stretches beyond the boundaries of a single farm. Communities maintain their way of life as they choose, rather than altering it to suit an outsider's vision of foreign travel. Eco Agritourism must be advantageous for communities. Otherwise, there is no incentive to provide these valuable services or expand production. Our approach can be implemented anywhere in the world. Eco-agritourism is a business run by accomplished professionals. All beneficiaries – the public and private sectors, the media and travelers – need to be aware of the value of these programs. CEC promotes responsible travel programs. We also organize workshops for colleagues and our success has encouraged others to follow our lead.

## Responsible Travel

CEC aims to contribute to the well being of local people and their environment. Small-scale practitioners cannot afford advertising, nor are they certain to benefit from it, as the coverage is rarely specific to their work and could be subjective.

CEC takes small steps to launch a small-scale programs building them from the ground up in collaboration with other local businesses, advocacy groups and public agencies. With the rapid interest from savvy travelers and growth of responsible travel advocacy groups, entrepreneurs' participation in programs is increasing. Responsible Eco Agritourism is not a trend; it is a necessity.

## Conclusion

Eco Agritourism, provides a wide range of benefits to communities and visitors. It provides an opportunity for entrepreneurs and small business owners and travelers to be active participants in sustainable development programs. It requires direct collaboration with individuals and organizations delivering tangible returns on their investments. Eco Agritourism can help preserve and build sustainable communities. It can build meaningful careers for future generations and protect the very reason why people join CEC's Eco Agritourism program – to discover, preserve and promote nature, cuisine and culture.

## Reference

### Agriculture

<http://www.chamberofecocommerce.com/partnerprojects/agriculture.html>

### Aquaculture

<http://www.chamberofecocommerce.com/partnerprojects/aquaculture.html>

### Tourism

<http://www.chamberofecocommerce.com/partnerprojects/tourism.html>

### Food Security

<http://www.chamberofecocommerce.com/partnerprojects/foodsecurityhub.html>