ECOTOURISM ENVIRONMENTS

PROTECTED AREAS
**PROTECTED AREAS**

- The World Conservation Union (IUCN 1994) defines protected area as *an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means.*

- Protected areas account for most ecotourism activity because of the environmental protection that they attempt to provide.
PROTECTED AREAS

- By the 2004, over 100 000 public terrestrial protected areas were in existence worldwide, covering 6.1% of the world’s land surface.

- The actual proportion of the protected area varies widely between countries.

- The highest proportion of land in protected land are clustered in Europe and Latin America.
Importance of public protected areas as ecotourism venues

- **Natural environments**

Most protected areas are oriented toward the protection of relatively undisturbed natural environments and biodiversity. Therefore they provide a suitable physical setting for ecotourism.

Protected area status is often granted to an area on the basis of exceptional natural qualities.
Importance of public protected areas as ecotourism venues

- **High public profile**

An iconic attraction are preferred or ‘must’ see destinations for large number of visitors.

National Parks Yellowstone, Yosemite and Grand Canyon (USA); Serengeti national Wildlife Reserve (Tanzania); Kruger national park (South Africa), Banff National park (Canada),...
Importance of public protected areas as ecotourism venues

- *Structural suitability to ecotourism*

Most nature-based protected areas includes recreational activities, such as ecotourism, that focus on the appreciation of natural environment.

Recreational activities are regulated and other activities prohibited or restricted so that the criterion of environmental sustainability is also met to the greatest possible extent.
Importance of public protected areas as ecotourism venues

- **Investment in infrastructure and services**
  These typically include walking trails, parking areas, toilet facilities, campgrounds and equipment rental sites.

- **Convergence between protected and natural landscapes**
  The increase of the protected areas in the past century has been impressive, but it has been far exceeded by the destruction or degradation of the remaining natural environments.
INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) CATEGORIES

- Not all protected areas are equally compatible with ecotourism.
- Green and Paine (1997) calculated that during the mid-1990s, there were at least 1388 different categories of ‘protected area’ worldwide.
- National Park in the USA or Australia usually contains relatively undisturbed natural environments, while in UK the same term represents an extensively modified landscape that is protected for its cultural as well as ecological merit.
IUCN has defined a series of six protected area management categories:

**CATEGORY Ia: Strict Nature Reserve**
protected area managed mainly for science.

**CATEGORY Ib: Wilderness Area**
protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection.

**CATEGORY II: National Park**
protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation.

**CATEGORY III: Natural Monument**
protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features.
**IUCN MANAGEMENT CATEGORIES:**

**CATEGORY IV:** *Habitat/Species Management Area*
protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention

**CATEGORY V:** *Protected Landscape/Seascape*
protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation

**CATEGORY VI:** *Managed Resource Protected Area*
protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems
IUCN classification system is now widely accepted as the international standard for protected areas.

Its basic logic is - the lower the designated number of a site, the lower the amount of environmental modification and human intervention is acceptable.
The graph includes undated protected areas with category information in all years and excludes protected areas with no category information.
Source: WDPA August 2014 (http://www.palrc.com/about/about-protected-areas/)