

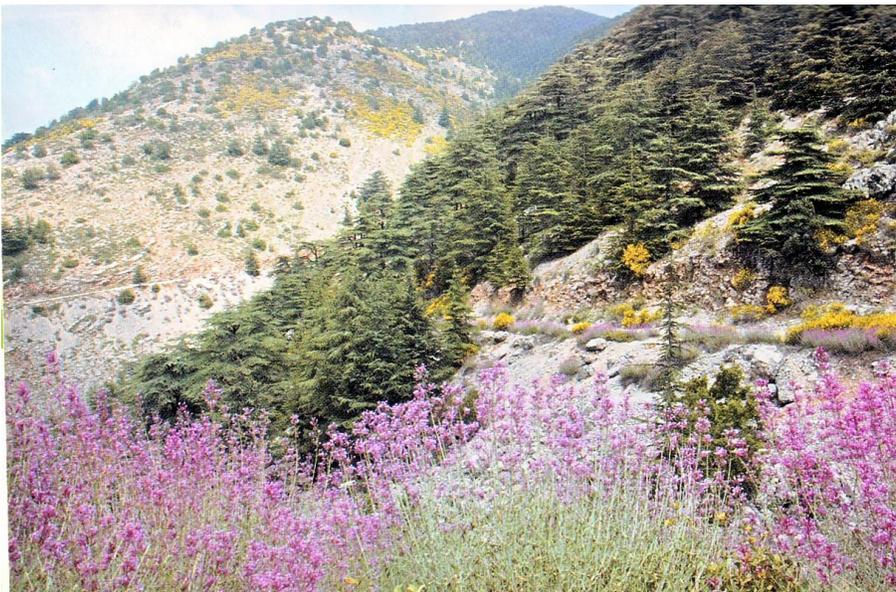
Location: Shouf National Reserve
(The protected house of Shouf biosphere reserve)

Date: 29 / 1 / 2014
Duration: 3 hours

Subject: Ecotourism

Ecotourism is one of the most important subjects nowadays.

Talking about ecotourism was the main idea in the meeting with Mr. Pascale Abdallah, in the presence of Miss Nail Berdawi and Miss Martin Saadeh from the DAI association which is interested in rural development and some of the volunteers in Shouf National reserve.



Ecotourism

Activities

The link between tourism and protected areas is becoming more important as tourism activities are relying more on natural heritage combined with cultural heritage. At the same time protected areas are also becoming more interested in the role of tourism in supporting conservation initiatives.

Ecotourism is a field that is very dependent on effective and efficient planning.

Tourism in and around protected areas must become a tool for conservation that contributes to the quality of life and economic opportunities of local communities.

Tourism packages help to fulfill these goals by introducing the visitor to the uniqueness of the attractions, and at the same time benefit the local communities directly. All the discovery packages proposed in our Eco-tourism strategy are composed of 2 days 1 night, with a large choice of activities and destinations.

They are designed to encourage 'slow travel' allowing the visitor to have a more authentic experience and a better understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

They are composed of 1 day hiking in the Biosphere reserve + 1 overnight in the guesthouse + 1 cultural tour at the villages. Most of these packages are for the summer season (mid April - mid October), but a good number of them are feasible in winter, whether or not they are combined with snow activities.



What can you do in the reserve?

Hiking: more than 230km of hiking trails in the mountain or next to the river

Biking: 20 bicycles are available in the villages surrounding the reserve

Donkey riding: 4 Donkeys are available

Snowshoeing: 19 snowshoes are available

Villages cultural tour

Villages local festivals

Taste the traditional

What about Eco-tourism Strategy?

Mr. Abdallah talked about the tourism value chain that in general and responsible tourism in particular, is a highly fragmented industry composed of many small businesses that are connected and interdependent. In Lebanon the tourism chain is not a functional entity due to a multitude of factors such as the lack of planning and regulations by the public sector, and the lack of professionalism in the private sector. There is an urgent need to involve local micro- enterprises that are owned by the residents surrounding the SBR.



The Tourism Value Chain concentrates on meeting visitor expectations and involves everything from pre-visit image and marketing right through to after sales care and commitment. Its key components are: Pre-visit image and information; booking and reservation; arrival and welcome; experience; attractions and activities; infrastructure and environment; places to eat/stay; departure/farewell; and follow-up.

Each stage of the visitor's 'journey' is important and a quality experience along each of the stages will result in a satisfied customer who will talk to friends and family about his good experience.

What about tourism packages?

Tourism in and around protected areas must become a tool for conservation, says Mr. Nizar Hany the general director of the Shouf reserve, that contributes to the quality of life and economic opportunities of local communities. Tourism packages help to fulfill these goals.



Written by: Nahed Bou Dargham
Reception & Information Hostess, Niha Office
For the February 2014 Newsteller