**Eco-tourism:**   Perhaps the most over-used and mis-used word in the travel industry. But what does it mean?  The Ecotourism Society defines it as "responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of the local people".  A walk through the rainforest is not eco-tourism unless that particular walk somehow benefits that environment and the people who live there.  A rafting trip is only eco-tourism if it raises awareness and funds to help protect the watershed.  A loose interpretation of this definition allows many companies to promote themselves as something that they are not.  If true eco-tourism is important to you, ask plenty of questions to determine if your trip will help "conserve and improve" the places you visit

**Eco – tourism our MISSION at WILD BROOK RETREAT**

Ecotourism, also known as ecological tourism, is a form of tourism that appeals to the ecologically and socially conscious individuals. Generally speaking, ecotourism focuses on volunteering, personal growth, and learning new ways to live on the planet; typically involving travel to destinations where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions

It purports to educate the traveller; provide funds for conservation; directly benefit the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, therefore, in addition to evaluating environmental and cultural factors, an integral part of ecotourism is in the promotion of recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and creation of economic opportunities for the local communities.

Ecotourism is a form of tourism that involves traveling to tranquil and unpolluted natural areas. According to the definition and principles of ecotourism established by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) in 1990, ecotourism is "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." (TIES, 1990). Martha Honey, expands on the TIES definition by describing the seven characteristics of ecotourism, which are:

* Involves travel to natural destinations.
* Minimizes impact and
* Builds environmental awareness.
* Provides direct financial benefits for conservation.
* Provides financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
* Respects local culture.
* Supports human rights and democratic movements.

Ideally, ecotourism should satisfy several criteria,such as:

* conservation of biological and Cultural diversity through eco system protection
* promotion of sustainable use of biodiversity, by providing jobs to local populations
* sharing of socio-economic benefits with local communities and indigenous peoples by having their informed consent and participation in the management of ecotourism enterprises
* tourism to unspoiled natural resources, with minimal impact on the environment being a primary concern.
* minimization of tourism's own environmental impact
* affordability and lack of waste in the form of luxury
* local culture, flora and fauna being the main attractions

The concept of ecotourism is widely misunderstood and in practice is often used as a marketing tool to promote tourism that is related to nature. This is an especially frequent malpractice in the realm of Jungle tourism. **Critics claim that these green washing practices, carried out in the name of ecotourism, often consist of placing a hotel in a splendid landscape, to the detriment of the ecosystem.** According to them, ecotourism must above all sensitize people to the beauty and the fragility of nature. They condemn some operators as green washing their operations: using the labels of "green" and "eco-friendly”, while behaving in environmentally irresponsible ways

A visit to WILD BROOK RETREAT, will give you the real feel of eco tourism as its our MISSION to minimize the negative aspects of conventional tourism on the environment, and enhance the cultural integrity of local people, and to promote the integral part of ecotourism, that is the promotion of recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and creation of economic opportunities for the local communities.