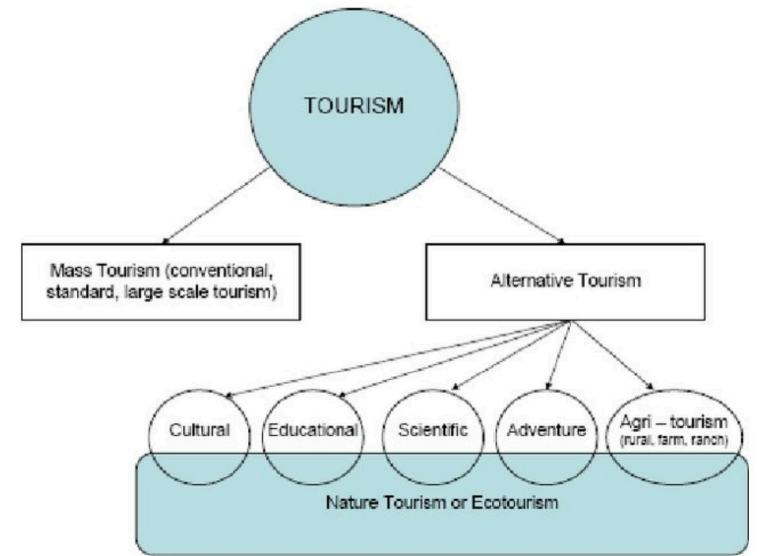


# Defining 'alternative' tourism

Elena dell'Agnese

Università di Milano-Bicocca

40 years of alternative tourism?



P. Holden, ed., 1984, *Alternative Tourism, with a Focus on Asia*, Bangkok, Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism.

# Alternative to what?

Erik Cohen, «Alternative tourism: a critique», 1987

- «An examination of the use of the idea of ‘alternative tourism’ reveals that it is meant to be **an alternative to several things**, and is therefore used in different ‘although related’ ways. These may lead to very different practices and consequences of ‘alternative tourism’»
- «The idea of alternative tourism has its source in **two contemporary ideological preoccupations** : one is the countercultural rejection of modern mass consumerism, and the other the concern for the impact of the modern industrial world on Third World [sic] societies»

## the countercultural rejection of modern mass consumerism

«Alternative tourism» in its counter-cultural conception, is, in the broadest sense, one variety of such alternative life styles. In their opposition to the conventional world, **the travelling youths even reject the label tourist and see themselves as travellers** or globe trotters while others labelled them as backpackers, drifters or hippies... Counter cultural alternative tourism inverts the values, motives, attitudes and practices of conventional mass tourism...

The conventional tourist spends money conspicuously for personal comforts and pleasures; the traveller, in contrast, travels on the cheap.

Indeed, while conspicuous consumption endows the conventional tourist with status among travellers, **the cheaper one can live, the more status one acquires**

The problems of this kind of alternative tourism multiply insofar as **it becomes fashionable** and ever large numbers of young backpackers strive to reach **untouched, unspoilt, primitive and remote destinations**, which appear to be off-the-beaten-track» (Cohen, 1987)



**COOKED NOMAD**

# SPIRIT

## I'M A TRAVELLER NOT A TOURIST

**Included:**

- Elephant pants
- Sangsom bucket
- 7-11 gift card
- Chang/leo wife beater
- Temporary wanderlust tattoo
- Full Moon Party ticket
- A guitar to annoy your hostel mates

**Not Included:**

- Shampoo
- Money
- Return flight

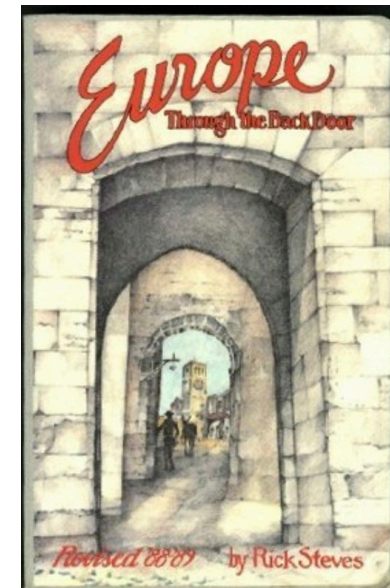
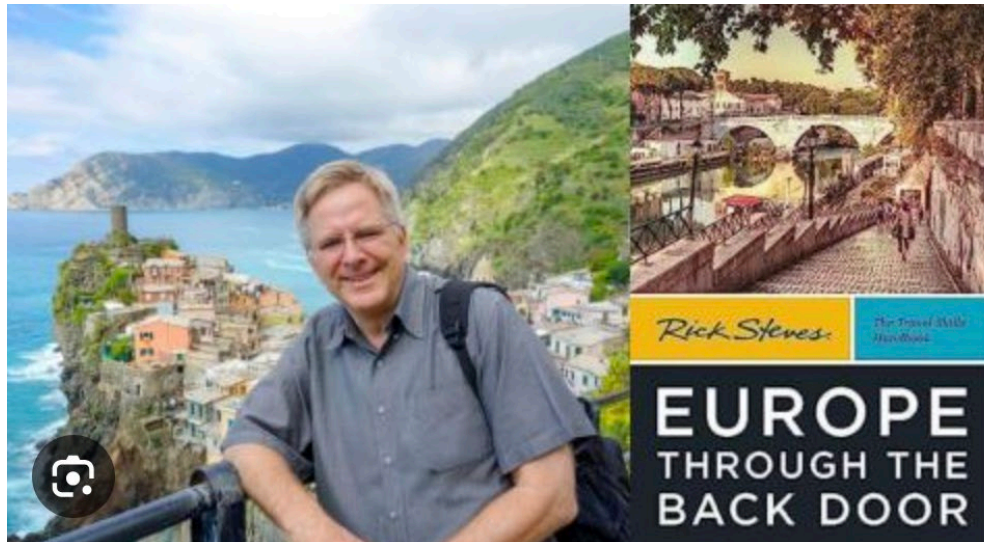
**ADULT**  
Size Costume

**Only 50 baht!**

**'We're not anti-tourist': Italy's picturesque villages struggle to cope with deluge of Insta-visitors**



«The process of *Vermassung*, of the increase in numbers of countercultural alternative tourists, also leads to some other problematic consequences, like the degradation of the local environment, and a progressive transformation of local society and culture, primarily through commercialization» (Cohen, 1987)



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# Italy's Civita di Bagnoregio: Jewel on the Hill



By Rick Steves



Beautiful Civita di Bagnoregio seems hewn right from the rock on which it rests. (photo: Dominic Bonuccelli)

Of all the Italian hill towns, [Civita di Bagnoregio](#) is my favorite. Less well-known than [Siena](#) or [Assisi](#), this stunning little gem has escaped the modern age mostly because of topography.

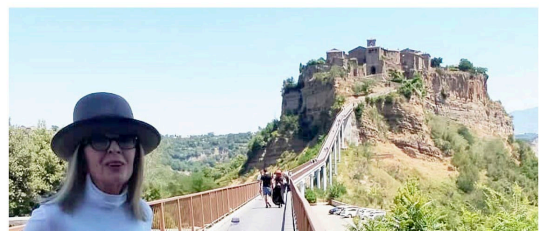
The town teeters atop a crest rising high above a vast canyon ruled by wind and erosion. The saddle of earth that once connected Civita to its bigger and busier sister town, Bagnoregio, has worn away. Photographs around town show the old donkey path that once linked the hamlets. Today, the only way in or out is by a footbridge. **Supp mopeds.**



LA CITTA' SOCIAL TURISTICA / BAGNOREGIO

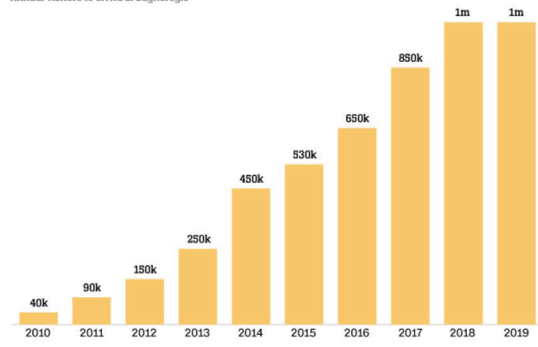
## Nuovo record per Civita di Bagnoregio: è il borgo più instagrammato d'Italia

La "città che muore" è passato da centro etrusco a luogo amato dagli internauti del web



proves to be contributing to the local economy.

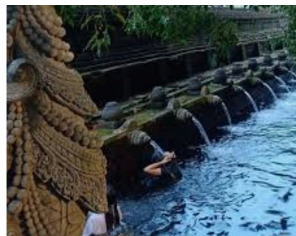
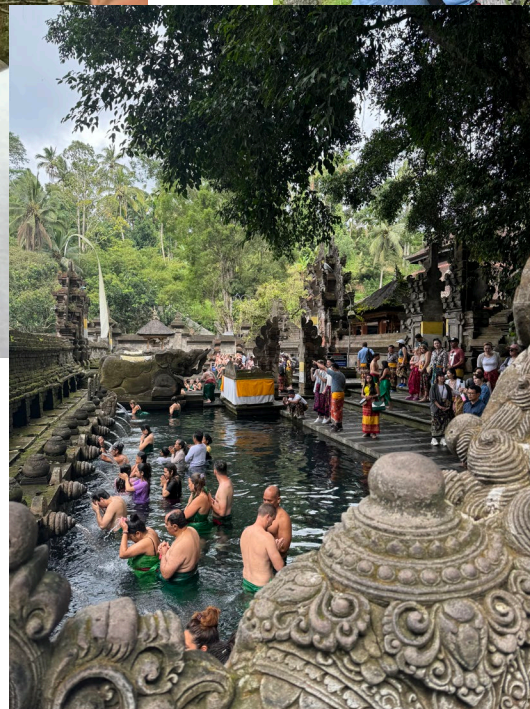
Civita's tourist boom  
Annual visitors to Civita di Bagnoregio




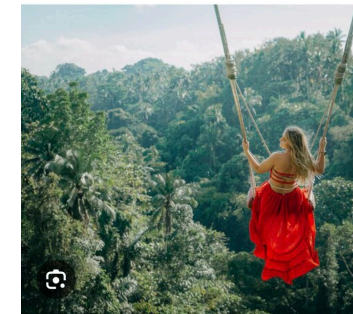
Source: Casa Civita  
Graphic: Gabrielle Smith, CNN



# Ubud?



 Tripadvisor  
2024 (Ubud) Ubud Monkey Forest, I



UBUD Instagram Spot Tour con el  
[fotógrafo](#)

- «Concerned alternative tourism has been defined as aiming to promote .. a just form of travel between members of different communities. It seeks to achieve mutual understanding, solidarity and equality among participants...
- The available reports indicate that, insofar as such alternative tourism projects were maintained on a small scale and encompassed, mainly self-selected and concerned visitors from developed countries, they indeed succeeded in overcoming most of the alleged shortcomings of both mass and countercultural tourism.
- **Mass tourism is a business based on scale, and cannot be simply broken down into many small operations based on short stays ... either with local families or in specially constructed local-style accommodation...» (Cohen, 1987)**



# Community based tourism?

## Guesthouses in the Maldives

In the Maldives, the development of guesthouses—encouraged by the Third Tourism Master Plan (2007–2011) to create more opportunities for locals—became a source of social differentiation within the local community.

Economically advantaged individuals were able to build guesthouses, often constructing new buildings rather than modifying their existing homes, allowing them to host tourists and earn additional income. In contrast, those who lacked the financial resources to invest in such ventures were excluded from these potential benefits.



## Alternative with respect to what?

- 1) **with respect to destinations** - with the risk of degrading these alternative destinations in a way similar to those affected by mass tourism
- 2) **with respect to hosts** – with the risk of exacerbating economic divides within the community
- 3) **with respect to consumerist ways of traveling, eating, and consuming** – but... we already know that tourism as a whole, regardless of the type of product or attraction, must be **sustainable**. Or it should be, at least, designed to offset greenhouse gas emissions, minimise land use and reduce waste...

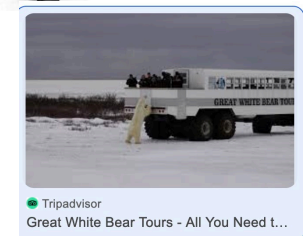
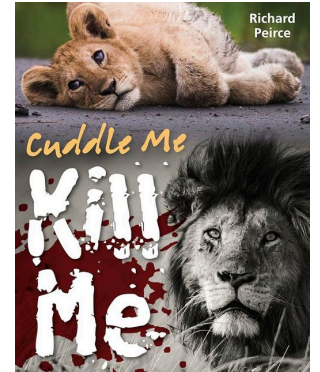
**So, what?**

It is well known that when talking about sustainability, one must refer to the three dimensions of environment, economy and society... o these three dimensions, a fourth (the ethical one) should be added, not only in relation to human beings, but also in relation to non-human animals.



Animals in tourism have been (and still are) hunted, mistreated, commodified...

africanhuntingsafaris.c... < > ⋮ >



Animals are also consumed in large quantities... in the form of roast beef, lamb stew, pork sausages, chicken curry, etc. ... and become, even from the plate, a kind of tourist attraction, as food specialities, in gastronomic tourism and festivals.



**CORTONA**  
Giardini del Parterre  
10-11-12-13-14-15 Agosto 2024  
ore 18 - 24



**63ª SAGRA DELLA BISTECCA**  
Patrocino del Comune di Cortona

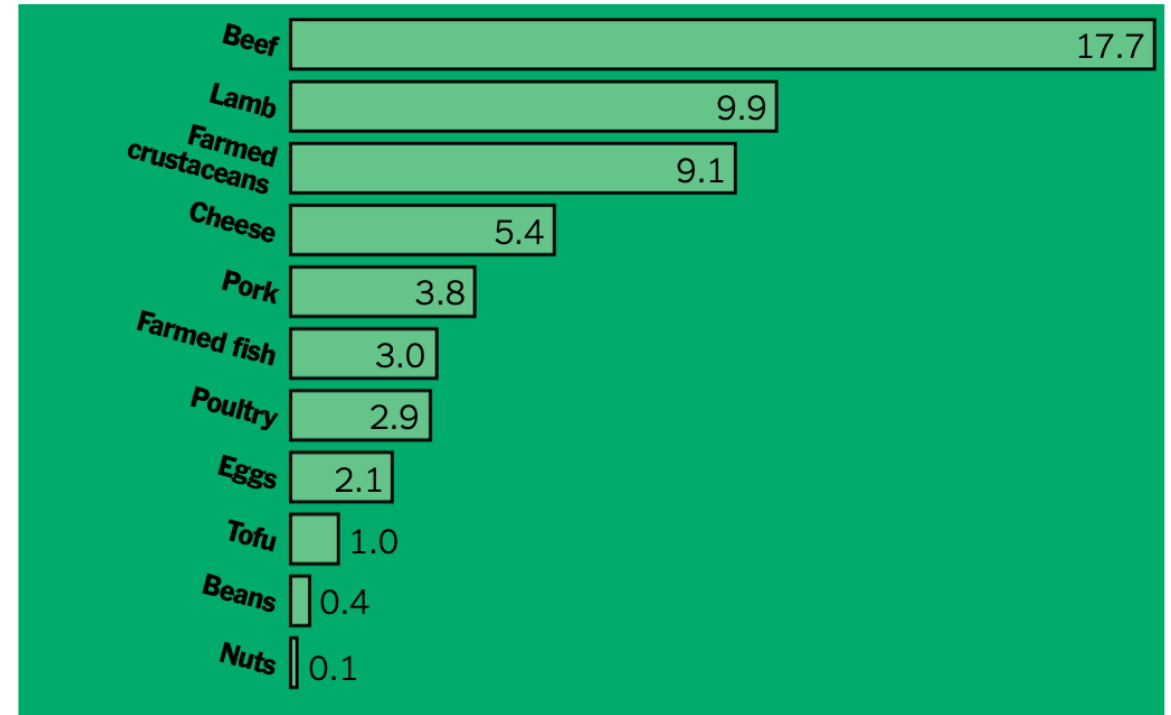


Leaving aside ethical veganism, which is certainly not for everyone, greater respect for animals can intersect with the issue of environmental sustainability - we know that a third of greenhouse gas emissions come from what we eat, and that a large proportion of these emissions come from beef ....

Being more sustainable (alternative) as a tourism operator could therefore mean more than not washing towels every day, using renewable energy or offering zero-kilometre food. It could also mean offering quality vegetarian alternatives on the restaurant menu and then giving customers the freedom to choose.

### Holy Cow!

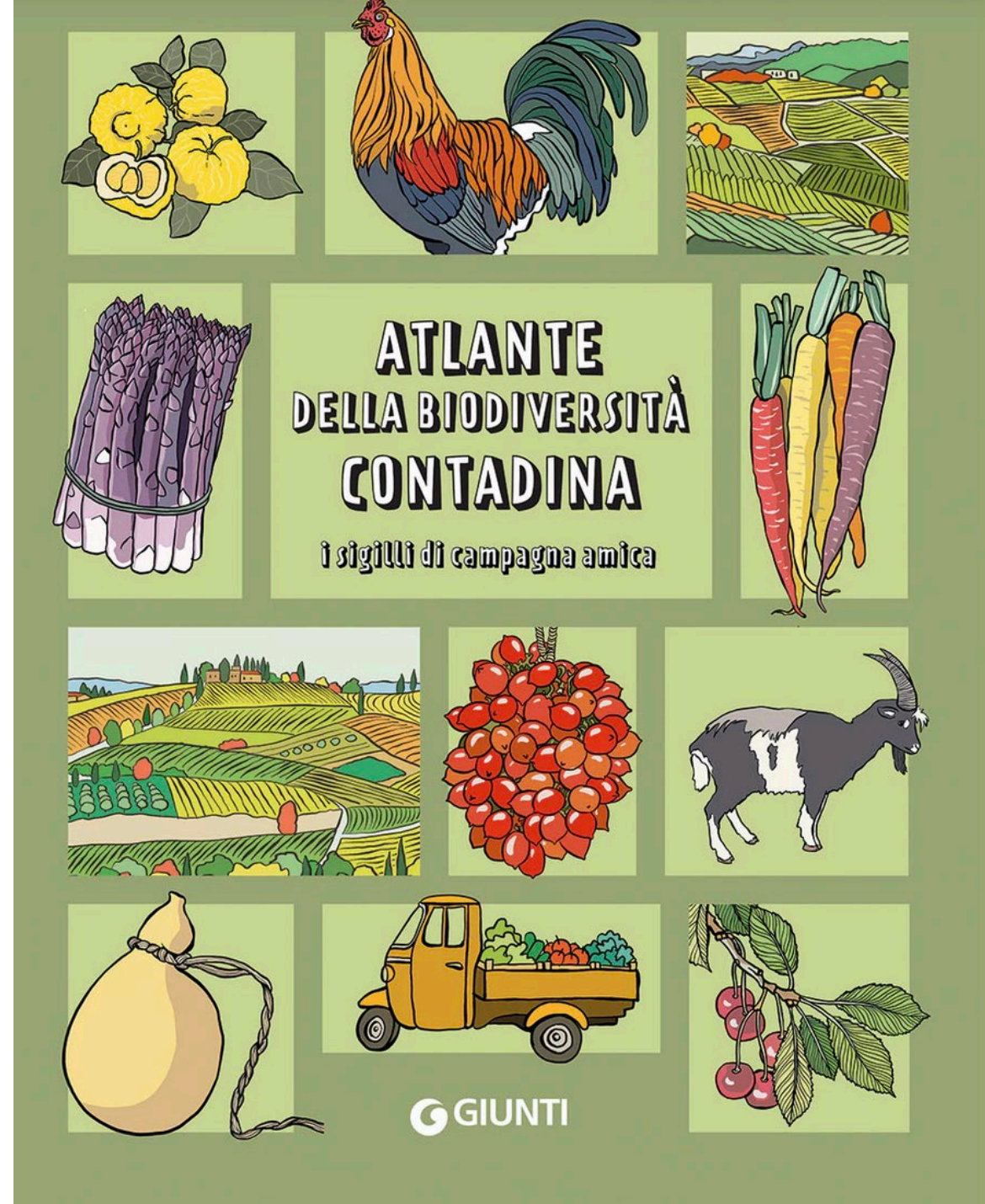
The average greenhouse gas impact (in kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub>) of getting 50 grams of protein from:



Source: Poore and Nemecek, [Science](#)

This could mean, for example, identifying local products of rural biodiversity and offering them, or at least including them in the menu, in order to safeguard local production and traditional agriculture.

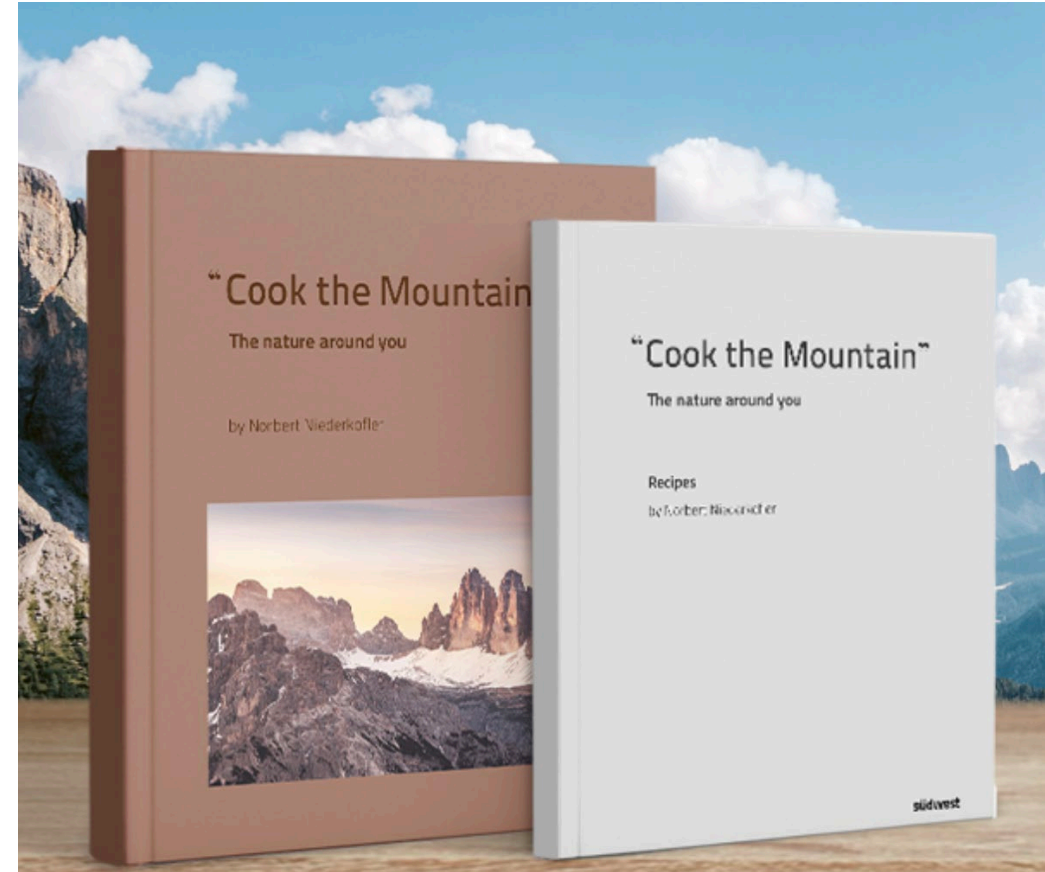
That is, being «alternative» in the kitchen



# «Cook the mountain», the Michelin-starred chef and the Green star...

**What is the MICHELIN Green Star:** «It is an annual award which highlights restaurants at the forefront of the industry when it comes to their sustainable practices. They hold themselves accountable for both their ethical and environmental standards, and work with sustainable producers and suppliers to avoid waste and reduce or even remove plastic and other non-recyclable materials from their supply chain. These restaurants offer dining experiences that combine culinary excellence with outstanding eco-friendly commitments and are a source of inspiration both for keen foodies and the hospitality industry as a whole»

*'Cook the Mountain' reaches its highest expression'. According to the MICHELIN inspectors, 'Niederkofler is one of the masters of Italian cuisine*



It can also mean linking up with cultural institutions working in this field, such as **eco-museums**, and promoting food as a cultural, material and immaterial heritage: the taste of the land... eco-museums and food heritage

## I sapori dei territori. Gli Ecomusei e il patrimonio alimentare

<http://www.ecoslowroad.eu/il-ruolo-degli-ecomusei/>

### Il Progetto Eco Slow Road

Eco Slow Road è un progetto ideato e promosso in occasione di Expo2015 dall'Ecomuseo delle Acque del Gemonese per la Rete italiana degli ecomusei, in stretta collaborazione con Slow Food Italia, con l'obiettivo di collegare le realtà ecomuseali italiane caratterizzate da un patrimonio agroalimentare significativo, al fine di promuovere e valorizzare le risorse e i beni, materiali e immateriali, e diffondere un modello di produzione e di consumo non di massa e far emergere l'interesse per le produzioni agroalimentari tradizionali, frutto di un'agricoltura spesso familiare ed espressione della cultura di territori che hanno sempre sostenuto la biodiversità agraria e l'adattamento sociale ed economico alle risorse locale.







# COLTIVARE IL PAESAGGIO MANGIANDO

[Home](#) > [Il Casentino](#) > [Prodotti Agro-Alimentari](#)

## PRODOTTI AGRO-ALIMENTARI

### PRODUZIONI AGRO-ALIMENTARI E DELLE TRADIZIONI CULINARIE

Il progetto Ecomuseo del Casentino ha come primario obiettivo la tutela e la valorizzazione del patrimonio territoriale nelle sue svariate componenti culturali. All'interno di questo riveste un ruolo di primaria importanza l'aspetto delle produzioni locali e della cucina tradizionale che raccoglie saperi, sapori e manualità che non vanno dispersi ma, al contrario, valorizzati e riproposti per il piacere di "assaporare" un intero territorio. Il Casentino è terra ricca di produzioni alimentari che hanno una lunga storia legata alla tradizione agricola, all'allevamento in particolare ovino e suino e ai prodotti del bosco. Negli anni l'Unione dei Comuni, anche attraverso l'Ecomuseo del Casentino, ha lavorato alla valorizzazione delle produzioni agro-alimentari e delle tradizioni culinarie, sia attraverso il censimento puntuale dei prodotti, che attraverso la partecipazione alla nascita di consorzi per la commercializzazioni di prodotti quali la patata e la castagna.

## Il progetto "Ecomusei del gusto"

Conoscere e vivere la montagna cuneese attraverso 4 eccellenze culinarie



**Moreover, in addition to destinations and practices, tourism can also be «alternative» in relation to its goals**

Is the purpose of tourism only the pleasure of those who practise it, the profit of those who provide the services necessary to practise it, and perhaps the revitalisation of the tourist region, or can it have a higher mission?



- After all, offering truly alternative tourism is not just about not disturbing the local community, paying staff properly and not destroying the environment...
- Tourism is an economic lever, at a local level, but it can also be a tool for overcoming (or at least alleviating) poverty.
- And not just at the local level. It is not just about offering hiking, backpacking, sleeping in the tents or huts of local people (in the form of what we call responsible tourism).
- Again, we need to give customers a choice...

## **Pro-Poor Tourism: Harnessing the World's Largest Industry for the World's Poor**

*Dilys Roe IIED, UK and Penny Urquhart Khanya, South Africa*

Luxury tourism can also make a contribution...

Being pro-poor does not mean sleeping in a hut; it means choosing a tour operator that allocates part of the proceeds to works and institutions that alleviate poverty - the local one, or even the one in the other part of the world. It means taking actions that contribute to alleviating poverty rather than making superficial gestures.

... helping those in need does not require sacrificing comfort or luxury, but rather thoughtful decision-making and prioritization of ethical practices.

- This approach ensures that individuals and companies contribute positively to global social and economic equity.
- Indeed, it is possible to support initiatives that alleviate poverty, even if those efforts occur far from the business's physical location. Businesses can thrive while giving back to the community, demonstrating that luxury and sustainability can coexist.
- Allocating proceeds from high-end tourism to fund educational projects in less privileged areas is a practical and inspiring way to make a difference: I can run a five-star hotel in Cortina, and help, with my proceeds, to build a school in Burkina Faso. That's what the owners of the Soneva, in the Maldives, do. But you can do it anywhere in the world.
- And it is certainly a good way to be 'alternative'