



EARTHCHECK

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Huatulco is the first sustainable community in the Americas, and the third worldwide to be recognised by EarthCheck.

The Huatulco community expects the tourism industry to provide leadership to achieve sustainable environmental and social outcomes for the benefit of the future generations.

This commitment to leadership is clearly articulated in Huatulco's Sustainability Policy and practically demonstrated by the establishment of their Green Team.

Key achievements in 2008 include:

Energy Consumption was **64.3% better than the Best Practice** and **renewable sources produced 23% of energy** used by the region.

Potable Water Consumption was only 103.6 kL per person; **17% better than the Best Practice level.**

In 2008, the solid waste per person was only **0.2 tonnes; 9.1% better than Best Practice**

The Water Saving rating was **3.9 points better than Best Practice level.**

Travel and Tourism Accreditation was **73.5% better than the Best Practice level.**

Habitat Conservation (biodiversity) was **52% better than the Best Practice level.**

95% of the water used was recycled or captured from rainfall.

Modern water/ sewage treatment to ensure no waste enters the ocean.

BAHÍAS DE HUATULCO, MEXICO

Bahías de Huatulco - or Huatulco Bays - is Mexico's southernmost beachside destination. Centred around the town of La Crucecita on the Pacific Coast, tourism is the lifeblood of the economy.

Huatulco has 36 beaches strung out along 35 kilometres of spectacular coastline and a population of just 18,000. However, the region receives some 3,400 tourists daily and this places great pressure on the natural and social environment.

The South Sierra Madre Mountains and the Coyula and Copalita Rivers border the 21,000 hectare area. Seventy-eight percent of Huatulco is undergoing regeneration to preserve the region's ecological balance as damage was done in past through clearing, development and hunting.

Since 2003, Huatulco has been included in the Ramsar Wetlands for the Future Initiative as site 1321, a watershed and coral coast zone. In 1998, the Mexican Government declared 6,375 of lowland jungle and 5,516 hectares of marine area the National Park of Huatulco, and this was then designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2006.

The area is home to a variety of accommodation options including rooms for rent, small economy hotels, luxury ocean-front villas, vacation condominiums, bed and breakfasts, and several luxury resorts that are sited along shores of Tangolunda Bay.

The community recognises the importance of improved environmental, economic and social performance outcomes, with particular reference to addressing local community sustainability issues.

THE GREEN TEAM

To take responsibility for sustainability issues, a Green Team was formed in 2005. This comprised 30 representatives from government and community stakeholders, who lead the Agenda 21 Committee.

The Green Team is divided into seven groups; each focusing on a key performance criteria aligned with the EarthCheck Program. They are:

1. Sustainability Policy
2. Energy efficiency, conservation and proper management
3. Water use efficiency and wastewater treatment
4. Ecosystems, biodiversity, air quality and noise control
5. Waste reduction, reuse and recycle, use and storage of hazardous substances
6. Diffusion and Culture
7. Training

Each year, new action plans are drawn up and implemented by the Green Team.

BENEFITS TO COMMUNITY

The EarthCheck Communities Program has helped Huatulco raise awareness about the natural environment and conservation of resources. This helps guide growth and tourism development, reducing negative impacts on the biodiversity of the area.

Full participation and commitment of private and government organisations is encouraged across the three levels of government; municipal, state and federal.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Huatulco has been positioned as a sustainable community and destination, benefiting on both domestic and international fronts.

The community believe that tourism is a national priority for the economy, but that this goes hand-in-hand with environmental conservation and improving the quality of life for the host community.

To achieve this goal, training and collection programs for children and adults are held on the first Saturday of each month. Attendees learn about the principles of reducing, recycling and reusing unwanted items and materials.

More than 1600 staff from the tourism industry - including major hotels and businesses - have attended environmental training. Furthermore, in excess of 4700 students from primary school through to university levels, have attended sustainable tourism education.

PLANNED INITIATIVES IN SOLID WASTE REDUCTION

Some of the key initiatives designed to improve Huatulco's sustainability include the development of a new landfill site, which complies with international regulations and facilitates the separation of general waste from recyclables. This facility aims to reduce waste by at least 80%.

A recycling centre will be built for the collection of recyclable items, such as

newspapers, paper, cardboard, steel and aluminium cans, glass and plastics, which will then be transferred to recycling companies.

Each school will have its own waste collection point, where waste will be segregated into general waste, recyclables and organics (green waste and food scraps) for compost.

Students will learn about better waste management and the importance of considering natural resource conservation and environmental protection, through environmental training programs.

To reduce the use of plastic bags in Huatulco, promotions at self-service shops educate people about the importance of reusable shopping bags, to achieve waste reduction and to reduce potential damage to the area's vulnerable marine life.

