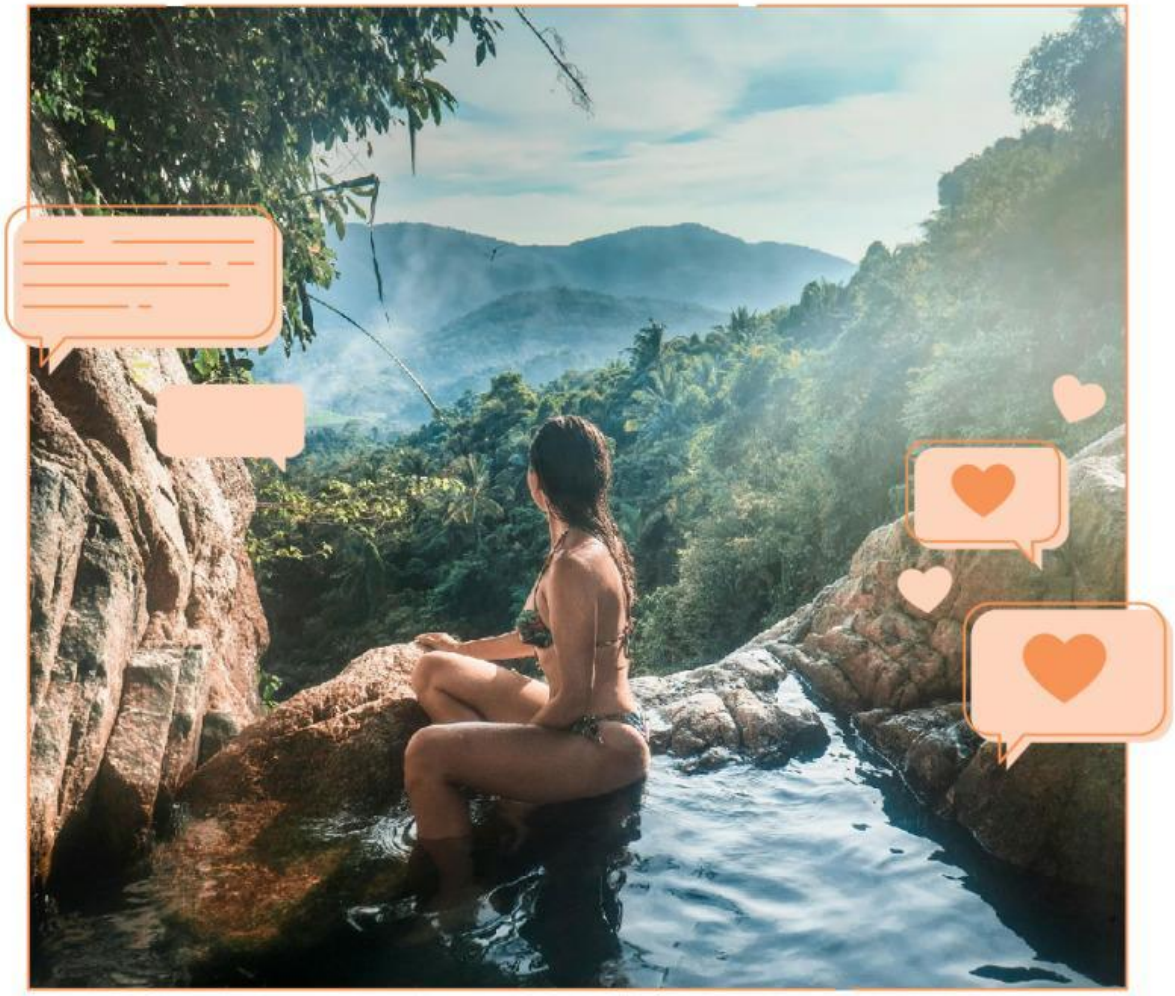
Ecotourism or Influencer Overdose?

ESL Reading Comprehension



Pre-reading Questions:

- Have you ever visited a place after seeing it on social media?
- What are some benefits of sharing travel photos online?
- What are some problems that can happen when too many tourists go to the same place?

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Reading Text

In the age of social media, the way people choose travel destinations has changed dramatically. Photos of turquoise waters, icy cliffs and hidden beaches fill our feeds every day. Many of these posts come from **influencers** – people with large followings who regularly share photos and videos from exotic places. Their job, or passion, is to promote experiences, places and products through eye-catching content.

As a result, once-**remote** locations like Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Antarctica are now booming with tourists. A few years ago, these destinations were known only to adventurers and researchers. Today, they are on many people's bucket lists – thanks largely to viral posts.

On the surface, this trend seems positive. Social media has given visibility to countries and communities that were previously overlooked. **Ecotourism**, a type of travel that focuses on nature and sustainability, has grown in popularity. Many travellers now want to explore natural environments while also protecting them. Influencers can raise **awareness** about climate change, endangered species and the need to protect our planet. In this way, social media can be a powerful tool for education and positive change.

However, there's another side to the story. The rapid increase in visitors can overwhelm fragile **ecosystems**. Some natural areas simply can't handle thousands of tourists each year. In places like Antarctica, even small environmental changes can have long-term effects. Animals may flee from their habitats, vegetation may be trampled and waste may be left behind. What started as a beautiful photo opportunity can end in lasting harm to the landscape.

Also, not all influencers promote sustainable behaviour. Some ignore local rules, walk off designated paths or disturb wildlife to get the perfect shot. In some cases, locations that were once peaceful are now **overcrowded** and damaged. Local residents often feel the pressure, too – facing higher prices, traffic and the loss of quiet community life.

This raises important questions:

- Are we protecting these places, or simply using them for likes and follows?
- Should there be limits on how many visitors are allowed each year to promote **sustainable travel**?
- Should influencers be required to follow strict guidelines when promoting natural destinations?

Some travel companies are now working with influencers who focus on sustainability. These content creators highlight local cultures, encourage responsible behaviour and educate their audiences about **conservation**. The goal is to shift the focus from 'getting the perfect photo' to 'leaving a positive **impact**.'

In the end, social media is just a tool – it can help or harm, depending on how we use it. Travellers, influencers and tourism companies all have a role to play in making sure that beautiful places stay beautiful, not just for us, but for future generations.

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Activity 1: Gist Multiple Choice Questions

Choose the best answer.

Which of the following best captures the central argument of the article?

A. While social media has democratised travel inspiration, it risks commodifying fragile environments unless influencers and tourists adopt a more responsible, conservation-focused approach.

B. The rapid growth of tourism in previously isolated destinations is solely the fault of influencers who disregard environmental concerns.

C. Ecotourism trends have solved most of the environmental issues caused by social media-fuelled travel.

D. Travel companies should prioritise profitability by partnering with influencers who generate high engagement, regardless of environmental consequences.

Activity 2: Reading Comprehension Questions

Read the text again and answer the following questions:

1. How has social media changed the way people choose travel destinations?

2. What are some positive effects of influencers visiting natural places?

Disclaimer: This resource has been made for the purpose of teaching English language learners. We know that students can be learning English in many different places, in many different ways and at any age, so we try to keep these resources as general as possible.

There are many acronyms associated with English language teaching. These include (but are not limited to) ELT, TEFL, EFL, ELL, EAL and ESOL. While the term ESL may not fully represent the linguistic backgrounds of all students, it is the most widely recognised term for English language teaching globally. Therefore, we use the term 'ESL' in the names of our resources to make them easy to find but they are suitable for any student learning to speak English.

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