



Case Study: Adventure Travel in Mexico: Sustainable Development Beyond the Beaches

Situation

Most tourists know Mexico for its sun and popular beaches. The mass tourism sector has contributed significantly to Mexico's economy, providing about 3.8 million jobs and \$277b in GDP in 2008.

SECTUR, Mexico's Tourism Ministry, wanted to find ways to encourage more people to visit its interior regions, bringing tourism revenues to local businesses and communities off the beaten path. However, it was also concerned that the mistakes of mass tourism development along its coast not be repeated.

In October of 2009, SECTUR commissioned Xola to assess its current industry structure, resources; identify regions for market development as well as recommend product models within these areas, and offer management and development strategies.

Challenge

A crux issue for Mexico is how to create a cohesive strategy for adventure tourism in a country with such varied resources. In short, where should SECTUR focus?

Findings

Xola's review focused in three states — Veracruz, Oaxaca, and Chiapas. The team structured its review around the Adventure Tourism Development Index's *10 Pillars of Adventure Tourism Market Competitiveness*.

The team discovered a multitude of untapped opportunities and pinpointed crux issues preventing these opportunities from being realized.

One of the greatest challenges to fostering adventure tourism in Mexico stems from centralized decision-making. In a country with such varied cultures and resources, the centralized creation and management of tourism policy and natural resources is difficult to translate efficiently to local markets.

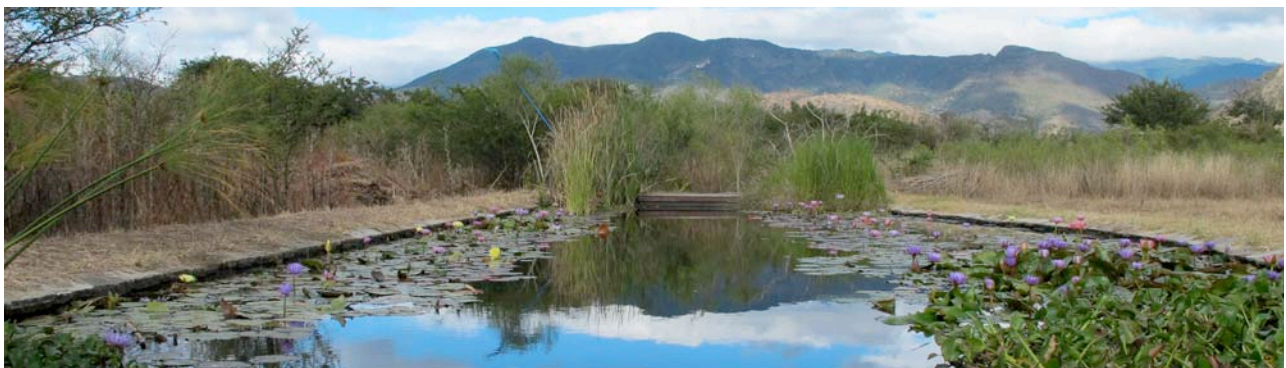
Solution

An overall theme for adventure tourism was proposed, "Ruta de Aventura y Naturaleza," which would link rural destinations, highlighting authentic culture, and natural resources. The idea builds on SECTUR's existing *Pueblos Magicos* concept.

Routes and itineraries within each state were also identified and suggested.

In addition:

- Product models were recommended for the three regions — these included itinerary suggestions, accommodations, resource management, soft infrastructure, capacity and training
- Supply development strategies were identified
- A decentralized policy approach was suggested, with the recommendation to delegate responsibilities further to community level leaders. Ideas for policy stemmed around entrepreneurship and adherence to environmental conservation standards.



For more information on this or adventure market assessments, contact Christina Heyniger at info@xolaconsulting.com