



Contribution from Mellionec



Impact of tourism on villages and small communities

It is interesting that the French word "touriste" was taken from the English "tourist" that literally means "circular journey"

Middle English via old French *to(u)r* and Latin *tornus* from Greek *tornos* 'lathe'.

With the publication of his book "Memory of a tourist" in 1878, Stendhal popularized this word. It gained in importance by the end of the 19th century with the development of the pleasure trip as a society phenomenon.

The economic and political aspects of tourism appeared in the fifties.

In Central Brittany, this notion came later.

In the beginning it was considered as a supplementary, but scorned, activity of the agricultural community. Tourism gradually took a place in the rural economy. It strengthened as people became aware of the value of rural life, historical buildings, ancient sites and natural environment and the importance of their preservation.

Rural tourism contrasts with coastal tourism. There is an absence of a "mass" effect and there are the difficulties in organisation, promotion and profitability.

Rural tourism in Central Brittany requires those active in tourism to have solidarity because of the interdependence of their activities. The owner of a "gite" or "chamber d'hotels" (a bed and breakfast) will have to be aware of the cultural activities organized locally and regionally. He / she will need not only to support the promotion of those activities, but also to know about what local authorities do to preserve and promote local heritage, whether buildings or landscapes.

This collective commitment, this solidarity must deal with and gain strength from a number of constraints. These constraints weaken a young economy.

Among these we note:

- Difficulties in defining the boundaries of a particular tourist area, defying accurate definition for further communication
- Quantitatively there are not so many tangible attractions and these are often spread over a large area
- There are few great natural sites or grandiose buildings with tourist appeal
- Break even point is difficult to reach
- A real lack of professionalism at every level: promotion, organisation, reception. ...

Nevertheless the tourism remains an interesting way of developing an area such as ours. We have advantages now that will help to carry this evolution to a successful conclusion. Our social organisation gives way to social interaction. Because of the commitment it requires we know the value of meeting with others. This authenticity of human relationship is our main advantage.

In a preserved environment, we can address a public looking for quietness and simple values.

As a result of our central situation in Brittany and of the increase in population with more spare time (for example senior citizens and people benefiting from a shorter working period) a tourism of short holidays and weekend trips could be developed. We are already delighted with the results we have: this is a positive view of our efforts as seen by others, this awareness of our rural identity, this desire to share.

We will put forward a number of questions :

- How to reconcile authenticity with professionalism and however keeping the economic capacity of development of the channel ?
- How not to destroy our "product" by over marketing it and or identifying the wrong market ?