Imagine vacationing in a place of stunning, natural beauty. Picture yourself

relaxing on a pristine beach in Belize, exploring the desert on a camel

in Riyadh, or following lions and zebras in Kenya. Now imagine that

while enjoying these experiences, you are also helping to preserve the

environment, protect wildlife, and support local communities. Sound too

good to be true? It isn’t! Such vacations are part of the fastest-growing

trend in the travel industry. The trend is called ecotourism.

 While ecotourism was almost unheard of before the 1990s, it has quickly

become a multi-billion dollar industry. But what exactly is ecotourism?

These are some of its characteristics:

• It involves travel to natural, often remote, destinations. These

 are often protected areas where development is limited.

• Ecotourism destinations focus on recycling, water conservation,

 and using renewable energy sources.

• It builds environmental awareness. As visitors explore an area,

 they also learn about it.

• It provides an economic incentive to preserve the environment

 and raises money to help protect it.

• It creates financial opportunities and jobs for the local population.