

ABSTRACT

Few cultures are as misunderstood and under-appreciated as the Vikings. Few people realize that the Vikings, although they led simple lifestyles, were amazingly effective and advanced. The Vikings lived a culture that was truly their own, even though influences from all parts of their known world did impact its evolution. The Viking Village near Copenhagen in Denmark has resurrected that 400 year era. In the village, visitors are challenged to think about the deeper meanings of their participatory activities. The village dares to reveal the truth about the Vikings, shattering their contorted, exaggerated, and incorrect images. The Viking Village is ecotourism at its best. This article shows how village leader Jørgen Poulsen and I have partnered to create an ecotourism experience that is in harmony with the natural environment and which respects cultural heritage. We do this by using the village's existing educational programs and the experiences of my American college students. My students and I will participate in a pilot project that proposes a new ecotourism program for the village to be carried out in 2012.

KEY WORDS: ecotourism, pilot project, Viking Village

Introduction: Image and Reality

In the wake of globalization that has created homogenous and standardized mass tourism products, the trend in tourism is to embrace diversity. New forms of tourism preserve a sense of place and bring the experience to life. Natural environments and cultural landscapes have many untold stories that can be used to breathe new life into a destination, attraction, or activity. The Viking Village, in the suburb of Albertslund outside Copenhagen in Denmark, has managed to preserve a sense of place through authentic re-creation of Viking stories, myths, and legends. The Village very cleverly connects its past with the visitors through means that are true to the core principles of ecotourism. There is no question that the Viking Village is an excellent example of this form of tourism.

This article shows how the students investigate and realize the contorted image of a brutal warrior Viking who loots the world. They do this through the Viking Village deconstructions of the stereotypical Viking, through the creation of educational tourism experiences that connect visitors with historically accurate and natural surroundings. Albertslund County near Copenhagen originated the idea of the Viking Village in 1992. The vision was to reconstruct a village with a strong focus on cultural authenticity and active participation. This historical workshop approach is used by educational institutions, especially grades K1 through 12, from Albertslund County. The county runs the village and organizes school visits. All other visitors are charged an entrance fee. The goal of the Viking Village is to make sure the Viking Era becomes a permanent, proud,

and accurate part of the Scandinavian cultural heritage. The cliché that tourists should take nothing but pictures and leave nothing but footprints is taken very seriously in the village. The village makes sure that the footprints left behind by its visitors are few in number. Even though a large number of visitors would translate into lots of tourist dollars, the Viking Village maintains the balance of delivering a high quality educational experience and managing visitor numbers.

The village relies on 130 members of the "Friends of Viking Village" organization. The members are private citizens from all over Denmark, even though most members are from the Copenhagen area. The oldest member is 80 years old. Some members contribute to the village through private donations. Others volunteer a few days each year to help with construction, maintenance, and activities. The volunteers leave no details out and take no shortcuts. They take great pride in attempting to create objects with the same high quality standards as the Vikings. There is no question that this attention to quality workmanship has given the volunteers utmost respect for their ability to recreate the past.

This article simultaneously demonstrates an obvious blend of the tourism and anthropological disciplines. As a Dane living abroad, I am what Agar (1996: 56) refers to as a product of a multi-cultural environment where I have become accustomed to cultural diversity. I do not feel threatened by different life styles, rather I tend to become fascinated by them. Therefore, my goal is to show my students how to embrace and appreciate the Viking Village



as a completely different life style that most likely will remove them from their comfort zone. The Viking Village does this through participatory and hands-on experiences. These experiences show how the cultural heritage site of the Viking Village is, in our opinion, a superior example of ecotourism principles successfully applied. To develop this argument, an extensive review of Viking related literature and documents has been undertaken. Since published histories on the Viking Era are often highly contradictory one to another, I have relied heavily on my own personal knowledge and experiences. I grew up in Denmark where the Viking culture was introduced in early childhood. Since then, I have read about, observed, and investigated the Viking era. Much of my Viking knowledge comes from this inner familiarity, awareness, and understanding. My involvement with the Viking Village began six years ago after my first visit with American college students.

During the visit to the village, I require my students to record data and take field notes. They bring a small notebook and a pencil. They take notes at irregular occasions, because they follow the participatory “hanging-out” method of collecting data while attempting to show an interest in the culture (de Munck 1998). They record information in their notebooks during informal conversations with the village workers. They also make pencil sketches of Viking art and architecture. This article contains several quotes from these student notebooks. (They have given permission to reproduce their work.)

When arriving at the Viking Village, the village workers immediately begin to deconstruct incorrect notions of the Vikings. The most important image the Viking Village shatters is the warrior Viking helmet. The worst truth offender always has been this helmet. The truth is that the Viking helmet did not have horns. In Copenhagen’s tourist districts, it is difficult to avoid the eye-sore of horned helmets – except at Viking exhibits in the National Museum. It is a popular myth that all Vikings wore horned helmets while raping women, killing everyone in their path, and looting the world. Few tourists are aware that horned helmets were used in the Bronze Age (about 2,000 years before the Viking era) and that this earlier history has little connection with the Vikings themselves. Sometimes, it is Denmark’s own fault that their Viking heritage is misrepresented. For example, many Danes are eager participants in this image distortion at international soccer matches. Since the Vikings (and their horns) symbolize power and strength, many Danish soccer fans wear the horned helmet as an expression of fighting spirit. This soccer Viking-type hat is often painted in the two national flag colors: red and white. One is left to ponder whether it is possible that the horned helmet really symbolizes national unity or national pride. In other words, what does it really mean to be a “true” Scandinavian or

Danish person? If a person can’t identify with the helmet, does this mean the person is not really Danish? What would happen if an immigrant attends an international soccer match and wears the helmet? Would this person look silly?

Multinational corporations also do an excellent job at maintaining this distorted Viking image. The most obvious is the Capital One credit card company’s Viking commercials on television. These 30 and 60 second commercials have run for several years and are hugely popular. Capital One’s commercial *Viking in the Plane* is apparently “one of the best Viking commercials” (blog comment, Viktir666). The first statement in the commercial is “Sure, we had a good time pillaging,” while depicting the Vikings as stupid, dirty, and fierce. Even so, the popularity continues: “Whatever they are supposed to be, they are funny, they resemble Vikings very funny stuff” (blog comment, riddick7810). Different cultural eras are mixed together in the commercial, which is especially evident in their clothing. A few bloggers have commented on this: “They’re mixing up Celts with Vikings again” (blog comment, nameless616). “Since when did they [Vikings] have British accents? I swear, it’s like the movie 300 with Spartans that for some strange reason have British accents. At least give them Greek accents” (blog comment, zoologist2007). On the other hand, is cultural misrepresentation taken too seriously? As one blogger says: “Both are fiction and none of them is meant to be accurate, just relax and enjoy the show” (blog comment, invancorea)

Because distorted, and often untrue, Viking images are deeply imbedded in our minds, it will be difficult to permanently and persuasively erase them. It is also important to understand that cultural misrepresentations sell really well as a mass tourism product. In the world of mass tourism, accuracy, authenticity, and creativity are not important, as can be seen in the Disneyland tourism product. However, the Viking Village sets the record straight. Denmark is lucky to have the Viking Village.

Ecotourism

The Viking Village staff were not aware that their participatory activities and cultural preservation efforts followed ecotourism principles. That is why it is a tremendous pleasure and rare privilege to experience such a low-key and down-to-earth authentic representation of culture without the traditional mass tourism methods. “[Since] Visit Denmark (formerly the Danish Tourist Board) has not wholeheartedly embraced the concepts of ecotourism and sustainability” and views ecotourism as a “passing trend” (Kaae 2006: 12), the village may possibly be Denmark’s best kept ecotourism secret.

Fennell explains that the “emphasis [of mass tourism] is often on commercialization of natural and cultural re-





sources, and the result is a contrived and inauthentic representation of, for example, a cultural theme or event that has been eroded into a distant memory” (2008:4). Early insinuation of the dissatisfaction with this form of mass tourism developments started in the 1970s. Koning already recognized in 1974 that “an imitation-American culture of commerce has covered the landscape. Travel is destroying one of the most exciting reasons for traveling: to discover the dazzling depth and width of human experience and human going-ons” (1974: 590). A few years later, Valene Smith mentioned that, “host destinations must consciously control or restrict tourism in order to preserve its economic or cultural integrity” (1979: 8). Fennell argues that “[mass tourism] ignored asocial and ecological elements of destinations in favour of more anthropocentric and profit-centered approaches to the delivery of tourism products” (2008: 17). Is it possible that these early anthropologies of tourism paved the way for the concept of ecotourism?

Since then, a myriad of ecotourism definitions have surfaced. A frequently quoted definition is from The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) which was “the world’s first international non-profit dedicated to ecotourism as a tool for conservation and sustainable development” (TIES 2011). TIES defines ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people”. More specifically, true ecotourism strives to:

1. preserve cultural heritage
2. conserve natural landscapes
3. use resources efficiently
4. ensure cultural authenticity
5. educate and inform
6. bring the tourism experience to life
7. encourage volunteering
8. be sustainable

De-Hollywoodization of Viking Heritage

Few cultures are as misunderstood and underappreciated as the Vikings. Contradictions and disagreements abound among popular authors, scholars, historians, archaeologists, medieval chroniclers, and general audiences throughout the world. Thompson often contradicts himself by describing the Vikings as “the Norse pirates” and claiming that all of Europe felt “the icy grip of the Vikings” (2009: 161) but later admits that the “images of Viking brutality have overshadowed many positive aspects of their culture” (2009: 164). In fact, it seems as if his own writing overshadows his own positive sentence and admission: “most Vikings were farmers” (2009: 166). Thompson completes his stereotype by this powerful sentence: “The ruddy, blue-eyed, merciless pirates swooped through like Vandals ... spreading terror through Europe” (2009: 156). The entire

statement is easy to refute, especially the biological impossibility that all Scandinavians are born with blue eyes.

One positive, and often overshadowed, aspect is that the Vikings sailed the European Russia rivers to reach the Black Sea and eventually Constantinople. The Vikings traded furs and amber with silks and spices. These Vikings would arrive in the spring and leave in the fall. One surprising fact is that many Vikings were invited to serve the Byzantine royal court in Constantinople as personal guards of the elite. Some Vikings would remain in this service for several years and return to Scandinavia with an enormous amount of gold and silver which they had earned as payment. Sadly, many medieval chronicles have reported that Vikings returned to Scandinavia after having “looted” Constantinople.

Few visitors also realize that even though the Vikings were simple people, they were surprisingly effective and advanced technologically. The circular forts are among the most impressive examples of Viking construction techniques. A Viking king, Harald Bluetooth, constructed two unique circular forts around 980 A.D. in Denmark. The strict and precise geometric plans of these forts attest to the military, commercial, and administrative functions that these forts served. Nor is it appreciated that the Viking culture evolved with few influences from their known world. Therefore, there is no question that the introduction of Christianity forever changed the Viking culture. In fact, the period around 1200 A.D., when Christianity was firmly established in Denmark, symbolically represents the end of the Viking era. The Vikings resisted Christianity for a few hundred years because this new and strange religion threatened the Nordic gods and pagan religion. Pleasing the Nordic gods and obtaining protection from them was crucially important in Viking society.

As noted earlier, the Viking Village does a superior job at ecotourism. Unlike many other tourist attractions with historic and cultural themes, the Viking Village is not selling cultural tour packages that are Hollywoodized, romanticized, or portrayed stereotypically. The village provokes and challenges visitors into thinking about the deeper meanings of their participatory activities. The Viking Village is truly authentic. The village is built on an 850 A.D. Viking farmer’s site in a beautiful meadow where the Vikings had access to plenty of water, timber, and fertile soil. The stunning rural landscape has sweeping views of creeks, rolling hills, and open fields. My student, Tullaya Glimchit, spent a day in the village in May 2010 and made it clear that: “The Viking Village is unique and different from other cultural experiences because it truly puts you into a state of mind where you feel like you are a part of the culture. We were not lectured about the history of the Vikings. We were not dragged around the site simply just to look at what a



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Viking Village might have looked like, but quite the opposite. We were split up into groups where we got hands on experience with everything that Vikings used to do”.

Clearly, this is not just another reconstructed medieval village that is built to please masses of tourists. At this village, there is no T-shirt shop, happy-hour bar, or souvenir store. There is not even a medieval festival. Visitors make their own souvenirs and festivities through participatory work. As student Aubrianna DiCaro says: “This cultural experience is truly unique, because it is completely authentic to the Viking era and is ran as identical as possible to the time period. Since the village is tucked away, it separates you from reality and really places you in another time to be immersed in the Viking era. It was one of the most enriching cultural experiences I have ever had in my life. It was nothing that I expected.”

In the Viking Village, participatory activities are true to the latest Viking archaeological sites and historical research. These activities reflect Viking daily life so there are many chores to complete. These chores may include chopping wood, baking bread, tending animals, carving wood, or smelting Thor’s hammer. Even though all visitors help build and maintain the village, there is always room for play and games. Student, Cody Johnson, sums it up nicely: “The participation at the Viking Village not only corrected our misconceived notions, but was also an incredible amount of fun.”

Most amazingly, though, the visitors are encouraged to use all their senses in extraordinary ways. As Jørgen Poulsen, the leader of the Viking Village, says: “First you are serfs, then you can eat lunch.” Village workers constantly are *touching*, or reaching out to, the visitors by bringing the real Viking world into realization through active participation in games and simulations. They breathe new life into the tourism experience by dressing visitors in Viking outfits. These outfits are hand-made using fabrics that closely resemble the textiles that were available 1,200 years ago. The textiles are weaved, dyed, and sewn by hand. Visitors spend hours in these outfits while cooking, smelting, weaving, and playing games. However, the Viking games are not just fun games. They represent traditional games designed to prepare them to fight to defend their family, home, village, and kingdom. It took many years of training to build up the strength to fight man-to-man using only a sword and a shield. Some of the games in the village simulate strength building activities. A more obvious touch is the realization that cooking lunch involves being burnt by the nettles that are used for the soup. Student Katelin Westfall’s honesty is worth noting: “I was not looking forward to the village visit. I think the whole experience takes people completely out of their element and has the potential of really changing how a person thinks. When we first got to the village and start-

ing putting on the dresses it seemed like such a silly thing to be doing, but the second we stepped out of that first ‘welcome building’ I was no longer a college student in 2010, I was a Viking woman in 800 A.D.”

The village also encourages visitors to engage in a deeper *looking* into the culture. The obvious visual experience is to see local materials that are used for village construction and to learn how the village was reconstructed with Viking tools and techniques. The Viking Village motto is to use the past for the future. However, the past is also connected with the present. Village houses are reconstructed in collaboration with a local museum, archaeologists, and historians. Together, they use excavated Viking sites from the Copenhagen area as models. No modern construction technology or tools are used. Only reconstructed Viking tools, techniques, materials, and knowledge are implemented, with very few compromises. No other medieval experience in Denmark can claim so few compromises. These reconstructed techniques can be examined and admired at the village’s four timber structures with turf roofs. The largest house is the living quarters and the most impressive of the structures. This building is full of color, embroidery, and wood carvings that are reconstructed based on Nordic pictorial interpretations. In another example, a Viking chisel is used to make bowls and spoons for cooking and eating. It takes time, precision, and conscientiousness to create a great variety of things using only Viking tools and techniques.

A more indirect way of looking deeper into Viking culture is by starting the visit by walking backwards into the village, an act which simulates walking 1,200 years back in time. This is an excellent way to get a clearer view of the early Middle Ages. It is also an excellent way to walk-the-talk of ecotourism. Walking backwards brings the experience to life. Walking backwards is harder than what it seems. This kind of walking forces the visitor to slow down and begin to understand the village on their terms instead of on our modern terms.

Implementing the *listening* skills of concentration, avoidance of assumptions, and reading between the lines is the hardest for students to focus on. Approximating the sound and rhythm of chopping down a lime tree with a reconstructed Viking axe is intimidating, hard work, and humbling. The ability to listen well is put to a true test when visitors walk in unison carrying the felled tree on their shoulders back to the village. However, it will always be village employee Maria Ojantakanen’s opera-type singing that immediately gets everyone’s attention and great admiration. The flute music of Louisa, a village volunteer, is astounding as well. Music and song are often followed by story-telling. The mythologies of Thor and Odin are always popular, but so is Loki. Students are fascinated by the ultimate betrayals and lies



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of this Nordic god who is believed to have been related to Odin. Loki is known for having helped Odin create the world. However, Loki's worst deed was arranging the murder of Odin's son, Balder, because he was jealous of Balder's popularity, beauty, and kindness. Another devastating deed of Loki was when he chopped off the long hair of Sif, goddess of fertility and the wife of Thor.

Of course, the highlight is *smelling* lunch being cooked over an open fire. One also smells smoke blown by the wind in all directions. But that did not negatively affect Sandra Morriss' village experience: "I really enjoyed helping with the daily tasks in the village. We were able to contribute through learning how to do certain tasks in the traditional Viking way. We worked with some of the villagers to prepare the daily meal. That is definitely something I would be interested in doing again." Sustainability becomes very clear during lunch, because the food is made from village resources such as herbs and wild plants. Maria sums it up nicely: "It is important to use what the land gives you."

It is equally challenging in *tasting* the atmosphere of true Viking life. As village volunteer Louisa says: "No one here asks you why you are not done with something. Vikings finished their task when it was ready. You have to let things take their time." Another way of tasting the atmosphere is when the village shatters the Viking warrior image again by showing how most Vikings were peaceful and self-sufficient farmers and traders. And this is exactly what the Viking Village is all about: living the life of a farmer. The visit to the village does not involve running around like a wild warrior with big swords. After all, the relatively small numbers of Scandinavians could not have supported large numbers of ships with hundreds of wild warriors, although this is what chronicles from 10th century monasteries throughout coastal Europe often claimed.

Some authors continue to claim that the Scandinavian population numbers have not changed much since 800 A.D. Others disagree. "Even today the Scandinavian landmass supports a population of little more than 17 million people. In the Viking Age ... there were many fewer people" (Batey 1994: 15). According to Russell, the estimated population in Europe by 1000 A.D. was about 35 million (1935: 504). At that time, Scandinavia's population was less than 2 million (Russell 1935: 504). Since most Vikings were farmers, this leaves very few men in their prime age to pillage the world. Therefore, it seems absurd for Thompson to claim that "by the end of the [9th] century, large parts of Europe were so devastated by Vikings that the countryside was a desolate place" (2009: 166). While some Vikings indeed were attacking and pillaging, especially English and Irish towns, one of left to ponder how an estimated few hundred thousand men scattered all over Europe, West Asia, Northern Africa, and North America could decimate an entire continent.

In order to combat such claims, the Viking Village represents the prevailing agricultural lifestyle. This involves not being allowed to use any gadgets that were not used in the early Middle Ages. This includes not wearing sun glasses. It also includes learning basic phrases in the old Nordic language.

Tourism Anthropology

Clearly, the Viking Village offers complementary activities for both ecotourists and anthropologists. Both share a genuine interest in cultural heritage. While tourists do not engage in ethnographic field work, they often engage in an informal search for answers that can easily be used in anthropological research. A typical ecotourist often unconsciously travels with Agar's (1996) anthropological model of "being there". Ecotourists begin a cultural experience with a general passive observation of the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation. As time goes by, the ecotourist usually then raises their level of attention and wishes to actively engage in activities with local people. I attempt to have my students adapt Agar's definition of holistic recognition: "That an isolated observation cannot be understood unless you understand its relationships to other aspects of the situation in which it occurred" (Agar 1996: 125). I do this by showing my students how to evolve from being passive learners in the classroom to engage in active participation in the Viking Village. The students' task is to not observe the village as an isolated place in history. Rather, it is important to experience and understand the village's relationship with the larger Viking world.

When they visit the Viking Village, students just go with the flow as the day unfolds. In that respect, ethnography is like traveling abroad. A traveler may have a rough idea of the expectations of the trip, such as what to see and what to do. Traveling abroad, even within the Western world, takes common sense and a logical mind. Traveling with an open mind provides a wonderful opportunity to mix with all kinds of people, to learn more about their country and culture. Flexibility and patience yield a relaxing and enriching experience.

Traveling abroad also requires a bottomless amount of patience and flexibility, because it is impossible to plan for the unexpected. Since it is impossible to predict what lies beyond the mountain, the unexpected almost always happens. Often, a traveler must think fast on his/her feet and know how to get out of a situation if it becomes too dangerous or too uncomfortable. During active participation in the Viking Village, it is often necessary to unexpectedly alter one's trains of thought in order to blend in with new and challenging activities.

My students, like many ecotourists, often take field notes in the form of a journal in which they write descriptions



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of what is going on. In ethnographic fieldwork, journal notes focus on verbal and non-verbal tourism behaviors. Identities of persons and businesses are omitted from all circulated written records for the sake of maintaining anonymity and protecting privacy. However, a travel journal is full of names, places, businesses, emails, and phone numbers for networking purposes.

An ecotourist often conducts informal interviews with various members of a society without realizing that he/she is actually doing anthropological work. Ecotourists may also be unaware that they indirectly are adapting Agar's (1996) informal ethnographic interview style, because they do not have a written list of questions. An ecotourist casually chats with local people, just as an anthropologist does. It is as if an ecotourist understands the strategy of informality minimizing harm to the natural flow of events into which formal questions may intrude (Agar 1996:140). Agar's comment that "observation and interview mutually interact with each other, either simultaneously or sequentially" (1996: 158) fits very well in an ecotourism atmosphere.

The Viking Village works hard not to lose the spirit of an unusual cultural heritage experience. It dares stand away from other tourism and educational ventures. The Viking Village's approach makes it a publicly recognized ecotourism program that adheres to the concept of sustainability. However, sustainability is too often coupled with an attitude that says: "I want cleaner air, but I don't want to give up my car." More properly, sustainability is a life style. The key is to find a way to redefine values to avoid the mass tourism behavior of literally "loving nature to death" (Cousteau 1993). My students and I are eager to work with the village to find a way to attract the ecotourists that would say: "I want real authenticity, and I want to leave technology at home".

Pilot Project

An overnight stay in the Viking Village holds even greater potential for removing visitors from their fast-paced, globalized, and technologically dependent cultures. This could be the ultimate way to breathe even more authentically as a Viking. That is why I have partnered with Jørgen Poulsen to experiment with a pilot project. The project tests the idea of a small group of ecotourists who will be completely immersed into the earliest 1,200-year-old Viking culture. Since the Viking Village is already true to the core principles of ecotourism, a pilot project that tests a more immersive educational tourism program makes sense. The pilot project implementation date is set for May 21-22, 2012.

My students will visit a variety of Viking sites in Denmark before arriving at the village, with the goal to have them better appreciate the basic idea that the Vikings were just Europeans with a different way of life. First, they will visit Denmark's oldest town, Ribe. The town was founded around 700 A.D., a little before the Viking era. Over the next few hundred years, Ribe evolved as a major trading town and port that was ruled by the Vikings. A visit to a Viking chieftain's burial site will give the students a better understanding of what life and death were like in 10th century Denmark. The chieftain was buried in a Viking ship. Today, the wood has disappeared, but the iron pieces remain, as well as the bones of horses and dogs that were buried with the chieftain. They will also learn how to oar a Viking ship and manage its sails during a two-hour sailing in war and cargo ship replicas along the coast.

Another important visit is to the town of Jelling which bears the legacy of Denmark's first two monarchs. These monarchs were also Vikings: King Gorm the Old and his son King Harald Bluetooth. In Jelling, King Gorm the Old was originally buried in a large mound but his body was transferred to a wooden church after Denmark began to convert to Christianity around 965 A.D. Harald Bluetooth raised two rune stones, the first inscribed with the claim that he converted the Danes to Christianity. The other stone claims they were the rulers of Denmark. Runes were symbols, an alphabet often carved in stones. These runic inscriptions usually depicted power and possession in a verse or stanza format. When Denmark had completely converted to Christianity, the Latin alphabet was used instead. In Jelling, students will learn how to connect the Viking past with the present and future Danish monarchy. Students will also spend time at King Bluetooth's Trelleborg Viking Fort, constructed around 980 A.D. The precise geometric plans, military attributes, and sheer size of this circular construction likely enabled it to house between 500 and 800 Vikings. Another legacy of King Harald Bluetooth is Roskilde Cathedral which has been the favorite burial place of the Royal Family since the early 15th century. The first church was built in wood by King Bluetooth. The current cathedral in red bricks was



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built around 1170. Roskilde was once the capital of Denmark, before Copenhagen became the capital in 1443.

The trip will end in Copenhagen. Here, students will visit Denmark's Noma restaurant, whose Nordic Cuisine enabled it to be voted *The World's Best Restaurant* in 2010 and 2011 in the San Pellegrino "World's 50 Best Restaurants" competition. Students will investigate the Viking impact on the culinary world. Students will evaluate and analyze the degree to which Denmark has used the Viking past to succeed in the present day through the study of culinary historical traditions. They will study how old Viking cuisine has been reinvented and reinterpreted as the new Nordic Cuisine. Denmark has also won the honor of having the best chef in the world. In 2010, Rasmus Kofoed, owner of Geranium restaurant in Copenhagen, was voted *World's Best Chef* in a World Cup-type competition called Gold Bocuse d'Or. At the Viking Village, students will gather information to begin writing a Medieval Cookbook. For example, they will hike through the forest to collect herbs and plants that are used to cook the medieval way. Some of the herbs may be unknown to them, so one challenge will be to find the matching English words. The students therefore will begin to compile a list of ingredients. While it may take a few hours to gather these, it may also take a few hours to take notes about cooking methods.

Most importantly, students will benefit from the pilot project by assisting in spearheading the Viking Village's first anthropological and ecotourism program. During this experience, they will also learn how to protect and interpret natural and cultural resources. They will help the Viking Village staff evaluate how they can best elevate to the next level of offering an overnight stay for a small group of ecotourists. They will develop ideas for a 3-day and 2-night educational tourism program in the village. Students will help make sure the educational tourism experience is maintained at a sustainable small-scale level through applying course concepts related to ecotourism and in collaboration with village volunteers. Students will work in tight collaboration with the village staff to make sure the ecotourism program meets the overall vision and mission of the Viking Village. Furthermore, students will adhere closely to decisions made by the village staff before creating a program and activities that meet ecotourism criteria.

For now, the ecotourist target market is one American family. During the village visit, students will discuss and present their educational tourism ideas with the employees and volunteers, who will vote for the best and most feasible ecotourism ideas. There will be a prize for the winning student. The Viking Village staff will be permitted to use student work and ideas in any capacity they deem appropriate.

Conclusion

It can be argued that ecotourism is a luxury of the afflu-

ent. The concept of ecotourism can therefore be criticized to be an activity for the elite tourist. To counteract the elitism reaction, this article has shown the importance of the Viking Village as it elevates its programs in order to preserve cultural heritage in an authentic and accurate way. It is widely understood in the international tourism community that it is important to consciously and deliberately control or restrict tourism in order to preserve a site's cultural integrity (Smith 1989: 14). Ecotourism often accomplishes this by controlling the number of visitors. "Wealthy tourists obviously have more money to spend, and therefore [the Viking Village] needs to draw fewer visitors, reducing the possibly negative effects of having too many tourists hanging around" (Chambers 2000: 37). The drawback could be that affluent travelers sometimes "require the provision of goods and services that are unlikely to be locally available" (Chambers 2000: 38).

However, it is time to accept that tourism can be an equally happy and fun experience without the mass tourism need of shops, bars, and crowds. The formal embrace of ecotourism in the Viking Village could help the visitors rethink their lifestyles and values while learning to focus on the interconnectedness among environmental, cultural, and economic variables. It is also time to accept that tourism will have a difficult time prospering if too many people draw on too few resources. The Viking Village is alive and survives because, following Cousteau (1993), its life support system functions to balance and maintain a habitable environment. In the Viking Village, everything is connected.

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