

Managing Quality Cultural Tourism

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>About the book for teaching purposes</i>	xi
Part 1 Introduction	
1.1 The situation of cultural tourism	3
Part 2 Components	
2.1 The user	15
2.2 The presenter	28
2.3 The item	41
Part 3 Objectives	
3.1 Attracting	57
3.2 Detracting	71
3.3 Educating and informing	81
3.4 Entertaining	90
3.5 Commercializing	97
Part 4 Conclusion	
4.1 Cultural tourism now and for the future	105
<i>Glossary</i>	115
<i>Notes</i>	116
<i>Select bibliography</i>	121
<i>Index</i>	124

Preface

The aim of this book is to set out and describe matters and issues concerning the pursuit of achieving happy heritage visits by those managing quality cultural tourism. In both structure and content the book has to the fore the perceived needs of teachers, students and practitioners in the general fields of tourism and leisure, heritage and cultural resource management.

The concern will be to highlight (a) circumstances in society in general, (b) circumstances which, in particular, concern cultural tourism and (c) circumstances which pertain to a site or item, or group of sites or items, which together condition what would be the appropriate tourism response in each individual situation. In using the word 'appropriate', my meaning is 'that which is most suitable in all the prevailing circumstances'. The word is central to the book. With this assessment of sites in their context, I shall suggest ways, means and alternative methods for them to be managed to achieve a quality cultural tourism product.

Culture is very much tourism's main attraction. Without culture to make the difference, every place would seem blandly the same. Without a belief in new or different sensations and benefits at journey's end, what incentive would there be for any of us to make a visit that is discretionary in type? With no destination dissimilar, a journey would hardly ever be deemed so desirable as to be 'necessary'; and what position would the tourism industry be left in then, poor thing? Without their different cultural heritages, therefore, places around the world would have little to offer that would attract for purposes of tourism.

Despite a situation of world recession at the time of writing, tourism continues on the path predicted for it of becoming the number one industry in the world by the millennium. In this circumstance, presenters, understandably, will increasingly want more and more to use more and more cultural heritage for *their* purpose. Many people in many guises will meanwhile expand upon use of the cultural heritage as consumers. The product, focus of both groups, subject of much increased use, may be under many, varied and great pressures. There is growing concern in various quarters and places, both professional and lay, about how to meet the tourism demands of the

cultural heritage appropriately, without irrevocable and unreasonable damage to the primary resource.

A fundamental difficulty in trying to satisfy the needs of a site or item, its presenter and its user, is that the needs of the last two are likely to be essentially short term, whereas those of a site or item, for its continued preservation, require gratification on a continuous, long-term basis. In theory, either visitor or presenter can move on elsewhere if a chosen heritage resource is exhausted or eradicated through over-use and exploitation, but once that primary historical resource is damaged or lost, it can then at best only be repaired, or re-created in replica.

Accepting that cultural tourism is a boom, how, if it all, can it be made a boon for everyone concerned? My attempt to answer that question is the subject of this book. I begin from the premise that if we all want to join in the activity of cultural tourism in some manner, on the grounds of practicality alone we can no longer just continue doing so in the same way: the resource alone cannot stand it. On the one hand, we need to recognize that we cannot automatically expect to engage in traditional cultural tourism as we want to, when we want to and how we want to. On the other hand, we need to identify more closely what are the various requirements of cultural tourism, with the purpose of then finding a greater range of types of ways, both old and new, of meeting them appropriately.

My starting point is that, whether we like it or not, cultural tourism is here to stay and set to grow, and that, therefore, we had better get down to seeing that this activity is characterized, throughout, by the best conduct possible.

As more and more of us come to consider we have right of access to the world's cultural heritage, we create for ourselves a challenge in handling a situation of epic proportions. The only response with a hope of meeting that challenge, I believe, is management of a very high order and quality. The focus of this book is to suggest ways towards management of this type—management which will most likely meet the needs of the heritage item, its user and its presenter. Heritage tourism is a three-way relationship, between a site, its presenter and its audience. My intention is to suggest how this relationship may be made as happy and suitable as possible for all three, in all the prevailing circumstances.

At the start of the book, in Part 1, I shall outline the general situation of cultural tourism, before I seek in Part 2 to identify the various needs of culture of the three groups: the user, the presenter and the item of culture/heritage itself. In Part 3 I shall suggest ways in which the various, often conflicting needs may be met most suitably. I shall mention examples, good, bad and ugly to illustrate points. In Part 4 I shall present my conclusion. My aim throughout is to show how that felicitous event the happy heritage visit, may be achieved and to define attitudes, types and methods of approach to managing quality cultural tourism.

Acknowledgements

People, places, matters and media items, around the world, serve to stimulate my thoughts. In the preparation of this book, that all these are source both for encouraging ideas and, in the instance of the media, of material for examples, is obvious. I would therefore like to say a huge thank you for this. For inspiration by his breadth of knowledge and his generosity in sharing it, deserving of special mention is Kevin Robins, Reader in Cultural Geography at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The energetic and steadfast enthusiasm for the project of Andrew Wheatcroft, my editor, whose was the original idea for the book, has been enormously helpful, and he has firmly, kindly and positively kept me from straying over-far from that first concept. Closest encouragement has come from Professor Peter Fowler.

I am deeply grateful to you all.

About the book for teaching purposes

As I mentioned in the Preface, this book is structured with a view to the uses that teachers and students may wish to make of it.

The text of the book is arranged so that the subject is introduced in general by considering the situation of cultural tourism. Then the principal elements of the cultural tourism product are looked at, followed by an analysis of the component needs and aims of cultural tourism and how they can be met, and thereafter there is a conclusion.

Following each chapter are two additional items: one outlines the chapter's main *Issues and questions*, the other provides suggestions for *Further reading*.

At the end of the book are: a Glossary; Notes, listed by chapter; and a general Select bibliography. The Index itemizes items, issues and places.

The book can be used for:

- a) teaching for the tourism and leisure and heritage professions;
- b) for higher education in universities and technical training colleges over a range of humanities and social science disciplines and vocational subjects;
- c) for secondary education at school at National Curriculum Key Stage 4 level.