Tourism and Environment
WIT Series on Tourism Today

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Titles in Series

Cultural Tourism
Tourism and Environment
Tourism and Natural Protected Areas
Tourism as a Tool for Development
Tourism as a Challenge
Tourism and Environment

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Preface

The contributions contained in this volume deal with two perspectives of ‘tourism and environment'. The first one could be called the 'role of the environment in tourism' and the other one ‘environmental tourism'. The reader would expect the same message in both cases. The environment comprises the set of biophysical and cultural events surrounding us and influences the activities to be developed depending on time and site.

The same environment can be attractive to some and unattractive to others. The objective of environmental tourism involves visiting and enjoying places during our leisure time, where nature, be it wild or humanized, presents features generally considered to be attractive and valuable. But today the environment is also perceived as being seriously affected by certain negative aspects of modern living or types of land uses.

The environment plays a crucial role in tourism. It comprises physical and cultural processes which are habitual or circumstantial. It is always an important component of any trip, especially when the reason for the journey is curiosity, entertainment, recreation or any other of tourism’s myriad purposes. These activities can also form a part of journeys made for reasons other than tourism, such as business trips, although the features of the environment have not been sought after by the traveler and climate is not essential in deciding the trip.

Among the environmental characteristics of a region, climate is usually the most relevant and conditions almost all other components. Much of the natural, as well as the urban cultural landscape and the countryside are a function of climate. Thus, the environment changes seasonally. This change affects the life and culture of each place and largely explains the movement of travelers. Environment and landscape therefore give rise to a curious dialectic over the year. Thus, coastal landscapes are not more beautiful in summer than in other seasons but environmental conditions cause a much greater demand in this season.

The environment thus offers different types of natural and cultural landscapes. It can provide visitors with rain or sunshine, safety or surprise,
certainty or uncertainty. Local people and culture depend upon these circumstances and the visitor may find them more or less attractive. Certain places in the world captivate visitors who flock to them in large numbers. Local people recognize the benefit of this, employers become interested in the economic aspects and consequently the Administration develops ad hoc infrastructures. As a consequence a country's economy may depend significantly on the tourism resulting from the characteristics of the environment.

Within 'environmental tourism', wild nature currently attracts huge amounts of visitors. This appeal underlies the aphorisms of 'ecotourism', 'adventure tourism', 'sports tourism', 'rural tourism', etc. The environment, however, is not only climatic comfort and wild nature. From the perspective of tourism, one should perceive good management of natural resources. The strong appeal of 'good climate' has led to some regions to change from a rural subsistence culture to a lucrative services economy. But, unfortunately, there are too many examples of the shortsightedness and corruption of some administrations and the greed of some entrepreneurs, who have brought to the brink of ruin many natural landscapes, rural cultures and local economies in regions where the environment and natural resources had previously been sustainable. Unfortunate situations generated by environmental mismanagement of tourism occur throughout the world. Local populations within emerging tourism-based economies ought to learn this lesson.

The images in brochures, the web and other modern means of communication attempt to emphasize the environmental appeal of a given location. The coast, the mountains or other biodiversity sites are now obvious attractions for nature tourism. The variety of life on Earth and its fragile tenure make it even more attractive for tourism, but this variety is also seriously threatened. Hence, sites such as 'Natural Protected Areas', should not be considered or managed as outdoor zoos or botanical gardens. Maintenance of these spaces is a serious commitment beyond pure conservation, naturalistic or academics purposes. This maintenance should involve the local populations. In the same way that culture represents not just art, monuments and museums, the environment is also represented by the rural cultural landscape, urban nuclei and the history of these sites. The rural world now faces one of the most serious challenges in its history: the incorporation of tourism, the development of an activity with great educational and cultural potential and with the vital task of alleviating rural abandonment and migration to cities.

The edited papers included in this volume were selected from those presented at different international conferences organized by the Wessex Institute of Technology. They address important issues related to tourism and the environment which the Editors hope will provide a better understanding of some of the current challenges.

F.D. Pineda, 2013
About the Editor

Francisco D. Pineda is a full professor of Ecology at the UCM since 1981. Specializing in Land Planning and Mediterranean Ecosystem and Landscape Analysis including biodiversity assessment. His most recent research is focused on energy, matter and water connectivity of real landscapes and the impact of human activities on them. He has coordinated around seventy national and international research projects, most commissioned by national and international organizations and companies, as well as through Spanish and European competitive calls. His works has been developed in Europe and Latin America having resulted in numerous scientific papers – Landscape Ecology, Oikos, Acta Oecologica, Environm. Conservation, Biological Conservation, J. Environm. Manag., J. Theoret. Biology, J. Veget. Science,... Author and editor of several monographs and technical books, often in collaboration with other authors, and opinion articles – La Recherche, Quercus, Ecosystems, Development, El Pais, El Mundo, ABC, Nueva Revista,... President of WWF-Spain, 1996–2012. Board member of WWF International, Gland. Founding member of the European Centre for Nature Conservation, ECNC, Tilburg. Member of the Spanish Chapter of the Club of Rome.
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