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Volcano and Geothermal Tourism: Sustainable Geo-resources for Leisure and Recreation

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Volcano and Geothermal Tourism: Sustainable Geo-resources for Leisure and Recreation

Edited by Patricia Erfurt-Cooper and Malcolm Cooper. London, United Kingdom: Earthscan, 2010. 400 pp. £ 75.00, US$ 125.00. ISBN 978-1-84407-870-7.

What a splendid book this is! It is a most impressive achievement, gathering contributions from a knowledgeable list of contributors and packaging the collection with a useful introductory chapter, conclusions and recommendations, and a comprehensive set of appendices. If you want to know anything about the subject of this book, you will find it here, amply described in the substantial chapters or in the illustrative case studies, by alphabetically ordered geographic region. The aim of comprehensiveness, tempered by the impossibility of including every single relevant destination, has been achieved and, while the serious reader will want to take each region in turn and absorb the whole volume, the casual reader is likely to dip in to find her favorite sites first, only to find herself drawn in to the exploration of lesser-known regions. This book will be a popular addition to many tourism libraries, as it is generously illustrated with photographs in black-and-white and color, along with many useful maps and diagrams (although the color illustrations would benefit from fuller reference to the text, and at least 1 photograph is missing).

The subtitle of the book emphasizes one theme, that of sustainability. The other main theme addressed throughout is that of risk management, given that many of the sites discussed are active; even dormant sites have safety issues, and this aspect is thoroughly and sensitively discussed. The extreme contrasts contained within the book—between, for example, the 6 or 7 days needed to traverse the Marangu route up Mount Kilimanjaro and the daily crowds of tourists at Pammukale in Turkey—illustrate the very varied leisure purposes to which volcanic and geothermal resources are being put. The risks tourists take in visiting the many sites are made explicit to bring out some of the difficulties of managing tourism in vulnerable places, and the careful linking of the sustainability issues with the management of risk for tourists is particularly well done. The importance of planning and the value of interpretation in geo-parks and wildernesses is a strong theme in the chapters on developing country sites, such as David Newsome's chapter on North Sumatra's Sibayak Volcano, which covers the issues for site management and reemphasizes the need to gather visitor data.

It is this aspect of volcano and geothermal tourism that is still to be addressed in the whole context of geotourism. Erfurt-Cooper points out at the beginning of Chapter 9 that "most people who visit volcanic environments in Japan do so under the guise of nature-based hot spring tourism …" (p 42); one can contrast this with the view of Petford et al, who suggest in Chapter 6 that "presently, volcano tourism is niche market, high-end and exclusive" (p 85), and the discussion of the potential for "dark tourism" in Montserrat (p 91). It is evident that the definition of volcano and geothermal tourism is focused on the management of sites, the attitudes of managers toward tourism, and the development of income-generating and sustainable tourism practices. It is perhaps time for a much more focused attempt to discover what tourists want from geo-tourism sites; why they visit them; how much of their interest is specialist in nature and how much is driven by the availability of appropriate infrastructure; whether they are interested in the geology of the site, the landscape, the symbolism, the danger, the newsworthiness, or the difficulty or ease with which they can make the journey; or whether they have "dark" motives for their visits. Tom Hose addresses this in his chapter (and elsewhere) but much remains to be done.

It is difficult to view the subject of this book as a tourism "niche" since it is also evident that many of the sites described are places of *mass* tourism. Pompeii and Herculaneum are visited by cultural tourists for heritage reasons as well as tourists interested in Vesuvius, and Jonathan Karkut's discussion of Vesuvian tourism and the stakeholder issues involved in the Campania region helps to illustrate the difficulties of creating a single model that can contain the variety of sites and purposes that can be included in the concept of volcano tourism. The authors are plainly aware of the diversity of the tourist populations to be found at the many different sites. The views of experts are clearly of great importance, and the popularity and danger rankings in the last chapter provide an interesting comparison. But until the objectives of so-called volcano and geothermal tourists are fully explored in empirical studies, it is hard to see how their behavior can be properly managed so that they get from volcano tourism the most satisfying experiences, consonant with their own safety. The presence on *YouTube* of accounts of stupidly risky behavior should not be taken as evidence that the vast majority of tourists to dangerous sites would willingly put themselves and emergency service providers at risk if they were made aware of the likelihood of an eruption. However, Charles Dickens (1846: 248) chose to climb Vesuvius so that he would have "sunset half-way up, moonlight at the top and midnight to come down in" and, in *Pictures from Italy*, Dickens (1846: 251) describes the feelings of an enthusiastic tourist on an active volcano: "There is something in the fire and roar, that generates an irresistible desire to get nearer to it"; this gives us an impression of the kinds of responses a survey might elicit. Like disease and terrorism, the imminent threat of eruption may well cause modern mass tourists simply to switch destinations.

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As Malcolm Cooper points out in Case Study 4 on The Cascades, "not all tourists are attracted to the geo-thermal resources, they are all visiting because of the topography, climate and biodiversity … " (p 107). It is important for the future of volcano tourism that volcanologists and geologists look up from the rocks and appreciate the diversity of perspectives that tourists bring to their special interest.

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