

Prospects for Polar Tourism

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The name of Bernard Stonehouse from the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge university has long been associated with ecological research in polar regions. Here he turns his attention to tourism, with able assistance from his American colleague John Synder. As the editors, authors or co-authors of 13 out of 17 chapters, Synder and Stonehouse have made a sterling contribution to this very solid piece of work.

The other authors are widely scattered across seven countries, with the USA, UK and Netherlands most heavily represented. Of the 17 chapters, five discuss both Poles simultaneously, two focus on the South and three on the North, reflecting the interests of the principal authors. Cultural and economic issues, not surprisingly, receive more emphasis in the inhabited Arctic with its numerous Indigenous peoples and settlements. In the sparsely occupied Antarctic with its widely-spaced scientific stations and sub-Antarctic islands, the main emphasis is on management of ship-borne tourism and to a lesser extent, aerial overflights.

The main focus is on history, economic scale, trends, industry structure and tourism management. Research on tourist impacts, for example, is summarised rather briefly. The role of IAATO, the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators, is emphasised. Also emphasised is the contrast between the jurisdiction of national governments in the Arctic and most sub-Antarctic islands, and the rather less effective role of the Antarctic Treaty in controlling tourism on the Antarctic mainland. The role of gateway ports receives attention, and so does the deliberate tourism development strategy of Grytviken in South Georgia. The biggest unknown, apart from the melting of the Arctic sea ice and opening of the North-West passage, seems to be a new Russian push for tourism development in the White and Barents Seas.

Judging from data presented in this volume, it would seem that cruise ships are getting bigger and more luxurious, and penetrating further and more frequently into Arctic and Antarctic waters, at least partly because of global warming. At the same time, it seems

that individual adventure exploits in polar regions are also becoming more frequent. Some of these are well-prepared, but some are not. Some have to be rescued by research station staff or tourist vessels, at considerable cost; and some lead to tragedy. Meanwhile, Arctic and some sub-Antarctic communities are turning increasingly to tourism as an economic mainstay for the future. As in so many regions worldwide, however, growth in tourism seems to be occurring ahead of the legal and practical mechanisms to regulate its environmental and social impacts. Concern over this issue may well be one major reason why Snyder and Stonehouse have given us this book. Indeed, it is well worth reading, both as a case study in tourism and as a component of human activity in polar regions. ■ **Ralf Buckley** International Centre for Ecotourism Research, Griffith University, Gold Coast, Qld Australia 9726 E-mail <r.buckley@griffith.edu.au>