

## **Marine Ecotourism**

Carl and Erlet Cater. CABI (<http://www.cabi.org/>) 2007, viii + 307 pp (figures, tables, index)  
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PUBLICATIONS IN REVIEW

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Sixth in the CABI Ecotourism Series, this volume illustrates three important points. First, there is a substantial eco- and adventure-tourism industry along ocean coastlines and out at sea. Second, as on land, ocean tourism is often in competition with extractive primary industries that may be severely degrading tourism resources. Third, knowledge of ocean ecosystems and of human impacts upon them is far less detailed than for their terrestrial counterparts.

The introductory pages take a somewhat seafaring or even swashbuckling tone, with the authors noting that “The blood of the Vikings courses strongly through our veins”, (p. 2), and that they “offer no apology for the scattering of nautical terms” (p. 21). The majority of the book, however, consists of a detailed review of relevant literature, well peppered with quotations but perhaps rather short on critical commentary. No original data are presented and one might quibble over some of the structure of the book (some chapters have up to five levels of subdivisions). Descriptions of environmental management practices by marine ecotourism operators, for example, are scattered throughout the text, while environmental requirements of government agencies are grouped together in a single chapter on management structures. Such difficulties, however, arise during any largescale literature review of a complex topic such as this.

The book has three parts; environment and activities; major stakeholders and their interests, and the interactions among those interests. After an introductory chapter, the book reviews the context of marine ecotourism within the global industry and regional economies. The next chapter describes natural attractions in ecotourism, including reefs, shores, polar regions, wildlife and as well as the role of culture in ecotourism. Chapter 4 outlines the major marine ecotourism activities, such as diving, whale-watching, sea kayaking, sailing and surfing.

The subsequent chapter analyses the interests of coastal communities, distinguishing natural, human, physical, financial, social and cultural capital. This is followed by a look at the characteristics of marine ecotourists. The emphasis here is psychological rather than demographic, with chapter headings such as education, esteem, expertise, escapism, and embodiment. The book then describes the various ways in which different people conceptualise marine nature, with illustrations ranging from whale flensing and shark attacks, to aquaria and cartoon movies. Marine ecotourism itself is examined in chapter 8, using a triple-bottom-line approach (financial, social, and environmental measures). Case studies are provided, but not many.

The role of government is reviewed in chapter 9; the scope here is broad, ranging from local permit systems to international aid funding and even the role of nongovernmental organisations. Tools used by management agencies are reviewed in the following chapter, with some evaluation of enforcement and effectiveness of management practices. Initiatives to improve sustainability through partnerships are summarised in chapter 11, which notes that these initiatives have at best “a mixed record” (p. 254).

The concluding chapter provides a smorgasbord of theory and quotation, with a can of worms as the final metaphor for the marine ecotourism sector. This, however, seems unduly pessimistic. The sector is undoubtedly complex, and the authors were ambitious in the breadth of issues they set out to cover, resulting in an unavoidable tradeoff between breadth and depth. For those who work daily within the relatively restricted confines of academic research, it is useful to be reminded that the real tourism industry operates within a complicated international political context where it is only a minor player. Compiling this volume may indeed have been a voyage of discovery for the authors themselves (p. 273), but

in the process they have give the reader an admirable chart of their discoveries, a very well worthwhile contribution to the CABI Ecotourism Series.

Whilst academic cooperation between family members in the same generation is quite commonplace, the cross-generational – and indeed cross-continental – cooperation for the current volume is rather exceptional. It seems to have worked well. One may, perhaps, speculate whether the series of sea kayak photographs from p. viii to p. 25 and then p. 95 might carry some metaphorical meaning beyond the merely representational – but in any event, the Caters are to be congratulated on their joint efforts, which will provide a useful reference for years to come. ■ **Ralf Buckley**. International Centre for Ecotourism Research, Griffith University, Gold Coast, Australia 9726. E-mail <[R.buckley@griffith.edu.au](mailto:R.buckley@griffith.edu.au)>