

Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism



Edited by K.D. Lyons and S. Wearing

**JOURNEYS OF DISCOVERY IN VOLUNTEER
TOURISM**

International Case Study Perspectives

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International Case Study Perspectives

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Contributors

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Dr Eduardo Fayos-Solá is the Director of the Education and Knowledge Management Department of the United Nations World Tourism Organization. He is also the President of the UNWTO Themis Foundation for Quality in Tourism Education and Training. From 1991 to 1994 he was the Director General of Tourism for Spain, in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism. He has been Professor of Applied Economics and Economics of Tourism at the University of Valencia (Spain) since 1977 and previously was Assistant Professor of Economics of Development at the University of Stockholm (Sweden).

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Dr Kirsten Holmes is a Research Fellow at Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia, investigating the contribution of volunteers to tourism. Previously she was a Lecturer in Tourism at the University of Surrey and also a Lecturer in Leisure Management at the University of Sheffield in the UK. Her research focuses on various aspects of volunteering within tourism but she also researches more widely within cultural tourism, particularly the role of culture within urban regeneration, and has recently completed work for the UK government on notions of sustainable leisure.

Professor John Jenkins is Head of the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Southern Cross University in Australia. His research has a

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Dr Andrew Lepp is a Professor in the Recreation, Park and Tourism Management programme at Kent State University (USA). He has an MS degree from Oregon State University and a PhD from the University of Florida. As a researcher, one area of interest has been tourism and sustainable development in East Africa and he has published several papers on the subject. His interest in the subject grew from the 2 years he spent working as a Warden of Tourism in Uganda's national parks and wildlife reserves. He has also worked for the US National Park Service and the US Forest Service.

Dr Kevin Lyons is a Senior Lecturer in Leisure and Tourism Studies at the University of Newcastle, Australia. He received his Master's and Doctoral degrees from the University of Georgia, USA, in 1998. Prior to his career as an academic, he worked for 15 years in community-based leisure and tourism services in New York where he was responsible for recruiting and managing large teams of paid staff, international volunteers and cultural exchange participants. This experience led him to develop his research interests in volunteering and travel. He has also conducted research into the relationships between leisure and communities, and has examined the impacts of volunteering upon life trajectories. He has published his research in a number of international refereed leisure studies and tourism studies journals. He is on the Board of Directors of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Leisure Studies (ANZALS), and is an associate editor for a number of international refereed journals.

Amie Matthews is a PhD candidate at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Her research focuses on the experiential significance of travel in the lives of young Australians and the impacts extended international journeys have on identity formation. Having spent a number of years working in the tourism industry and having been privileged enough to travel to a number of Australian and international destinations with backpack in tow, she has both a professional and personal interest in the backpacking culture, tourism and volunteer travel. Her broader research interests include youth culture, alternative spiritualities, contemporary secular ritual and social change movements.

Dr Nancy McGehee is an Associate Professor in the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program at Virginia Tech. She is a sociologist. She has spent over a decade studying and writing about volunteer tourism both in the USA and abroad. Her current interests centre on resident perceptions of volunteer tourism, as well as the exploration of how better to match volunteers with community needs.

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Professor Philip Pearce is the Foundation Professor of Tourism at James Cook University. He undertook his doctoral studies at the University of Oxford and has always been interested in tourist behaviour and analysis. He has held a Fulbright scholarship to Harvard University and has published widely in tourism journals and books. His most recent book with Channel View (2005) is *Tourist Behaviour: Themes and Conceptual Schemes*. He is a foundation member of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism, an Honorary Professor at Xi'an International Studies University in China and teaches in graduate-level courses in Italy. He maintains active publishing interests in tourists' motivation, experiences, satisfaction and impact.

Eliza Raymond migrated from England to New Zealand in 2001 where she studied Geography and Spanish at the University of Otago. Following her experience as a volunteer in Guatemala and Chile, she returned to Otago to research good practice in volunteer tourism. She is now working as the International Programs Coordinator for Maximo Nivel in Cusco, Peru. Maximo Nivel's volunteer programmes cater for international volunteers seeking to contribute to the social, cultural, economic and/or natural environment of Cusco and the surrounding region.

Dr Lisa Ruhanen is a Lecturer at the School of Tourism, the University of Queensland. She has an honours degree from James Cook University and a PhD from the University of Queensland. She has been involved in a number of research projects in both Australia and overseas. She is a visiting scholar with the United Nations World Tourism Organization's Education and Knowledge Management department and is involved in the Education Council as part of the University of Queensland's current role as Council Chair.

Dr Gabrielle Russell-Mundine obtained her PhD from Southern Cross University where she investigated the experiences of an Aboriginal Corporation as they undertook the process of investigating and developing sustainable community enterprise options including tourism, forestry, education and social enterprises. Gabrielle started out her working life in the small business sector learning about business in industries as diverse as office products to baby products. Her real interest, however, was in the volunteer work she was doing in youth programmes and later in politics. Eventually she moved full time into the not-for-profit sector and has since worked for NGOs such as Amnesty International, The Futures Foundation and the Minerals Policy Institute. She has also worked as a political adviser to an NSW Senator, researching and advising on corporate social responsibility, human rights and foreign affairs issues.

Dr Suzanne Snead holds a BSc in Psychology and MSc in Therapeutic Recreation from the University of Southern Mississippi, USA. She spent several years as a practitioner in the disability and recreation fields before returning to academia to complete a PhD in Social Sciences at the University of Newcastle, Australia, and a research fellowship with the University of Sydney, Australia. She has presented at numerous conferences in the USA, Canada and Australia on topics such as inclusive community recreation, client autonomy, leisure education and staff–client interactions in allied health settings. She has recently returned from a year-long ‘working holiday’, teaching English in Russia.

Nadia Söderman has a Master’s degree in German, French and Marketing from Åbo Akademi University in Finland and is currently completing her MPhil at the Centre for Tourism Policy Research at the University of Brighton, England. She is interested in languages and speaks English, Swedish, German, Spanish, French and Italian, some Finnish and a little Russian, Japanese and Maori. Her research interests lie in the fields of youth tourism, educational tourism, volunteer tourism, rural tourism, ecotourism, indigenous cultures and Latin America as a destination.

Dr Rochelle Spencer is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion at Macquarie University, Australia. Her doctorate explores alternative touristic models of ‘doing’ rights-based community development in Cuba, notions of transformative learning and new social movement participation. She is keenly interested in the social development of socialist Cuba in the current age of globalization and neoliberalism as a site of educational and humanitarian tourism. Drawing on her tourism and NGO sector experience, Rochelle’s current research is situated within the local government context. She is exploring the diverse possibilities of harnessing social capital, local networks and partnerships, including volunteering, for building sustainable communities and social transformation from ‘within’.

Dr Tamara Young is a lecturer in the School of Economics, Politics and Tourism at the University of Newcastle, and a research associate in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Western Sydney. She completed her PhD at the University of Newcastle in 2005. Her doctoral thesis examined guidebook constructions of traveller and travelled cultures, and the interplay between text and audience in the context of independent backpacker travel in Aboriginal Australia. Her research interests include representation and interpretation in tourism, guidebooks and travel media, travel experiences and identity, cultural tourism and Aboriginal Australia.

Dr Stephen Wearing is an Associate Professor at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). He has been responsible for a variety of projects in the area of Leisure and Tourism Studies at an international and local level. Stephen received his PhD from Charles Sturt University, Australia. He has served as chair and on the Board of Youth Challenge Australia for over 12 years. He has directed a number of leisure and tourism community-based projects in Costa Rica, Solomon Islands, Guyana and Australia receiving a special citation from the Costa Rican Government for services to community, conservation and youth

and an outstanding contribution award from Youth Challenge International in Canada. His published research in refereed journals and books on volunteer tourism and ecotourism is internationally recognized and highly cited. He is managing editor of a new refereed international journal entitled *Journal of Volunteer Tourism and Social Development*.

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Preface

A central question that led us to develop this volume of international case studies asks whether volunteer tourism is an example of a niche product in the broader arena of tourism or whether it is an alternative social phenomenon that challenges the commodity-intensive underpinnings of tourism. In seeking answers to this question we realized that volunteer tourism manifests in diverse ways and a rigorous understanding of it requires casting the analytical net widely. To this end, we have sought out a collection of theoretically and empirically grounded case studies that we feel provide a rigorous and critical vehicle for understanding the relationship between volunteering and tourism broadly. This book explores the experiences of the volunteer tourist and the ensuing narrative between host and volunteer as it manifests in diverse and increasingly contested political international contexts. As such, this volume includes case studies conducted in 12 countries across six continents.

In order to understand the extent and nature of volunteer tourism and to ask critical questions of it, we have invited scholars from around the globe who are actively involved in knowledge generation and research activism related to volunteer tourism to contribute chapters to this book. These contributors include established leaders in tourism research and emerging researchers who represent a 'new wave' of scholarship that is developing in response to this fast-growing area of tourism.

This book is organized into three parts that explore key approaches to, and dimensions of, volunteer tourism. In the opening chapter for each part we provide an in-depth discussion of relevant approaches and issues that link and frame the ensuing cases.

Part I considers the perspectives of host communities and the organizations that provide them with volunteers as part of a process of social and community development. Part II presents case studies that focus upon the experiences of the volunteer tourist and considers issues of the self, motivation, identity and the impact of volunteer tourism upon the volunteer. The case studies presented in Part III consider new and emerging trends that challenge traditional conceptualizations

of volunteer tourism and open the door for further investigation that explores their implications in the future. In this concluding part, we ask questions about the future of volunteer tourism and the dialogue that arises if we examine how a commodified or decommodified frame is used to examine it.

This book was developed as a resource for scholars, commercial and non-commercial service providers and students alike who seek a deeper understanding of how volunteer tourism is growing and developing, the potential power of this form of alternative tourism and the potential challenges it presents. We hope it opens the door for critically informed practice in the future.

Kevin Lyons and Stephen Wearing
Editors

Acknowledgements

There are several people who have been instrumental in enabling us to complete this collection of international case studies. We thank the contributors to this book who represent the full spectrum of scholarly experience from the well-published through to those whose chapter in this volume is their first foray into published scholarly work. We also thank a number of the contributors who agreed to blind peer review other chapters in this book. This extra layer of work has strengthened this volume considerably. We would also like to thank Suzanne Snead, PhD and Research Associate at-large for her work on the final drafts of the chapters in this book. Her 'ninth-hour' assistance was invaluable. We thank those volunteer tourists who agreed to participate in the empirical research that features in a number of the cases presented. Finally, we thank those host communities who opened their doors to scrutiny and analysis. Through your participation we believe this volume provides rich insights into the phenomena of volunteer tourism.

Kevin Lyons and Stephen Wearing

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**Journeys Beyond Otherness:
Communities, Culture
and Power**

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1

Volunteer Tourism as Alternative Tourism: Journeys Beyond Otherness

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Seismic changes in leisure time, disposable income, mobility and communication technologies have created a context in which tourism has thrived, grown and diversified to encompass a wide array of leisure travel behaviours that were not imagined even as recently as a couple of decades ago. Leading the way in this process of diversification is alternative tourism, which describes a form of tourism that rebukes mass tourism and the consumptive mindset it engenders and instead offers alternative, more discriminating, socially and environmentally sustaining tourist experiences (Wearing, 2001). The demand for alternative tourism has led to a diverse array of niche products and services, each the subject of critical scholarly analysis including educational tourism, farm tourism, cultural exchange tourism, scientific tourism and volunteer tourism, which is the subject and focus of this book.

Definitions of volunteer tourism have begun to emerge in the academic and popular literature and are cited in a number of the case studies presented in this volume. Some of these definitions are relatively narrow in their focus. For example, Wearing (2002) defines volunteer tourists as those who 'volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that may involve the aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment' (p. 240). This definition uses criteria that limit volunteer tourism to those experiences located within the context of holidays or vacations. Others such as Uriely *et al.* (2003) take a more macro-approach and consider the more inclusive notion of volunteering in tourism as an 'expression of what is recognized in tourism literature as the "other" dimension of postmodern tourism, which emphasizes the growing appeal of concepts such as "alternative", "real", "ecological", and "responsible" forms of tourism' (p. 61). While specific definitions are used in some of the contributions to this book to frame individual case studies, we have resisted the temptation to offer an overarching definition of volunteer tourism for this volume. Instead we recognize volunteer