

THIRD EDITION

# TOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY

Development, globalisation and new tourism  
in the Third World



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MARTIN MOWFORTH AND IAN MUNT

# Tourism and Sustainability

'If unequal opportunities are large within many countries they are truly staggering on a global scale'. So concludes the World Bank's 2006 *World Development Report*. It is a global unevenness within which the barriers to immigration of Third World migrants to wealthy First World nations go ever higher, while the barriers to travel in the reverse direction are all but extinct. So how exactly can tourism contribute to narrowing this glaring inequality and gap between the rich and the poor? Are ever-expanding tourism markets – and the new, responsible, forms of tourism in particular – a smoke-free, socio-culturally sensitive form of human industrialisation? Is alternative tourism really a credible lever for lifting poverty stricken countries out of the mire of global inequality, setting them on the right track to 'development', and making poverty history?

*Tourism and Sustainability* critically explores and challenges what have emerged as the most significant universal geopolitical norms of the last half century – development, globalisation and sustainability – and through the lens of new forms of tourism demonstrates how we can better understand and get to grips with the rapidly changing new global order.

This third edition has been extensively updated and includes new material on:

- Poverty reduction, livelihoods and pro-poor tourism
- New forms of tourism in cities
- Continuing growth of the fair trade movement
- Tourism's contribution to climate change
- Volunteer and 'gap' tourism
- The effect of disasters on new tourism

Drawing on a range of examples from across the Third World, *Tourism and Sustainability* illustrates the social, economic and environmental conditions for the growth of new tourism. The book is original in its assessment of tourism through the lens of power – who holds it; how it is used; and who benefits from the exercise of power in the tourism industry. Additionally, the analysis is an interdisciplinary one and the book will therefore be useful to students of Human Geography, Environmental Sciences and Studies, Politics, Development Studies, Anthropology and Business Studies as well as Tourism itself.

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## On previous editions

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‘This book should be compulsory reading for all those engaged in tourism research.’  
Erlet Cater, *In Focus*, Tourism Concern

‘. . . one of the most significant books produced on tourism in the past few years.’  
Geoffrey Wall, *Annals of Tourism Research*

‘A valuable and overdue contribution to a multi-disciplinary area. This book meets the challenge to say something clear and interesting in a quicksand of ambiguities.’  
Professor John Lea, University of Sydney

‘Informative, stimulating, and provocative, the book deserves to be read by a wide audience . . . It is absolutely essential reading for all those serious scholars of tourism studies wishing to appreciate “the bigger picture”.’ Brian Wheeler, *Annals of Tourism Research*

‘. . . the book is quite simply one of the most important theoretical contributions to the growing subdiscipline of tourism geography and is likely to be a mainstay for many years to come.’ Keith Debbage, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*

‘. . . a far-reaching, timely and quite penetrating critique of some of the forms of tourism that have emerged as a direct response to the clarion call for sustainable tourism development.’ Michael Parnwell, *Journal of Development Studies*

# **Tourism and Sustainability**

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Martin Mowforth and Ian Munt

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For Matthew and Joseph





# Contents

<i>Foreword to third edition</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
<i>List of figures</i>	xv
<i>List of tables</i>	xvii
<i>List of boxes</i>	xix
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xxi
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
<i>Purpose and limits of the book</i>	1
<i>Tourism as a multidisciplinary subject</i>	2
<i>Key themes and key words</i>	3
<i>Tourism and geographical imagination</i>	6
<i>Layout of the book</i>	8
Chapter 2 Globalisation, sustainability, development	11
<i>Tourism in a shrinking world</i>	12
<i>Uneven and unequal development</i>	14
<i>Sustainability and global change</i>	18
<i>Development and the Third World</i>	31
<i>Conclusion</i>	45
Chapter 3 Power and tourism	47
<i>Power play</i>	48
<i>The political economy of Third World tourism</i>	52
<i>Tourism as domination</i>	53
<i>Alternative critiques for alternative tourism?</i>	60
<i>Conclusion</i>	81
Chapter 4 Tourism and sustainability	83
<i>The growth in mass tourism</i>	84
<i>Resulting problems and the rise of new forms of tourism</i>	94
<i>Terminology</i>	97
<i>Defining the 'new' tourism</i>	98
<i>The principles of sustainability in tourism</i>	100
<i>Agenda 21 and sustainable development in tourism</i>	108
<i>The tools of sustainability in tourism</i>	109
<i>Whither sustainability in tourism?</i>	118

Chapter 5	A new class of tourist: trendies on the trail	120
	<i>Class, capital and travel</i>	121
	<i>A new class of tourist?</i>	130
	<i>The scramble for Third World destinations</i>	141
	<i>Conclusion</i>	147
Chapter 6	Socio-environmental organisations: where shall we save next?	148
	<i>New socio-environmental movements</i>	149
	<i>Environmentalism and new tourism</i>	154
	<i>Environmentalism and power</i>	171
	<i>Conclusion</i>	175
Chapter 7	The industry: lies, damned lies and sustainability	177
	<i>Trade and tourism</i>	177
	<i>Size and structure of the industry</i>	183
	<i>Redefining sustainability</i>	191
	<i>New personnel and new features of the new tourism industry</i>	214
	<i>Conclusion</i>	222
Chapter 8	'Hosts' and destinations: for what we are about to receive . . .	224
	<i>Local participation in decision-making</i>	225
	<i>Government control and community control</i>	239
	<i>Displacement and resettlement</i>	251
	<i>Visitor and host attitudes</i>	259
	<i>Conclusion</i>	267
Chapter 9	Cities and tourism: guess who's coming to town?	268
	<i>Urbanisation as the antithesis of development</i>	271
	<i>Cities as economic machines</i>	273
	<i>Recycling places: heritage and the urban poor</i>	276
	<i>Pro-poor city tourism?</i>	283
	<i>Slum tourism: aestheticising the poor or taking control?</i>	285
	<i>Conclusion</i>	291
Chapter 10	Governance, governments and tourism: selling the Third World	293
	<i>The politics of tourism</i>	294
	<i>Assessing the politics of tourism</i>	296
	<i>Tourism as politics</i>	299
	<i>Globalisation and the politics of external influences</i>	302
	<i>Sustainable tourism as political discourse</i>	318
	<i>Conclusion</i>	333
Chapter 11	New tourism and the poor: making poverty history?	335
	<i>Understanding poverty</i>	335
	<i>The Millennium Development Goals and tourism</i>	338
	<i>Pro-poor tourism</i>	344
	<i>Migration and remittances</i>	354
	<i>Human security</i>	359
	<i>Conclusion</i>	367

Chapter 12 Conclusion	369
<i>Key themes and key words</i>	369
<i>New forms of Third World tourism</i>	371
<i>Globalisation, sustainability and development</i>	373
<i>Sustainability and power</i>	374
<i>New tourisms, new critiques</i>	375
<i>Whither new forms of tourism?</i>	375
<i>Notes</i>	378
<i>Appendix 1 Travel and tourism-related websites</i>	384
<i>Appendix 2 Websites relating to carbon budgets and carbon offsetting</i>	387
<i>References</i>	388
<i>Index</i>	412





# Foreword to third edition

It is now well over fifteen years since we started talking about and writing the first edition of this book, first published in 1998. New editions provide an opportunity to take a hard and critical look at what we have got wrong and what we believe still holds good. We have been lucky enough to receive the feedback of colleagues and students in many different countries, some supportive, others challenging us where they think we are off target. We originally wrote *Tourism and Sustainability* in part as a critical reaction to what appeared to be at the time a rather uncritical approach to the expansion of tourism (and especially new forms of tourism). On its tenth birthday we have retained much of the original argument for this third edition. Of course, some of our original categorisations may have been offered as a challenge rather than as exhaustively and scientifically researched typologies: hunches designed to provoke critical discussion rather than prescriptive conclusions, and our pessimistic outlook may remain overcooked. And yet, the progress in promoting more locally rooted, more equitable, and environmentally responsive forms of tourism in the past fifteen years has been painfully slow. Understanding why this is so, and overcoming obstacles to change, remains a fundamental challenge.

Some of the issues that we covered, at least briefly, in the first edition but that were relatively 'silent' in the public realm are now right at the top of the global political agenda. Climate change and the need to end poverty, for example, are now daily topics of media discussion and central targets for the United Nations and member governments. The UN's Millennium Development Goals coupled with global campaigns against poverty have imprinted this global challenge in the consciousness of many, and have demanded a response of agencies such as the World Tourism Organisation.

At a time when the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade has been marked, some have drawn the parallels between these monumental challenges and demanded that it is this generation's duty to step up to the mark and 'Make Poverty History'. Yet in a world where the jewels of new tourism from the Maldives to Kiribati and Tuvalu in the Pacific are in danger of literally disappearing beneath the waves, and where global inequality is rapidly accelerating (not slowing down or reversing), it appears clear that these will be the burning issues for our and subsequent generations. Unless western consumption practices are reined back, and their rapid global spread (through, for example, the breathtaking industrialisation of China and India) is not tempered, the implications will be potentially disastrous. Tourism needs to take its temperature within this broader global context and judge its part in averting or encouraging the onset of crisis.

Much has changed since both the first and second editions of *Tourism and Sustainability*. The growing identification, at least in the western world, of the G8 countries as the single imperial power and the spread of the consumerist lifestyles associated with their political and economic platforms have given rise to a number of counterbalancing movements. Prime among these has been the anti-globalisation movement that makes its presence felt at each meeting of the G8 powers. Also of potentially considerable significance as a

counterbalance to the G8's power is the so-called 'Pink Tide' of Latin America – the rise of governments that question and challenge the wisdom and appropriateness of the Washington Consensus – and the alternative G20 powers led by the IBSA axis – India, Brazil and South Africa. Additionally, the so-called war on terror, resulting from the 9/11 attacks on the USA, has brought about major changes in our patterns of behaviour and movement. All of these events, movements and trends have had direct and indirect effects on the development of tourism.

The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in which an estimated 230,000 people tragically lost their lives seemed to stand for both the fragility and resilience of tourism. The rebuilding and rehabilitation that followed the tsunami provided a reminder of the potential advantages of locally generated and led development. Equally, however, the ugly lure of tourist dollars led to land grabbing in some countries (especially the coastline of Thailand) in an attempt to finally deny the poor the right to return to their land. The tsunami brought the battle for land into the open in the words of the Asian Coalition of Housing Rights 'like never before'.

In this edition we have continued to build a more wide-ranging discussion on development, a fundamental requisite for understanding and assessing new forms of Third World tourism. This ranges from a presentation of development theory, to a critical discussion of tourism's fair trade and pro-poor development potential. In particular, the promotion of people-centred approaches to development has continued to find resonance in pro-poor, community-centred, tourism initiatives and as a counterbalance to the top-down and trickle-down approaches to tourism master planning in Third World destinations. We have therefore provided a separate chapter focused on pro-poor tourism and a further chapter looking at the under-researched practice and potential of pro-poor tourism in cities. But it is an approach that remains at the margins, more a form of analysis rather than a form of practice. In the years ahead it will be important to guard against development spin and the liberal use of 'pro-poor' as a development prefix in the same way that 'eco-' became a prefix in the tourism industry.

The core of our argument, however, remains unchanged in that development is an inherently unequal and uneven process, symbolised arguably by the diasporic and increasingly thwarted movements of Third World migrants to the First World, starkly contrasted to the accelerating movements of relatively wealthy western tourists to the Third World and the ideology of freedom of movement that supports this.

The question with which we embarked in 1993 also remains unchanged: can new forms of tourism become a significant force in global development? In the context of increasing global inequality and poverty, the overall size of the tourism industry (a point that tourism advocates invoke to explain why it should be a major force for development) and the advances made, our conclusions remain cautious. Indeed, as we write, the United Nations' annual survey confirms that progress on reducing global poverty has slowed depressingly to 'snail's pace'. Without starting from an assessment of the structures and relationships of power that influence the fate of tourism, it is, perhaps, a little too easy to be seduced by the possibilities inferred from what remain relatively few examples of positive change. To re-emphasise, however, this is not a 'do-nothing' manifesto. Far from it, we hope. Never has practical action been of such importance (regardless of the scale). Rather, it remains a contribution to understanding the wider global context within which tourism operates and from which responses must be forged.

Martin Mowforth and Ian Munt  
February 2008

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# Figures

1.1	Key themes and key words	3
2.1	Globalisation: uneven and unequal development	14
2.2	Transition in late twentieth century capitalism	24
2.3	Tourism, sustainability and globalisation	30
2.4	The age of development	33
3.1	The power jigsaw	48
3.2	Neocolonial discovery?	65
3.3	To be or not to be a tourist?	68
3.4	An alternative tourist's guide to an exciting region	73
4.1	History of the tourism industry	85
4.2	Ethics and the industry	90
4.3	Global tourist arrivals	92
4.4	Criteria often used for sustainability in tourism	101
5.1	The culture of travel	122
5.2	Self-discovery and the social field	129
6.1	Annual membership of Greenpeace UK	150
6.2	Global distribution of Survival International's membership	152
6.3	The global growth of protected areas	167
7.1	Elements of the tourism industry	183
7.2	Consultancies and forms of consultation	207
8.1	Participatory Community Development – There You Go!	227
8.2	The TEA guesthouse in Laguna, Toledo district, south Belize	241
8.3	Inside the Laguna guesthouse	241
8.4	The Hotel San Blas, Panama	251
8.5	Tourism-related water conflicts	252
9.1	Slum dwellers as a percentage of urban population by region, 2001	269
9.2	Heritage hotspots: historic city centres on new tourism circuits	278
9.3	Luang Prabang	279
10.1	Tourist arrivals and receipts, Egypt, 1993–2005	295
10.2	Poverty and the 'hard-line market bolsheviks' of the IMF	306
10.3	Regulating the Third World	316
10.4	Belize	319
10.5	Tourist arrivals and receipts, Belize, 1985–2004	320
10.6	Ecotourism on Ambergris Caye – or not?	323
10.7	The Burma boycott debate	331
11.1	The drive towards the MDGs	344
11.2	Greater Mekong Subregion tourism sector problem tree	353
11.3	Tourist arrivals to and migrants from Latin American and Caribbean countries	357
12.1	Tourism, sustainability and globalisation	371





# Tables

2.1	International tourist arrivals and receipts from selected First World countries	15
2.2	International tourist arrivals and receipts from selected Third World countries	16
2.3	The world's top 25 tourism spenders (excluding transport), 2005	17
2.4	Post-Fordism and tourism	22
2.5	The UN's Millennium Development Goals	35
4.1	Murphy's growth factors in the evolution of tourism	87
6.1	Tourism and the spectrum of environmentalism	156
6.2	Protected area categories	168
7.1	A qualitative assessment of some differences between a conventional mass tourist package and a typical trekking package	190
7.2	Selected characteristics of 'new' and specialised tour operators	193
8.1	Pretty's typology of participation	229
8.2	Doxey's levels of host irritation extended	266
10.1	Tourism interest groups	299
10.2	Agenda 21: responsibilities of governments	313
11.1	MDGs and the travel and tourism industry	340
11.2	Pro-poor tourism	345
11.3	Pro-poor tourism strategies	346
11.4	What 10 per cent of a country's tourism receipts might mean to the poorest households	349
12.1	Key themes and key words	370





# Boxes

2.1	The Rio and Rio + 10 summits	19
2.2	Have mouse will travel	23
2.3	Shifts in contemporary tourism	26
3.1	The ‘new imperialism’	54
3.2	Tourism in metamorphosis?	59
3.3	Tourism and the development of capitalism	60
3.4	Elements of a new tourism critique	62
3.5	Global porters	69
3.6	Focus on truck travels	70
3.7	Travels in authenticity: the evolution of the concept	75
4.1	Studies in tourism	88
4.2	Package holidays (Pass Notes)	90
4.3	The growth of tourism in Tanzania and Eastern Africa	93
4.4	An A–Z of new tourism terminology	97
4.5	Tourism and development: defining new tourisms	99
4.6	Carrying capacity calculations for the Guayabo National Monument, Costa Rica	102
4.7	Social divisions in the Bay Islands of Honduras	105
4.8	The tools of sustainability	110
5.1	Ecotourists: a personal profile	124
5.2	Voluntourism and gappers	127
5.3	The Himalayan Kingdoms Team: tour leader profiles	133
5.4	On tourism and travelling	136
5.5	Paradise lost: Bali and the new tourist	143
5.6	Himalayan Kingdoms Treks and Tours 2008 brochure	146
6.1	Big International Non-Governmental Organisations (BINGOs)	151
6.2	He’s destroying his own rainforest. To stop him, do you send in the army or an anthropologist?	164
6.3	Diamonds are forever: the Bushmen, the ecologist and the government of Botswana	165
6.4	WWF bankrolled rhino mercenaries	166
6.5	Conservation and imagination: clash on environment	169
6.6	Tourism development in Mexico	171
7.1	Fair, fairer, just and ethical tourism	181
7.2	Five major forms of TNC participation in the Third World hotel industry	186
7.3	Categories of international regulation and control of relevance to the travel and tourism industry	195
7.4	British Airways’ environmental strategy	211
7.5	Offshore real estate: Third World for sale	216