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## Book Review

### **Adventure Tourism: The new frontier A Critical Review**

*Writers: John Swarbrooke, Colin Beard, Suzanne Leckie & Gill Pomfret*

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This book represents a very ambitious project! It is an attempt to explore the growing, but broad and “ill-defined”, phenomenon of adventure tourism. At the same time, the sub-headings of the book reflect the authors’ view that adventure tourism represents a ‘new frontier’ in tourism in several ways.

First, in many ways the changes that have taken place in adventure tourism in recent years appear to illustrate and support the idea that the world is witnessing the transition from ‘old tourism’ to ‘new tourism’.

Second, in terms of the geographical dimension of tourism adventure tourists are pushing back the frontiers, making destinations of the last wildernesses on earth, and even of space!

Third, in many types of adventure tourism the industry is seeing new forms and variations on a theme, which are shifting ‘the frontier’ in the different sectors of tourism.

Finally, the adventure and general travelers are living and experiencing in a time where ‘classic’ natural wilderness adventure travel is being complemented by adventure experiences in man-made artificial environments, often in urban areas.

The authors are determined to try to present as holistic a view as possible of adventure tourism. In most texts adventure tourism is seen as a physical phenomenon, involving tourists undertaking physical activities in unfamiliar and often inhospitable environments. However, there is also a non-physical dimension to adventure tourism in two ways. In the first place, physical adventure activities have a strong non-physical element in the emotion of fear and, taking mountaineering as an example, in the almost spiritual feeling experienced when standing alone on one of the highest points on earth.

The authors have added a little more academic stuffs in their scholarly pursuit where they argue that more fundamentally, though, there are forms of adventure tourism that are largely or wholly non-physical in nature. Non-physical adventure tourism can, perhaps, be divided

into different types, namely:

- Intellectual adventure, such as travelling for mental self-development
- Emotional adventure, for example gambling or hedonism
- Spiritual adventure, where people travel in search of spiritual enlightenment

The inclusion of non-physical adventure tourism in this book has made it almost unbearably difficult to write, because non-physical adventure has received much less attention from academics than its physical counterpart. As a result, there is little theoretical literature in this field, and very few data exist for many forms of non-physical adventure tourism. For this reason, non-physical adventure tourism receives less coverage in this book than the more traditional physical forms. However, the authors wish to stress that this imbalance is mainly as a result of the lack of data and theoretical literature, and it in no way reflects their view of the respective importance of the two forms of adventure tourism.

It became clear to the authors very early on that adventure tourism is a diverse field. Even physical adventure is highly heterogeneous. The breadth of physical adventure tourism today was clearly illustrated in a small book given away free in 2002 with *Global* magazine in the UK. This listed 'Great Adventures for 2002', includes:

- Trekking holidays in Morocco and Asia
- Bike-riding adventures in South Africa
- Diving trips to the Red Sea
- Whale-watching in Norway
- Swimming amongst sharks in South Africa
- Cheetah-watching in Namibia
- Dog-sledding and reindeer expeditions in Lapland
- Sailing tall ships across the Atlantic
- White-water rafting in Turkey
- Surfing in Cornwall, UK
- Riding the full length of the Trans-Siberian railway
- Taking part in charity challenge adventures, including the 'Vietnam Life Cycle Challenge' and the '2002 UK Challenge Series'
- Going on a polar cruise to either the Arctic or Antarctica
- Going on holiday and paying to work on conservation projects in the UK
- Micro-light flying in the UK
- Taking part in the 'running of the bulls' in Pamplona, Spain
- Sky-diving in Spain and Florida
- Driving a Formula 1 racing car in the UK
- Practicing falconry in the UK
- Taking a motorcycle tour of the South Island, New Zealand
- Training with Thai boxers in Thailand

- Horse-trekking in Kyrgyzstan
- Participating in the Outward Bound 2002 Expedition.

Non-physical adventure tourism is also a very diverse field, encompassing everything from gambling trips to hedonistic sun, sand, sea and sex vacations to journeys in search of spiritual enlightenment.

What is clear is that adventure is not an absolute concept that is the same for everyone. The concept of adventure is highly personal, and means different things to different people. Something that is quite every day or mundane for one person can be a rare adventure for another: depending on experience and personality.

Sadly, this is just one of the areas in which the writing of this book was constrained by the lack of empirical data on many aspects of adventure tourism. Hence in Chapter 12 the authors have made an impassioned plea for more research to be conducted in adventure tourism.

Having talked a little about the aims of the book, and the problems experienced in writing it, it is time to tell the reader a little about its structure.

Part A sets the scene with the following traditional yet obviously necessary academic components 'Introduction, definitions and typologies' followed by 'Historical themes in adventure tourism' contents.

Chapter 1 makes an inviting attempt to introduce the concept of adventure tourism and offers some key definitions and typologies, while chapter 2 puts adventure tourism into its historical context.

The adventure tourist is the focus of Part B. Chapter 3 concentrates on individual tourists and their characteristics and motives, while Chapter 4 analyses the scope and nature of the global adventure tourism market.

In Part C we turn our attention to the supply side of adventure tourism. Chapter 5 looks at destinations and views, while Chapter 6 looks at the structure of the adventure tourism industry.

Part D explores three key aspects of the management of adventure tourism. Chapter 7 concentrates on the marketing of adventure tourism, while Chapter 8 covers the crucial subject of risk management. In Chapter 9, the highly topical issue of ethics is examined.

Part E features two chapters on important and rapidly developing sectors of adventure tourism; wildlife tourism (Chapter 10) and artificial environment tourism (Chapter 11).

In Part F, the authors endeavor to look into the future and predict how adventure tourism is going to develop over time.

Part G is a very important section because it consists of real case studies, drawn from many different countries, which illustrate many of the points made in the text.

Finally, there is a detailed bibliography to help those who want to do further reading.

Despite the authors' humble request to take their efforts positively and encourage them further in serious academic pursuits, they have quite successfully produced an academic work that can benefit college students and other interested beginners. Their arguments about adventure tourism have huge potential for all daring and imaginative enthusiasts in their

doings. It's aptly described how the adventure tourism sectors produce real life heroes and also notable writers. The travel writing according to the authors is "The expression of the restless soul. For a small number of people, adventure tourism or travel is an outlet for the restless spirit unable to fit in to conventional society" (46). This very aptly fits the story of Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* which is a personal account of the Mt. Everest disaster. The book is a 1997 bestselling non-fiction book and it details Krakauer's experience in the 1996 Mount Everest disaster, in which eight climbers were killed and several others were stranded by a storm. Adventurers in other parts of the world have also penned their travel accounts including... "Lawrence of Arabia in the Middle East and Matisse in the South Sea Islands" (46), for example.

The book opens up discussions on very modern and contemporary themes like '180° Adventures', 'Space tourism', 'Adventure travel writing today', 'Adventure travel as television entertainment', and 'Personal adventures and the holiday postcard'. The book has tried to cover many interesting issues that can bemuse readers. When enthusiasts come to ponder on the sections like 'Sex tourism' or 'Hunting' we are enticed for further readings and encouraged for future self-explorations!

One of the inviting sections of the book is the case studies which contain interesting topics for college students' writing projects like 'Women backpackers', 'Disabled people and adventure travel', 'Walk on the wild side – travelling to the world's most dangerous places', 'Rock climbing', 'Backpacking across Asia' just to name a few.

However, this is not a book that is well polished, nor does it provide comprehensive coverage of the subject, and it offers very few answers. Instead, as the authors have admitted, it is in many ways "untidy and selective", and it "raises far more questions than answers". This may well be due to the authors' limitations as authors, but it also reflects the complexity of the field, its rapidly changing nature, and the very ambitious goals we set for ourselves. It is a classic case of 'work in progress', and the writers hope that this book will be a catalyst for other, more gifted, people to become interested in researching aspects of adventure tourism.

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## References

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