

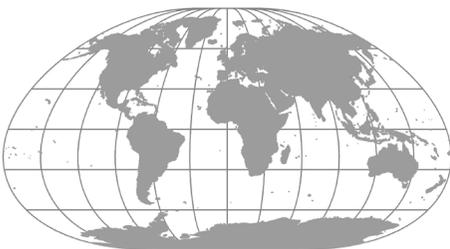
Book Review

An Introduction to the Geography of Tourism. Velvet Nelson. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2013. 308 pp. US \$49.95 Paperback (ISBN 978-1-4422-1072-1).

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Geographers specializing in the study of tourism have long complained about the marginalization of the sub-discipline within the wider scope of geography. Those of us who teach tourism geography recognize tourism as an inherently geographical topic ripe for critical investigation in classrooms. Yet despite the obvious appeal, there have been few texts that attempt a comprehensive overview of tourism geography and none geared directly at an undergraduate audience while also striking the right tone and level of engagement required to fulfill the task. I have personally heretofore eschewed the use of textbooks in teaching tourism geography in part because I have never found one that aligns with my view of the discipline or is simply palatable to my students. Velvet Nelson's newly published *An Introduction to the Geography of Tourism* may just be the book to change my mind.

The book is comprised of thirteen chapters arranged into four parts. The first part is an overview of tourism geography with introductions to basic geography and tourism concepts as well as a general overview of the most prominent types of tourism products. It is worth noting that the introduction to geography as a discipline here is good enough to consider for use outside of specific tourism classes. The second part elaborates on why tourism is inherently geographical with chapters on historical spatial patterns of tourism, transportation, and physical and human geographies of tourism. The third part focuses on tourism's impacts with chapters on economic, social and environmental geographies. The final section broadly examines



how the tourism industry arranges space and shapes places with chapters respectively focused on management of tourism spaces, representation of places, and experience of places.

The book is particularly strong stylistically. Chapters are not overly long and are broken down so their use can be tailored as needed to match the flow of a course. Each chapter is also supplemented with breakout boxes containing a mixture of case studies, in-depth explorations of particular topics such as pro-poor tourism and cultural commodification via tourism, and boxes providing the voices of anonymous tourists' experiences in various travel situations. The latter were particularly welcome and provide a grounded, personal feel that is often lacking in textbooks and that serves to connect the concepts of the chapters in a real-world context that many readers can relate to. The best, but perhaps imprecise way of stating their contribution, is that they give a visceral sense of what it is like to be a tourist and why we travel, including the unplanned serendipitous moments along with the unexpected annoyances that are the fuel for creating lasting memories.

This is not to say the book is perfect. The placements of certain discussions are debatable. For example, it seems somewhat strange that despite a nice in-depth box discussion of ecotourism in the chapter describing tourism typologies, there is no mention of ecotourism anywhere in the chapter on environmental impacts. Also there are some missing elements, such as the explicit connection between touristic consumption and the construction of identity which would have found a natural home in the final chapter of the book. Contemporary medical tourism is also absent. But that said, for a book of this size and scope, these are relatively minor issues. In fact, one of the book's strengths is that it does not feel like it is trying to be everything. Indeed, the author admits in the preface that the topic at hand presents limitless possibilities and therefore requires that difficult decisions be made regarding

the inclusion of content. This suggests that the best strategy to utilize this text is as a foundational guide to be supplemented with outside material.

In short, this book is not an attempt to be an exhaustive guide to tourism geographies, but rather a guide on using geographic concepts and methods to interrogate a fascinating subject. On those grounds, those of us who prefer to think of tourism geographies as a way to teach *geography* by using tourism as a subject matter will most likely find Velvet Nelson's text a natural fit.