

# Book review

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This book is timely. It arose from the strong interest in the call for papers for a special issue of the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* entitled “Sustainable tourism and Indigenous peoples”. With a focus on case studies from Australia and New Zealand, the book complements the special issue and contributes to the dissemination of these valuable case studies, thereby facilitating their potential use in the classroom and stimulating important debate amongst practitioners, researchers and government representatives on the past, present and future of Indigenous tourism.

The introduction positions the book well, starting with the context of travel driven by curiosity, exploration and an interest to experience the “exotic other” and a demand for unique cultural experiences. The editors then acknowledge the global strengthening of efforts by Indigenous communities to reclaim their cultures as well as growth in the recognition of intangible elements thereof, both of which are evident in tourism. When introducing the geographic/cultural delimitation of the book, the editors highlight the stark lag of Australia compared to New Zealand in terms of the proportion of Indigenous tourism contribution to the overall tourism offering. They stop short, at this point, of tackling the reasons for this difference; though a sobering picture is painted of these in the follow-on chapter.

The book is structured in two parts with a focus on Australia in the first seven chapters, a transition chapter and five chapters on New Zealand. The concluding chapter brings together the perspectives of two Indigenous tourism leaders – one each from Australia and New Zealand. Buoyed by the promise (made in Chapter 1) of this section considering the

future for both Indigenous tourism practice and research, I was left somewhat disappointed when I finally got there.

A well-conceived synthesis with a future focus would strengthen this otherwise strong volume.

Chapter 2 provides the reader with an important baseline of Indigenous tourism in Australia and, importantly, defines the terms Indigenous tourism and Indigenous tourism “visitor”. The description of the Australian situation presented thereafter is frank, realistic and evidence-based. It highlights the broader historic (colonial), societal and political realms which continue to stifle Indigenous tourism in Australia. Laudably, it does not stop there but looks to present a way forward. Chapter 7 continues the frank and constructive exposure of the present reality of Indigenous tourism in Australia. It proposes a reframing of the approach and illustrates Fraser’s (1999, 2009) justice framework of recognition, redistribution and representation through four tourism case studies.

The case studies in this volume are diverse in nature and insights they provide. They range from an examination of a tourism venture that is Aboriginal family-owned and run on-country and facing the Jekyll and Hyde nature of operational aspects (e.g. a flexible itinerary being both a strength and a weakness; multidimensional business goals being both inspirational and exhausting); to the exploration of evolving management mechanisms such as joint management; a case that illustrates that sometimes the time is not right for tourism after all; a small island community that just cannot seem to agree on working together to better their lot; to the reflective conversations of the relational value chains, refreshingly captured in the final case study of a Māori tourism entrepreneur. Collectively, these cases inspire the reader to reflect and learn, highlight challenges and opportunities and show the role of key stakeholders in the success or failure of initiatives.

Setting the scene for Part 2 on New Zealand, Chapter 9 provides the reader with an opportunity to sit back and learn about the

## Indigenous Tourism: Cases from Australia & New Zealand

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chronology of Maori tourism development in New Zealand. This detailed account provides many examples of successful business ventures and shows the path to a strong Maori presence in New Zealand tourism – underpinned by progress in recognition, redistribution and representation. So if you have read Chapter 7 and want more examples, you will find ample here to back up Fraser's framework.

The book offers a good balance between the gloomy reality (particularly in Australia), positive examples and a solutions focus. It addresses a range of scales and covers a variety of relevant examples and situations thus providing a diverse resource for classroom discussions. Authors clearly define key terms and overall there is fairly good internal consistency on the application of key terms and alignment in interpretation and critical appraisal of key data (Chapter 4 being somewhat of an exception to both). Duplication between chapters, which can be a problem in edited volumes, is minimal.

While a couple of chapters would have benefitted from stronger alignment to the volume theme, I consider the diversity of cases and even writing styles as a strength. Akin to many Indigenous tourism experiences, reading this book is a journey. This journey included exposure to important yet confronting facts, engaging theoretical discussions and hearty exposure to practice. Some chapters flowed beautifully and were easy to read, while others were less accessible. The New Zealand examples in particular provided an apt demonstration of the use of language as a cultural equaliser.

The book highlights both progress and gaps that remain to be addressed. It shows that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Larrakia Declaration, the Merne Altjerre-ipenhe guidelines and local Indigenous laws, protocols and custodial obligations provide a basic framework for governments, industry and others to support Indigenous tourism that benefits, empowers and provides autonomy for Indigenous communities. For future progress, political will is required, yet remains as one of the weak links. It influences the degree to which governments ensure these

protocols are known, adhered to and enforced; as well as ensures that efforts by different parts of government are appropriately coordinated and synergistic rather than cannibalistic. All-the-while, the book reflects the growing global assertion of Indigenous peoples' rights and aspirations.

The book highlights for both countries the historic evolution, current strengths, opportunities and important parameters to building an Indigenous tourism future that supports Indigenous peoples' rights, values and autonomy. A suggestion close to my heart and which warrants further exploration in research is the idea mentioned in Chapter 2 of turning the educational focus on the tourist, not just the providers of Indigenous tourism, in order to build cultural competencies. This concept is also touched upon in Chapter 8, expressed as engaging the tourists "on the hosts' terms".

As the cracks in the profit-focussed dominant economic model are widening and global awareness of connectivity increases, Indigenous approaches prioritising culture, well-being and connectivity, as demonstrated in these tourism cases, may well turn out to become the leading lights for other industries to follow. As the transition chapter aptly points out, the future may well return us to the past – to the social and cultural capacities of tourism aspired to in the 1980s, before the tsunami of economic growth and industry focus swept the tourism landscape.

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