

# Book Review

## *Tourism in Parks: Australian Initiatives*

R. Buckley. Queensland, Australia: International Centre for Ecotourism Research, Griffith University, 2004. ISBN 0-909291-92-6: \$AUD45.00.

The book provides a compilation of papers from an Australian Academy of Science Fenner Conference held in 2001, on Nature Tourism and the Environment. The Conference focused on policies for managing protected areas, with a strong emphasis on world heritage areas. The purpose of these annual Fenner Conferences is to bring together individuals with scientific, administrative and policy expertise to consider current environmental problems and contribute to associated policy development. This book addresses nature tourism, predominantly but not exclusively in protected areas, and has 13 chapters, written by senior industry and government agency staff. A number of the chapters have been updated subsequent to 2001 to report on more recent policy initiatives. Collectively, they provide a 'snapshot in time' of policy activities in a country where ecotourism is a significant contributor to the national economy.

Overviews of tourism and conservation in Australia are provided early in the book by Bruce Leaver, John Brown and in the multi-authored chapter by McDougall and others. These chapters set the scene for a matter of continuing interest to practitioners and researchers alike – how can we create and maintain productive partnerships between tour operators and protected area managers? The activities of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority are featured, under the sub-title 'Doing it Better', with an explanation of how the Authority is moving beyond a prescriptive permit system for tour operators to cooperative management with the operators based on performance standards. The associated management emphasis will shift from regulation of users to managing impacts. Sound training and accreditation of operators will be an essential feature. Performance standards and accreditation of operators are also central themes in the chapter on Queensland's protected areas by Tony Charters and Emma Smith.

Several chapters provide a welcome focus on marketing as a critical aspect of the sustainable management of tourism in natural areas. The difficulties and possibilities offered by marketing and branding are clearly and impartially explored in the chapter by Russell Watkinson, on the Wet Tropics World Heritage area of Northern Queensland. They report on their branding research that suggested the alternative name of Australia's Tropical Rainforests World Heritage. The intrinsically intriguing 'outback' of central Australia is also explored from a marketing perspective, with the chapter by Joc Schmiechen showing how tourism product segmentation can work for an area larger than many European countries.

In summary, the book provides a useful overview of current policy initiatives in Australia, although it would have been more accurately titled 'heritage' tourism in parks, given the heritage focus throughout. One of the particularly useful features is the authors' candidness about the problems with managing tourism, especially the lack of resources and difficulties in engaging and retaining the support of stakeholders and potential partners. These problems are not unique to Australia and this book provides some novel solutions, applicable worldwide, as to how these problems may be addressed. The book has numerous typing errors, including incorrectly numbered chapters. As such, the book should be read and appreciated as a rapidly-produced and readily-available reference on current nature tourism initiatives in Australia, rather than as a carefully produced and reviewed academic publication.

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