

## Rural Tourism and Recreation: Principles to Practice

By L Roberts and D Hall, ISBN: 978-0-851995-40-3; 2001; xix+272 pages; CABI Publishing, Wallingford, Oxon.

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This book explicitly makes an attempt to analyze the two distinct intellectual traditions and odd combination viz. rural development (a hybrid of rural sociology and human spatial geography) and tourism, a feat the authors achieved remarkably well. The authors, Lesley Roberts and Derek Hall, are associated with Leisure and Tourism Management Department, Scottish Agricultural College in Ayr. Shire. It is a jointly authored book; they have included numerous short invited contributions from a wide range of contributors from Europe.

The book's intentions are noble and it meets the stated goals (page 1) to: review the work of academics and practitioners concerned with recreation, tourism and rural development issues, and to present an accessible synthesis of key issues arising from the observations and conceptualizations of such work; illustrate policy and commercial relevance and/or application by linking the key issues raised by such work with policy, planning and markets for tourism and recreational products and services; and adopt a rather different analytical approach by emphasizing a focus on neither tourism nor the tourist, but on the ways in which the one is consumed by the other.

In blending the two fields of rural development and tourism, it is a much more sociological and analytical work than many other books on tourism, at the same time being more applied and practical than many rural sociological analyses. The book is structured around the themes of change, unsustainability, integration, transparency and

paradox. These themes are emphasized in every chapter meticulously by the authors. After a general introduction to the issues, chapters focus on the rural as a social construction, unsustainability, the management of rural tourism in a policy sense, understanding the concept of community and its connection to rural tourism development, the tourism market, the concept of 'nature' and its commodification, the integration of tourism in rural development, ending with a synthesis chapter. The European policy milieu is addressed throughout, with some discussion of the LEADER program, one of the initiatives for the advancement of disadvantaged rural areas in the EU. The Cork Declaration on Rural Development remains a major highlight of the book.

The book, although covers a lot of ground, has noticeable deficits in the range of material that could have been considered. For example, there is no reference to the perspective on 'endogenous rural development' of van der Ploeg and others. Unfortunately, these deficits are exacerbated by an index that does not do justice to what is actually included. In fact the more we dwell the book, the more we get annoyed by the inadequacy of the index. Another deficit is, obviously, the extensive references are given at the end of each chapter rather than at the end of the book. Scanning for key references thus has to be done for each of the nine chapters.

The book has been recommended at the University (advanced undergraduate/ masters) level and marketing of tourism studies. Within the UK, it would be an ideal text. The lesser significance of

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rural tourism in the Indian context and the distinct nature of Indian rural folk, makes the book less relevant but potentially applicable for a discussion of the two tier cities. The book nevertheless, would serve as an introduction to the social issues and the social literature in a subject on the sociology / geography of tourism. From the non-sociological perspective of tourism, the book contributes limited insight; however, the book has succeeded in making tourism literature richer by properly addressing policy issues of rural tourism. Serious observations made on the application of rural practices in promoting recreation, is really laudable although they are pole apart. The contents of book, barring few things, could be useful for evolving rural and agricultural tourism policy in many less development countries. The book has the capacity to reach out the target audience as every book has its own readers. Nevertheless, the book would still serve as a useful reference or sourcebook on the theme. It is a valuable addition to the Tourism Management Institute libraries.