January 2003

Book Review: Tourism in China: Exotic Land Revealed

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Abstract
There is no better way to learn about tourism in China than from renowned experts in the field. Alan Lew, Ph.D. and professor at Northern Arizona University, Lawrence Yu, Ph.D. and associate professor in the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at George Washington University, John Ap, Ph.D. and associate professor in tourism management at Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Zhang Guangrui, director of the Tourism Research Centre, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, China, have contributed to and edited a collection of writings detailing the development of tourism in this fascinating and exotic land.

Keywords
Joan Remington, Asia, FIU
BOOK REVIEW

Tourism in China:
Exotic land revealed

by Joan Remington

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In Tourism in China the authors take the reader through five major sections detailing the modern historical developments of tourism from 1860 through 1900 to the initial beginnings of modern-day tourism development in 1978, when a shift in national policy took place emphasizing economic reconstruction rather than political struggle. Section I concludes with an analysis of inevitable tensions caused by the clash of modern and traditional values illustrated in the development of Beijing as a modern city and tourist attraction.

Section II, Research and Impacts, provides empirical studies of the impacts of tourism on China beginning with the institutions responsible for research and moving through the economic impact and the force of ecotourism in China’s nature reserves. China’s “adequately established hotel industry,” negative news reports on travel agencies, air, land, and water tourist transportation, and theme park development, with the pros of its spectacular growth to 2,500 parks in 18 short years, and cons covering industry turmoil and many project failures, are given in Section III.

Section IV, Tourism Markets, is interesting in its approach to inbound tourism and the focus of economic development with the lifting of the “Bamboo Curtain” in 1978 after China’s decades of isolation from the world. With its initial
begins in visits to family and friends by returning Chinese compatriots through suggested major market promotions, the need for improvement of the infrastructure to meet growing international tourist needs and demands, the reader continues his or her journey considering short and long-haul international tourists and leisure in China.

The section concludes with a look at outbound travel by Mainland Chinese to Hong Kong, and its implications. While internal and external restrictions on outbound travel and adequate income prevent the majority of China’s 1.2 billion population from experiencing the outside world, the World Tourism Organization in 1997 projected that China would be the fourth largest outbound tourist-generating country in the world by 2020.

Having shown the reader how China’s tourism “has experienced great changes in the last two decades” including the impact its membership in WTO provides, the editors take us through the conclusion of World Trade and China’s Tourism: Opportunities, Challenges, and Strategies, showing the reader China’s tremendous potential to “quickly solidify its presence in the international marketplace.”

This is an interesting and fascinating text, giving insight into the workings and development of what may prove to be a tremendous force in the tourism arena during the coming decades. Tourism in China can be the primary text in a specialized course on the impact of China in the world tourism marketplace, or as a supplemental text with its specialized readings in broader-based tourism course work.

In any case, it is worth the time to read and learn about a large part of the world that had been closed to many travelers for so long a time.

Joan Remington is Associate Dean and the director of the Institute of Hospitality and Tourism Education and Research in the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Florida International University in Miami.