

**Hal Rothman, ed..** *The Culture of Tourism, The Tourism of Culture: Selling the Past to the Present in the American Southwest*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003. xi + 250 pp. \$34.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8263-2928-8.



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Selling the Package, Packaging the Sale: Exploring Tourism's Role in the History of the Southwest

In his introduction to this intriguing anthology, Hal Rothman asserts that, since the mid-1990s, "tourism has become one of the major buzzes in American society" (p. 3). As the resident of a state whose economic fortunes seem increasingly dependent upon the whims of an international traveling public, this reviewer has considerable sympathy for that argument, at least as it applies to the American West. An equally compelling observation, however, would be that the proliferation of published works focused upon tourism as a field for scholarly inquiry during the same period has created a major buzz within the historical profession. Merely compiling a bibliography of monographs issued in the last decade would challenge even the hardest reference librarian, while the next wave of dissertations in the field, now reaching its crest in the graduate schools, ensures that the struggle to remain current with the literature faced by practicing students of tourism's history will continue.

Among the growing host of volumes now lining library shelves that consider tourism's evolution and its impact upon host, guest, and region, *The Culture of Tourism, The Tourism of Culture* fits snugly among various anthologies that have sampled the breadth of research underway in the field as a whole or within a narrower portion of it. Scott Norris's *Discovered Country*, Weigle and Babcock's *The Great Southwest*, and Wrobel and Long's *Seeing and Being Seen*, for example, all reflect the range of perspectives being applied to tourism, past and present, in the American West. [1] Rothman et al. has the particular distinction of incorporating the insights of respected students of tourism's historical place in the Southwest with those of planners and practitioners dealing with the industry's contemporary development. Although a few authors in this volume do cross back and forth between these realms, most focus their energies upon illuminating one or the other.

In his introduction, editor Rothman endeavors to set the premise for those who follow by identifying the Southwest as a "canvas for the [American] nation," a "dreamscape" that could en-

mesh visitors in a "mythic past" of impressive dimensions (pp. 6-7). Those notions reappear, explicitly or implicitly, in many of the subsequent pieces as the essayists parse the particular visions called to mind by encounters with this dream world. Among those writers who explore tourism's complicated history, several ponder the influence of iconic images such as the California mission or the region's distinctive "tricultural" identity as lodestones for the tourist trade, while others consider the dynamics of the relationship between the creators and the consumers of such images. In writing about the establishment of California's "El Camino Real" highway in the early-twentieth century, for example, Phoebe Kropp depicts a project intended to promote the pastime of motor touring by invoking a mostly fictional "grand and romantic regional past" (p. 47). Chris Wilson and Sylvia Rodriguez, in their respective articles, discuss different aspects of the complicated intertwinings of Native Americans, Hispanics, and Anglos in the Land of Enchantment that encourage the tourist's enduring pursuit of the culturally and ethnically exotic throughout the Southwest. Rina Swentzell, in her meditation on the role of the works produced by the Taos Society of Artists as agents of change in the Pueblo artistic and spiritual worlds, underscores the transformation that she compares to the Heisenberg principle: "whatever is observed is changed by the act of observation--and by the observer" (p. 69). Leah Dilworth and Marguerite Shaffer respectively contemplate the implications of different souvenirs acquired or created by tourists to memorialize their adventures, to create the "narrative of authentic experiences" (Dilworth, p. 103) that would serve as the "touchstones to ... refresh [the] memory" (Shaffer, p. 78). Erika Bsumek takes this line of inquiry one step further by examining the "virtual" tourist travel fostered by Pasadena, California, collector and dealer Grace Nicholson through her extensive commerce in southwestern Indian artifacts. And Char Miller traces the successive waves of promotional visions and commercial de-

velopment that established San Antonio, Texas, during the past century as a tourist haven for, in turn, hell-raising cowboys, expiring victims of tuberculosis, and well-heeled patrons of its River Walk.

Probing tourism's meaning in the twenty-first-century Southwest proves an equally challenging assignment for the remaining authors in this volume. Questioning whether "appropriate cultural tourism" can actually exist, William Bryan reviews three case studies from modern-day Arizona. Positing that tourism remains "an industry that is basically extractive in nature," he measures success or failure by whether each enterprise can contribute to "a sustainable local economy and a quality natural and human environment" (p. 141). Similarly, Susan Guyette and David White provide a working model of the cross-cultural planning necessary to sustain any successful endeavor in contemporary cultural tourism. Sylvia Rodriguez elucidates what she regards as the baleful influence of New Mexico's "hyperethnicity," fueled by the increasing demand of tourists for the dependably exotic. And Hal Rothman, dissecting the latest efforts of Las Vegas to re-invent itself, discovers in them the perfect reflection of an "individually oriented culture of personal choice" (p. 230) that exemplifies early-twenty-first-century America.

Despite the superficial disparity among their topics, a close reading of these essays soon reveals that most of these authors share an abiding concern with the pursuit by tourists of authenticity and experience. From their varying points of view, the individual essayists illustrate the types of experiences that different tourists have sought, the meanings that tourists drew from them, and the lengths to which travelers might go in hopes of preserving the memories of what they experienced. They portray the impact that this search for experience has had upon indigenous peoples of the region as well as the efforts of profit-minded entrepreneurs to facilitate the searching. Un-

like many conference proceedings entombed in print, therefore, Rothman et al. has the notable virtue of incorporating various essays that speak to one another's point of view, extending the dialogue about the impacts of tourism yesterday and today upon tourist and host, upon the viewer and the viewed.

For environmental historians, many of these essays reflect issues of enduring importance in the field. Even though focusing upon the general theme of cultural tourism (defined by Guyette and White as "an exchange of information on life-ways, customs, beliefs, values, language, views of the environment and other cultural resources" [p. 169]), the volume encompasses much material about efforts to construct representations of place, about the development of natural resources (especially scenery) to attract the tourist trade, and about the rise of commercial enterprises geared toward more sensitive use of the natural environment and human resources. While an essay offering a more scholarly evaluation of the rise of eco-tourism or the economics of post-Earth Day tourism would have been more in keeping with the general tone of the volume, even the essays on current planning and business models for tourism contribute to the significance of the anthology by introducing a contemporary dimension usually left to public policy analysts. Although each essayist retains his or her individual voice, the quality of the writing remains quite high while those essays based upon extended archival research are uniformly superior examples of the genre. *The Culture of Tourism, The Tourism of Culture* thus should be considered as a necessary addition not merely to institutional collections but to the research libraries of scholars investigating any aspect of tourism's impact upon twentieth- and twenty-first-century America.

#### Note

[1]. Scott Norris, ed., *Discovered Country: Tourism and Survival in the American West* (Albuquerque: Stone Ladder Press, 1994); Marta Wei-

gle and Barbara Babcock, eds., *The Great Southwest of the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railway* (Tucson: Distributed for the Heard Museum by the University of Arizona Press, 1996); and David M. Wrobel and Patrick T. Long, eds., *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001). Reference should also be made to Susan Rhoades Neel, ed., "Tourism and the American West," a special issue of the *Pacific Historical Review* 65, no. 4 (November 1996). Though not devoted to the topic of tourism, other collections of essays published in the past decade have reflected the routine inclusion of that subject as a significant issue within the field of Western history, as can be seen in Hal Rothman, ed., *Reopening the American West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998); and Richard White and John M. Findlay, eds., *Power and Place in the North American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

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