

# PLENARY SESSION

## Geotourism, a European Perspective ON a Global Phenomenon

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This paper presents an overview of the history and development of modern geotourism with an especially European focus. Geotourism was itself first defined in the early 1990s (Hose, 1995) following a study of 'site-specific interpretative provision' (Hose, 1999) at selected lowland geosites in England, although the initial work had earlier been presented in the USA (Hose, 1994). The original definition was subsequently modified following further fieldwork and for the purposes of this paper is initially defined as: *'The provision of interpretative facilities and services to promote the value and societal benefit of geological and geomorphological sites and their materials, and to ensure their conservation, for the use of students, tourists and other casual recreationalists.'* (Hose, 2000, 2003). It encompasses geosites and their interpretative and promotional media, together with the lives, work, collections, publications, artworks, field-notes, personal papers, workplaces, residences and even the graves and memorials of their associated Earth scientists. It is a form of both 'special interest' and 'niche' tourism. For the former, participants are motivated by the specific interest in geology for which they express some enthusiasm and dedication. For the latter (Hose, 2005) participants are drawn to dedicated tourism provision focussed on the needs of a relatively small tourism market. It is useful for visitor management purposes at geosites to recognise 'Dedicated Geotourists' as *individuals who purposefully select to visit geosites and exhibits for the purpose of personal educational or intellectual improvement and enjoyment* and 'Casual Geotourists' as *individuals who visit geosites and exhibits primarily for the purpose of pleasure and some limited intellectual stimulation*. Provision for the former is long established and usually in the form of field-guides and journal papers. Provision for the latter is relatively recent and largely in the form of populist guides, trails and visitor centres. Whilst the geosites visited by the two types of geotourist can overlap, their usages and understandings of such locations are often quite different. It is also useful for geosite management purposes to recognise 'primary' and 'secondary' geosites. The former possess geological/geomorphological features of at least local significance for their scientific, educational or interpretative value and range from quarries and natural

cliffs to mines and caves. The latter have some feature(s) and/or item(s), within or on a structure of at least local significance to the history, development, presentation or interpretation of geology/ geomorphology and include museum and library collections/archives, heritage/visitor centres, geologists' residences, and memorials along with commemorative plaques and monuments.

The initial definitions and approach focussed on geotourism with an essential underpinning geoconservation base (Hose, 2008) and were incorporated and acknowledged within the original UNESCO geopark documentation (Patzak & Eder; 1998; Patzak, 2000). This initial geoconservation focussed approach acknowledged concurrent and earlier global attempts to consider geology as an aspect of tourism and is still globally recognised today, even if the definitions are becoming quite specific so as to incorporate specific measures within geotourism provision (Dowling & Newsome, 2010b). Unfortunately, since the mid 2000s, several agencies and authors have adopted a non geoconservation, indeed a non geological approach, to geotourism (Stueve, Cook & Drew, 2002); National Geographic ignored all published work outside of the USA to falsely claim to have singularly coined geotourism for a: “. . . *destination's geographic character - the entire combination of natural and human attributes that make one place distinct from another . . .*” (Stueve, Cook & Drew, 2002, p.1), but this a mere a re-branding exercise for a traditional form of regional or cultural tourism. Some of these rather misguided approaches now even permeate aspects of the geotourism provision and management within both the Global and European Geopark networks as well as other protected landscape areas. Thus the stage is now set to reaffirm the original intentions and underlying rationale for geologically based geotourism, the provision of which is simply unsustainable in tourism terms, and unacceptable to the scientific community, without embedded geoconservation.

The paper therefore necessarily examines and critiques the geotourism concept from its initial definition in the United Kingdom to its various newer definitions and the present plethora of often contradictory and confusing approaches. Various models have already been developed to explain and predict geotourism activities and processes (Dowling & Newsome, 2010a; Hose, 1997, 2000, 2009) but the rapid expansion of the geotourism literature indicates the need for their further refinement. Hence, the paper provides for geotourism a new definition, emphasising its geological rather than geographical focus and incorporating the best of the original and newer approaches, together with a new model.

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