

# Global Geotourism Perspectives



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## **Geotourism: a Global Activity**

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<b>The definition of geotourism</b>	5
<b>Geoheritage conservation</b>	5
<b>Geotourism's stakeholders</b>	7
<b>Geotourism's attractions</b>	7
<b>Risk management</b>	7
<b>Geotourists</b>	8
<b>Geotourism education</b>	9
<b>Outline of the book</b>	12
<b>Conclusions</b>	18

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# 1

## Geotourism: a Global Activity

**Ross Dowling and David Newsome**

Geotourism is sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing the earth's geological features in a way that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation, and is locally beneficial (Dowling and Newsome, 2006). It is about creating a geotourism product that protects geoheritage, helps build communities, communicates and promotes geological heritage and works with a wide range of different people. Whichever way it is defined or described, the 'geo' part in geotourism means geology and geomorphology. The natural resources of geotourism include: landscapes, landforms, rock outcrops, rock types, sediments, soils and crystals. The 'tourism' part means visiting geosites, learning, appreciating and engaging. Overall, geotourism comprises the geological elements of 'form and process' combined with the components of tourism such as attractions, accommodation, tours, activities, interpretation and planning and management (Figure 1.1). Examples of globally recognized geosite destinations include: the Grand Canyon in the United States of America, the Lulworth Crumple in southern England, Uluru National Park in Australia, Iguazu Falls separating Brazil and Argentina, and the Daxia Landforms in China.

Geotourism is a synergistic form of tourism in which the elements of the landscape and landforms together create a tourist experience that is richer than the sum of its parts, appealing to visitors with diverse interests. It also involves the community when a combination of local businesses and civic groups work together to promote and provide distinctive, authentic visitor experiences. Geotourism may also provide economic and other benefits to local residents such as job creation and income generation as well as added services, products and supplies. When the community understands the beneficial role of geotourism it becomes an incentive for wise destination stewardship.

Geotourism is also about creating a place in which both locals and tourists are free to enjoy the area's local geological landscapes (Dowling and Newsome, 2008). It generates an experience which brings together the local landscape, the local community and its visitors all of whom have different interests in the earth's formations. Local businesses and community groups work together to promote and provide a distinctive, authentic visitor experience. Geotourism places a major focus on informing tourists and local communities about the

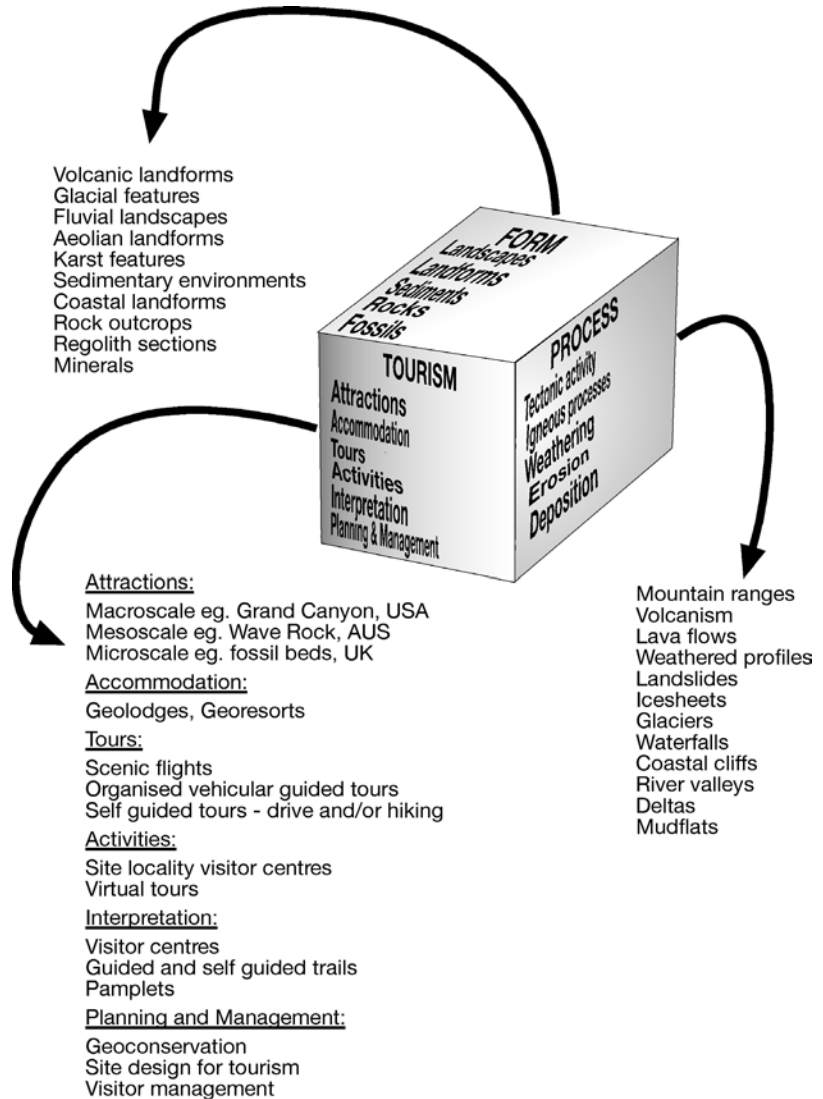
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**Figure 1.1:** – The nature and scope of geotourism.

Source: Dowling and Newsome, 2006, p.5.

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earth through geological interpretation and education. Geotourism businesses are usually operated by local communities and this may include a combination of interpretation, tours, accommodation and food outlets. These in turn generate business for the local residents creating a larger workforce and economic aid.

This book builds on our earlier contributions (Dowling and Newsome, 2006, 2008) and is the companion volume to our current book *Geotourism: the Tourism of Geology and Landscape* (Newsome and Dowling, 2010) a book that sets and extends an agenda for geotourism into the future. This book supports this direction in providing further examples of actual and developing geotourism from around the world. In maintaining the direction of geotourism and providing clarity as to where geotourism lies as a new form of natural area tourism,

**Chapter extract**

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