

Tourism and Political Change

16

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Does Tourism have a Role in Promoting Peace on the Korean Peninsula?

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 Published by Goodfellow Publishers Limited, Woodeaton, Oxford, OX3 9TJ
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Design and setting by P.K. McBride

Part V

Changes

in Political

Relations

16 Does Tourism have a Role in Promoting Peace on the Korean Peninsula?

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Introduction

In recent decades the potential for global war has eased as Cold War rivalries have evaporated and been replaced by commercial and political competition. As political tensions have eased, domestic freedoms have increased to the point where citizens of the Russian Federation are free to travel abroad and in China an increasing number of citizens have access to independent overseas travel. A number of tourism researchers contend that tourism has been a major contributor to the development of peace, however, in the international relations literature the accepted view is that tourism has been one of the beneficiaries of peace, with development of bilateral tourism flows following, rather than preceding, the warming of relations between former protagonists (Bell and Kurtzer 2009; Calder 2006).

This chapter focuses on the Korean peninsula. After reviewing the arguments made for and against the view that tourism has contributed to the development of peaceful relations, the chapter examines the situation with particular emphasis on the regional geopolitical situation in the first decade of the 21st century. The chapter argues that in the political manoeuvrings between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) tourism has been used as a policy instrument in a wider political context that both states view as critical to their future survival. In the South, tourism has been used as a component of policy objectives aimed at winning support amongst domestic constituents, while in the North it has been used to collect foreign currency and achieve specific international policy goals. The chapter concludes that when peace does eventually occur, tourism has the potential to become an important instrument for nation building in a future united Korea.

A review of the literature on the role of tourism as a vehicle to promote peace between divided and warring nations reveals considerable agreement that tourism does promote peace while acknowledging that there are some circumstances where there are difficulties in this process. Authors including Butler and Mao (1995), Kim and Crompton (1990), Waterman (1987), Yu (1997) and Zhang (1993) have supported the view that tourism has some ability to reduce tensions between partitioned nations. Kim and Crompton (1990) for example introduced the concept of two-track diplomacy (discussed later in this chapter) while Yu (1997) built on previous contributions in the political science

Chapter extract

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