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Weather and Climate

Introduction

Weather can be regarded as a vital resource for tourism, and Robinson (1976) suggested weather was a major element which contributes to tourism development. Although it is seen as less important in Peters' (1969) grouping (see Chapter 3), Boniface and Cooper (2001) devote a separate chapter to climate, suggesting its importance for tourism, and this book follows suit with an entire chapter containing a discussion of weather and climate. However, it is climate ('average weather conditions over a period of time') that is particularly significant and Holden (2016) considers it to be the most important factor affecting tourism.

This chapter discusses weather as a resource for tourism, and stresses that weather (and the related concept of climate) provides a very significant context for many tourism activities. The discussion below indicates that variations in climate occur in regular annual cycles and we refer to these as seasonal changes. The seasons, the cause of which is explained below, are a very significant aspect of tourism and the seasonality of tourism is largely the result of climate.

Key perspectives

Boniface and Cooper (2001) indicate that climate can be viewed as a significant resource for tourism, but they emphasise its importance, when they also state that it imposes constraints on tourism in terms of limiting the appeal of a destination. However, climate can be viewed as a particularly important resource for tourism for the following reasons:

- Climate includes a number of aspects (e.g. temperature, snow, wind speed and direction) that are major influencing factors on certain types of tourism. So, for example, beach-based tourism is linked strongly to high levels of sunshine, whilst ski tourism requires snow, and sailing and kite surfing need wind of a certain strength to make the activities possible.
- It is often a *combination* of climate factors acting together, such as sunshine hours and high temperatures for sunbathing, or snow and low temperatures

for skiing, that enable certain types of tourism activity to occur in specific locations.

- Much tourism takes place out-of-doors, so even with modern technology, it is not possible to avoid weather and climate in relation to these types of tourism activity.
- There are climate zones around the world with differing climate conditions, some of which encourage tourism, others which do not.
- Climate has been very important historically in assisting in the creation of certain types of tourism destinations, such as coastal resorts and mountain ski resorts.
- Climate continues to be important, both in relation to domestic tourism and international tourism, leading to regular movement of people at certain times of the year from tourist origin areas to tourism destinations. This is what is termed 'seasonality' in tourism and is linked closely, although not exclusively, to climatic seasons.
- Climate change is one of the most significant factors affecting all life on earth in recent history and has important impacts on tourism (this issue is discussed in detail in Chapter 11).

As indicated in Chapter 3, Robinson (1976) suggested that 'good weather' is important for tourism, but he does not give a clear definition of 'good weather'! However, Robinson indicated when fine weather is important and how 'bad weather' can seriously affect tourism activities. Indeed, when discussing tourism in Britain, he stated that British weather is notoriously fickle and there is a general lack of sunshine, despite mild conditions, even in much of southern Britain. This, he argued, is why the Spanish Costas, as well as the French Mediterranean coast and large parts of the Italian and Greek coasts have become desirable destinations for British tourists who are seeking 'guaranteed sunshine'.

However, it is also the case that 'good weather' includes snow for winter sports and related activities. Mountain areas such as the Alps have become popular for winter tourism activities because of the almost guaranteed snow cover which allows skiing for several months of the year. Nevertheless, as discussed later in Chapter 11, global warming is affecting the nature and length of the ski season, as well as the actual location of ski tourism.

What is considered 'good weather' for certain types of tourism is perceived by potential tourists, in relation to 'bad weather' elsewhere. This contributes to the travel behaviour of these tourists that takes place at particular times of the year. Hence, from November to the end of February, northern Europe usually has generally cool, often cold weather, accompanied by cloud and frequent rain and also the strong possibility of snow in this period. This perceived 'poor weather' in the northern part of Europe has led to the development of 'winter sun' locations. These locations are almost always south of the northern European countries, such as the UK, Germany,