

# Tourism and Crime: key themes

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Edited by

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## Vulnerable Victims

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Design and setting by P.K. McBride

# 4 Vulnerable Victims

Paul Brunt

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This chapter includes the following elements:

- ◆ A brief overview of the research evidence on the victimisation of tourists
  - ◆ A discussion of the variations in risk of victimisation by tourist type
  - ◆ A more detailed analysis of the tourist experience of gay holidaymakers, with particular reference to crime victimisation risks as well as experiences of harassment and discrimination more broadly.
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## Introduction

Being safe on holiday is an expected requirement. Places that develop an unsafe reputation can be substituted by alternative destinations that are perceived as safer for tourists. Beyond the obviously unsafe places in the world, where governments advise against travel, individuals must make up their own minds about where to go on holiday. One of the distinctive features of the tourism industry is that we cannot ‘test-drive’ a holiday beforehand. Judgements about where to travel are often made on the basis of imperfect knowledge and generalisation, and tourists learn about destinations from brochures, adverts and the media (Smith, 1989; Brunt, 1997). We typically think about what the destination has to offer in terms of accommodation, its environment and things to do (Crompton, 1979; Krippendorf, 1987) and many of us do not consider the issue of crime when we are planning the next holiday (Brunt *et al.*, 2000). Are we more at risk of crime as tourists than in our everyday lives? Most of us would probably prefer not to think about this, and certainly the tourism industry does not want us to think such things in case we decide to stay at home. Whilst it is true that only a minority of tourists suffer criminal victimisation while on holiday, it is important to explore variations in the crime experiences of different tourist types. Crime patterns vary according to factors such as the nature of tourism, its scale, the type of development, the season, as well as variations relating to the tourists themselves and issues associated with their behaviour. This latter issue is the focus of this chapter – what categories of tourist are particularly vulnerable to criminal victimisation?

Clearly when considering issues of tourist victimisation, a number of methodological issues are evident. Prominently there are the questions of how we measure

crime, and how to quantify the extent of tourism, with many researchers relying on official statistics. However, recorded crime patterns depend to some extent on the discretionary behaviour of victims and police, individuals' willingness to report crimes and policing policy changes. All these factors can have a considerable impact on the official picture of crime independently of any variations in real rates of offending and victimisation. It is highly likely that tourists face different considerations compared with locals in deciding whether or not to report crimes, and that the police will also take into account whether or not the complainant is a tourist when they make decisions about recording marginal cases. Some tourist victims may be unwilling to report a crime for fear of 'secondary victimisation' (Campbell and Raja, 1999). This relates to further suffering of victims through prolonging or aggravating the victim's trauma by the attitudes or behaviour of unsympathetic or disbelieving law enforcement and other criminal justice authorities. Clearly some 'types' of victim are potentially more vulnerable to secondary victimisation than others and, as such, crimes against these kinds of people are likely to be under-reported.

## **Tourists as crime victims**

There is a considerable body of research to demonstrate relatively high crime rates in tourist areas and this has been discussed in the previous two chapters. By 'high' what is often meant is the extent to which crime rates in 'tourist areas' differ from areas where tourism is less common, and hence comparisons between tourist and resident levels of victimisation are analysed.

An area of research that has received much less attention is the extent to which the *type* of tourist has an influence on tourist criminal victimisation. One study by Brunt and Shepherd (2004) was concerned with assessing the link between the type of tourist and the type of victimisation suffered and to examine the effect of the victimisation experience upon the tourist's future destination choice. The reports of 178 tourist visitors to Cornwall who were crime victims showed that vehicle and accommodation crimes occurred more frequently than violent crimes or other crimes against the person. In broad terms, younger people tended to be crime victims more frequently than the older tourists, especially for crimes against the person and of those relating to their accommodation. Middle-aged persons (35–54) were more prone to being victims of car crime, and males, in absolute terms, were generally more susceptible to crime than females. Females, though, were more prone than males to becoming victims of crimes against the person, especially theft. The number of hours spent out of the accommodation during the evening had a significant effect upon the type of crime suffered. Unsurprisingly, the more time spent out of the accommodation, the higher the incidence of crimes against the person and crimes related to the dwelling. To a large extent the study substantiated the contention that tourists, as victims of crime, appeared to

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