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Astro-Tourism: A new frontier

Introduction

Astronomy is a field of study that has been around for millennia, and involves the gazing at and understanding of the stars. Astro-tourism is an emerging field of study which is fast becoming a reality for mainstream space explorers, and now space travellers, who are independent paying guests searching for an astro-experience, which aligns with space tourism (Reddy et al., 2012). Tapada et al. (2021, p. 291) have suggested that *'astro-tourism consists of activities focused on observing night skies and celestial phenomena in natural spaces, which contributes to communities' involvement, empowerment and participation and to regional development'*. Furthermore, Charlier and Bourgeois (2013) suggest that astronomical tourism is multidimensional, multifaceted and at the crossroads of various societies and interactions. This fast-evolving sector is the so-called final frontier in human exploration and the possibilities for the tourism industry are endless. This chapter explores various concepts of astro-tourism including wellness-centric hotels incorporating star gazing in spas, resorts, hotels and campsites on Earth. Attention will then turn towards frontier travel, sub-orbital and orbital tourism experiences and Moon and lunar travel, in which space travel is a reality. Other topics for discussion include space travel, space hotels and the attributes of space tourism employees. Whilst virtual reality features in discussions related to astro-tourism, this topic is detailed in Chapter 4.

Stargazing

As mentioned, stargazing has been around for a long time, falling under the field of study of astronomy (Wolf-Chase, 2012). Stargazing has been used in navigation, science, physics, mathematics and to explain creation through religion. More recently, tourism and hospitality researchers and practitioners have also turned their attention to stargazing. This has resulted in wellness-centric hotels and