

Book Review

50 Dark Destinations: Crime and Contemporary Tourism, edited by Adam Lynes, Craig Kelly and James Treadwell, offers a fresh perspective on travel destinations and activities that often find themselves situated within the constantly widening realm of dark tourism. Presented throughout the book's 50 chapters are a range of case examples found around the world, which include a few well-known dark locations (e.g. Choeung Ek, see Chapter 18), as well as many other dark spaces and places that have remained underexplored within dark tourism scholarship (e.g. Alcatraz East Crime Museum, see Chapter 6). However, this book is not exclusively about dark tourism – “travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre” (Stone, 2006, p.146). Indeed, the eye-catching cover and use of the word ‘dark’ in the title might lead readers to assume this book is about dark tourism. However, *50 Dark Destinations* is more about contemporary culture and the influences of criminality and violence on tourist and consumer behaviour, which reaffirms the book's first objective “to question why we spend our days in museums filled with artefacts of violence... engage in leisure pursuits that damage the natural environment... smile while stood at the sites of a past genocide” (p. 7).

50 Dark Destinations is predominantly framed by graze theory (i.e. the public consumption of extreme and spectacular violence) and deviant leisure (i.e. harmful activities that have become accepted and embedded within normal forms of leisure) (p. 5). Both are key to supporting the book's second objective, which is to reframe public criminology as “anti-graze” and minimise the “fetishism of gratuitous violence and the sublime” (p. 8). Through this framework, the majority of the chapters focus on the tourist consumption of ‘the darkness’ recognized for making the destination ‘dark’. The destinations discussed include a range of spaces, places and experiences, such as visitor attractions, guided tours, natural landscapes, remote locations, bustling cities, and the virtual environment.

As the book focuses more on graze culture and consumption of ‘the dark’, many chapters are seemingly subjective commentaries of the underpinning social, cultural, political and/or economic influences that underpin dark tourism and deviant leisure activities. Some of these are more critical than others, conveying a sort of bias or disdain towards the destination, activity and/or tourists that they're writing about. However, several chapters do provide well-rounded critical reviews of different forms of ‘dark’ tourism, such as Holocaust tourism (see Chapter 11), prison tourism (see Chapters 14, 15), and genocide tourism (see Chapters 17, 18), and in doing so, successfully use their destinations as examples to reinforce their discussions on the use of in-situ locations for tourism activities. Several chapters (e.g. 12, 35, 38) focus directly on the tourist experience, how the experience came to be, and how it sits within the framing of dark tourism or even thanatourism. These stand in stark contrast to the chapters (e.g. 22, 50) that explicitly state their destination is not dark in the traditional sense, but are considered dark because of the corruption and unethical or illegal activities that go on within the destination, in addition to the overt drug and alcohol use by tourists that often lands them in dangerous situations (see e.g. Chapters 24, 30). Other chapters (e.g. 25, 41) have used this theme of corruption and illegal activities to address the dangers of traveling to these destinations, which essentially tells readers to stay away. Yet, this focus on the dark underbelly of some destinations seems to align more with what Holm et al (2017, p. 116) refers to as risk tourism (i.e. travel activities that involve the potential for personal harm, physical injury and/or death). Thus, extending the early debates concerning semantics and dark tourism (see Foley & Lennon, 1996), *50 Dark Destinations* establishes important questions, particularly for those

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who study dark tourism, about what we mean by ‘dark’. It appears to have become a catch-all word for anything considered negative, but that is an oversimplification of the wide-ranging and highly complex and layered travel activities outlined in this book.

In general, the book is an easy read, given most chapters are only 4 – 5 pages in length, with a few being 2.5 – 3 pages. It is for this reason that these chapters are rather snapshots of dark destinations and real world issues that require further exploration and discussion. Several chapters could have been combined, and others certainly expanded to provide more in-depth discussions, which could have been possible across 2 volumes of 25 destinations each. In addition, contributions from (dark) tourism scholars might have added an additional perspective for the book, since the contributors, chosen by the Editors, were all from within the fields of criminology, psychology and geography.

For dark tourism scholars and students, this book offers a wide range of potentially new case study locations to further develop research and understanding, and does so in the same manner for extreme adventure and risk tourism scholars and students. However, these forms of tourism are not necessarily synonymous, and therefore this book would have benefitted from a clear thematic structure. Readers might infer the themes if they take notes on each chapter, which suggest the book moves from deeply critical commentaries on a range of tourist experiences to locations of execution and genocide, before moving on to places made dangerous from corruption and illegal activities, to then end with an assortment of places, spaces and experiences that are in some way linked to death, violence, or suffering. While the Editors comment on a similar structure in the Conclusion (see p. 322), this could have been made clear from the start. Given the range of tourism types that the contributing authors refer to – dark tourism, extreme tourism, risk tourism, ecotourism, voluntourism, virtual tourism – *50 Dark Destinations* could have easily been themed in that way.

To conclude, this book contributes to the ongoing discourse of dark-themed travel activities and the important discussions about how tourists (and society) consumes death, disaster, tragedy, and the seemingly macabre, in addition to violence, harm and destruction. Importantly, it also lends itself to critical discourse concerning destination management, visitor management, and matters pertaining to sustainability and EDI (equality, diversity and inclusivity). It is for this reason that industry professionals may also find this book useful for prompting important discussions about the future of their ‘dark’ destination.

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