3 Geographical Resources for Tourism

Introduction

Chapters 1 and 2 made brief reference to a number of potential geographical resources for tourism. Some of these resources are located within the physical environment, such as landscapes, and include coastal area, moorlands and mountains. Others are part of the human environment, including towns and cities and historic monuments – in summary this is usually known as the built environment. These physical resources and human resources are not necessarily located separately but are often found together. For example, a coastal tourism destination has a physical environment which may be made up of a beach, a shoreline, the sea and it could be backed by cliffs. This will be coupled with a human environment of, for example, hotels, restaurants and bars and possibly, a harbour or marina. This chapter considers the physical and human resources for tourism.

Key perspectives

Approximately 50 years ago, Peters (1969) provided an attempt to classify tourist attractions. His classification, which was made in relation to international tourism, had five categories, which are as follows:

- **Cultural:** (e.g. sites of archaeological interest, historical buildings and museums, political institutions)
- **Traditions:** (e.g. festivals, music, folklore, arts and handicrafts)
- **Scenic:** (e.g. National Parks, wildlife, flora and fauna, beach resorts, mountain resorts)
- **Entertainment:** (e.g. zoos and aquaria night life, cinema, theatre, theme parks)
- **Other attractions:** (e.g. climate, health resorts, spas, unique attractions not available elsewhere)

(source: Peters,1989)

Not long after Peters put forward his fivefold classification, Robinson (1976) argued that very many tourism attractions are, in fact, geographical and suggested that

there are seven geographical aspects of tourism. These seven aspects are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Geographical components of tourism (after Robinson, 1976)

Accessibility and location
Space
Scenery – landforms (e.g. mountains), water (e.g. rivers) vegetation (e.g. forests)
Climate – sunshine, cloud, temperature conditions, rain, snow
Animal life – wildlife (e.g. birds) hunting and fishing
Settlement features – towns and cities, historical remains, monuments , archaeological sites
Culture – ways of life, traditions, folklore and arts and crafts

There is some similarity between the aspects indicated by Robinson (1976) and those suggested by Peters (1969). However, there is more detail on physical geographical elements such as landforms and landscape features, including plants and animals, in Robinson's categorisation. Study of both Peters (1969) classification and that by Robinson in Table 3.1 may appear to suggest that almost all of the physical and human landscape can act as tourism attractions. However, it is important to be aware that not all resources of the physical environment and not all parts of the human environment are actual tourist attractions. Nevertheless, there is a very large range of attractions and many resources that are currently tourist attractions and yet others that have been attractions in the past.

Although not all geographical features are necessarily tourist attractions, Robinson (1976) suggested there are certain geographical factors that encourage tourism, or as he put it:

> *There are … principal elements or ingredients which predispose towards tourism development (Robinson, 1976:42)*

Robinson argued that there are six such elements, and these are outlined below:

- Good weather
- Scenery
- Amenities
- Historical and cultural features
- Accessibility
- Accommodation

Boniface and Cooper (2001) used a somewhat similar approach to both Peters (1969) and Robinson (1976) and subdivided geographical resources for tourism under two broad headings: physical resources and cultural resources. Although, in many ways their headings mirror the classification points made by both Peters (1969) and Robinson (1976), Boniface and Cooper (2001:25) stated that there are three main characteristics of the resources for tourism, and suggested that:

- The concept of tourism resources is usually taken to mean tangible objects which are considered to be of economic value within tourism
- The resources are not just used by tourists, but tourism resources are shared with a number of other uses, such as agriculture, forestry, water management and services used by local people
- The resources are perishable. This means that in the case of some resources, such as landscape, they can be damaged by tourists. Another meaning of perishable here is that some tourists' resources, such as accommodation (for example hotel beds) cannot be stockpiled and also unused tourism resources cannot be stored and will perish.

■ Good weather

Robinson (1976) suggested that 'good weather' is important for tourism. However, he failed to define precisely what 'good weather' actually means, but he gives a number of examples. Robinson argued that fine weather is very important for beach based tourism and as he says it 'can make or mar a holiday' (Robinson 1976:43). Robinson (1976) went as far as actually claiming that weather is the most important resource for tourism, whilst Boniface and Cooper (2001) went even further and claimed that it can be considered as more than a resource, as it has a major influence on all outdoor tourism activities and 'bad weather' can restrict tourist behaviour. For this reason, a complete chapter (the one following this) is devoted to discussing weather in this book, and this is done in relation to climate.

■ Scenery

Both Peters (1969) and Robinson (1976) make specific reference to scenery as a geographical resource for tourism. It is also usually the case that when scenery is referred to, it means that natural or semi-natural landscapes are being discussed. It is important to note in relation to our understanding of scenery, that until only two hundred years ago, much of what is considered to be attractive scenery today, such as rugged mountain ranges, or high moorlands, was avoided by most travellers, if it was possible to do so. So, for example, the European Alps were not considered to be attractive to tourists up to the mid-1700s, but instead as a barrier to the movement of goods and people between northern and southern Europe.

In the UK it was the Romantic Movement poets, such as William Wordsworth, who started an interest in 'raw nature' and 'wild places' by writing about the English Lake District, which is a region of relatively low, but by UK standards, remote hills and mountains. Wordsworth also visited the French and Swiss Alps in the 1740s and wrote about his experiences there, which acted as a form of marketing for others of his generation to visit, and also to inspire many more in the last 250 years.

Nevertheless, the word *scenery* can be considered a rather vague term. For a passenger sitting on a bus or train, what is outside and apparently passing the