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Book review

GEOBOOK 120 pays, 7000 idées (GEOBOOK 120 countries, 7000 ideas), Robert Pailhès, Paris: Prisma, 2024. ISBN 978-2-8104-3995-9

Teaching tourism geography is an interesting, useful, and enjoyable task, but it implies access to consistent bibliographic resources, for a correct understanding of the tourism phenomenon. Theoretical knowledge should be supplemented with viable data but these data should also be supplemented with concrete examples to understand their variation across the destinations. Because geography and implicitly tourism geography is based on maps and images, in teaching tourism geography travel guidebooks can be used, because the images in the guidebooks, which are generally of high quality, can highlight the content for students but can also play an important role in influencing teachers' dispositions positively, which is reflected in the quality of teaching, and could support and protect the teachers' resilience and wellbeing (McKay & Barton, 2018).

The updated version of the French guidebook, published initially in September 2018 as an anniversary volume (40 years) of the GEO collection, is not a simple travel guidebook, which offers knowledge about tourist destinations, but a combination of a captivating book with over 400 GEO brand photos, and a practical guide for the preparation of a trip: thus, in a pleasant form, information is found for any type of destination, regardless of continent, latitude, altitude, environment, type of human habitat.

At the beginning of the book, several tables contain general information for the 120 states, very useful for having an overview of the world tourist destinations. The first table includes the purpose of the visit (landscapes, sea, snow, desert, terrestrial fauna, marine fauna, geomorphological tourist attractions, cities, museums, monuments, holidays, and traditions), on a scale with three values: high interest, medium interest, low interest. The second table contains an overview of each destination, depending on the average cost of the air ticket, the average cost of the journey, health and safety precautions, the necessary documents, air transport departing from Paris, the time difference between the official time of France and the time at the destination, the infrastructure, the best period to visit, the tourist influx.

The third table contains information on the average monthly temperature regime for the respective countries, within the states where there are several types of climate being presented in several series of data. The last general table contains information on the periods of visit during the year, from the point of view of the weather, for the states included in the intertropical region: from green color for the months in which the visit is recommended, to red color for the months in which the visits are not recommended, due to very high heat, storms, or rains.

In this part some contemporary trends of tourist activities (with web addresses regarding such activities, where appropriate) are also presented: alternative tourism, guided photography tours, tourism and share economy (Airbnb, BlaBlaCar, Uber, etc.), weekend shopping, with details on the most important destinations where these trends are specific (Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, London, Milan, Dubai, New York), wedding trips (Bahamas, Bali, Maldives, Mauritius, Polynesia, Seychelles), and so on.

Most of the book is further dedicated to the presentation of the selected countries, in alphabetical order. As noted in the title, the book includes presentations and travel suggestions for 120 countries in the world. Of course, due to the very large volume of information, this book contains only essential information, the countries being presented very succinctly, in two pages. Exceptions are countries of continental size and those that are important tourist destinations, to which a larger number of pages is dedicated (twenty pages for the United States of America, fourteen for India, twelve for China, ten for Canada and the United Kingdom, eight for Spain, etc.), and presentation is made by large geographical regions and case studies.

The two pages dedicated to a country contain, in a pleasant and accessible form, a summary of the tourist attractions of that country, then the practical information grouped in a travel note (contact, through the embassy or other institutions of that country present in France, travel formalities, public health issues, time difference, average cost of stay, languages and currency, population, religion, holidays, recommended purchases). There is also a summary of the tourist attractions and activities, detailed later in the main text: maritime coasts, rivers, landscapes, fauna, traditions, cities, history, monuments, etc. The country visitation periods are also presented in detail, by months and by regions (useful especially for countries with continental dimensions, with several types of climate).

The travel tips are presented in a separate section, focusing both on the positive and the negative aspects: one example is the average cost of stay, an information that is essential, as it forms a certain public perception, and determines the size of the

tourist flows, thus being able to explain the differences between the number of tourist arrivals and the income obtained from international tourism. These tips refer both to problems related to the natural environment (for example, as a positive aspect, the exuberant tropical nature, and, as a negative aspect, a short favorable season), as well as the social one (for example, the insecurity of border areas or in the large cities, poorly developed roads or accommodation infrastructure, precautions regarding adventure in tropical forests or areas not recommended to tourists, etc.). This section also contains the tendencies regarding the tourism of the respective country, which presents the future preferences of the tourists, based on the known elements.

The text is accompanied by a simple map of the country, with the main relief units, useful for those who have difficulties locating countries and regions, and which contains conventional signs for the regions where there are monuments, beaches and sea coasts, landscapes, panoramas and sites for walks in nature, parks for the protection of wildlife, art and popular traditions; attractive and carefully selected images of natural and/or anthropic tourist attraction are included as well.

The author does not explain why some countries are not included in the book: as the title of the book highlights, 120 countries are presented, although the number of countries in the world is higher, depending on the sources. France, even if it is the first destination in the world at the level of international tourist arrivals, is not presented in this book. Consequently, an issue worth noting in the case of tourist guidebooks, and also a weak point of them is the exclusion of some destinations: from Central Asia (only Uzbekistan is included); from the Middle East (Iraq, despite its valuable vestiges from the Mesopotamian civilization, etc.); from Africa (Uganda, Mozambique, etc.); and the examples can continue. A conclusion (in many cases wrong) that can be drawn by the reader planning a trip is that countries that are not included in the guidebook should be avoided; the image of that country can be affected thus generating tourism patterns, since destination image plays a significant role in predicting tourist's behavior (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020).

Another problem with these guidebooks is sometimes the brief presentation of the countries (regardless of the size of the territory, the number, and the quality of the objectives) and what aspects of each country it covers. GEObook informs about tendencies regarding tourism, and the strengths and weaknesses of that country; sometimes these assessments can be subjective and stereotypical.

Despite the critical discussion above, this book is a valuable resource for scholars and students in tourism geography, but also for anyone who intends to plan

an international trip due to the overview of the tourism context of the destination.

References

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Gabriel CAMARĂ
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași
Department of Geography
gabriel.camara@uaic.ro