Australian Geotourism - Current Challenges and Future Opportunities
The Linnean Society of NSW Symposium - Sept 2010

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Scenery and Geology - a 1938 Musing

- **Scenery** depends on **land structure** - in other words, its **geology**.

- Everyone interested in the **countryside**, how it has taken shape, why it presents us with the varied beauties of mountain and woodland, river valleys and fertile meadows, is, if often unconsciously, appreciating its **geology**.

A.E. Trueman
Professor of Geology, Glasgow University
Today’s Agenda - The Challenges

- **Geotourism** - the great definition debate.
- From definitions to **branding** - why is this important?
- Building **awareness and support** in the geological professions.
- **Geopark** development in Australia.
Understanding Natural Heritage

Natural heritage is the legacy of natural objects and intangible attributes encompassing the countryside and natural environment, including flora and fauna, scientifically known as biodiversity, and geology and landforms, i.e. geodiversity.
Key Concepts - Ecotourism

- According to Ecotourism Australia, ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.

- Ecotourism Australia believes that the ultimate definition of ecotourism is compliance with the core criteria stated within the Eco Certification Program.
The provision of interpretive and service facilities to enable tourists to acquire knowledge and understanding of the geology and geomorphology of a site (including its contribution to the development of the Earth Sciences) beyond the level of mere aesthetic appreciation.
Geotourism - Australian Definitional Concepts

- In 1996, J. N. Casey & A. E. Stephenson provided "tips and practical experience" on putting geology into tourism. They argued for the use of simple explanations of geology, suggested including links to indigenous legends, and also making use of the public's interest in orchards and wineries.

- Also in 1996, W. Mayer suggested Australia was well suited to nature tours, e.g. Kakadu, the Great Barrier Reef, as well as geotours in the Hamersley/Pilbara regions.

- In 2006, Assoc Professor Bernie Joyce suggested that Geotourism is ecotourism or tourism related to geological sites and features, including geomorphological sites and landscapes.
Geotourism - A Geological Definition

- Professor Ross Dowling (ECU) convened the inaugural global geotourism conference in 2008.
- The 2006 text ‘Geotourism’ by Newsome & Dowling is regarded as an important reference point for the development of geotourism concepts and the ‘geologist’s definition’.
- According to Dowling, Geotourism is a form of natural area tourism that specifically focuses on geology and landscape. It promotes tourism to geosites and the conservation of geo-diversity and an understanding of earth sciences through appreciation and learning.

Professor Ross Dowling, 2010
Geotourism Characteristics

1. Is **geologically based** and can occur in either natural, rural or urban environments.
2. Fosters **geoheritage conservation** through appropriate sustainability measures.
3. Advances sound **geological understanding** through interpretation and education.
4. Generates **tourist** or visitor satisfaction.

*Dowling, 2010*
Geotourism - National Geographic Society and the Travel Industry of America (1997)

- Geotourism is "best practice" tourism that sustains, or even enhances, the geographical character of a place, such as its culture, environment, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.

- Like ecotourism, geotourism promotes a virtuous circle whereby tourism revenues provide a local incentive to protect what tourists are coming to see, but extends the principle beyond nature and ecology to incorporate all characteristics that contribute to sense of place.

- Geotourism incorporates sustainability principles, but in addition to the do-no-harm ethic, geotourism focuses on the place as a whole.
For many years global geoparks were operating geotourism on the holistic approach as per the NGS definition.

The only difference was that the geoparks have had a unifying theme that ties all their activities and heritages together through ‘geology’.

In the US, geotourism (in the broader sense) has been practised for over 100 years.

It is geology, and only geology, that can tie things such as biodiversity, cultural heritages, local cuisines and patterns of agriculture/settlement, folklore, mythology etc together.

So the only thing missing from the NGS definition is the GEOlogy and GEOmorphology!
Geotourism - A revised National Geographic Society Definition??

Geotourism is "best practice" tourism that sustains, or even enhances, the geographical character of a place, such as its culture, environment, heritage, and the well-being of its residents, as well as interpreting its landscapes and its geology.
Geotourism incorporating all types of ‘placed-based’ tourism

Boley, B.B. after Thompson, S. 2009
Geotourism - Diversity of Sites

- Geo-sites
- Icons (Inc National Landscapes)
- Caves/Karst Areas
- Mine Sites
- Landforms
- National Parks/Reserves/Urban Parks
- Geoparks/PaleoParks
- World Heritage Areas
- Geo-trails
‘Experiential’ Tourism - A New Product Proposition

- The global market is looking for unique product experiences and a broader mix of experiences.
- The ‘geotourism’ experience creates a more holistic experience, and is a move towards the ‘experiential’ tourism model.
- In short, ‘experiential’ tourists seek memorable experiences.
Geotourism - Potential Markets??

- Domestic Travellers
  - Geologists/Geomorphologists/Speleologists/Paleontologists
  - School Groups
  - Geopark/PaleoPark Interests
- ‘Experiential’ Overseas Travellers
- ‘Experiential’ Domestic Travellers
Geotourism Segmentation:
GEOtourist or Geotraveller?

Geology Interest Groups:

- GEOtourists - Geological Tourism
- GEOtourists - ‘Geopark’ Tourism

Non Geology Specific Interest Groups:

- Geotravellers - Nature Based/Ecotourism
- Geotravellers - ‘Experiential’ Tourism
GSA GEOtourists
Five Most Important Travel Purposes

1. Increasing **knowledge** of geological sites and landforms.
2. To satisfy my **curiosity**.
3. To have a **memorable experience**.
4. To obtain **intellectual stimulation**.
5. Visiting destinations offering a **unique bundle** of features and attractions (i.e. ecology, geology, culture and history).
US ‘Geotourism’ Survey of Geotravellers

Five Most Important Travel Purposes

1. Trips to **favourite destinations** I have been to before.
2. Travel to destinations where I can experience the outdoors but still have **comfortable accommodations**.
3. Travel to destinations **I’ve heard about from friends and relatives**.
4. Trips where I can walk around in **historic/charming towns/locations**.
5. Trips to **family-friendly** destinations.

Defining Geotourism as a Brand

Why this is important?

1. If we are going to promote the concept of geotourism to the tourism industry, we need to have a clear and universal understanding of what the ‘brand’ means.

2. If we are seeking government support for funding geosites, geotrails and for supporting geopark concepts, we sure need to get our act together.

3. We still have a big job to explain the geotourism concept to the geological professions!
Building Awareness and Support in the Geological Professions

1. The Australian geological profession has shown very little interest in or support for geotourism, whatever way we choose to define it.

2. The mining and exploration industries as well as museums, universities, and government agencies are generally perceived by geologists as providing the only employment opportunities.

3. Geoparks and geotourism are perceived by many geologists employed in industry as creating threats to employment through the alienation of land from exploration and mining.
Building Awareness and Support in the Geological Professions

4. Geologists employed in the mining industry have not yet realised the potential for protecting the geoheritage related to economic geology.

5. By and large, geotourism is now being championed by geomorphologists, geographers and speleologists rather than by mainstream geologists.

6. Even then, very few of these professional groups do not understand the tourism industry.
Australia's First ‘Global’ Geopark
Not just volcanics but also grasslands, lakes, caves, wetlands, homesteads, gardens, towns, villages, culture, heritage, legends, history and exploration, stone walls, soldier settlement and much much more......

AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE
One of the most important aspects of a Geopark is:

- the link between the geology and the people, their stories, culture and history that builds a sustainable source of geotourism,
- brings jobs to rural and indigenous people and in turn,
- helps protect sites of importance, and
- promotes geoheritage.
Challenges for Geopark Development in Australia

- Other competing ‘land designation’ systems underpinned by environmental, heritage and tourism values e.g. national parks, world heritage areas, including ‘national landscapes’.
- The politics of Australian federalism.
- Relatively low profile of geoscience in the Australian community - overshadowed by the strong influence of the Australian mining industry lobby.
- Apathy amongst the Australian geological community not helped by the decline in geoscience education and university geology schools in recent years.

East Asia Geopark Conference, Taiwan, April 2009
The Geopark ‘Problem’ in Australia - Sept 2010

1. Concept not yet supported by the EPHC, the planning and tourism agencies; the concept does not fit into the current public land management system.
2. Concept not embraced or understood by the geological profession.
3. Agricultural/mining industries yet to be engaged.
4. Geol Surveys and GA not engaging in geopark development and geotourism generally.
5. No available funding programs for geopark development.
Today’s Agenda - Future Opportunities

- Geotourism for:
  - ‘geologists’ (geotours).
  - mining and economic geology.
  - ‘National Landscapes’.
- Role for the **geological professions**.
- Engagement with **government**.
- **Marketing** geotourism sustainably.
- Case Study - Country Charm Discovery Tour.
Marketing Of Geotours
Suggested Alumni Groups

- Geoscience professional societies - GSA, AIG, AusIMM, others in the Australian Geoscience Council
- Visiting Geoscience Conference delegates
- Other professional groups - engineers, doctors etc
- Geography Teachers - Society & Environmental Studies/Geography
- Bushwalking Groups
- Community and Social Clubs - e.g. Rotary
- Other institutional Alumni - universities, museums etc
- Friends groups - National Trust etc
Geotourism and Mining Areas

- Existing and abandoned **mine sites**.
- Old **mining towns**.
- Historic **mining regions** e.g. West Coast Tasmania.
- **Economic geology geosites** e.g. gossans, alteration zones.
- **Old mine site complexes** combining mining, museums, ecological interpretation, history and culture e.g. Gold Ecological Park, Taiwan.
Broken Hill

DEWHA has been assessing both the mining and minerals (i.e. economic geology) heritage of Broken Hill.

- Broken Hill’s prominent role in Australia’s mining history.
- For the development of innovative mining and metallurgical practices.
- As the place where safe working practices and workers’ legislation was first developed for miners.
- For its well-known mineralogical diversity.
- For its importance for the associations with many individuals who have played a prominent role in the Australian mining industry.

Source: DEWHA
a partnership between conservation and tourism to identify and promote up to 15 of Australia's exceptional natural and cultural experiences to the international market
Partnership Between Conservation & Tourism

- International and national branding and marketing of the selected exceptional national icons
- Enhance the role of national parks in regional economies and foster a multi-tenure coordinated approach to regional tourism development

A catalyst for regional tourism planning:
- destination branding
- infrastructure
- visitor information
- enterprise development
Where are the opportunities for geoheritage?

Many geoheritage sites are found within the National Landscapes. In fact, some are major tourism draw cards.

How to get involved?

- Make contact with the local National Landscape Steering Committee.
- Build understanding of the National Landscapes brand.
- Explore partnership opportunities.
- Communicate in line with brand.
- Share your stories.

Australia’s National Landscapes seeks to tell the stories of Australia’s diversity and richness to the world.

Source: Parks Australia
1. Geological professions to engage further with relevant government agencies to better coordinate interaction with relevant government agencies.

2. Enhanced availability of various state/territory resources which identify and promote geoheritage sites.

3. Lack of understanding both within the geoscience professions and the general community of the differences between the concepts of geoheritage and geotourism.

4. Make better known to geotourism operators and others information on geoheritage site suitability for geotourism.

5. Interest in mining heritage can be expanded to embrace areas of geoheritage pertaining to economic geology.
There is an opportunity to foster and promote geotourism initiatives within Australia’s National Landscapes with geological and geomorphological significance, as a model to advancing geotourism and geoheritage considerations in other regions, having particular regard to the recently stated views of the EPHC relating to the furtherment of Geopark proposals in Australia.
There is an opportunity for geotourism advocates to engage with state/territory park managers to determine commonality on issues relating to:

- Connecting Landscapes.
- Forming Partnerships.
- Attracting Visitors.
- Development of Regional Communities.
- Indigenous Engagement.
- Identification and Establishment of Geosites/Geotrails.
The incorporation of the geotourism experience (with traditional nature tourism and elements of other ‘place based’ tourism creates a more holistic experience, and is a move towards the experiential tourism model. In short, ‘experiential tourists seek memorable experiences.

In this sense, sustainability is achieved through providing a high quality experience encouraging return visitation, and attracting new customers by ‘word of mouth’.

Geotourism has great potential as a new niche product. However, it will still require the same disciplines that apply to other niche, ‘high value’ tourism activities.
Five ‘Ps’ of Marketing for Sustainable Marketing of Geotourism

- **Product** - Geotourism - ‘experiential’ focus.
- **Place/Position** - customise for demographic and special interest groups.
- **Price** - high margin if the ‘packaged value’ exceeds expectations.
- **Promotion** - traditional nature-based tourism channels.
- **People** - geotour leadership.
Country Charm™ Discovery Tour
The Rock Doctor - Dr John Jackson

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