

Epilogue: Contrasting Coldwater and Warmwater Island Tourist Destinations.

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The dominance of the physical setting is one of the strongest images that emerges when tourism on cold water islands is examined. Ignoring for the moment the often dramatised relationship between humankind and climate, it is clear, either implicitly or explicitly, that human existence, let alone tourism, on these islands is continuously vulnerable to physical conditions. While the “cocooning” of tourists on tropical islands is almost over-discussed (Dann, this volume), such shielding of the pleasure seekers from the physical (and sometimes human) elements there is essentially for comfort, rather than survival. On at least some of the coldwater islands discussed here, it is survival which necessitates such sheltering from the elements, not just of tourists, but of locals also. Such conditions, along with other factors, have inevitably kept numbers of visitors to low levels, even where the islands may have many, often unique, attractions. Thus one can deduce from even a brief examination of the chapters in this volume, the fact that to be a tourist to such destinations means that one must have a specific motivation to visit the particular island or island group. None of these islands, or their equivalents in other cold water areas, can be visited ‘by accident’ and none of them represent a generic form of tourism except in a very broad way. Each is unique, and grouping them into categories, other than by such adjectives as ‘coldwater’ or ‘extreme’, is not convincing. To draw together some common themes and issues, therefore, is somewhat difficult and inevitably subject to personal bias and interpretation.

It might be appropriate therefore, to make some reflexive commentary here. This writer has had a lifelong interest in such islands, beginning from spending holidays as a child on some of the islands off the west coast of Scotland, and continuing this experience through bird-watching holidays to the northern isles of Scotland, and also visiting Irish, Scandinavian and Baltic islands, before moving to North America and visiting Canadian northern islands, along with Iceland. It should not be assumed however, that such visitation developed a longing for cool vacations (in the temperature sense), and it was with at least equal delight that I managed to visit Turks and Caicos, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Bali and Java among other warmwater islands. This perhaps is an important point to bear in mind. While we may discuss the perhaps distinct characteristics of coldwater island tourists, we should not imagine that they do not also visit warmwater islands and do not enjoy a “Blue lagoon” on the veranda of a villa as the sun sets just as much as a malt whisky on a cold wet afternoon watching a gale or snowstorm near one of the Poles. While there may be specific characteristics of coldwater island tourists, these have not been determined definitively, although we are able to generalise about them, or at least those who visit the more extreme examples of such island destinations.