

# The Journal of Arctic Tourism

## From the editors

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## Welcome to the first issue of the Journal of Arctic Tourism!

*... while many studies in Arctic tourism hitherto have accomplished a baseline knowledge, the rapid development in the (New) Arctic warrants rejuvenated approaches acknowledging the rapid environmental, socio-economic and political changes in the region. In this context, traditional business perspectives are complemented by alternative theoretical approaches highlighting communities, geographical imaginaries and spatial relations, also featuring the application of recent theoretical reasoning within an Arctic context. (Rantala & Müller, forthcoming).*

This opening quote is from a book proposal accepted by Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, outlining a *Research Agenda for Arctic Tourism*. The editors emphasise a wide approach to comprehending Arctic tourism, drawing on innovative scholarship from the range of the sciences to creatively conceive tourism across disciplinary boundaries in addressing challenges presented by the 'new' Arctic. If you find yourself reading these lines you are interested in the past, present, and future development of tourism in the Arctic. As such an avid reader you may also align yourself with the call from Rantala and Müller (forthcoming) on adopting a broad, creative, and innovative perspective on tourism, whilst simultaneously recognising some of its basic facets. One such facet is the fact that tourism growth worldwide is on a steep upwards trajectory, which global events only seem to be able to temporarily dent. The clearest evidence of this seemingly relentless growth trajectory is post Covid-19 global travel. Whilst during the pandemic it was brought to an all but complete halt, now travel has resumed with even greater force, with many seeking to make up for time lost being confined to one's home during the pandemic. The consequences of this unabated growth in international travel are manifold. One of which is that an ever-growing share, albeit still tiny, of the global population can seek out tourism experiences in ever more remote and exotic locations. The Arctic is one such region. Its remoteness, inaccessibility, and inhospitable spaces have long held a particular allure of exoticness and uniqueness which travellers are keen to experience.

Beyond the qualities of the place itself and the expectations of the visitors, tourism also holds a promise to people living in the places visited. Small and peripheral communities which have experienced economic restructuring have many moved away from traditional industries to that of tourism as more tourists make it to ever more remote Arctic places. Arctic tourism hubs and gateway cities emerge as more and more people in the periphery and in said hubs or gateways start to pin their hopes of prosperity on tourism. Tourism's role in these dynamics and population change in Arctic communities differs considerably by location and is impacted by many factors. Many Arctic communities have seen a significant population growth, such as Alaska, the Canadian Arctic, and Iceland while other Arctic communities are in decline—particularly in rural areas. These dynamics can in part be analysed through the ways in which immigration fluctuates with the tourism season and the impacts this has. In this context of dynamic transformations it is imperative to critically analyse and engage with tourism, its development trajectory, role and manifold impacts in places and on peoples brought into its sphere of influence. What will the seemingly inevitable growth of tourism mean for places and peoples in the Arctic?

*The Journal of Arctic Tourism* is a scholarly journal in the field of tourism set up to interrogate this overarching question. The journal is published by the Icelandic Tourism Research Centre (ITRC), which is headquartered at the 'edge of the Arctic' in the community of Akureyri, North Iceland. The publication is a collaborative project between the Icelandic institutes of higher education involved in tourism studies along with the Icelandic Tourist Board. Through this journal the University of Iceland, Hólar University, the University of Akureyri and the Icelandic Tourist Board hope to create a platform for interdisciplinary discussions on tourism in the Arctic that enhance theoretical knowledge and strengthen professional discussion on its development and impacts. Contributions from the various disciplines are encouraged to

achieve this ambition. So, whilst the journal aligns with tourism studies in the broadest of sense, submissions are welcome across the spectrum of the sciences. These range from the physical and natural sciences focused on the ecosystem and cryospheric dynamics and the role tourism plays therein. The social sciences exploring people's perception and engagement with tourism as an economic and cultural activity—towards community development co-creating equality with a focus on building and sharing capacity for improvements in a community. And to the humanities examining the meaning of travel and renderings of tourists and hosts through practices and performances, and with pedagogy through tourism studies and education as a force of social transformation for communities. Drawing on the range of these disciplinary domains is the best way to understand tourism in its complexity. Thereby research featuring trans-disciplinary work is most welcome and as such can help contribute to regenerative tourism where tourism development and understanding is focused on 'giving back' and contributing to regeneration of communities and their environments.

Based on these ambitions the editorial team would like to emphasise a few points to give a sense of the direction we would like the journal to take at current. First point to be rehearsed is that the journal is not meant to promote tourism, but to critically interrogate it and constructively engage with it as a facet of nature, our society and culture. In this case focused on a particular region which is becoming ever more central in popular imagination and geopolitically contested – the Arctic. Related to this, we do not see tourism as a malignant thing. We are rather keen to interrogate who are the tourists, when, where, and how? Thus, on the pages of this journal we would like to see research recounted aiming to understand how tourism is practiced and performed in the Arctic, which we see as a much more interesting question than trying to outline it as either bad or good. The main challenge around tourism is that it is hard to draw a line and say, "you are a tourist, and you are not". Similarly, it is hard to cast a defining line around the industry as a sector, and maybe it is not at all helpful to see tourism as a particular sector of activities? Arguably, we are all tourists all the time and tourism can be in all we do. How these practices contribute to the making of the Arctic now, but also historically and into the future is thereby of our concern. Secondly, there is a point about the region the journal is focused upon. The Arctic is home to approximately four million people, many of whom struggle for livelihoods in a rapidly changing Arctic. The drivers and impacts of these changes are a worthwhile research topic in itself, but also the role tourism plays therein as a solution (frequently promoted) and as contributor to these rapid changes. Here the role tourism plays in the socio-economic imaginary and policy making for the Arctic realm is of interest. Not least the fact that tourism is even used in the geopolitical jostling of global powers when it comes to the Arctic. The third point to be exercised is on how tourism plays a role in the conservation of the Arctic. Should the Arctic or parts of it be seen and governed as a no-go zone for 'the tourist' whoever that maybe? Which imaginaries of the region dictate that? Is it at all possible to parcel off pieces of the planet and state: Here no-one can go? Apart from the obvious fact that people actually do live in the Arctic and have done for thousands of years, what dictates the terms of 'protection' and/or conservation is certainly worth exploring. What is to be protected, for whom and by whom? Colonial imaginaries have through history told so many people who they should be and how they should act. This is truly a topic for the Arctic to research and again what tourism does in this context – reinforcing and/or empowering certain people at certain times in certain contexts. Lastly, and a point of great importance, is how we understand tourism in the context of climate change. This becomes particularly pertinent in the Arctic context, where travel to and within the Arctic is often long-haul and reliant on fossil fuels. Here the main concern is the carbon footprint. Emerging is thus yet another research topic. How could the potential carbon futures (or non-futures) impact the Arctic realm and its peoples – what could travel there without carbon entail? What could that look like? What and how possibilities are contained in it.

All in all, the journal and research on tourism in the Arctic holds many of the debates and challenges addressed by critical tourism scholarship more generally. In the specific geographical context of the Arctic some of these topics gain particular salience. So, with this new journal – open access, no fee and fully and transparently supported by the ITRC<sup>1</sup> – we hope to invigorate the research community of those interested in tourism and the particular geographies around the North Pole.

Whilst papers detailing research accounting for the dynamic relationship of tourism and the Arctic are the focal point of this journal, the journal also welcomes unreviewed materials such as research notes, conference materials, book reviews, interviews, etc. concerning tourism and tourism research in the Arctic. This is in the spirit of creating a platform for dialogue on tourism in the Arctic. Being acutely aware of the planned obsolescence of theory in academia, the explosive growth of journal outlets and the millennial hegemonic imperative to 'publish or perish', the journal aspires to foment tourism research and discussion in a critical and responsible manner, with open, transparent and fast review processes. In addition to the regular publication, special issues will also be published, dealing with specific themes or emphases related to tourism in the Arctic. Specific calls will be issued for papers in special issues. Special issues are subject to a special editorial board in consultation with the journal's editorial board.

Some very practical notes to conclude this opening editorial. The *Journal of Arctic Tourism* is published in open access exclusively online and is open for submission all year round. It is desirable that peer-reviewed articles are written in English, but articles will also be accepted in Icelandic. Abstracts in both languages are required in all articles (translation is provided by the ITRC). Unreviewed material will mainly be published in Icelandic. There is no charge for publishing articles. Accepted papers are published as soon as they are ready and having undergone a fair, transparent double-blinded peer review managed by the editorial team. The reviewing process is double-blind and authors are kindly requested to remove any identifications that may be found in the documents before submission. The editorial board assesses whether an article falls within the scope of the journal and whether it is acceptable for peer review. In addition to general requirements for academic papers, authors are expected to follow the submission checklist. An article that is forwarded in a peer review is sent to at the least two experts in the relevant field. Authors are expected to receive answers regarding publication as soon as possible. If an article is not rejected, the authors will have the opportunity to make corrections in accordance with the comments of the reviewers. The final decision on publication is made by the editorial board. The editorial board additionally evaluates and decides on the publication of unreviewed material. If necessary, the editorial board may request the opinion of experts in the relevant academic field.

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