

Re Cycling and Geotourism: an adventure approach to appreciating physical landscapes

Thomas A. Hose, School of Earth Sciences, University of Bristol, UK, gltah@bristol.ac.uk

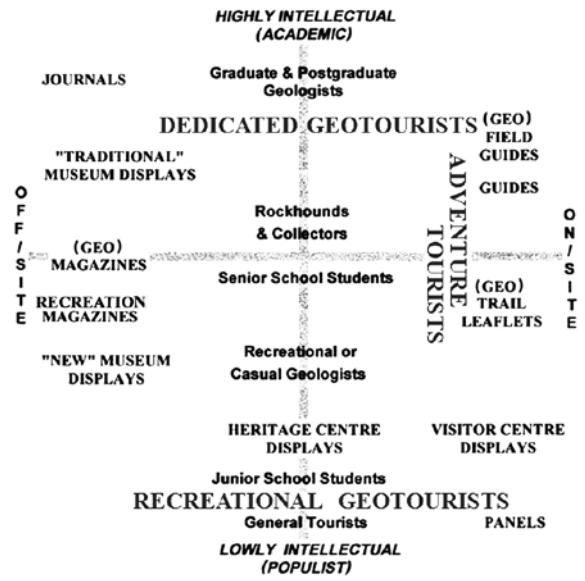
A Rich European Geoheritage

Europe's present-day rich legacy of geological material in museums, universities, archives and libraries – its cultural geoheritage – is a consequence of its citizens' 400 years of geological inquiry (Hose 2016a). Its recognised geosites and geomorphosites and their associated landforms, rocks, minerals and fossils (or geodiversity) – its natural geoheritage – populate both the historic and modern geological literature (Hose 2016b). The recognition that many of the literatures' geosites and geomorphosites, and from which the specimens in the collections had been gathered, were lost, degraded or were no longer accessible led, from the mid-20th century, to the development of geoconservation measures to protect what was left (Hose 2008). Further, the recognition geology in general and geoconservation in particular were poorly regarded and understood by the public geologists and others, from the late 20th century, developed geotourism provision (Hose 2011; 2012), latterly with an emphasis on geoparks; indeed, it has been recognised that 'In today's economically stretched climate, tourists are a valuable source of local income. The encouragement of the tourist industry to include geodiversity within its remit is therefore high...' (Burek 2012, 45). Whilst traditionally tourism provision has focussed on mass market provision there has been a growing interest in developing niche tourism (Novelli 2005) which can encompass geotourism (Hose 2005) and adventure tourism (Shephard & Evans 2005).

Adventure and Geo(Tourism)

Europe has witnessed in recent years a growing interest, perhaps resurgence when historical antecedents are noted, in physical activity - especially adventure - tourism. Between 2009 and 2013 it was estimated (Anon 2013) that its populations' involvement in adventure tourism increased from 25% to 47%. Geotourism provision, especially interpretative media, could most naturally encompass some adventure tourism provision – particularly when focussed along hiking and (road and mountain bike) cycling trails. 'Recreational' and 'casual' geotourists are primarily pleasure-seekers, focused on social interaction at (preferably) interpreted geosites. Their chief interest is informal educational experiences for themselves and for accompanying children (Hose 1997; 2000) and generally they are not adventure tourists. However, a minority are climbers, hikers and mountain bikers – individuals who, like true adventure tourists, choose to explore - often with an interest in the Nature of their surroundings – 'wild' areas. A minority of geotourists are 'dedicated' (Hose 2000) and a natural market for adventure tourism; they purposefully select and will explore 'wild' and remote areas to visit geosites and geomorphosites. In many of their characteristics adventure tourists cross over with, especially dedicated, geotourists. For example, of the former 37% are graduates (Anon 2013, 8) and of the latter just under

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30% to 50% (Hose 1998) and generally around 40% (Hose 1996) are graduates. Likewise, as for modern and historic geotourists (Hose 2008), they '... ranked areas of natural beauty as the most important factor in choosing their last destination, followed by the activities available and the climate of the destination' (Anon 2013, 9).

Adventure tourism within aesthetic landscapes combines physical activity, cultural exchange or interaction, and engagement with Nature. It can require significant physical or mental effort and takes participants out of their 'comfort zone'. Five of its major activities are mountain, hill and trail walking, road biking and mountain biking. These are generally 'soft adventure' (Shephard & Evans 2005, 203) activities in that they provide experiences beyond those associated with mass tourism, are spiritually and intellectually rewarding, and are generally safe and without excessive physical demands. They appeal to a broad range of participants (in terms of age, fitness, and experience) and can readily be undertaken by beginners. They can accommodate a range of budgets and timeframes and can be integrated within interpretative provision such as geotourism. The recent, albeit USA based, report on adventure tourism (Anon 2013, 3) mentions archaeological expeditions, bird watching and safaris - but not geotourism - together with backpacking, hiking and cycling as forms of soft adventure tourism. The author's first geotourism writing was specifically aimed at hikers (Hose 1974) and it noted '... (in the interests of conservation) it is often best to take note, or photograph an exposure, than to literally hammer it into the ground. By conserving now we will leave geologists of the future something to observe and research upon.' Geoconservation permeates his approach to geotourism in the specific UK areas and geotrails herein examined.

Some UK Geotrails Considered

UK trails with a geotourism focus and primarily for cyclists, but also suitable at least in part for hikers, are examined and critiqued in terms of their accessibility, interpretative media and historical basis. Most of these cyclist focussed (geo)trails incorporate a holistic approach to interpretation with the inclusion of strictly non geological, especially historical, material as added interest for users. It is worth noting that such consideration are nothing new for it was noted at the close of the 19th century that '... if you can, combine with your strolling some such pleasant study as botany, geology, or some other branch of natural history. The best form of exercise by far and away is tricycling.' (Stables 1889, 102). A particular feature of these (geo)trails is the use of multi-modal transport options, a much promoted modern approach to recreational cycling that has historic antecedents, 'We frequently took long as well as short journeys by rail in addition to our bicycle riding ... By taking advantage of these facilities for travel, we saw a large portion of the country [England] not covered by our route on the bicycle.' (Chandler & Sharp 1888, 77). Specific (geo)trails examined include those for: Milton Keynes to Newport Pagnell; Bristol to Bath; the Tissington Trail; and for the North Pennines Geopark. That examination incorporates a theoretical geotourism interpretative underpinning (see figure) based upon already published and some unpublished (Hose 2003) geotourism research is given. A historical perspective and overview is also provided as the basis for the development of future geo(trails). Finally, recommendations for the content and approach of (geo)trails for adventure tourists are also given.



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