



Volunteer Tourism: The lifestyle politics of international development (Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism and Mobility)

By Jim Butcher, Peter Smith

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Just a generation ago the notion that holidays should be invested with ethical and political significance would have sounded odd. Today it is part of the lifestyle political landscape.

Volunteer tourism is indicative of the growth of lifestyle strategies intended to exhibit care and responsibility towards others less fortunate, strategies aligned closely with developing one's ethical identity and sense of global responsibility. It sits alongside telethons, pay-per-click, Fair Trade and ethical consumption generally as a way to "make a difference".

Volunteer tourism involves a personal mission to address the political question of development. It draws upon the private virtues of care and responsibility and disavows political narratives beyond this. Critics argue that this leaves the volunteers as unwitting carriers of damaging neoliberal or postcolonial assumptions, whilst advocates see it as offering creative and practical ways to build a new ethical politics. By contrast, this volume analyses volunteer tourism as indicative of a retreat from public politics into the realm of private experience, and as an expression of diminished political and moral agency.

This thought provoking book draws on development, political and sociological theory and is essential reading for students, researchers and academics interested in the phenomenon of volunteer tourism and the politics of lifestyle that it represents.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Butcher and Smith have provided the definitive unpacking and critical analysis of the mainstreaming of volunteer tourism. Reading this book may change your life more than doing a gap year and will make you think about volunteer tourism differently and with insight." – *Professor Kevin Hannam, Leeds Beckett University, UK*

"Butcher and Smith's fascinating study goes beyond the existing debates on volunteer tourism to consider the changing nature of contemporary politics and international development. They explore how volunteer tourism involves the search for social meaning against the shrinking of the public political imagination. Volunteer tourism assumes significance because of how politics and development have become re-orientated around projects of therapeutic self-realisation as opposed to national material transformation. Indeed they suggest that volunteer tourism outsources the responsibilities of cultivating global citizenship onto the South. The book raises important questions for those of us seeking to understand North-South relations and politics today." – *Dr Vanessa Pupavac, School of Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham, UK*

About the Author

Jim Butcher teaches at Canterbury Christ Church University, UK. His research interests lie in the sociology and politics of tourism.

Peter Smith teaches at St Mary's University, UK. His main areas of interest lie in the sociology of volunteer and ecotourism.

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