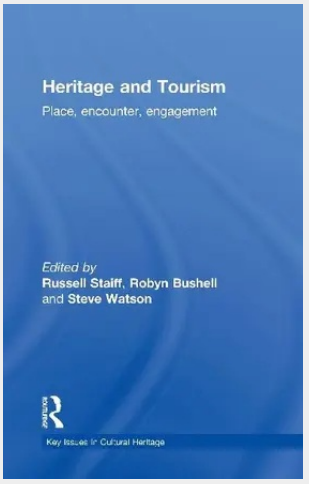
Staiff / Bushell / Watson

Heritage and Tourism

The complex relationship between heritage places and people, in the broadest sense, can be considered dialogic, a communicative act that has implications for both sides of the ‘conversation’. This is the starting point for Heritage and Tourism. However, the ‘dialogue’ between visitors and heritage sites is complex. ‘Visitors’ have, for many decades, become synonymous with ‘tourists’ and the tourism industry and so the dialogic relationship between heritage place and tourists has produced a powerful critique of this often contested relationship. Further, at the heart of the dialogic relationship between heritage places and people is the individual experience of heritage where generalities give way to particularities of geography, place and culture, where anxieties about the past and the future mark heritage places as sites of contestation, sites of silences, sites rendered political and ideological, sites powerfully intertwined with representation, sites of the imaginary and the imagined. Under the aegis of the term ‘dialogues’ the heritage/tourism interaction is reconsidered in ways that encourage reflection about the various communicative acts between heritage places and their visitors and the ways these are currently theorized, so as to either step beyond – where possible – the ontological distinctions between heritage places and tourists or to re-imagine the dialogue or both. Heritage and Tourism is thus an important contribution to understanding the complex relationship between heritage and tourism.



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