

Aspects of Tourism

DYNAMIC TOURISM





Economics of Outdoor Recreation

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Foreword

The demand for outdoor recreation is booming today, as is obvious to anyone even modestly familiar with the situation. Less publicized but no less impressive has been the enormously heightened interest in outdoor recreation as a field for professional study in the last decade or so. Park lovers and administrators, dedicated conservationists, and others deeply interested have long written and spoken about parks and recreation, and they have often been influential in securing public action to reserve or manage parks and other areas in ways which they thought desirable or essential. But this type of concern has not really been a professional one, and it has rarely included research, especially research in the social sciences, about outdoor recreation. These park and recreation people have been advocates of a point of view or of specific actions; they have not generally been concerned with analysis of social and economic processes.

All of this has changed greatly; there has been a major upsurge of professional interest in outdoor recreation. In a recent bibliographical survey, Wolfe has listed some 160 books and articles, in addition to the studies of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, nearly all of which have been published within the past decade. This upsurge of professional interest has not been confined to any single professional group; economists, sociologists, geographers, lawyers, foresters, landscape architects, park and recreation executives, and other groups have shared in it. For many of these men, outdoor recreation has not yet become, and perhaps never will become, a professional field in and of itself;

¹ R. I. Wolfe, "Perspective on Outdoor Recreation—A Bibliographical Survey," Geographical Review, Vol. 44, No. 2, 1964.

rather, it is subject matter for workers from various professional fields. National interest in outdoor recreation was given a major boost by the work of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission.² One outcome of its work was the passage in 1964 of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, under which substantial sums will be granted by the federal government to the states for aid in acquiring and improving park and recreation areas. The requirement that the states have a recreation plan will give much increased weight to the usefulness of research in the general field, and we may well expect to see further proliferation of research in response to this stimulus.

Our concern with outdoor recreation is, we think, a natural one. Outdoor recreation requires natural resources, sometimes rather large amounts, and the mounting demand for outdoor recreation will bring major pressure for shifts in resource use. In the coming years, money is going to be invested in outdoor recreation—large amounts, by all indications. Decisions affecting recreation are going to have to be made. We think that they would be better made if more were known about the subject and about the outcomes of alternative ways of dealing with it.

Numerous issues of public policy on outdoor recreation are now before the American people. Shall government (at any level) try to meet the apparent demand for outdoor recreation on an essentially free entrance basis? Are we prepared to pay the price required to maintain the quality of the recreation experience? Can some means be devised to obtain effectively co-ordinated planning among the numerous private groups and public agencies? Shall natural resources be allocated to recreation and to competing uses on the basis of their comparative value for each purpose? If on some other basis, which one? How can the public use of privately owned land and water areas for recreation best be stimulated and assisted? How is the nation going to pay for the outdoor recreation it demands? More specifically, who is going to pay for it?

These are some of the policy issues which we raise in this book; we do not try to solve them, much less to advocate a line of policy on outdoor recreation. In the solution of issues of social policy, the value standards and philosophy of the persons concerned may be as critical as the technical and economic aspects of the issues. But the latter do set limits or raise problems of cost which often condition, if not determine, the answers. We think the general analytical framework erected in this book, and the methods of analysis outlined, can be very helpful in

² Outdoor Recreation for America: The Report of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission to the President and to the Congress (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962). See also the twenty-seven Study Reports of the Commission.

enabling any individual or group to arrive at a sounder decision on recreation policy issues.

This book has been written by economists, but it is not directed primarily toward economists. Instead, it is aimed primarily at park and recreation workers, and at students in these fields. There are many employees of federal, state, and local park, forest, and recreation agencies who will be, we think, interested in the ideas and the approach we have developed herein. Most of these men and women are not economists, and we have tried to write in a nontechnical style that does not introduce economists' jargon unnecessarily and which tries to explain the concepts used in analysis. At the same time, there is a growing interest among such workers in the economic and social aspects of recreation, and we hope this book will thus be of value to them. Many nonprofessionals-citizens deeply concerned with recreation-may find the book useful in the same way. At the same time, we have tried to present ideas, concepts, and data that will be considered valuable by other economists and social scientists generally. In particular, we hope to stimulate university and other professional workers to initiate research on some of the problems we outline, and thus to test our ideas.

Our main concern has been with the United States. The analysis we make, and the problems we raise, are generally directly applicable to Canada also, although we have explicitly introduced but little of the Canadian experience into our discussion. The situation is different in the older countries of Europe and Asia where comparatively little land has been set aside specifically for outdoor recreation and where settlement on the land is often heavy. The situation is still different in many low-income countries, where incomes, transportation facilities, and leisure do not permit the kind of mass outdoor recreation we have in the United States. Yet, we believe that similarities are growing and that many parts of our analysis could fruitfully be adapted to the special problems of all these countries where the resource and population situations are so different from our own.

This book presents our views on the economic and social aspects of outdoor recreation, as of now. It brings together many ideas, analyses, and viewpoints which are scattered through other writings; but it also includes much new material, presented here for the first time. Its greatest virtue, in our eyes, is that it puts numerous specific materials into a reasonably consistent and comprehensive framework.

Outdoor recreation is a growing and changing field, and a definitive book simply cannot be written today. What is written here will be partially out of date in five years, or at least we hope it will. The basic principles and approaches should stand the test of time; but there should be amplification, enrichment, and change as these basic ideas are applied

in specific situations of widely varying kinds. We badly need more research, in many areas and kinds of situations, both to test and modify ideas and to provide a body of quantitative research results.

We encourage other researchers to develop, challenge, modify, and amplify the ideas and concepts we advance in this book. We hope that it, and our earlier studies, will serve to stimulate many workers in various professional fields, as well as to provide useful and workable ideas to those in the administration of outdoor recreation.

We owe thanks to a very large number of persons who have contributed, often indirectly, to this study. Over the past several years, it has been our privilege to meet with many workers on outdoor recreation problems, either individually or in groups, and these have broadened our viewpoint and increased our interest, possibly to a greater degree than even we realize. Several of our colleagues at Resources for the Future have been especially helpful: Joseph L. Fisher, Irving K. Fox, Allen V. Kneese, Robert K. Davis, Harvey S. Perloff, John V. Krutilla, Henry Jarrett, and Hans H. Landsberg, in particular.

Much of the material for this book was assembled by Mary A. Holman, without whose intelligent and diligent assistance the authors would have had a much more difficult task. During the 1959–60 academic year, David N. Milstein carried on research along somewhat similar lines, under RFF auspices, and his ideas have been very helpful.

A draft of several chapters of the present book was circulated for review in the summer of 1961; comments on them were received from the following persons (the agency with which they were associated at the time of review is shown for identification only): Elmer Aldrich, Division of Recreation, State of California; W. M. Baker, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Ottawa; Charles K. Brightbill, University of Illinois; George D. Butler, National Recreation Association; Charles B. Cranford, Department of Recreation, Philadelphia; Charles E. Doell, Superintendent of Parks, Minneapolis; George R. Hall, Technical Review Staff, U.S. Department of the Interior; William J. Hart, State Park Commission, Nevada: Irvin Hoch, University of California (Berkeley); H. Clifton Hutchins, University of Wisconsin; M. M. Kelso, University of Arizona; Karl S. Landstrom, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior; J. Karl Lee, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Department of the Interior; Morris Miller, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Ottawa; James Munger, Economic Research Service, U.S.D.A.; Edward B. Olds, Health and Welfare Council of National Capital Area; Richard H. Raymond, of Harris, Kerr, Forster and Co. (San Francisco); James C. Rettie, U.S. Department of the Interior; Harry A. Steele, Agricultural Research Service, U.S.D.A.; L. F. Twardzik, Michigan State University; Raymond D.

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We are glad to acknowledge our debt to these people, and to any others whom we may have inadvertently omitted. Full responsibility for errors, omissions, viewpoints, and conclusions rests with the authors, of course.

> Marion Clawson Jack L. Knetsch

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