

The Formation Process of Ethnic Tourism in Australia

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This article aims to explain the significance of recent multicultural tendencies in Australian society as they effect tourism. Since the Labor Party held political power in 1972, Australia has been moving toward a multicultural society which respects each ethnic culture as equal under the law. The commitment to multiculturalism is seen in government administration and consumer activities. This social tendency is also clearly seen in restaurants, the tourism industry and hospitality management in Australia.

A major potential growth area is regional heritage and cultural immersion tourism. In the past, this has been largely run by dedicated special heritage tour providers organizing tours to their own region or country areas. These operations have often been economically marginal and lacked the capital and expertise to tap into the mainstream tourism structures. Now, mainstream tourist operators and governmental tourist bureaus are assisting these operators with tour packaging, promotion and operation.

There are two levels at which ethnic tourism develops within a multicultural society. First, there is a diffusion of foreign cultures or minorities' cultures into the mainstream society. This provides an important foundation. At this level, there are three main elements to fix the imported cultures. For example, (1) cross- cultural encounters stimulate a society, and (2) acceptability of foreign cultures has an essential role in receptiveness. To sustain ethnic tourism (3), productivity bases are also important. These elements introduce ethnic tourism, which is based on the culture of immigrants, into Australia.

At the second level, ethnic tourism and other kinds of tourism become connected. For example, Aboriginal culture became one of the important factors for ethnic tourism in the mid 1980s. In addition, Aboriginal knowledge of wildlife is useful for ecotourism. Both elements, ethnic tourism and ecotourism, are compounded into the sustainable tourism of the 1990s. Aboriginal culture is an important asset, which is strongly promoted to domestic and international tourists as a unique cultural tourism experience. It is one in which tourists can participate. Traditional Aboriginal lifestyle promotes both environmental learning and cross- cultural understanding for tourists. This interesting connection allows sustainable tourism to flourish in Australia.