CLIMATE, TOURISM AND RECREATION

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF BIOMETEOROLOGY

COMMISSION ON CLIMATE, TOURISM AND RECREATION

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The Commission and its Aims

The ISB Commission on Climate, Tourism and Recreation was created during the 15th Congress of the ISB held in November 1999 in Sydney, Australia. The aim of the CCTR is to promote research in tourism climatology and recreatiuon climate assessment.

Weather and climate for tourism

Tourism is one of the world's biggest industries and it is also the fastest growing. World tourism grew by a record 260% between 1970 and 1990. For many regions, tourism is the most important source of income. For example, tourism contributes to over half the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in many countries of the Caribbean. Here like many other places, climate is the main impetus for attracting visitors and it is generally accepted that climate forms an important part of the tourism resource base. But the role of climate in determining the suitability of a region for tourism is often assumed to be self-evident and therefore to require no elaboration. Relatively little is known, other than in very general terms, about the effects of climate on tourism or the role it plays. Even less is known about the economic impacts of climate on commercial prospects for tourism. The CCTR was formed specifically to address this neglected area.

Approaches to recreation and tourism climatology

Much of the research in recreation and tourism climatology appears to be motivated by the potential usefulness of climate information for planning in tourism and recreation. The research often addresses the theme of recreation or tourism climate as an adjunct to a variety of decision making processes ranging from those related to such things as the development and location appropriate recreational facilities, or determining the length of the recreation season during which a facility will operate, to those as specific as planning future activities involving personal decisions of when and where to go for a holiday. There is also interest in the indirect effects of climate. For example, Perry (1997) suggests that people leave swimming pools and golf courses on wet days and converge on nearby towns in search of amusement indoors. Therefore, depending on the weather sensitivity of the recreational activity, climatic information can help in the planning, scheduling and promoting of alternative indoor entertainment facilities. Perry (1997) also describes the use of climate information in publicity campaigns to condition tourists' expectations of climate at certain locations. It is clear that if climatic information is to be useful in decision making, it needs to be presented in a form appropriate to the problem. De Freitas (1990) shows that standard weather data or even secondary climatic variables are not always reliable indicators of the significance of atmospheric conditions. Recreationists respond to the integrated effects of the atmospheric environment rather than to climatic averages.

Weather and climate as a natural resource

Together with geographical location, topography, landscape, flora and fauna, weather and climate constitute the natural resource-base of a place for recreation and tourism.

Weather and climate as limiting factors in tourism

The characteristics of weather and climate are not necessarily determinants of tourism but constitute an important factor in both financial terms for tourism operators and the personal experiences of tourists. Various places in the world have a "tourism potential" and weather and climate set limits.

For example, tourism administrators do not promote places with a little potential or appeal as this would not be profitable. On the other hand, the tourist who chooses to visit such places would suffer inconvenience (e.g. transport costs) or discomfort (e.g. heat or cold stress). Financial loses can also result from weather variations and changes. Rainy summers or less snowy winters can have significant impacts on tourism.

Weather and climate as factors in tourism and recreation 'demand'

Weather and climate can affect decisions about holiday destination or the kind of activities engaged in. Weather can play a significant role in the three phases of a trip: before, during and after. Meteorological conditions also affect on-site behaviour of tourists and recreationists.

Weather, climate, health and tourism

Weather and climate can have a variety of effects on the physical well being of holidaymakers (e.g. heat and cold stress, sunburn, effects air pollution and heat stroke). Purpose-designed climate advisory services could help to prepare and protect travellers, especially at-risk groups (the retired, the very young, the sick).

The general objectives of the commission is to facilitate research and the dissemination of information on:

- Methods for assessing the relationships between climate, weather, tourism and recreation
- Assessment of the implication of extreme atmospheric events for tourism and recreation
- Tourism and health
- Climate change and tourism
- Thalassotherapy (Application of sea water and sea climate for health purposes)
- Supply of advisory services for proper climatic adaptation of travellers

Examples of research topics

- Impacts of climate variability on tourism and recreation
- Effects of extreme climate and meteorological events on the tourist industry
- Climatetherapy and health tourism - the link between climate, tourism and human health
- Information for tourism
- Climate change and tourism
- Methods for assessing the relationships between climate, weather, tourism and recreation
- Assessment of the implication of extreme atmospheric events for tourism and recreation

References

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Perry, A.H., 1997: Recreation and tourism. In: *Applied Climatology: Principles and Practice*. Routledge, London, 240-248.

For further information please contact:

Dr. Andreas Matzarakis	Prof. Dr. Chris de Freitas	Dr. Daniel Scott
Meteorological Institute University Freiburg Werderring 10 D-79085 Freiburg, Germany	School of Geography & Environmnetal Science, City Campus, University of Auckland Private Bag 92019, Auckland New Zealand	Meteorological Service of Canada, at the Faculty of Environmental Studies University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, N2L 3G1
Ph. +49-761-203-3585	Ph. +64-9-373-7599 Ext. 5283	+519-888-4567
Fax +49-761-203-3586	Fax +64-9-373-7434	+519-746-2031
Email:matzarak@uni-freiburg.de	Email: c.defreitas@auckland.ac.nz	Email: dj2scott@fes.uwaterloo.ca