

# Why tourism's future lies in its past

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Climate change and carbon footprints, political unrest, global epidemics—what does it all mean for the future of tourism?

While the [crystal ball](#) is murky, futurologist Associate Professor Ian Yeoman from Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington's School of Management has some ideas about how the sector may change in the coming decades.

Associate Professor Yeoman, a scenario planner who is Head of the School's Tourism Management Group, says the key to predicting what may happen lies in pinpointing [tourism](#)'s crucial turning points in the past.

As co-editor of a new book, "[The Future Past of Tourism—Historical Perspectives and Future Evolutions](#)," he asks whether future tourism will benefit from having "listened" to the past or whether it will be hamstrung because it ignored it.

Chapters written by more than a dozen experts cover topics from globalization and the development of place to hotels and the diversification into niche tourism.

The rationale for the book was to "identify the key turning points in tourism's evolution in order to predict the future", says Associate Professor Yeoman.

"In futures research, change is the constant from the past to the future. One of the roles of futures research is to model the development of society, looking for signs, social movements, [technological advancement](#) and signs of change at the point of evolution.

"The book allows us to conceptualize tourism in a way that historians can contribute to the future and futurists can embrace the past."

In the book, Associate Professor Yeoman discusses historical and future turning points for the industry, including people's increasing mobility, step changes towards mass tourism, and sustainable tourism.

"Looking to the past, we can see, for example, the debates about conservation and tourism," he says.

"Thomas Doone, the first superintendent of the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, was constantly in conflict with conservationists, often ignoring the Conservation Preservation Act of 1903.

"He was responsible for the introduction of moose, axis deer, bharal sheep and other exotic species into New Zealand, causing the destruction of native plants.

"Then, late last year, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment Simon Upton said much the same about the potential environmental consequences of tourism growth as those early conservationists in his 'Pristine, popular ... imperiled?' report."

Transport and mobility have always driven tourism, says Associate Professor Yeoman.

"With the advent of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the technological advancement from sail to steam, the journey time from England to New Zealand was cut from three to six months to four to seven weeks.

"Today, Auckland to Doha is 19 hours. Imagine a future where Auckland to London is four hours with hypersonic travel? Trips into outer space are possible with Virgin Galactic.

"Tourism is one of the great industries of the world. It is an industry that will be here in 2195, as we will continue to go on holiday, whereas other industries and services, such as coal mining, high street banking, the printed media or postal services are simply industries of yesteryear."

So are there any stumbling blocks to the success of New Zealand tourism looming over the horizon?

How much might the current coronavirus outbreak affect tourism here? You will find the answers in tourism's history, says Associate Professor Yeoman.

"Between the 1890s and 1920s, we saw two influenza pandemics in New Zealand, but then tourism was not a significant global industry in which people moved around the world.

"Today, many of us will remember the SARS [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome] coronavirus outbreak in 2003, but many may not realise that another novel coronavirus, MERS [Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome] is currently circulating in parts of the world.

"When the World Health Organization declared Guangzhou and Hong Kong as high-risk tourist destinations during SARS, the impact on Hong Kong was initially disruptive, but the virus was contained. The destination quickly recovered."

Wars and terrorism have also caused ructions for tourism, he says.

"However, the birth of European tourism can be attributed to the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars.

"The tourists of this period were the nobility of society. Because of the revolution, the German aristocrats and others from around the continent didn't travel to France. Instead, they went to other parts of Europe, with the highlands of Scotland just one beneficiary during this period. Thus began the Grand Tours of Europe.

"All this demonstrates the resilience of tourism."

Provided by Victoria University of Wellington

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