

**UNIVERSITY OF MACERATA Course of Excellence:
Sustainable Tourism in Rural Communities
December 9th to 14th 2101
Sue Beeton, La Trobe University, Australia**

This course incorporates the main elements of sustainable tourism, addressing environmental and social aspects of tourism in a rural community. Each topic will include a major Case Study that covers some of the successes, failures and lessons that can be learnt which will also be related to relevant of tourism theory. Other examples will also be provided.

Australia has been fortunate with many of its sustainable tourism enterprises, with some strong collaboration resulting in positive outcomes. However, even the most successful project has had its issues, as well as failures, which will be examined as part of the learning process in this course.

While the course will have an Australian focus, reflecting the expertise of Prof Beeton, there will be strong international elements included, as well as discussion relating to how the Australian lessons can be applied to Italy. In addition, Prof Beeton has travelled extensively and undertaken research in other parts of the world, particularly in relation to film tourism, which will also be incorporated into the program.

The final day will incorporate a community planning workshop.

Assessment

Students will be assessed through the Major Assignment on the final day, as well as class activities. Contribution to discussions and evidence of wide reading will also contribute to the assessment.

Day One (Dec 9): Community Development through Tourism

The course will commence with a discussion on the similarities and differences between Australia and Italy.

After a brief overview of the course and introductory exercise, we will be looking at tourism in relation to rural communities and sustainability. The focus of the day will be more on social aspects of sustainability, but will also introduce some environmental aspects that will be covered in more detail on Day Two.

Topics covered will include discussion on the various types of communities, when tourism is a positive option for a community and when it may not be the case. Students will be introduced to the range of theories that underpin the course. They will also look at the tourism activities and market in the Marche region – who is visiting, what do they do and who could be encouraged to visit (current and potential markets).

Case Study: The Development of Rail Trails in Australia

Rail Trails are multi-user trails sited along disused railway lines, and have been extensively developed throughout Australia. Due to their relatively benign gradients and the trails' differentiation from vehicular roads, these trails have become particularly attractive to recreational cyclists. Many of these trails traverse countryside and small towns extremely attractive to tourists, many of whom have been introduced to cycling through Australia's network of Rail Trails.

This case study examines a longitudinal study of the impact of these trails on the communities through which they pass, particularly in terms of economic input and increased amenity for all. The study attempts to address a dearth of information relating to cycling, tourism and regional communities in Australia by concentrating not only on an overall economic contribution of a Rail Trail, but also on the host communities through which it travels.

However, in spite of their appeal, it has not always been easy to garner support from the local communities and landowners through which the trail passes. We will look at a case in Queensland where the state government has taken leadership in the development of rail trails and their efforts to engage the local community.

Day Two (Dec 10): Sustainable Tourism

An outlook of eco-(sustainable) tourism: where we are, where we are going and where can we go? Topics will include a discussion on sustainability and 'eco-labeling'. The role of rural tourism and agritourism in Italy will also be discussed, along with issues of commercial as well as environmental sustainability.

Case Study: Phillip Island, Victoria Australia

Phillip Island is a little over an hour's drive from Victoria's major city, Melbourne, and has attracted local holiday-makers looking for sun, surf and sand retreat. However, the island has more than this, and for over 50 years has been a major nature-based tourist attraction, where visitors come to witness the daily return of the little penguin from the sea to their burrows each evening. The island also has a koala park and a controversial development close to a fur seal sanctuary. The issues of development and various attempts to commercialise these attractions, which has had varying success, provides the student with a significant range of issues and solutions to developing nature based tourism.

Day Three (Dec 13): Film Induced Tourism

The focus of today is on the role and the impact of fictional film and television on rural tourism and rural communities. General areas covered will include the similarities and differences between movies and TV series in relation to encouraging tourism, as well as the place of film in creating images that may or may not be attractive to tourists. Issues of social and environmental sustainability will be considered in relation to film (movies and TV) and tourism.

Case Study: Two Communities, Two Countries, Two TV Series

This case study looks at two TV series, one from Australia and the other from England, both filmed in small communities. One is a seaside holiday village, while the other is a small village within a national park. The respective popularity of each TV series has impacted their host communities and regular visitors in different ways, some positive and others that are problematic. We will consider these cases and the community responses to the various issues, which also demonstrates some cultural differences between the two countries.

Day Four (Dec 14): Bringing it all Together

Local community representatives and tourism bodies will be invited to attend this final day.

Prof Beeton will summarise some of the key points from the previous topics, followed by presentations from the students on the role of tourism in developing the Marche region.

Workshop: Destination awareness of the Marche Region

The presentations will be followed by a brainstorming discussion with local community stakeholders. We plan to finish with a community action plan and proposal development. This will provide some steps towards developing a strategy for the region.

The workshop will also provide a practical illustration to the students of the challenges of community planning. The day will conclude with a de-brief on the Workshop and summation of the course with the students.

Biography: Sue Beeton

Dr Beeton began her life in tourism guiding horseback tours in the Australian High Country, largely in response to the popular '*Man from Snowy River*' movies. She witnessed first-hand the growth of a specific sector of tourism and its effects on local, country communities and families, as well as on the natural environment. In the early 1990s she was a Board Member of an industry tourism association (Victorian Tourism Operators Association) where she represented the interests of such groups to local and state government, and was instrumental in establishing the first Tourism Accreditation program in Australia, and subsequent Ecotourism Accreditation.

Since moving to academia some 14 years ago, Sue has conducted tourism-based research into public land management, nature-based tourism, rural tourism, community development, cycle tourism and film-induced tourism. She has taught a wide range of courses, from rural tourism, community tourism and rural festivals and events through to entrepreneurship, destination marketing and cultural tourism. As well as producing numerous academic papers, she has published three books, *Ecotourism: a practical guide for rural communities*, which has been translated into Japanese, *Community Development through Tourism* and the seminal work, *Film-Induced Tourism*.

She currently serves on the Board of the international Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA), as well as being the Foundation President of the recently formed TTRA Asia Pacific Chapter and co-convenor of the bi-annual International Tourism and Media conference (ITAM), which was held in Prato in 2010.

She holds a PhD in Tourism from Monash University, Masters in Tourism and Graduate Diploma in Australian Tourism from the Australian Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University.