

Book Review

FIELD GUIDE TO THE BATTLEFIELDS OF SOUTH AFRICA: ANGLO-ZULU WAR, 1ST & 2ND ANGLO-BOER WARS, COLONIAL & FRONTIER CONFLICTS AND INDIGENOUS & VOORTREKKER BATTLES

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Field guide to the battlefields of South Africa: Anglo-Zulu Wars, 1st & 2nd Anglo-Boer Wars, Colonial & Frontier Conflicts and the Indigenous & Voortrekker Battles written by Nicki von der Heyde is an excellent book. This very comprehensive book is any battlefields' or heritage tourists' ultimate guide to exploring the battlefields of South Africa. Heritage tourism is a growing discourse in Southern Africa.¹ Battlefield tourism is an important niche of heritage tourism and includes "visiting war memorials and war museums, 'war experiences', battle re-enactments and the battlefield".² Globally, battlefield tourism is becoming increasingly popular,³ with much research on the battlefields of World War I having been done recently.⁴ Most notably, 2014 marked the centenary of WWI (1914–1918), and saw many people across the world visiting battlefield sites. Battlefield tourism forms part of thanatourism or what is more commonly known as 'dark tourism'.⁵ Several reasons why people would want to visit places of death and destruction (such as these once were) exist.

Increasingly, contemporary research explores the meanings and motivations of people visiting battlefields with a "desire for learning and commemoration play(ing) an important part in motivating battlefield tourists".⁶ Stakeholders of battlefield tourism are thus coming to the realisation that these tourists are "an emotionally sensitive, nuanced and reflexive constituency"⁷. It has been shown that battlefield tourists are a

specific niche of the cultural and heritage tourism market.⁸ In a recent contribution, Smit, Magagula and Fūgel call for more attention to be devoted into research of South Africa's military geography.⁹ Although battlefield tourism has been researched in many countries, few studies have focused explicitly on local tourism planning and the effects of battlefields for local economies. In South Africa, there are several reasons for heritage and cultural tourism being used as an economic development tool. First, the South African cultural and heritage assets in terms of battlefield sites are different in character from those in other developing countries. Second, many of these battlefield sites are located in remote rural areas where other economic and revenue-creating activities are limited. Third, in the South African context, battlefields heritage and cultural tourism can be a lever for small tourism enterprise development, such as the establishment of bed & breakfasts in local settlements. Importantly, for entry-level small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) to support heritage or cultural tourism, little capital is required.¹⁰

In her book, Von der Heyde geographically explores many of these issues in the narratives of the various battlefield sites (most of which are heritage sites), in a well laid-out and carefully structured approach. The field guide is divided by province and explores the battlefields in South Africa – KwaZulu-Natal; Gauteng and surrounds; Free State and the Northern Cape; the Eastern Cape and finally, the Western Cape. What makes this book such a treasure trove for the tourist is the use of both history and geography to explain the relevance and influence of each of these battles carefully in the South African context. The use of good maps and GPS coordinates of the battlefield in question make this book very useful and accessing the sites an easy pleasure. The use of timelines and well-represented battle maps of key engagements make this a very useful book, almost replacing the quintessential battlefields tourist guide. The book is beautifully illustrated and well researched, with a full and useful index at the back of the volume. The chronology of battles and the checklist at the back of the book will guide avid battlefield tourists to explore the history and geography of these places carefully and sequentially. Geographers, historians and tourism scholars alike will have multiple uses for this book, a highly recommended reader and reference work.

Several challenges must be addressed to enhance the potential for battlefield tourism, if heritage tourism is to be an important local development vehicle in South Africa. Among the major problems highlighted are a lack of planning, strategic direction and management, and political will to improve the situation and solve problems that affect each of the battlefield sites. These are policy issues that must be dealt with at both local and provincial government level if heritage tourism is to be a responsible and sustainable niche of the national tourism economy. The limits of battlefield tourism as a contemporary driver for local development are evident in that battlefields are attracting fewer of the smaller surviving generation who are immediately interested and affected by the history and heritage of these conflicts. Accordingly, attention must be given to more segmented and innovative marketing, the development of higher quality accommodation within these rural areas, improved education of guides at sites and expanding the knowledge of local tourism officers.¹¹

Expanded levels of funding and strategic grants from local and provincial government can also go a long way to help sustain and support the work being done by the Battlefields Route Association of KwaZulu-Natal. Above all, chronic problems exist with the capacity of local government to support tourism development, including the niche of battlefield tourism. As a whole, these issues confirm broadly the capacity shortcomings of many local governments in South Africa with respect to tourism development, planning and management.¹² The local municipalities and district municipalities in this region of KwaZulu-Natal are typical of local governments across South Africa, which are struggling, with multiple challenges of planning for responsible and sustainable tourism development.¹³ Battlefields tourism remains a popular form of heritage tourism in the South African context.¹⁴ Von der Heyde's book remains an invaluable resource in this process and would be a useful resource to any heritage or battlefield tourist visiting South Africa.

Endnotes

¹ CD van der Merwe. "The organisational, geography and local developmental impacts of heritage tourism in South Africa". PhD thesis. University of Johannesburg. 2016.

² R Dunkley, N Morgan & S Westwood. "Visiting the trenched: Exploring meanings and motivations in battlefield tourism". *Tourism Management* 32. 2011. 860–868.

³ P Fallon & P Robinson. "'Lest we forget': A veteran and son share a 'warfare tourism' experience". *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 12/1. 2017. 21–35.

⁴ AV Seaton. "Another weekend away looking for dead bodies ... Battlefield tourism on the Somme and in Flanders". *Tourism Recreation Research* 25. 2000. 63–77; P Clarke & A Eastgate. "Cultural capital, life course perspectives and Western-Front battlefield tours". *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 9. 2011. 31–44; C Winter. "Tourism, social memory and the Great War". *Annals of Tourism Research* 36. 2009. 607–626; C Winter. "Commemoration of the Great War on the Somme: Exploring personal connections". *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 10. 2012. 248–263; C Winter. "Social memory and battle names: Exploring links between travel, memory and the media". *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 16. 2016. 242–253.

⁵ B-J Yan, J Zhang, H-L Zhang, S-J Lu & Y-R Guo. "Investigating the motivation-experience relationship in a dark tourism space: A case study of the Beichuan Earthquake relics, China". *Tourism Management* 53. 2016. 108–121; J Kokkranikal, YS Yang, R Powell & E Booth. "Motivations in battlefield tourism: The case of '1916 Easter Rising Rebellion', Dublin". In V. Katsoni, A. Stratigea (eds). *Tourism and culture in the age of innovation*. Heidelberg: Springer, 2016; S Miles. "Battlefield sites as dark tourism attractions: An analysis of experience". *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 9. 2014. 134–147.

⁶ R Dunkley *op cit* 860.

⁷ R Dunkley *op cit* 866.

⁸ U Henama, M Jansen van Rensburg & A Nicolaidis. "Nkandla: The unexplored

- frontier for heritage tourism to Zululand, South Africa”. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure* 5. 2016. 1–16; Van der Merwe *op. cit.*
- ⁹ HAP Smit, HB Magagula & TJ Flügel. “South African military geography: Advancing from the trenches”. *South African Geographical Journal* 98. 2016. 417–427.
- ¹⁰ Van der Merwe *op. cit.*
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² CM Rogerson. “Reframing place-based economic development in South Africa: The example of local economic development”. *Bulletin of Geography, Socio-economic Series* 24. 2014. 203–218; CM Rogerson & E Nel. “Redressing inequality in South Africa: The spatial targeting of distressed areas”. *Local Economy* 31. 2016. 28–41.
- ¹³ H Manwa, N Moswete & J Saarinen (eds). *Cultural tourism in South Africa*. Bristol: Channel View Publication, 2016.
- ¹⁴ D Venter. “Battlefield tourism in the South African context”. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure* 1. 2011. 1–5.