Adventure Tourism

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Preface

Jane on Ranger, New Zealand. Photo Ralf Buckley.

DEDICATION

For my mother Jane, who can run up mountains, ski down them, swim across lakes, gallop horses, sail yachts, pilot gliders, and race cars on and off-road; and expected her children to do likewise regardless of age or sex.

Adventure means different things to different people. For the past 5 or 10 years the term 'adventure', and images of adventure activities, have been used worldwide to advertise holidays, equipment, clothing, lifestyles, property and more.

Adventure may also mean different things to different tourists. What fills one person with fear fills another with boredom, and vice versa.

Adventure tourism products, however, form a relatively well-defined and recognizable sector of the tourism industry. Adventure tours are retail-level commercial tour products which clients purchase specifically to take part in an outdoor activity which is more exciting than contemplative, and where the outdoor environment is enjoyed more as a setting for the activity than for its scenery, plants or animals.

These definitions are not clear-cut, and in practice many tour products focus on nature and/or culture at the same time as adventure. This has been recognized through terms such as ACE, adventure-culture-ecotourism (Fennell, 1999, 2001) and NEAT, nature-eco-adventure-tourism (Buckley, 2000).

The adventure component of such tour products is recognizable by the activity and sometimes also by the location. Diving and snorkelling, whitewater rafting and kayaking, skiing and snowboarding, hiking and biking, climbing and mountaineering, sailing and seakayaking: all of these form the basis for adventure tours. Visiting polar regions, deserts, jungles or mountaintops, or looking for large, dangerous or unusual wildlife, also contains a strong element of adventure.

There are tens or hundreds of thousands of individual adventure tourism products worldwide, and many millions of tourists buying them each year. And adventure tours are rarely cheap, not least because they commonly require expensive specialist equipment: from hiking boots to diving regulators, surfboards to yachts and ice-strengthened expedition vessels.

So adventure tourism is big business. It is a major part of the tourism industry. It is one of the main reasons people travel. To date, however, it has been little studied. Tourism researchers have turned their attention quite extensively to people who: visit friends and relatives; go to meetings and conventions; go to sporting events, art galleries and even rave parties; lie on the beach in the sun; eat and drink or visit shopping malls – but not much, apparently, to people who travel specifically to have fun.

Adventure tourism is not, of course, entirely unstudied. There is quite an extensive literature on the psychological aspects of various adventure activities, but these studies are largely from an outdoor education or parks and recreation perspective, not from a commercial tourism perspective. There is barely any published work, apparently, which describes and analyses the structure of adventure tourism products. This is analogous, for example, to studying the psychology of drivers and passengers before knowing what a car looks like, let alone how it works.

Ideally a book on adventure tourism would be able to synthesize an extensive published literature on all aspects of adventure tourism products, before proceeding to the finer social details of the people who purchase them. But this basic literature simply does not seem to exist.

This book, therefore, makes a small start to remedy that defect, by providing analyses of over 100 real, retail-level, individual adventure tour products featuring a range of activities in various parts of the world. There are tens of thousand of such products, changing daily. A book such as this can only hope to present a small sample. It is a start. I shall count the work a success if it gives tourism students some of the basic data they need to understand adventure tourism products and compare

them with other types of tourism, and if it provokes other tourism researchers to expand it to more places, more products and more parameters.

One caveat is in order. This is a book about commercial adventure tourism products: retail products available for sale to anyone with the requisite skills, interests and funds. It is not a book about individual adventures, intentional or otherwise: either the author's or anyone else's. There are many such books, and some of them are classics; but they are not texts on tourism.

Disclaimer

Adventure tour operations change continually, and certainly faster than any one author can keep checking them. Information in the case studies and elsewhere in this volume has been compiled from a variety of written and electronic documents, and personal observations and experiences, which themselves date from different years or even decades. Where possible, publicly available statistical information has been updated during 2005 from tour operator websites and similar sources. These sources, however, may be outdated or inaccurate and no guarantees are expressed or implied regarding any such data.

Similarly, experiences reported are generally for a single occasion, which may or may not be representative of the tour product studied, and which may potentially reflect the personal interests of the author and other contributors as well as the characteristics of the commercial package.

Inclusion of a tour operator, company or product in this volume does not necessarily represent endorsement by the author(s), their employers and professional institutions, or the publishers. We have endeavoured to present a range of individual products from a variety of adventure tourism sectors, but this selection necessarily reflects historical coincidences as well as deliberate choices. Some of the tours described here, for example, were taken before the author first commenced academic research in adventure tourism. They are relevant, but not necessarily representative.

This book is intended for researchers, lecturers and students engaged in the academic analysis of adventure tourism. It is not intended as a tourist guidebook. As we checked and re-checked information during 2005, we found that relevant websites often changed several times within months; and different websites apparently referring to the same tours often contained conflicting information. If, after reading any of the case studies in this volume, you consider taking that tour yourself, please obtain up-to-date information directly from the operator.

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1 Introduction

Aims and Scope

Adventure tourism has grown rapidly in recent years as outdoor recreation has become increasingly commercialized (Buckley, 2000, 2004a; Travel Industry Association of America, 2005). To date, however, the actual commercial products offered by adventure tourism operators do not seem to have been subject to any coherent and comprehensive review and analysis. This book is a first attempt at such an approach.

Other sectors of the tourism industry have been analysed extensively. Many volumes, for example, have been written about conventions and coastal resorts, events and ecotourism. Many aspects of outdoor recreation have also received detailed scrutiny, and much of that literature is relevant to the modern adventure tourism industry.

The ways in which tour operators have packaged outdoor recreation activities as commercial products, however, do not seem to have experienced equivalent attention. The defining features of most adventure tourism products include the geographic setting as well as the adventure activity.

Customer experience also depends on guides and service, so people are also critical to the commercial success of adventure tourism. The role of adventure guides has indeed received some attention in the academic literature, as outlined below, and the experiences and attitudes of participants have been examined quite extensively. These more psychological components of tour products, however, are largely beyond the scope of the current contribution.

Defining Adventure Tourism

The distinctions between nature tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, adventure travel, commercial expeditions, outdoor recreation and outdoor education are blurred (Weaver, 1998; Fennell, 1999; Manning, 1999; Buckley, 2000; Newsome *et al*., 2001). Here I shall use the term adventure tourism to mean guided commercial tours where the principal attraction is an outdoor activity that relies on features of the natural terrain, generally requires specialized sporting or similar equipment, and is exciting for the tour clients. This definition does not require that the clients themselves operate the equipment: they may simply be passengers, whether in a dogsled, a whitewater raft or a tandem parachute harness.

As with most aspects of tourism, this is an artificial definition in the sense that it identifies one particular set of human behaviours from a broad multi-dimensional continuum, with no prior evidence that it corresponds to any empirically identified clumping within that continuum. Individual people have many different expectations and experiences from outdoor activities, and excitement is only one of these. The same tour can mean different things to different people. The distances people travel and the times they spend in outdoor activities are continuously variable. Levels of individual skill, self-sufficiency and equipment ownership, as compared to commercial support, also vary continuously. There is no definitive distinction between adventure and non-adventure, between commercial tourism and individual recreation, between remote and local sites, and so on. Such distinctions may or may not be significant from the various perspectives of, for example, an economic statistician, an outdoor equipment manufacturer, a tour operator and equipment rental agency, a protected area management agency, a public liability insurer or an individual person planning a holiday trip (Buckley, 2004a).

Whilst the boundaries of adventure tourism are not well defined, its core activities are. An archetypal example, perhaps, would be a multi-day whitewater rafting tour, where the tour operator provides all the equipment, the clients need no prior skills and the principal attraction is running rapids rather than riverside scenery. Climbing, abseiling, seakayaking and whitewater kayaking, skiing and snowboarding, caving, ballooning, skydiving and parapenting, mountain biking, diving and snorkelling, surfing and sailboarding, snowmobiling and off-road driving, heliskiing and many similar activities may also form the basis for adventure tourism.

Difficult Distinctions

Travel threshold

There are three commonly drawn distinctions that are particularly difficult to apply in the case of adventure tourism. The first is that for the purposes of economic statistics, a leisure activity only qualifies as tourism if it includes an overnight stay and/or travel away from the participant's place of residence. In Australia, the minimum threshold travel distance is set at 40 km, but this does not necessarily apply worldwide. Many commercial adventure activities are single-day tours. Most of their clients, however, are holidaymakers who are already far from home and so qualify as tourists. In addition, many single-day adventure tours travel more than 40 km from the pick-up point in the nearest gateway town to the location of the day's activity itself. Hence it is reasonable to consider these one-day activities as tours, which is indeed how they are marketed.

Recreation and tourism

The second difficult distinction is between adventure *tourism*, where a client pays a tour operator to provide an adventure experience, and adventure *recreation*, where individual participants carry out the same activity on their own. From a legal perspective, e.g. in regard to liability insurance or access and operating permits for a particular site, this distinction is clear and very significant.

As noted earlier, however, in terms of practical logistics there is considerable overlap. Private recreational groups, particularly non-profit groups such as schools,

may be much larger than small commercial tours. A commercial tour may provide all the equipment and specialized clothing that participants need, so they can show up in street clothes with no prior skills. At the other extreme, the tour company may provide only a guide, with participants expected to arrive with all their own equipment and the skills to use it. So-called tagalong 4WD tours operate this way, for example, and so also do some hiking tours and mountaineering expeditions.

The distinction between a group of skilled and well-equipped people led by a paid guide, by a volunteer guide whose expenses are paid, by one of their own number who is particularly experienced, or by a process of consensus, is a rather fine one. And to complicate matters even further, a private group with a private leader may contract an outfitter to provide equipment, guides and catering for a private trip. Again, the distinction between a private group that charters a tour company to guide and outfit them, and a similar group that makes a group booking on a scheduled but otherwise identical tour, is also a fine one, especially where the tour operator is the same in each case, and their tours are irregular and depart only if a large enough group signs up by a specified pre-departure date. A dive tour company that runs a large high-speed wave-piercing catamaran to the Great Barrier Reef every day is a very different operation from one that takes a single small group of highly experienced divers under the ice in the Arctic or Antarctic.

Fixed and mobile activities

A third significant distinction is between fixed-site and mobile activities. Again, the dividing line is not clear. A ski resort, for example, has a fixed site, whereas a backcountry ski tour is mobile. But heliskiing, for example, is a mobile activity with a fixed base. Similarly, a dive boat on the Great Barrier Reef is mobile, but it relies on a fixed wharf or marina to load passengers and supplies, and some boats journey routinely to elaborate pontoon facilities moored permanently on the outer reef. Some surf tours operate entirely from live-aboard boats; others operate from lodges or resorts near particular surf breaks.

Skiing and snowboarding are certainly excitement-based outdoor leisure activities that require specialist skills and equipment and rely on features of the natural terrain: i.e. an adventure activity. Tourist expenditure at ski resorts makes up a large component of Mallett's (1998) estimate of the economic scale of adventure tourism in North America, and the figure increases enormously if associated real estate development is also included (Johnson *et al.*, 2003). Corresponding attractions for resort-residential development in subtropical areas, however, such as marinas and golf courses (Warnken and Buckley, 1997), would not be considered as adventure tourism, even if some of the boats based at the marinas do operate adventure tours.

Social Contexts and Changes

As societies in developed Western nations become increasingly urbanized, greater numbers of people have lifestyles that lack any outdoor component except during leisure activities. Many of these people are relatively well-off but have little leisure time: they are cash-rich, time-poor. They see wilderness environments and wildlife through television programmes and travel magazines, perhaps without appreciating just how much time, equipment and expertise is required to make a wildlife doc-

umentary film. They also see athletes engaging in a variety of outdoor sports and recreational activities, perhaps without appreciating that these are a select and sponsored few who have made a career in the outdoor sport concerned.

These factors have created a cohort of people who have the desire, money and basic fitness for outdoor recreation in remote areas, but not necessarily the time, skills, equipment or experience. In addition, there are people who have prior experience and skills, but do not have the time to organize their own expeditions, no longer have their full former strength and skills, or simply prefer to pay for support services rather than organizing their own trips. It is these groups that provide the increasing market for commercial adventure tourism.

In the past, people interested in outdoor recreation would commonly buy their own equipment and learn relevant skills gradually, either from friends or through clubs. Both for social and financial reasons, therefore, this led them to focus on one particular activity. As equipment has become more sophisticated and expensive, the option of renting it as part of a commercial adventure tour product has become more attractive financially. If people no longer need to buy their own equipment, however, and if they can rely on guides for trip planning, leadership, safety and basic skills training, then they no longer need to focus on a single outdoor recreation activity.

It therefore appears that outdoor recreation is now treated much more as a purchasable short-time holiday experience than as a gradually acquired lifetime skill with its own set of social rewards and responsibilities (Johnson and Edwards, 1994; Buckley, 1998, 2000, 2004a; Kane and Zink, 2004).

Although commercial adventure recreation has absorbed a proportion of the outdoor recreation market, individual outdoor recreation has continued to grow at the same time. For most such activities, individual adventure recreation is probably still many times larger than commercial adventure tourism, though there do not yet seem to be any published quantitative analyses either of the number of people involved, or patterns of expenditure. Of course, the same individual may take part in the same activity sometimes as an individual, sometimes as part of a private group and sometimes as part of a commercial tour.

Equipment, Clothing and Entertainment

Over the past few years, quite strong and mutually reinforcing business links have arisen between adventure tour operators, equipment and clothing manufacturers, and the entertainment industry (Buckley, 2003b). These business ties are essentially mediated by fashion rather than any fundamental logistic links, so in the longer term they may well prove ephemeral. Currently, however, they are strong enough to have quite significant financial implications for the adventure tourism sector.

The way it works is similar for many different activities, but can be illustrated well by the surfing subsector (Buckley, 2003b). There are similar patterns for other types of adventure tourism. Snowboarding, for example, is used to sell winter street clothing. Rock climbing provides adventure images used to advertise a wide range of lifestyle consumer goods, from mobile phones to chewing tobacco. Manufacturers of expensive recreational equipment, especially motorized equipment such as snowmobiles, personal watercraft (jetskis), off-road and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and sport utility vehicles rely heavily on adventure imagery to maintain sales.

Historically, the hunting and fishing industries have also promoted their own clothing styles, and these are still used as status symbols amongst particular social

groups. Hunting, for example, enjoys particular status amongst well-off Germans, and fly-fishing amongst residents of the UK or the western USA. These styles, however, have not penetrated mass urban streetwear markets to the same degree as modern adventure-style clothing. Fashionable clothing based on riding gear may also have enjoyed prominence in upper-class European societies at one time, and the Australian Drizabone® coat, now used as a city raincoat, was developed for mountain horsemen. Again, however, these did not become general streetwear. The closest historical analogue to the modern link between streetwear and outdoor sport clothing is, perhaps, the highly successful use of sports athletes such as professional basketballers to market specialized sports shoes as mainstream urban streetwear. This, however, lacks the commercial adventure tourism component that applies for surfing and snowboarding, for example (Buckley, 2003b).

Overlaps with Other Subsectors

The commercial adventure tourism sector has grown rapidly but recently, and has received rather little academic attention to date. There is a long history of literature, from researchers and practitioners alike, in related areas such as outdoor recreation, outdoor education, leisure studies and protected area visitor management. There are a number of cross-links from these fields of study into the tourism literature. Individual recreational visitors to national parks, for example, make significant contributions to regional economies through their use of off-park tourist accommodation and services. Similarly, the psychological experiences of participants in outdoor education and recreation programmes may be very similar to those in commercial adventure tours.

The development, marketing, management, economics and general business practices in the commercial adventure tourism sector itself, however, have received very little attention in comparison to similar aspects of other tourism sectors. This lack of attention is all the more remarkable since the adventure tourism sector seems to be significantly larger and more widespread than specialist sectors such as ecotourism (Weaver, 2001; Buckley, 2003a), farm tourism (Ollenburg, 2006) or even volunteer tourism (Wearing, 2001).

The relation between adventure travel and ecotourism, in particular, has been taken into account by organizations such as the Adventure Travel Trade Association (2005), which for many years has run an annual World Congress on Adventure Travel and Ecotourism. Organizations focusing on ecotourism, however, such as The International Ecotourism Society (2005), have focused more on links with mainstream urban, rural and nature tourism through environmental management and education practices than on the links with outdoor and adventure tourism through product packaging.

Information on Adventure Tours

There is one previous text specifically on adventure tourism (Swarbrooke *et al.*, 2003), but it focuses more on the psychological experiences of young backpackers than on the commercial adventure tourism sector more broadly. There is also one text nominally on sport and adventure tourism (Hudson, 2002), but which in fact focuses heavily on fixed-site sports. A new book due out contemporaneously with the current volume (Easson, 2006) examines adventure and extreme sports, but only from a philosophical and psychological perspective.

There are a number of journal articles addressing issues such as participant expectations and experiences, risks and injuries, but relatively few that describe what products are available worldwide and how they work. Of course, individual adventure tour companies describe their products in their own brochures and websites, but such marketing materials cannot necessarily be relied upon as an accurate description for academic analysis of actual practices. The same applies to descriptions of adventure destinations and tour operators in specialist recreational magazines for individual outdoor recreation sectors.

For the individual tourist searching for information on adventure tourism products, there are currently several different options, depending on specialization, prior skill and price range. The first option, generally common amongst time-rich, cash-poor tourists, is to visit a well-known adventure tourism destination such as Queenstown in New Zealand, Cairns in Australia or Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, and then select one or more adventure activities from those on offer at that destination. This is a common practice, for example, in the backpacker market and applies particularly for short-duration, low-skill products such as half-day whitewater rafting trips, tandem skydiving or hang gliding, softboard surfing or introductory diving. Many travel agents sell package tours to such destinations that include one or more short-duration adventure activities. For less heavily visited destinations, guides such as the *Lonely Planet*® series provide information on activities as well as accommodation, often including contact details for individual commercial operators.

At a more specialist level and commonly a higher price range, there are commercial tour operators that retail a range of adventure tourism products. These are generally marketed through brochures, presentations and websites in the same way as specialist natural history tour products. Indeed, some firms offer both nature and adventure tourism products in the same brochures. Some of these companies focus on a single country or a single activity, whereas others include several activities and operate worldwide. Commonly, such operators also advertise in specialist recreational magazines for the activity concerned, such as surfing, diving, kayaking or skiing. That is, these products are aimed more at clients with strong interests and skills in one particular activity than at those who simply want a dose of excitement as part of a holiday package. Tour companies that advertise routinely in such specialist magazines are also likely to seek editorial coverage, e.g. by sponsoring places for travel writers or other journalists.

Base and Apex of the Adventure Sector

The bread-and-butter business base of the adventure sector is in so-called soft adventure, where unskilled clients show up in street clothes and a tour operator provides transport, equipment, specialized clothing, skilled guides and sufficient on-the-spot training for participants to enjoy a safe and usually short set of thrills (Buckley, 2004a). The broad-scale trend in adventure tourism is thus towards reducing risk, remoteness and skill requirements so as to broaden market demand.

At the same time that one end of the adventure tourism sector is expanding its appeal to mainstream mass tourism, however, the other end is expanding into smaller volume, higher cost products that require higher prior skills and involve greater individual risk for clients, and operate in more remote and inhospitable areas. If you have the necessary skills as well as money, commercial adventure tour operators can now take you climbing on 8000 m peaks, kayaking Himalayan rivers

in flood, diving under Antarctic ice, parachuting on to the North Pole or skiing across Greenland. Experiences such as these, which were at the frontiers of human endeavour only a few decades ago, now form a recognizable subsector of the tourism industry. This might be abbreviated as SCARRA, Skilled Commercial Adventure Recreation in Remote Areas (Buckley, 2004a) and represents the apex of the commercial adventure tourism industry.

Note that even the most remote and risky adventure tour products are still overshadowed by adventure recreation exploits and one-off expeditions. The apex of commercial adventure tourism is not the apex of adventure (Fig. 1.1).

Adventure tourism seems to be at the edge of the tourism industry structurally as well as geographically (Buckley, 2004a). In particular, some commercial adventure activities and destinations have evolved quite rapidly from extreme to soft adventure, whereas others have not. This depends on the balance between the driving pressures of market demand and the resistance of costs and technologies. Worldwide, social and technological changes make it easier and cheaper to visit remote parts of the globe, and reduce at least some of the risks.

Such expansion, of course, is not necessarily to the advantage of the individual tourism businesses that pioneered the particular products concerned. It moves them from a niche market where they have a strong competitive advantage or even a monopoly, to a larger and broader market where there may be a substantial competition on price. This price competition may exert downward pressures on safety, guiding skills, equipment quality, etc. At the same time, shifting towards a larger but softer adventure tourism market is likely to require changes in accommodation and transport logistics, so as to support more people in greater comfort. Typically, this needs considerably greater capital investment, which may take it beyond the financial reach of pioneer operators.

Skill, Risk, Reward, Remoteness

The critical factors differentiating the low-volume apex from the high-volume base of the adventure tourism sector are skill and remoteness. The requirement for prior skills in the relevant activity distinguishes specialist adventure tours from the broader nature, eco and adventure tourism (NEAT) sector, where tour operators strive to make their products accessible to unskilled clients so as to maximize their potential market size. The remoteness factor distinguishes such tours from skilled outdoor adventure recreation in more developed areas, such as heavily used rock climbing and scuba diving sites, or so-called park-and-play whitewater kayaking rivers.

Associated with the skill requirements and remoteness is an increased level of risk. This, however, is a consequence rather than a defining factor, and tour operators take steps to minimize risks, to maintain their future reputation as well as to minimize immediate liability. For skilled clients, adventure tours to remote areas offer rewards that they cannot obtain at their own local recreational areas, but with greater convenience and efficiency and lower risk than organizing a private recreational trip. Risk is reduced through the tour operator's local knowledge, guide skills, logistic support and, commonly, arrangements for emergency medical assistance and/or evacuation if needed.

As commercial tourism, small-scale skilled adventure tours to remote areas can be distinguished from private adventure recreation, competitive adventure sports,

etc., but the distinction can be rather fine. As noted earlier, for example, if a private group uses a local commercial outfitter to provide equipment for a particular trip, but provides its own leader, this would be considered as private recreation. If the same group uses the same outfitter to make the same trip, but with a leader provided by the outfitter, it would be considered as commercial tourism.

Evolution of Skilled Adventure Tours in Remote Areas

Historically, travel in the most remote areas and difficult terrain has nearly always been pioneered by scientific or sponsored expeditions, with commercial tourism lagging far behind. It is only recently that the opportunity to make a first ascent or descent, a first traverse or crossing, or to be the first to carry out a particular recreational activity at a new site, has been marketed as a component of commercial tours. Organizations such as the Explorers Club (2005) in the USA and the World Expeditionary Association (WEXAS, 2005) in the UK, focus on private rather than commercial expeditions. It is only in the last decade or so that organizations such as the Adventure Travel Trade Association (2005) have begun to cater equally for adventure tour operators as well as individuals. Even now, in areas of the world with local populations, transport and accommodation, tourism is commonly pioneered by individual travellers, with commercial tours establishing much later once the destination is well known (Fig. 1.1).

The way in which adventure tourism has developed thus differs between regions. Broadly, four categories of remoteness can be distinguished:

- Rural areas and parks in developed countries, typically within a few days from a roadhead and within range of rescue services; human habitation may be restricted by land tenure or economic factors but not by terrain or climate.
- Inhabited areas in developing nations, with purchasable access to local transport, shelter and food supplies.
- Sparsely inhabited areas with no regular mechanized access or local transport, no communications infrastructure and traditional subsistence lifestyles only.
- Areas that are uninhabited because of extreme environments: oceans, poles, some deserts, highest mountain peaks.

In developed nations, new high-skilled adventure tour products typically focus on more and more challenging recreational activities, such as: whitewater kayaking down previously unrun rivers; skiing or snowboarding down previously unrun slopes; ascents of previously unclimbed routes on cliffs and mountains; explorations of previously unvisited caves; or traverses of previously uncrossed terrain. The risk level may be high or extreme, but rescue services are at least potentially available.

Activities such as these are nearly always attempted first by private individuals, sometimes sponsored either for a one-off attempt or as part of professional teams. These are followed typically by other private groups, often from recreational clubs and associations. Once the volume of visitors provides a sufficient market, local outfitters may establish to provide on-site equipment rental and/or guiding services. Adventure tour operations can then use these outfitters, or their own gear and guides, to offer commercial trips. Commonly these are sporadic at first, with departure dates customized to individual groups of clients, and trips running only if fully pre-booked. At this stage, prices typically remain somewhat negotiable,

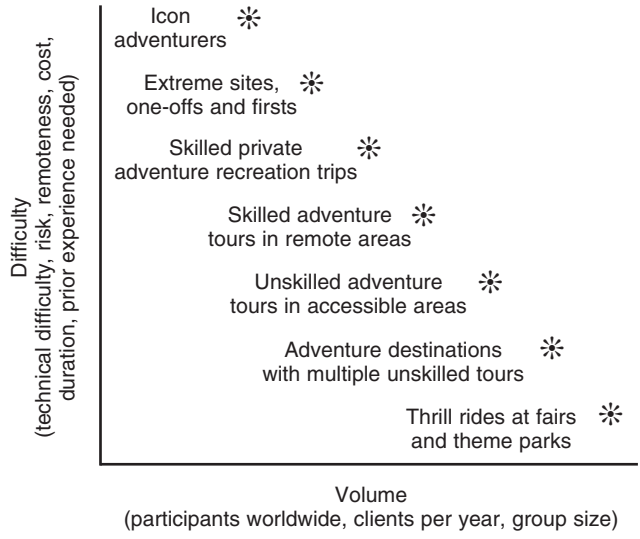

Fig. 1.1. The adventure activity pyramid: volume cf. difficulty.

calculated trip-by-trip depending on numbers. Only once such charters are well-established will operators begin to schedule routine departures with fixed per-client prices.

Inhabited areas in developing nations are visited routinely by local merchants and other domestic travellers, and their first international tourists are often backpackers relying entirely on local facilities: what might be described as the *Lonely Planet*® market. These, however, are – almost by definition – not engaged in high-risk high-skill recreational activities, first because such activities need logistic support, and secondly because they often need access to locally little-used areas, just as in developed nations. As in the latter, therefore, high-skill adventure activities are most often pioneered by private recreational groups, with or without sponsorship.

The first commercial adventure tours in these areas usually are self-supported expeditions, bringing all their own equipment. If these are successful, they may lead to the establishment of local operational bases and hiring of local guides, who then pioneer additional new trips. Sometimes, areas with an established industry in one adventure tourism sector may simply expand to add new activities from existing bases. Trekking and mountaineering outfitters and tour operators in Nepal, for example, branched into whitewater rafting once early descents showed that this activity was both feasible and commercially viable.

In areas occupied by indigenous societies with little link to the rest of the world, almost any travel has a significant adventure element. Worldwide, there are few such societies remaining. There are, however, all possible gradations between complete tribalism and complete urbanization, and there are still many societies where adventure recreation and its associated high-tech equipment are completely unfamiliar. The development of an adventure tourism industry in such areas may be inseparable from other aspects of so-called Westernization.

Most remote in perception and practical effect, if not in geographic distance, are the extreme environments where human life cannot be sustained for long without

technological means to supply oxygen, warmth or water. These include the so-called forbidden landscapes of the Arctic and Antarctic (Splettstoesser *et al*., 2004) and high montane environments above 6000 m, including the so-called dead zone. They also include sections of the world's hyper-arid deserts such as the Rub'al Khali or the Taklamakan, away from oases that form traditional camel-crossing routes. Any human venture into such areas is as a self-supported expedition, and any permanent human base is completely dependent upon continuing resupplies from outside the region. Independent travel is generally not possible since all visitors need expedition support, whether through an official, scientific, sponsored, private or commercial expedition.

Within these areas, the degree of skill and risk depend on the activity involved. To visit the Arctic or Antarctic as a passenger on a cruise liner requires neither skill nor fitness (Splettstoesser *et al*., 2004). To take part in a so-called expedition cruise, with frequent landings by inflatable boats, requires only basic balance and mobility. Multi-day seakayaking tours along the shores of Baffin or Ellesmere Island in the Canadian Arctic are available to any reasonably fit person with some experience in backcountry camping, though prior cold-weather seakayaking experience would certainly be an advantage.

Diving at the edge of polar ice, climbing 8000 m peaks, cross-country skiing in Greenland or the Arctic icecap (North Pole Expeditions, 2005a) or skydiving on to the North Pole (North Pole Expeditions, 2005b) require considerable prior skill and experience so as not to endanger either oneself or other members of the group. Beyond this, trips such as unsupported seakayak journeys in the Antarctic, or ski-mountaineering traverses of the sub-Antarctic South Georgia Island, are too difficult even for experienced commercial clients, and have been achieved only by highly skilled and experienced private groups.

Structure of Adventure Subsectors

Commercial tour products for different adventure activities feature different levels of risks, remoteness and prior skill requirements. For each activity, there are some products aimed at beginners, others at experts. Some adventure activities lend themselves to the design of tour products where clients are essentially passengers, whereas others require active participation. For activities that require active participation, such as kayaking, diving, surfing, ice climbing, horse riding or mountain biking, there are commercial tour products that offer training at basic or advanced level, and there are commercial tour products that take skilled participants to remote areas or icon sites and guide them once they get there.

There are other activities where prior skill is essential, such as heliskiing or boarding, or mountaineering expeditions. Skills must be learned elsewhere before joining a commercial tour. For expedition cruises, tandem parachuting, and many rafting and wildlife watching tours, in contrast, the clients would have no opportunity to exercise any relevant skills in any event, and take part purely as passengers.

For most of the adventure activities covered in this volume, a range of tour products are presented, with a corresponding range of prior skill requirements, risk and remoteness.