

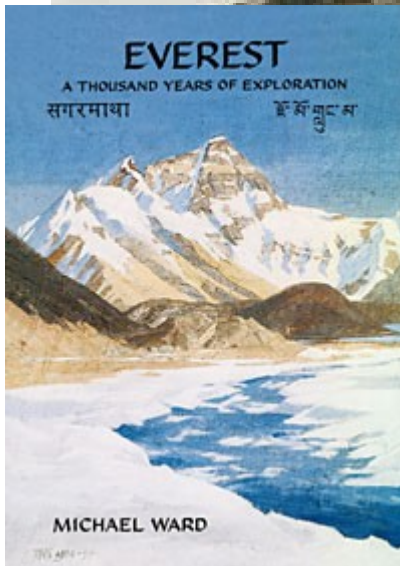
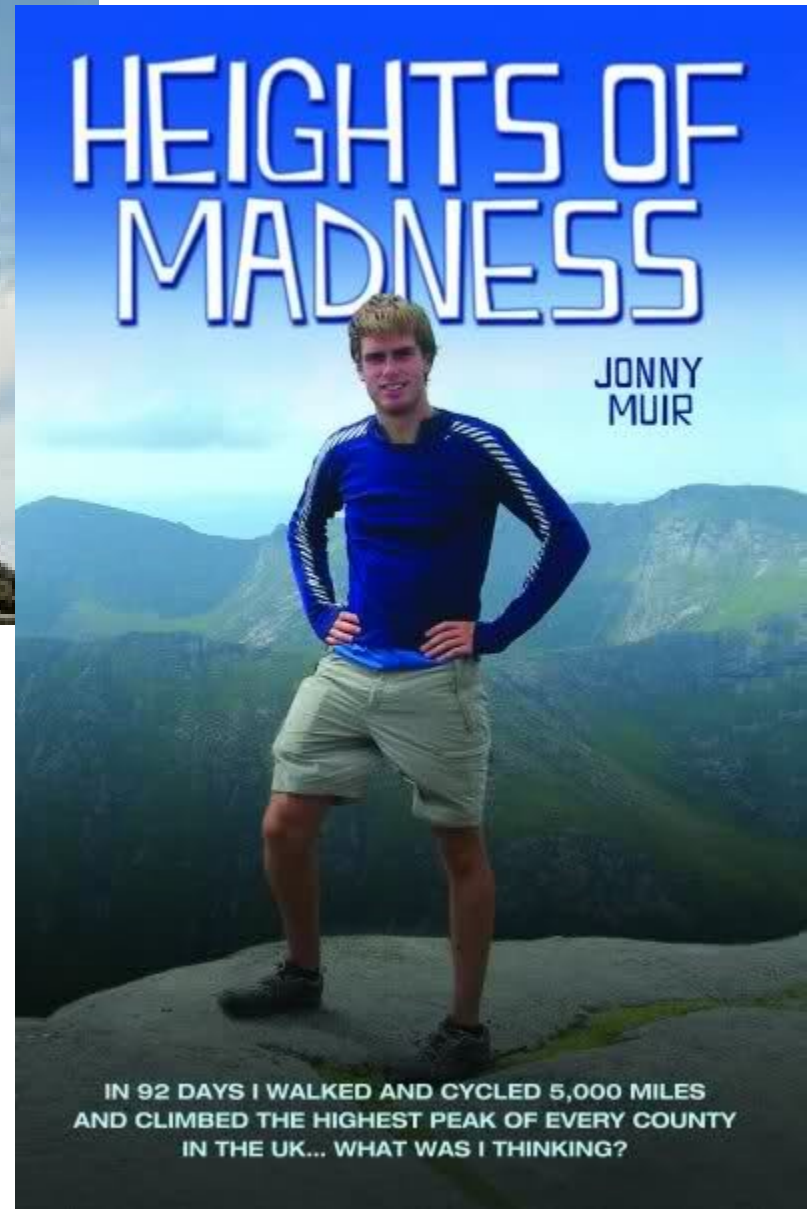
The Adventure Enigma

The Practice(s) of Mountain
Based Adventure Tourists in
Britain

Thematic Connections

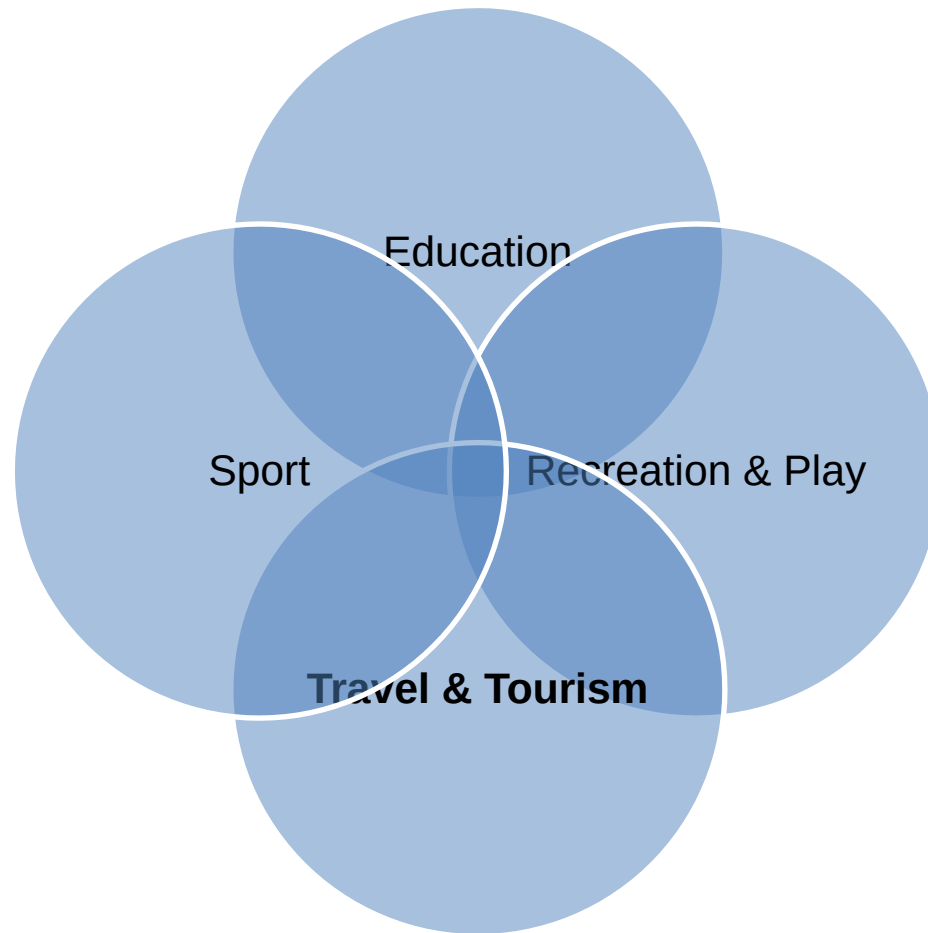
- Half way through the conference:
- - heard presentations on multitude of themes including: habitus, wildness, journeys, education
- - will hear presentations on a multitude more including: marketing, apprenticeships, adventure abroad, landscape appreciation and gender ...
- ... PB to share reflection and research on my extended interest in adventure as a social phenomenon ...

Adventure
as an
enigma?



“The 21st century
notion of adventure is
confused ... Too
often its adventure
with a small ‘a’ –
controlled,
claustrophobic and
costing several
thousands of pounds”
(2009 p. 300)

Adventure Forms



Adventure as Business: Scotland

- 7th Adventure Travel World Summit 2010: Aviemore
- Fort William: Outdoor Capital of the UK
- - Walking: 1.8m trips per year
- - Wildlife watching: 1.1m trips per year
- - Adventure sports: 250 000 trips per year
- - Adventure operators: small, 45% independent, 26% part of national chain(s), the rest = voluntary / charity organisation; local / education authorities; national sport organisation (Page, 2006)
- Niche operators, private and public provision.

Adventure as Business: Wales

- £15.8m EU backed investment: “to develop centres of excellence with the highest standards of facilities that will act as a hub for encouraging more sustainable tourism centred on Wales’ natural environment”
- Tourism Satellite Account for Wales: tourists spent £4.2bn in Wales in 2007.
- Projections for growth in Adventure Tourism and Water Sports Tourism by 2010 = 50% increase in water-sports; 100% mountaineering; 100% white-water rafting and bungee jumping

Adventure as Business: England

- English Adventure tourism reflects these patterns so that activities can include:
- Walking/climbing: mountain walks/treks, long distance trails, rock climbing and mountaineering
- Cycling/biking: cycle touring and mountain biking
- River activities: canoeing, kayaking, rafting and canyoning
- Marine activities: sailing, kayaking, surfing, coasteering and diving
- Wildlife/nature watching: boat and vehicle excursion and walking

Adventure Tourism

- (Jonny) Muir's adventure 'confusion' comes from:
 - - imposition of a *top down* commercial model (tourism)
 - - onto a grassroots *bottom up* model of adventure sports participation (adventure)
 - - into geographically constrained 'wild places'
 - - with competing interests from people
 - - in an increasingly *fluid* and mobile world

Theme of the Presentation

- Social boundaries:
- - what they are
- - how they are maintained
- - how they appear to be more permeable
- - the consequences for the social norms and organisational principles of adventure

A long held
fascination



- Different interests
- Different power relations



Issues in British Mountain Based Adventure Tourism

- Mike Weir, Cumbrian entrepreneur.
- Personality and drive set him against Lake District National Park Planning Authority.
- Took over run down slate mine and developed tourist attraction that included *via ferrata* and small zip wire (2007).
- Hugely popular and successful wanted to expand to 1200m zip from Fleetwith Pike



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**QUALITY ASSURED
VISITOR
ATTRACTION**

Mike Weir's
Honister Slate
Mine
English Lake
District



Issues in British Mountain Based Adventure Tourism

- Lake District attracts tourists with different expectations: adventure comes in different forms – broad (deep) and narrow (shallow).
- Broad = deep, sustained, reflective, low on excitement (e.g. Hill walking)
- Narrow = shallow, short, intense, high on excitement (e.g. Zip-wire)
- Honister building a business on the latter ...

Honister Slate Mines and Adventure Centre (web-site)

- Active tourist attraction:
 - - underground lighted tours
 - - *via ferrata* and zip-wire.
- “Stunning and safe outdoor activity for all the family and all abilities”
 - - Terms and conditions
 - - Downloadable risk assessment
- £20 adult; £15 child; £65 family.

Honister Slate Mines and Adventure Centre

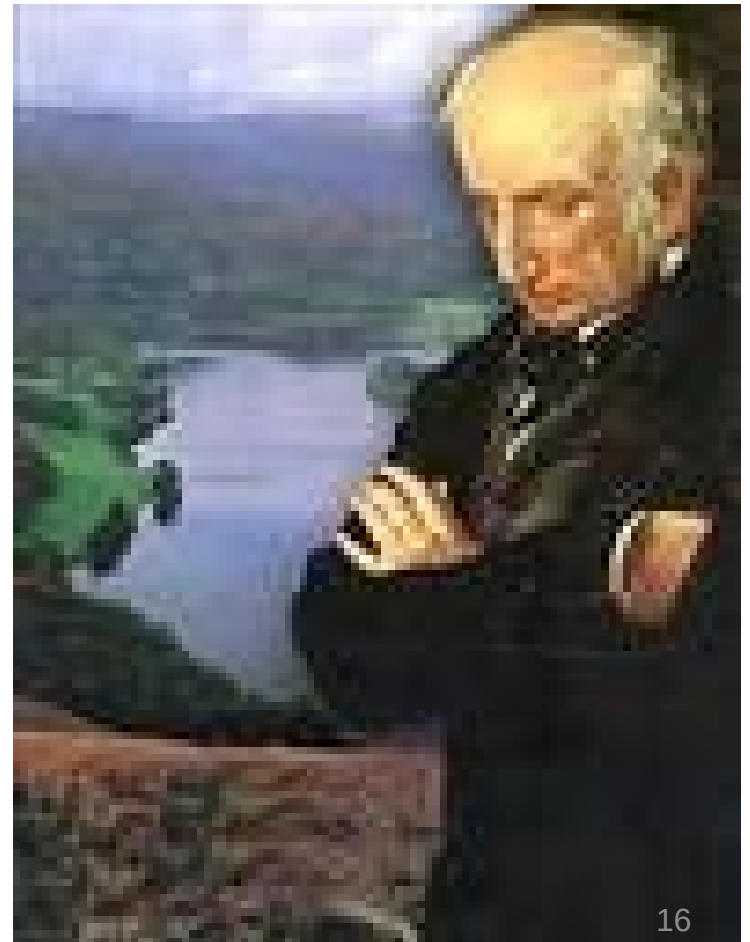
- Natural England, body responsible for preserving the natural environment, fined the business £15,000 for setting up a *via ferrata* without planning permission.
- Fleetwith Pike *via ferrata* application was rejected by the National Park Planning Board 9 votes against, 5 for.

A Clash of Traditions

Mike Weir, Honister

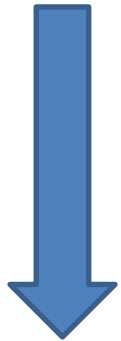


William Wordsworth



Adventure as a search: the inner journey? A lost sense of **community** / belonging?

A long history of mountaineering professionals - a modern pursuit



Mountaineering Communities as inclusive and exclusive



Bauman (2001)

- Bauman argues 'community' = “shared understanding of the natural and tacit kind” ...
- ... There is no conscious motivation or reflection, it just is – there is no distinction ...
- This all changed with industrialisation and its concomitant developments in transportation, and 'informatics' = movement of knowledge independent of people ...
- ... “the boundary between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ could no longer be drawn, let alone sustained” p. 13-14.

Community as a Social Construction

- Loss of 'community' leads to *insecurity* in a modern world where nothing is certain
- Identity becomes 'the most commonly played game in town'
- Search for identity divides and separates ...
- ... Yet we seek 'pegs' to locate our individually experienced fears and anxieties ...
- ... (re)construct barriers and boundaries.

Identity as Discourse

- The power of identity comes from its *reciprocity* ('internal-external dialectic' – Jenkins 1996).
- It is corporeal (adventure is about 'doing'):
 - - speech, action, attitude, gestures
 - - use of materials, projection of feelings
 - - race, ethnicity, gender
 - - size, age, physical appearance

Bauman (2001) and Delanty (2003)

- Political and public discourses promote 'community' as security and solidarity that appeals to emotive desires for identity.
- For many this is an 'imagined reality' (Bauman)
- Community as a sense of belonging that is more than 'place' or shared culture. But ..
- ... Tension between the responsibilities of modern life and our capacity to act autonomously (Delanty) ... adventure tourism?

Adventure Identities

- Participants (we who do adventure) operate a complex series of social enactments commensurate with identity as *inclusive* or *exclusive*.
- Boundaries of social groups are permeable and, because they are social constructs, subject to challenge, contestation, evolution and change.
- Identity in adventure is linked to 'place'....

Place and Identity in Adventure Tourism

- Collister (1984) shows us that place (mountains in this case) is contested. His (elitist) position has a 'power' of authority drawn from his professional status (Guide, instructor, author).
- Collister, R. (1984) Adventure versus the Mountain, Alpine Journal vol. 89 pp. 123-125.

Contested Outdoor Activities?



Participants and Identity

- In adventure identity is linked to:
 - - what you do
 - - where you do it
 - - *what others think* of what you do and where you do it (symbolic capital transfer)
- Example of WALKING.....

Walking as Distinction



Varley (2006, p. 188-190)

- The adventure commodification continuum shows:
- “...the paradoxical relationship between the controlling demands of the marketplace and the essential ideal of the original adventure”
- Shallow adventure = predictable, risk is managed; commodities with a ‘veneer’ of risk.
- Deep adventure = levels of autonomy, risk and uncertainty rise as the ‘saleability’ diminishes.

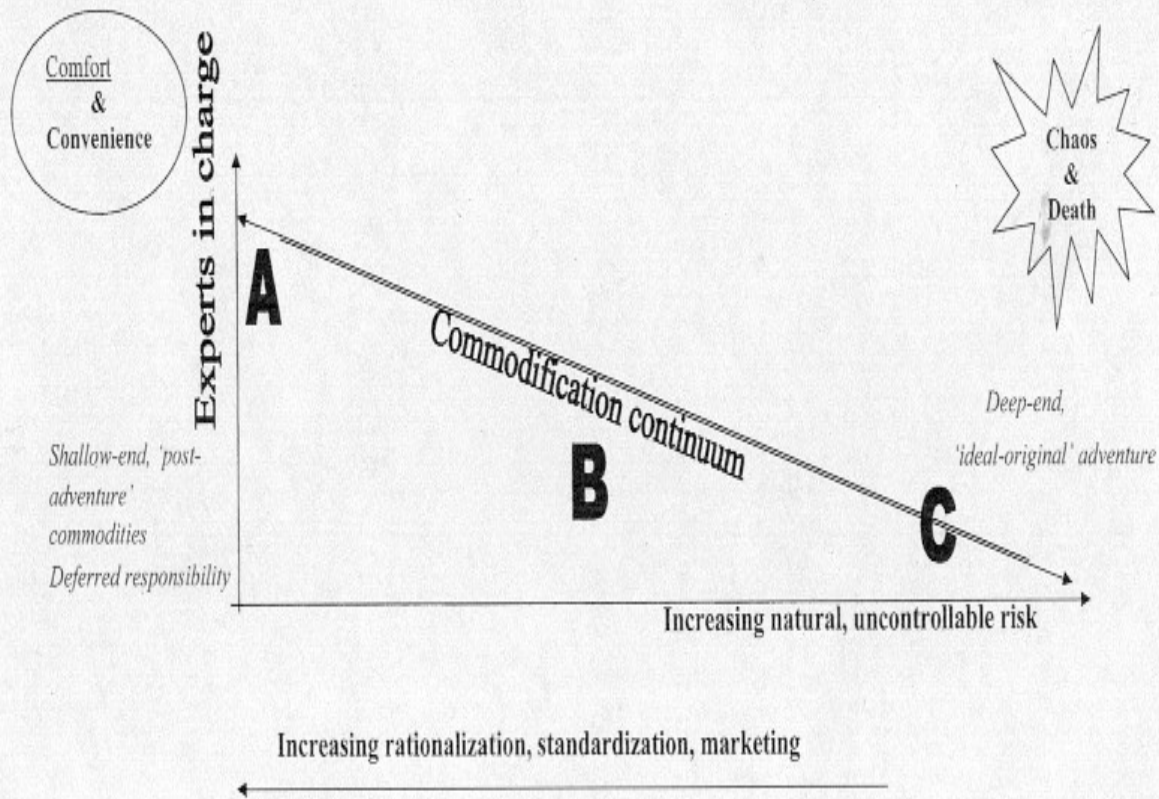


Figure 1 The adventure commodification continuum.

A. Highly saleable; not very adventurous at all: tourist products, staged events, balloon rides, bungee jumps, safari tours etc.

B. The terrain of the outdoor pursuits market: skills courses, guiding, expert led expeditions.

C. Generally too 'deep end' to ever become a product: solo mountaineering, independent expeditions: folk doing it for themselves, backpacking, sea kayaking, accidental survival situations, death by (mis)adventure.

A
A+



Scottish White-water Rafting

A+
B-





B

B+

C-



A – C Being a Mountaineer?

- Participant Identity = social concern
- Discursive strands of history, institutions, guidebooks, manuals, adventure brochures, web-sites and calendars and commensurate identity performance sustain the *frame*.
- (True) Mountaineers relate to this ‘tradition’ - ‘Others’ e.g. tourists, may, or may not.

The Social Battleground

- Sustaining the ‘frame’, i.e. embracing or resisting changes to the tradition = power struggle between **legislators** and **interpreters**.
- Constructing an identity from the social ‘building blocks’ of capital = social distinction e.g. Symbolic capital of a mountaineering ascent.
- Consider the case of ‘mountaineer’

Legislators and Interpreters

- Mountaineers have accepted forms of motility, value safe practice based on experience, value apprenticeships, 'guardians' of wilderness, deep immersion, deep rooted excitement-challenge. Using 'traditional methods'.
- Neo-mountaineers may espouse different values e.g. bright clothing, gregarious rather than solitudinous contemplation, fast ascents, using 'phones and GPS to 'short-cut' skill acquisition, technology 'solutions', a more playful and possibly 'shallower' approach (Lorimer, 2000).

Mountaineers Defending Their Position

- Traditional, rule bound mountaineers defending 'their' field against 'interpretations' from others presumably aspiring to 'be' mountaineers.



Performing an Identity



- The 30 second ‘window’ on Cuillin (silence, awe) and the ‘Whymper pose’. Backed up with...
- ...the reverence people showed, and what they did (or did not) say: “beautiful, beautiful, beautiful”.
- Stance and deportment = learned response, habitus in guides, conformity in clients.





But...

- Adventure tourists ('new' / neo mountaineers) do 'interpret':
- e.g. mountaineering tradition = slow, steady ascent to adequately absorb the views and conserve vital energy.
- 'Tom' liked 'to go hard at hills...heart pumping, sweat gushing' did not like slow movement through mountains.
- 'Tom' is disparaging of those that move slowly in 'contemplation' mode through the mountains.





The rules are
not fixed



Mountaineering Identity?

- Adventure tourism offers a threat to traditional views of what it means to be a mountaineer:
- - traditional, adventure climb, walk, scramble, explore
- - new, climbing walls, zip-wires, bolts, sport climbing, abseiling, bungee jumping
- British wild places bear evidence of the tensions between old and new.

Legislators Resist

- “True mountaineering is under threat: consumers are dragging the mountains down to their own level with oxygen and ladders. It’s time to stop pretending that standards haven’t progressed and start climbing with integrity”, (Bullock, 2011 p. 33).
- Now adventure tourism has ‘diminished’ the ‘7 summits’, ‘true’ mountaineers target the second highest – K2 harder than Everest?

The Tourist Route

- Tourist route = easy and accessible to many, 'distinction' becomes problematic because 'anybody' can do it.
- Tourist routes are the quickest and easiest way of accumulating symbolic capital of ascents; Ben Nevis, Snowdon, [Inaccessible Pinnacle?]...
- ...legislators avoid, interpreters embrace, one would expect, but..

B? The Tourist Route

- Some adventure participants were acutely aware of the label 'tourist' and were proactive in positioning themselves as mountaineers e.g. 'Will': did not want to go to Ben Nevis when "all Scotland beckoned!" 'John': spoke for the group, strongly resented being thought of as *tourists*. ... Can we be independent?
- ... Complexity and contradictions abound!

Oh, what
have you
started?







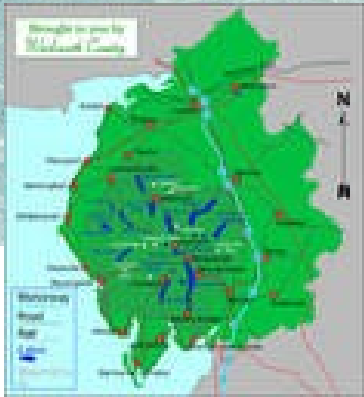
Permeable Boundaries

- Traditional (old) mountaineering uses non-traditional technologies including lap-tops, satellite 'phones, GPS and

The grass
roots
participants ...
But how did
they get to the
sub-Sahara?

Summer 2006

The Climbers' Club
Newsletter





RECOMMENDED ON
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Adventure Tourism and 'Sociations'

- Urry (2000) argues social organisation is being shaped by the 'mobilities' of the twenty-first century.
- 'Scapes' are networks that have re-configured time and space (e.g. Transport, email).
- This has changed our sense of belonging or community and created much more free floating groups.
- 'Sociations': "... relatively safe places for identity testing and the context for learning new skills" (Urry, 2000 p. 143).
- 'Sociations' need social maintenance
- 'Sociations' offer new ways of developing identity

Adventure Tourism as Sociations

- Sociations are (*temporary*) life defining communities.
- Bonded by shared **adventure** experience, common values: opting out means moving on to other life defining identities and purpose.
- ‘Adventure sociations’ (ad-sociations) *bonded* by holistic adventure experience (physical, cognitive, emotional) but

A – C Adventure Tourists and Sociations

- ... Some differences:
- - bonding requires time (days? Weeks?) so 'narrow' adventure does not form ad-sociations.
- - the bonding is finite to time limits of package.
- - ad-sociations are sustained by technologies (e.g. social network sites) and *re-activated* as opportunities occur by re-enactments of the holistic experience.
- - re-activation confirms the bond but does not require lifestyle adjustments.

The example of 'Peter'

- White, male, c. 60 years old
- Mechanic with good practical and problem solving skills, adventure = secondary career.
- 'Early' adventure African truck journeys lasting many weeks.
- Bonding experience leads to re-enactments e.g. Morocco – Malaga 2011.
- This is not 'friends re-united', it's experiential ...

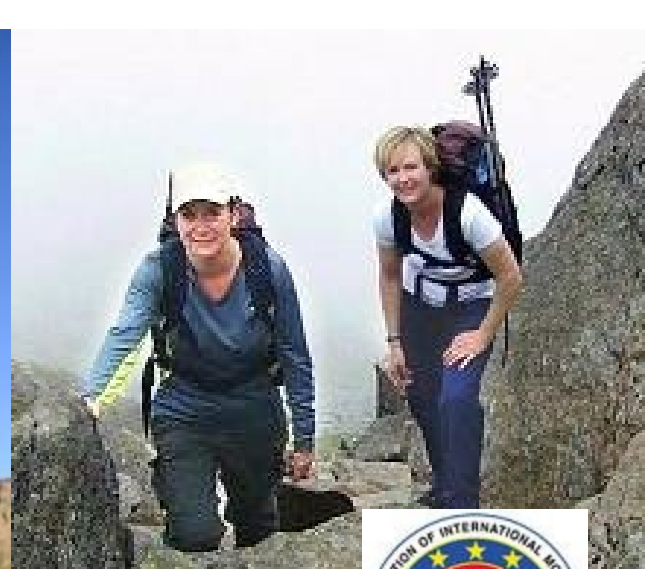
Boundaries and Participation

Old

- Traditional
- Romantic
- Broad
- Deep
- Singular
- Holistic
- Re-enactments
- = ad-sociations

New

- Neo
- Pragmatic
- Narrow
- Shallow
- Multiple
- Physical
- Networked
- = free floating



HAGGIS
ADVENTURES

LOCAL GUIDES, LEGENDARY TRIPS



GREAT
ADVENTURES
UK LTD

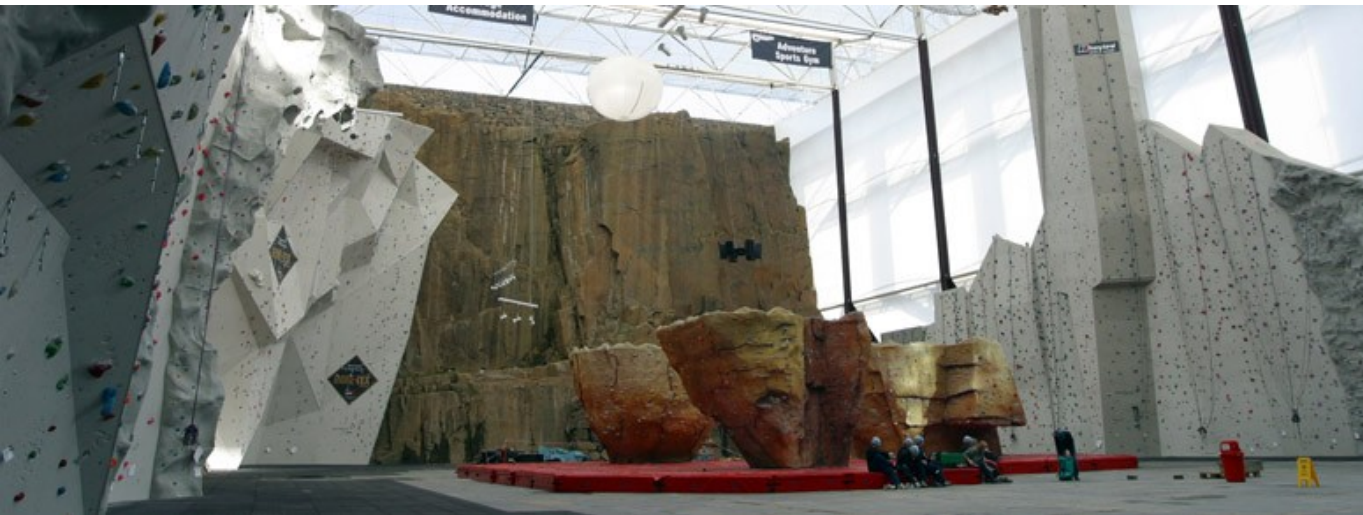


**CHECK OUT
THE BIG
CANYON
ADVENTURE**



The Paradox of Adventure

- “You cannot plan adventures. The best one can do is to let them happen” (Price ‘Adventure by Numbers’ 1978, p. 651)



A – C will always be there!





How much
has
changed?



British Adventure Tourism Industry

- Reflects the complexity created by bringing together 'adventure' and 'tourism'.
- It caters for the needs of 'old' and 'new' participants and ...
- ... In doing so is formulated as diverse and fragmented with a host of 'niche' provision ...
- ... Adventure tourism can not be standardised because of diversity in **people** and the social processes of **identity** construction.

A, B or C? – Adventure as an **Enigma**

