

# ATLAS Creative Tourism Bibliography

Greg Richards



*Lace making in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil (Photo Greg Richards)*

# **ATLAS Creative Tourism Bibliography**

**Greg Richards**

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## **Abstract**

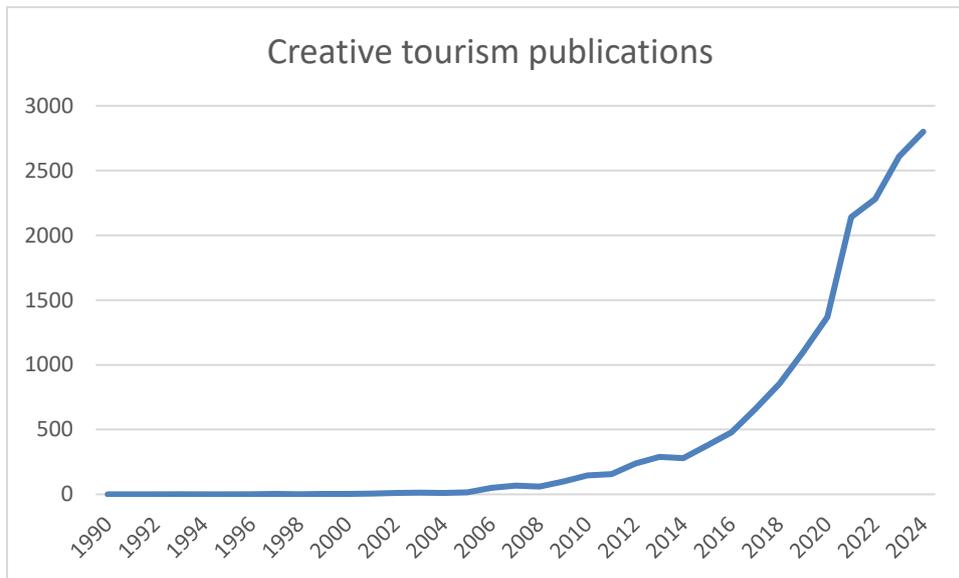
This updated and revised third edition of the ATLAS Creative Tourism Bibliography provides an overview of sources in this rapidly developing field of enquiry. In the 25 years since the creative tourism concept was developed, there has been considerable growth in scholarship, with new directions being developed in terms of theoretical treatment, methodologies and analysis. The latest edition of the Bibliography has benefitted from inputs from the Crocus EU Project (Cultural and Creative Tourism in Rural and Remote Areas) in which ATLAS is a partner. The work of the Crocus team has also helped to extend the range of languages covered by the bibliography and has provided a particular emphasis on creative tourism development in non-urban areas.

## Introduction

The rapid growth of the creative tourism field means that the number of publications and reports dedicated to this subject has also increased significantly in recent years. This bibliography includes a selection of some of the core texts in the field from previous years, and a review of the most recent publications on creative tourism.

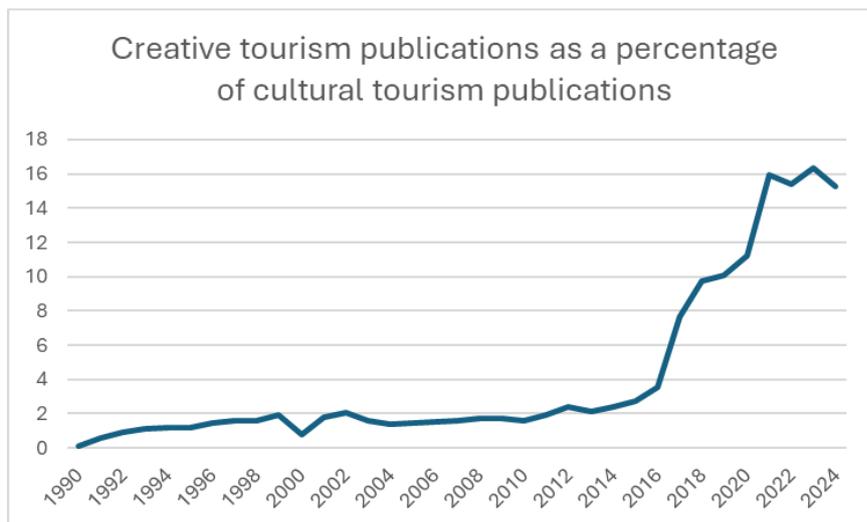
The number and scope of creative tourism publications has grown rapidly in recent years (see figure 1), with exponential growth in the past five years. This has been stimulated by a growing number of edited books and research projects related to creative tourism, such as the CROCUS project.

Figure 1: Creative tourism publications listed in Google Scholar.



The recent rapid growth of creative tourism publications has also seen this field grow as a proportion of all cultural tourism related research, from around 2% to 16% in the past decade.

Figure 2: Creative tourism publications as a proportion of cultural tourism publications



There has also been a significant growth of sources in languages other than English, particularly in Spanish and Portuguese. The need to draw on this growing cultural diversity of creative tourism perspectives is recognized in the current edition of the Creative Tourism Bibliography by the inclusion of sources in different languages. As always, suggestions for new inclusions in the bibliography are always welcome. Please contact Greg Richards: [g.w.richards@tilburguniversity.edu](mailto:g.w.richards@tilburguniversity.edu).

For more background and access to key publications in creative tourism, see <https://www.richardstourism.com/creating-creative-tourism-toolkit>

## **The development of the creative tourism literature**

Creative tourism was first defined as a concept by Richards & Raymond (2000, p. 18), who argued that creative tourism “offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken.”

This original definition encapsulated several key features of the concept. These include the strong link to place, and the idea that the creative content of creative tourism experiences should be characteristic of the location they are undertaken in. The idea of active participation is also important, since there are many passive forms of cultural and creative consumption that are offered to tourists, which provide a relatively superficial creative experience. The idea is also that visitors should develop their creativity in some way through the experience. The need to provide experiences that are characteristic of place also places the onus on the providers to think about the creativity of the place and what elements of this creativity might engage people.

Twenty-five years later, there seems little reason to fundamentally alter this definition. However, the intervening years have produced many different approaches to creative tourism, many of which have moved away from the original conception. The idea of creative tourism as a largely educational experience delivered through courses or workshops has been overtaken by the development of the experience economy. There are now many different modes of creative experience offered to tourists, and tourists themselves have also become more active in the co-creation of their experiences.

The relationship between creative and cultural tourism has also been an area of debate. When we originally formulated the concept, we saw creative tourism in dichotomous terms: it was at the same time an extension of cultural tourism into more active and creative experiences, and an opposition to traditional modes of cultural tourism as a passive form of mass tourism. We argued that many ‘cultural tourists’ were tired of the old models and wanted to try something new. That new experience usually involved personal contact with locals who, as Russo and Richards (2016) argued, had become the new arbiters of ‘authenticity’.

Authenticity was also an area that we tried to avoid in our discussions of creative tourism, given the loaded and multiple meanings of the term. There were some early attempts to link creative tourism and authenticity (for example in the UNESCO definition in 2006 and in Crispin Raymond’s reformulation of the concept in 2007). But

these did not generally stick. This probably reflects the complexity of trying to operationalize 'authentic' creative experiences. Creativity is complex enough!

An enduring aspect of debate is the extent to which creative tourism is actually creative. When looking at the wide range of experiences sold under the umbrella of creative tourism, it is perhaps not surprising that some forms of 'creative tourism' end up providing little creative content or active involvement. In the current bibliography one can find papers linking creative tourism with cemeteries, 'coolness', design, windmills, dams, archaeology, everyday life, new technologies and much more. This highlights one of the reasons why the creative tourism concept has become so popular: it is a very flexible concept. Some might argue that it has become too flexible to be useful as a category of tourism, and they might be right. On the other hand, creative tourism still seems to be used in a narrower sense than 'cultural tourism', which is not a term that many challenge.

The Bibliography reveals many new developments in creative tourism in recent years. One of the most notable of these in the light of the discussion about definition is the appearance of the compound term 'Cultural Creative Tourism' (e.g. Qi-Jie, Li, Lin & Fu-Biao, 2012). This term has gained traction because it reflects a combined policy approach to these two areas in China. There is certainly an argument for combining cultural and creative tourism given that they often overlap in terms of the experiences offered and the tourists who participate. However, in the recent conceptual review produced by the Crocus Project (Richards et al., 2024), we made a conscious decision to retain 'cultural' and 'creative' as separate forms of tourism. This reflects the emphasis of the former on more passive sightseeing tourism and the concentration of the latter on more active creative experiences, but it is also intended to try and retain more categorical clarity. Cultural tourism, after all, accounts for around 40% of all international travel (Richards, 2021c), which already seems general enough. Richards also argues that cultural tourism itself is fragmenting into a series of niches (including creative tourism, gastronomic tourism, religious tourism, etc), so it hardly seems sensible to lump cultural and creative tourism together again.

Another area that has become closely associated with creative tourism in recent years is urban tourism, and particularly the 'new urban tourism' that takes tourists off the beaten track to discover everyday creativity in the city (Richards, 2014). Creative tourism has also been linked to the 'coolness' of urban places (e.g. Chen & Chou, 2019), presumably because visiting creative spaces in the city not only provides opportunities for creative experiences, but also opportunities for social media posts and images for Instagram.

Social media is not surprisingly one of the major areas in which new technologies have been linked to creative tourism, but there are others, such as robots (Demirciftci, 2024), the concept of the 'playful city' (Marques & Borba, 2017) and mobile technologies (e.g. Zhang, Zhang & Shi, 2020). No doubt these connections will be made more often in future.

Some creative tourism destinations have also been particularly active in the development of research in recent years. The CREATOUR Project has produced a wide range of publications on creative tourism in Portugal (Creatour, 2020). Researchers in Iran have also been very productive in the last few years, partly thanks to the efforts of the UNESCO Creative Tourism Development Club. New additions to

the Bibliography over the past 5 years include a dozen contributions from Iran, particularly related to major cities. Indonesia and Thailand have also contributed several new sources to the literature.

There are also signs that creative tourism is beginning to be used as an umbrella concept for spatial development strategies. For example, there are a few studies of 'Creative Tourism Villages' in Indonesia (Kristiana, Brian & Mulyono, 2024; Richards, 2020), and forms of creative tourism have been incorporated into creative clusters in China (OECD, 2014). Such developments are now also being linked to 'creative placemaking' strategies, which involve a more strategic approach to changing the use and meaning of places to improve the experience of users. Placemaking and placeshaping approaches are also being tested in the Crocus Project in rural and remote areas of the EU (Halkier, James et al., 2025).

The growth of the creative tourism literature has also stimulated an increase in literature reviews and bibliographic studies of the field. In the current bibliography there are more than 15 papers providing an analysis of the literature. A meta 'review of reviews' was also a feature of the literature review for the Crocus Project, covering cultural and creative tourism in rural and remote areas (Richards et al., 2025).

One notable area in which there has been relatively little research is on critical perspectives on creative tourism. An early critique by Long and Morpeth (2012) linked the creative tourism concept to the creative industries and Korstanje (2015) provided a more global critique of creative development.

This third edition of the Creative Tourism Bibliography contains some 400 references, compared with around 300 in the first edition published in 2021, underlining the rapid growth of the field.

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