

*Vacationland: Tourism and Environment in the Colorado High Country.* By William Philpott. Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2013. 488 pp.; \$39.95.

In *Vacationland: Tourism and the Environment in the Colorado High Country*, William Philpott argues that tourism has manufactured a particular type of environment in Colorado's high country which has shaped Coloradans and Americans interact with their surroundings. Through five chronological chapters, Philpott explores a range of topics that include: the rise of tourist hotspots like Vail and Aspen, the shift from viewing the environment as a source of commodities to the environment as a commodity itself, the connections between suburbanness and vacationland, and the development of American attitudes during and after the environmental movement of the 1970s. Philpott draws most heavily on advertisements, newspaper articles, correspondence, federal and state government agency reports, local organization reports, and images to illustrate how pervasive an engineered vision of the environment has been in defining Colorado's status as a vacationland to Americans.

One of the highlights of Philpott's work is its wide appeal. Academics and popular readers alike will find a relatable and informative discussion of environmental history in *Vacationland*. Many residents of the state can learn a thing or two about Colorado's history while environmental historians can draw further on Philpott's ideas about the rise of the environment as a commodity. This book raises important questions of what historical interaction between humans and their environment will mean for future attitudes about their natural surroundings, and ultimately, for how the environment looks and functions.

The text itself moves seamlessly between illustrations of how tourism and the environment have each shaped the other. For instance, Philpott tells the stories of Aspen and Vail's rise to tourist Mecca. He argues that this rise was a result of beautiful mountain ranges frequently replenished with fresh snow powder during the winter and splashed with sunshine during the summer. But the popularity of skiing, hiking, fishing, and other outdoor activities motivated boosters and advertisers to manage the environment, thus shaping it to better fit tourists' expectations and needs. In one example, Philpott points out how ski resort owners have engineered the hillsides by cutting down trees and planting new ones in order to create a ski run that seems natural, but is really the result of a planning committee.

Philpott furthers this notion of human agency in determining what is natural by explaining that the planners of Interstate-70, the main roadway through the mountains, had to consider environmental factors. The existence of I-70, however, has affected the environment's appearance and natural routes of travel. With such examples, and building on a massive amount of research, Philpott blends a narrative of environmental history with an argument that astutely anticipates and addresses opposition or questions.

Though Philpott's book will generally appeal to historians and popular audiences, each audience may take issue with a few details. For one, Philpott lumped Coloradans together in some instances while showing clear divisions in others. He describes how mountain-dwellers during the 1950s felt about tourism: "But that was exactly the dream that captivated people living along each route: that their lonely two-lane road might magically become a high-speed tourist conduit, erasing the physical and psychological barriers that had scared so many flatlanders away" (Philpott, 110). Though he cites several sources in which mountain-dwelling citizens describe their desire for increased tourism, he may be overstating the case. There were often ranchers and mountain men in the pre- and post-World War II eras that preferred not to have development in their areas, their

attitudes anticipating those of the anti-development supporters in the 1970s. Outside this instance, Philpott is very careful about defining his terms.

Readers might also notice Philpott's heavy reliance on the skiing industry to illustrate his argument. In reading a book about tourism in Colorado's high country, several outdoor activities like hiking, river rafting, and fishing have as much prominence in the industry as skiing but Philpott discusses them infrequently. For his purposes, and as his research demonstrates, it was the skiing industry that best demonstrated the impact on Coloradans' decisions regarding highway routes and resort locations. Those readers looking for a book that addresses other tourist activities in detail will have to supplement with other publications.

Finally, Philpott's use of advertisements may raise questions from some readers regarding the effectiveness of advertising versus that of word-of-mouth. One of the key concepts in marketing is that the best advertisement comes from people recommending a product. For Philpott, ads for recreational activities are the key part of drawing Americans to Colorado for tourism. While he offers a well-supported argument of how Colorado advertisements—particularly in the 1950s and 1960s—appealed to American suburban ideals, he does not offer much support that it was *mainly* these ads that drew consumers rather than recommendations from their friends. Explaining the power of word-of-mouth would lend further credence to Philpott's already strong analysis.

Though some readers might quibble about parts of Philpott's book, it is a well-argued, well-written work that builds on a growing historiography discussing environment and tourism. Texts such as Roderick Frazier Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Mark David Spence's *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, Connie Chiang's *Shaping the Shoreline*, Annie Gilbert Coleman's *Ski Style*, Hal Rothman's *Devil's Bargains*, Earl Pomeroy's *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America*, and collections of essays by prominent environmental historians such as *Reopening the American West*—just to name a few—all examine how tourism affects Americans' perceptions of the environment.

Much like its predecessors, Philpott's environmental history emphasizes the complication of humans' relationship with the environment. Many people have direct relationships with the environment, but what they expect to gain from it shapes their interactions with it, and thus how the environment appears and functions. Philpott adds to existing knowledge about Colorado's ski industry and enlightens the reader as to what tourism has meant in the past and might mean in the future for the human-environment dynamic. He also prompts readers to consider how their interactions with the environment might be unintentionally supporting its commodification. Philpott has ushered in a new way of analyzing tourism and the environment, opening the door for future scholars to study such interactions in other parts of the nation and the world. Building off of Philpott's work, scholars might further explore which environments humans commodify, why, and what that commodification might mean for the future function of the environment—the function of their ecosystems as well as their function within societies that purchase every experience, even the ones that perhaps, should be free.

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