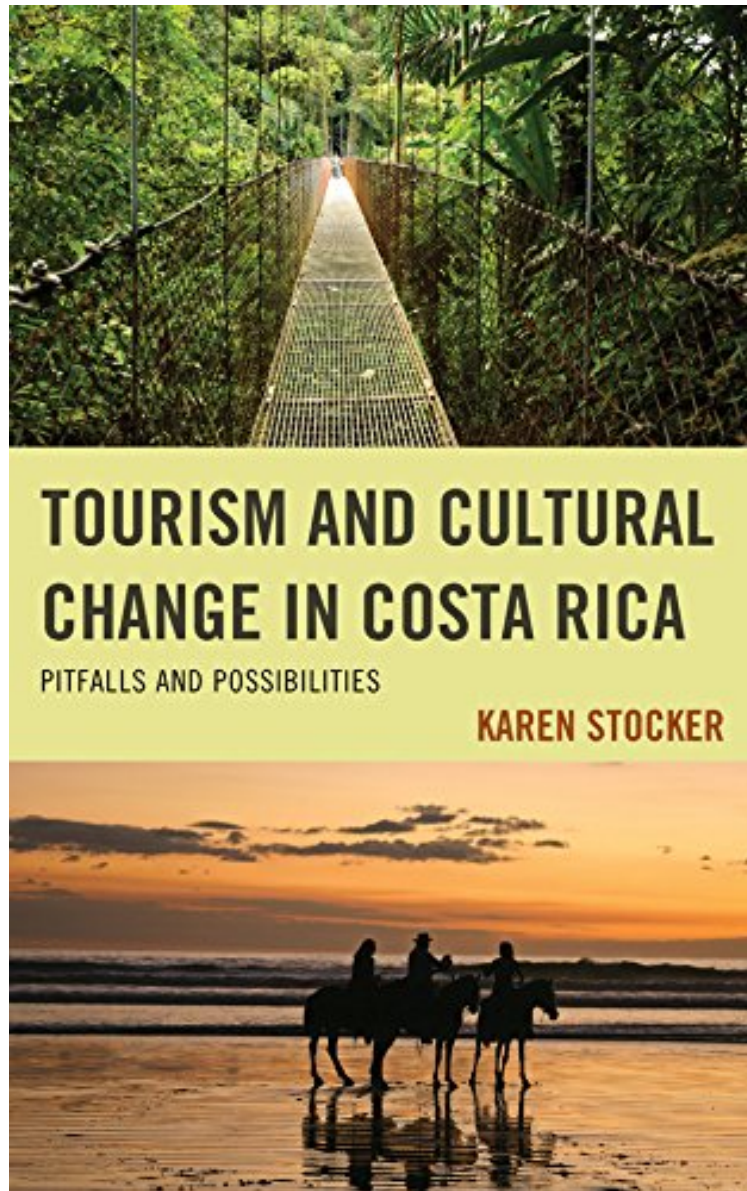


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# Tourism and Cultural Change in Costa Rica: Pitfalls and Possibilities

*Karen Stocker*

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**Karen Stocker : Tourism and Cultural Change in Costa Rica: Pitfalls and Possibilities** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Tourism and Cultural Change in Costa Rica: Pitfalls and Possibilities:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating read based on extensive research  
By Sara ARC Clark  
Stocker pours her decades of research in Costa Rica into this fascinating and educative read. Clear writing with many examples from participants makes this approachable for the academic and non-academic audience alike. She covers changes as seen by Costa Rican born locals, expats, tourists, and everyone in between in four different settings: a mostly Costa Rican-owned beach town, a mostly foreign-owned beach town, a Chorotega reservation town, and a mountain town now known for eco- and adventure tourism. I recommend this book for anyone who operates in the tourism industry (particularly if you care about local impacts), lives in Costa Rica, wants to live in Costa Rica, or does research on a related topic.

This book examines the consequences positive, negative, and otherwise of tourism in Costa Rica. Based on ethnographic research and interviews with tourists, tour operators, tourists-turned-settlers, and locals living in tourist destinations, this book brings together these varied perspectives with the aim of presenting forms of tourism beneficial to all parties. To examine both pitfalls and positive outcomes of tourism, it compares modes of tourism in destinations that are locally owned and foreign owned, ecotourism destinations, beach tourism, adventure tourism sites, and agrotourism projects. Furthermore, the author draws from two decades of research in two distinct communities to trace the ways in which the development of tourism in one community provided the springboard for changing gender roles and new opportunities for women, and, in the other, how the promise of tourism has spurred a cultural revitalization and positive change in Indigenous identity. Interviews with three generations of women in one tourist destination show generational changes in perspectives on tourism, and interviews covering the same time span show how in an Indigenous reservation poised to enter the heritage tourism industry, tourism offers a positive alternative to exploitative forms of labor and the stigma once associated with Indigeneity in that region. Interviews with locals in all four sites reveal the ways in which tourism carried out conscientiously would benefit them. These, juxtaposed with interviews of tourists regarding what they seek through tourism, offer a means of designing a mutually beneficial form of tourism. In sum, this book puts into conversation the varied views of those positioned differently within the realm of tourism in order to inform tourists and foreign land owners as to how they might glean the advantages that such an experience may bring to the traveler, while also playing up the benefits of these endeavors to local communities, and minimizing the potential damage these practices may cause.

Based on nearly two decades of field research in Costa Rica, Karen Stocker explores a range of tourism projects in that country from indigenous attempts to brand their unique cultural traditions, to eco-tourism, to resorts appealing to both Costa Rican clientele and international tourists. Stocker provides a much more nuanced tourism analysis than most studies. She navigates the complexities of both the benefits (achieved and potential) vs. the negative impacts of tourism and shows the multiplex ways in which the providers and consumers respond to these complexities. She concludes by offering recommendations by which the various participants might practice a responsible tourism. (Karl H. Schwerin, The University of New Mexico, PhD) Here is a fascinating, unpredictable, and deeply honest story about the tourism industry in Costa Rica. Building on two decades of ethnographic research and hundreds of interviews with tourists, locals, business owners, and expats, Stocker shares compelling and often surprising stories of how tourism has both delivered and disappointed on many promises. She has a talent for seeing all sides and helping us see them too. The pages come alive with the voices and views of real people who have real stakes in Costa Rican tourism. The result is the most balanced and insightful anthropology of tourism I've seen. (Amanda Stronza, Texas A&M University) This excellent book provides a multi-dimensional assessment of the impacts positive and negative, subtle and shocking of tourism in Costa Rica. Based on in-depth interviews and years of personal observations in Costa Rica, Karen Stocker weaves a rich and complex mosaic of how both hosts and guests are experiencing the tidal wave of tourism that has hit Costa Rica over the last quarter century. Stocker puts a human face on international tourism, building her analysis on the voices and views of Costa Ricans from indigenous and rural poor to workers, youth, and elite. She also puts a face on outsiders: long time foreign residents, newer arrivals, and various types of tourists, from eco- to adventure to sun-and-sand. (Martha Honey, Co-founder of the Center for Responsible Travel) *Tourism and Cultural Change in Costa Rica: Pitfalls and Possibilities* examines the consequences positive, negative, and otherwise of tourism in four different sites in Costa Rica. Based on ethnographic research and interviews with tourists, tour operators, tourists-turned-settlers, and locals living in tourist destinations, this book seeks to put in conversation with one another these varied perspectives with the aim of presenting forms of tourism beneficial to all parties. About the Author Karen Stocker is assistant professor of anthropology at California State University, Fullerton. Her publications include *Historias Matambugueas* (1995) and "I Won't Stay Indian, I'll Keep Studying": Race, Place, and Discrimination in a Costa Rican High School (2005).