

The complex relationship between tourism and climate change has featured in a number of *WHATT* theme issues since the journal's inception. In 2009, Anthony Clayton and Carolyn Hayle considered the implications of climate change for the Caribbean travel and tourism industry (v1, n3), and in 2012, Maximiliano Korstanje and Babu George focused on the extent to which sustainable tourism can help to mitigate the impact of global warming (v4, n4). I am delighted to welcome back for the third time as a Theme Editor, Vikneswaran Nair who together with Badaruddin Mohamed and Toney Thomas and their team of contributors investigate the latest work and provide a set of guidelines to facilitate adaptation by tourism businesses. The aim here is to consider ways of mitigating the impact of tourism activity on the environment and I should like to thank them for their significant contribution to this challenge.

Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT) aims to make a practical and theoretical contribution to hospitality and tourism development, and we seek to do this by using a key question to focus attention on an industry issue. If you would like to contribute to our work by serving as a *WHATT* theme editor, do please contact me.

Richard Teare
Managing Editor, WHATT

How can the tourism industry respond to the global challenges arising from climate change and environmental degradation?

The international tourism industry is one of the world's largest industries and plays an important role in the climate change agenda. Climate is a key resource for tourism, and the industry is highly sensitive to the impacts of climate change and global warming, many elements of which are already being felt today. In this context, the theme issue explores a critical question: *How can the tourism industry respond to the global challenges arising from climate change and environmental degradation?*

Four research questions are analyzed in this theme issue. They are:

- RQ1.* How vulnerable is the tourism industry to climate change and environmental degradation?
- RQ2.* How can we innovatively encourage tourists to consider opting for environmentally-friendly activities that reduce their carbon footprint as well as contribute to the preservation of the natural environment and cultural heritage?
- RQ3.* What are the practical tools that can be used by tourism policymakers and managers to foster the sustainable growth of the industry that will mitigate the impact on the environment? and
- RQ4.* Which policies encourage truly sustainable tourism as reflected by the quadruple bottom line of environmental, social, economic and climate responsiveness?

The issue contains articles based on case studies from Malaysia, Canada and New Zealand. As the focus here is to obtain an overview of the interrelationships between

tourism and climate change, general review articles also help to strengthen our understanding of current and on-going research in this area.

In conclusion, climate is a key resource for tourism as the industry is highly sensitive to the impacts of climate change and global warming. Building knowledge and understanding the transformation that the tourism industry needs to cope with climate change is critical if the industry is able to handle unpredictable weather-related events in future.

Vikneswaran Nair

*School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts, Taylor's University,
Subang Jaya, Malaysia*

Badaruddin Mohamed

*School of Housing, Building and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Minden,
Malaysia, and*

Toney K. Thomas

*School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts, Taylor's University, Subang
Jaya, Malaysia*

About the authors

Vikneswaran Nair is a Professor at the School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts, Taylor's University, Malaysia. He has a PhD in systems engineering (ecotourism systems) and more than twenty years' of research experience in the field of sustainable tourism and environmental management. An award-winning researcher and consultant with extensive publications to his credit, he received the Outstanding Young Malaysian of the Year Award in 2006 and 2009. He is currently Vice President of the Malaysian Ecotourism Association and is leading one of the biggest research grants awarded to a private university. The study is measuring the health of rural tourism destinations in Malaysia in terms of responsible tourism and carrying capacity. Vikneswaran Nair is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: vicky.nair@taylors.edu.my

Badaruddin Mohamed is a Professor in Tourism Planning at the School of Housing, Building and Planning (HBP), Universiti Sains Malaysia. He received his PhD and MSc in tourism planning and development from Rikkyo University, Tokyo, Japan. He is a seasoned researcher and consultant with numerous publications, and he has supervised many international PhD students to successful completion.

Toney K. Thomas is an Associate Professor at the School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts, Taylor's University, Malaysia. He is also the Deputy Dean of the Tourism, Events and Recreation Department of the School. His research expertise is on destination benchmarking, destination development, sustainable tourism development and tourism impact studies.