

Geotourism

Hi, and thanks to Sue and Verity for the opportunity (and reminder) to contribute towards this TAG article. I've recently accepted the role of Chair Geotourism Standing Committee, so here is a little about me by way of introduction.

I was born and raised in Darwin and have spent extensive time in Alice Springs, Roxby Downs and the Adelaide Hills. I now reside in Darwin with my family and work for the NT government within the Geological Survey as the manager of Geoscience Business Systems.

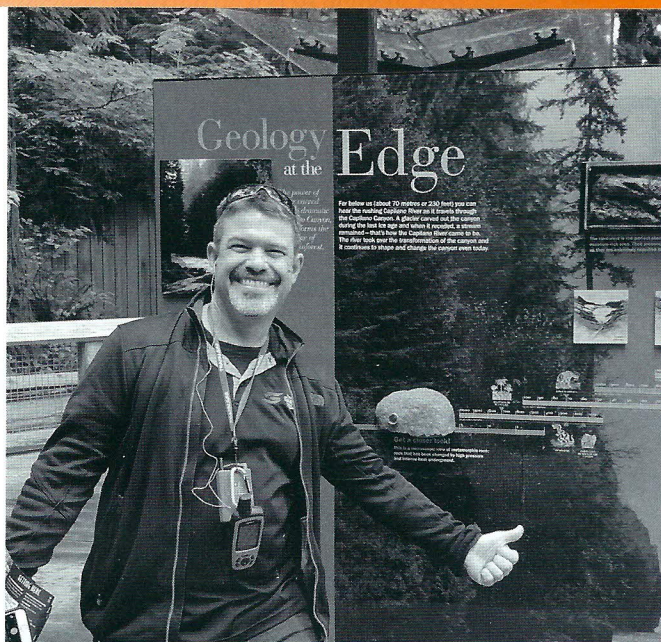
I have held numerous geographical information systems (GIS) and information management and technology (ICT) roles during my career in both government and private enterprise and am grateful for the skills, experiences and knowledge gained during my time with those organisations. My initial Bachelor of Science provided a good grounding in GIS (and the occasional Earth Science courses I completed), and the Master of Business and Technology provided additional business and ICT skills. I have learned and developed other skills on the job as they've been needed.

I have been fortunate to work with BHP in two different roles at Olympic Dam, in both the SA and NT Geological Surveys, several NT government departments, and to have learned 'by osmosis' from working with a multitude of skilled professionals in the geoscience, surveying, engineering and information and communications technology disciplines. I count myself fortunate that I have been able to enjoy such a diverse career.

I enjoy spending time with the family, and fill the rest of my time with playing hockey, coaching junior hockey or driving my kids to hockey! Whatever time is left is usually spent reading, studying or arguing with the family what will be watched on Netflix.

In the role of Chair, I plan to coordinate and facilitate information and resource sharing that promotes and encourages the good work happening around the nation regarding geotourism activities. I became involved in geotourism around three years ago after following the breadcrumbs of a personal interest in the NT and my interest grew in line with what I discovered and learned. I'm now hooked, and committed to helping progress geotourism in Australia and excited by the possibilities, particularly in Northern Australia and the Central Corridor (SA-NT). I built and released an app outlining geotourism opportunities, challenges and potential options for the NT in March 2019, which you can find at <https://arcg.is/15GDyq>.

I have also just returned from a family holiday from Canada and Singapore and had a great – and much needed – month-long break. The family and I saw incredible sites and had amazing experiences in British Columbia and Québec. It certainly got me thinking about the similarities and differences between the two countries, and how we may preserve, manage and promote our natural assets. Singapore – with a similar climate to Darwin – also had some interesting things to consider, particularly with respect to technology. The opportunity to learn through 'tourist eyes' was a valuable experience and will be reflected on over the next few months as I sift through my notes and photos (of which there are a few...).



Mark at the Capilano Suspension Bridge Park, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Image courtesy Mark Asendorf

Darwin is currently enjoying a nice and prolonged dry season – the first in a while – and I appreciate the opportunity to head out and explore in relative comfort. Darwin, like other towns in the Northern part of Australia, see the influx of the grey nomads along with other age groups as they escape the colder climates to enjoy the balmy days and cooler nights we enjoy at this time of year. We also have the usual influx of international visitors, and we welcome them and their stories, experiences and the economic contribution they make. Territorians like nothing better than a good yarn, good company and a cold beer. We are also blessed with a lot of fantastic country. Those that come here never forget the experience.

The 2015 white paper about developing Northern Australia outlined some of the opportunities and challenges, an exploration of the current state, and some of the options and choices that could improve the overall prosperity of the region. We are now starting to see some of the ideas and concepts becoming reality, with significant expenditure on improving transport infrastructure, world-class resource and agricultural projects, and the development of tourism-related infrastructure and services. Other socially focused outcomes are also being realised.

It is this future orientation that is of interest and of critical importance. I view my new role as having the opportunity to contribute and promote the sustainable development and growth of the geotourism industry in Australia. Like the rollercoasters on Sentosa Island in Singapore, I suspect the ride will be a little bumpy, and sometimes a little scary, but one hell of a rush!

MARK ASENDORF

Chair, Geotourism Standing Committee