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## Reseña Bibliográfica

**Prats, M.A., Merino, F. (2024): Blue Flag Beaches. Economic Growth, Tourism and Sustainable Management, Routledge. London and New York, 262 p. ISBN 978-1-032-34734-9.**

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The book *Blue Flag Beaches. Economic Growth, Tourism and Sustainable Management*, published by Routledge, within the series *Earthscan Studies in Natural Resource Management*, edited by María A. Prats and Fernando Merino is a step forward in the tourism knowledge of relevant aspects such as sustainability, environment and tourism growth, especially with regard to destinations as highly demanded as sun and beach destinations.

The starting point of this analysis is the importance of ecolabels and their economic and environmental impact on tourist destinations. Specifically, it focuses on the study of the blue flag program, as an eco-label promoted for 35 years by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE, Foundation for Environmental Education) currently present in 50 countries on 5 continents. Blue flags are awarded or not, annually, under rigorous selection criteria, publicly known, which ensure the quality of the selected beaches and are a guarantee for tourists who demand these destinations, which are backed by this reputable international brand.

It is divided into three parts. The first, supported by chapters 1 and 2, refers to the beginning of the creation of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), the development of the Blue Flag program and the criteria established for its recognition. The second, which corresponds to chapters 3 to 7, analyzes the state of the art of academic research on Blue Flags and their economic, social and environmental effects on the destinations that obtain them and their relationship with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As well as an analysis of the extension of the Blue Flag program in Europe and Latin America. Finally, a third part, which runs from chapters 8 to 19, analyzes 12 case studies from different countries that provide substantial insight into the development of this program in different continents.

Thus, for the European case, in chapter 8, the authors review the studies carried out for Spain on the relationship between Blue Flags and their economic impact on destinations. They also analyze the impact on economic development and welfare of blue flags in the destinations of the Valencian Community, which is the tourist destination with the highest number of blue flags in this country. Chapter 9 studies, in the case of Greece, the relationship of blue flags with the protection of environmental resources at the destination and, specifically, the protection of *Oceanic Poseidonia* for the conservation of the Mediterranean Sea, which offers important benefits to coastal areas. Chapter 10 compares 13 French tourist destinations, using an efficiency measurement model, in which the number of employees,

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available rooms and the number of blue flags of the destinations are considered as inputs, and tourist arrivals and taxes collected from tourism as outputs. In chapter 11, the authors present a dynamic panel model for the Italian case, trying to measure the influence on per capita income of whether the destination has a blue flag or not, using a dummy variable with values 1 or 0. The result concludes that the blue flag variable is significant and positive and therefore, it does influence per capita income in Italian tourist destinations. Chapter 12 analyzes the influence of the Blue Flag program on tourism and environmental development on the islands of Croatia, and specifically, conducts a case study for the island of Krk, the most important and most visited by tourists in this country. Finally, Chapter 13 studies the impact of Blue Flags in Turkey, a destination with a recent development of coastal tourism. In this country, its incorporation into the Blue Flag program has been of great importance. Specifically, the province of Antalya is the one that has achieved the most blue flags on beaches in that country. Turkey's incorporation into this program has been a great advantage for the development of tourism and the local economy, providing new employment opportunities.

Switching continent, Chapter 14 analyzes the case of South Africa. South Africa was the first country outside Europe to join the program 20 years ago. The authors highlight how its incorporation into the Blue Flag program has promoted at all levels of government (national, provincial and local) improvements in environmental management, safety, education and water quality in coastal areas, leading to sustainable growth in coastal tourism.

Regarding the American continent, chapters 15, 16 and 17 present the cases of Canada, Mexico and Brazil, respectively. With reference to Canada, the authors highlight the importance of recreational tourism, especially in the province of Ontario. Highlighting the opportunities offered to tourist destinations by the blue flags, especially in this post-covid stage, it helps to develop green strategies and the fulfillment of commitments to achieve the SDGs. For the Mexican case, the authors, from a social and environmental perspective, given the complexity of the Mexican case, propose the need to improve including the cultural and social heritage of coastal areas. In the case of Brazil, the authors highlight the Orla project that was implemented in 2004 with the objective of articulating public policies in coastal areas to promote economic development together with environmental care and respect for cultural traditions. In 2006, the blue flag program was also implemented in Brazil, which has worked in conjunction with the Orla project, as it has many interrelationships. For example, the possibility of obtaining blue flags is an incentive for destinations to join the Orla project.

Finally, the last two chapters, 18 and 19 raise cases from the Asian continent, India and Japan, respectively. India's incorporation into the BF (Blue Flags) program is relatively recent, 2018. This country serves as an example for other countries where coastal tourism development is incipient, but offers new opportunities for economic and social development of coastal destinations such as the participation of women and the development of nearby local communities from the perspective of eco-tourism. As far as Japan is concerned, this is an example in a country where the implementation of this program has little presence and where BF certification depends, from 2022, on JARTA (Japan Alliance of Responsible Travel Agencies).

In summary, this book is a reference for the analysis of the sustainable growth of coastal tourism in any beach destination in the world. It is of interest both for managers and authorities involved in coastal tourism and for tourism students and researchers (geographers, economists, sociologists...) who develop their analysis in the sustainable development of tourism. The beneficial impact of this program on the tourist destinations

presented serve as an example of the high maintenance of ecological standards for both consolidated destinations and developing destinations in which very important synergies are established between all the agents involved.

The book is the result of the collective work of 49 authors from 28 institutions in 16 countries, which guarantees an accredited and global vision on this subject. It is, without a doubt, highly recommended reading due to its interest and the rigorous selection by the editors of the aspects dealt with on the development of the BF program and the quality of the chapters written by the different authors.