

CHILKOOT: AN ADVENTURE IN ECOTOURISM.

BY ALLAN INGELSON, MICHAEL MAHONY AND ROBERT SCACE. JOINTLY PUBLISHED BY UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY PRESS & UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA PRESS, 2001, 246 PP. PAPERBACK (\$24.95) & HARDBACK (\$45). ISBN: 1889963542

Reviewed by Robert King

Bureau of Land Management, Anchorage

Chilkoot: An Adventure in Ecotourism is a delightful book. What prompted the authors to write it was the lack of a detailed illustrated guide to the Chilkoot Trail. This book nicely fills that need, but it also goes beyond to offer the reader a lot more. It chronicles the current and past use of the 33-mile-long historic Chilkoot Trail that begins at tidewater in Southeastern Alaska near Skagway, and climbs northward through the Coastal Range Mountains into Canada. Furthermore, it also provides a good understanding of how this beautiful part of the world is being managed successfully today, both for its history and for the enjoyment of visitors to the region.

So what is the Chilkoot Trail and why is it important? During the frenzied days of the Klondike Gold Rush of the late 19th century, this trail became forever linked to the hardships and adventures of the thousands of stamperders who traveled to the Klondike during 1897-98. Dramatic photographs and written accounts made the Chilkoot Trail widely known at the time, but the end of the gold rush period also brought a steep decline in its use. This book helps explain that history as well as more recent changes related to ecotourism. My first visit to the trail was in 1979 as part of a team to document the trail itself and the archaeological remains along it. Thus, I was immediately interested in the history portions of this book which alone are quite interesting and enjoyable. But I also liked the focus on ecotourism and trail management issues.

The authors divide their work into three parts. The first includes a good discussion of ecotourism in general, and how that approach enhances the enjoyment of traveling the Chilkoot Trail today, both in summer and winter. The authors see ecotourism as a multifaceted concept. Foremost, it involves people developing a more pronounced environmental consciousness and appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage of the area. Also, successful ecotourism is linked to the use of various management strategies to maintain the integrity of the area. And in the case of the Chilkoot Trail, the governments of

two countries and their respective park services are deeply involved in how this area is used today. That includes special management strategies due to special management designations having been given to the area.

In the second part of the book, the history of the trail is featured using a good mixture of secondary sources, including evocative and insightful contemporary quotes from years ago. Among other points made in this section is the significant, yet sometimes overlooked, prehistoric use of Chilkoot Trail as part of the trade network important to the Tlingit people. This part of the book also includes many fascinating photographs selected to help tell the story of what happened along the trail during the Klondike Gold Rush era. Also covered is the interesting boundary dispute between Canada and the United States which has great relevance today for explaining some of the later management history of the region which was still evolving when I first hiked the trail.

Additionally chronicled is what might be termed "historic tourism" that began not long after the Klondike Gold Rush ended over a century ago. Sometimes we forget that people even 100 years ago were coming to see the Chilkoot Trail region for one of the same key reasons that people come today: an enjoyment of the overall beautiful of the area.

The third section of the book, entitled "Along the Chilkoot Trail," is equally enjoyable. It comprises just over half of the volume and is a travelogue using over 100 great contemporary color photographs. Here you journey to the various notable spots along the trail guided by useful text. The personalized descriptions of the sites along the trail rang quite true to me and brought back fond memories of my time spent there. It was also fun to see photographs of some of the same artifacts and trail segments I helped record at that time. Yet, I also noticed several improvements not only to the trail itself but to the facilities available to today's tourists.

Overall, I found *Chilkoot: An Adventure in Ecotourism* a very enjoyable book. Not only is it a fine trail guide, but it also works very well in showing how good ecotourism opportunities and practices can be successfully created and managed to the benefit of today's visitors. Here we see how state and national governments and local communities work together to successfully protect, promote, and manage an area rich in both historical and environmental significance. As a result, this area can serve today as a good example of how other areas also could be managed successfully in the future. Thus, this book would be useful to land managers as well as to tourists, historians, ecologists, and anyone else just wanting to learn more about this very special part of Alaska in the early 21st century.