



In Memoriam:

**Professor Christopher Paul Cooper
(28 Apr 1952 - 28 Jun 2025)**

A Pioneer of Tourism Education, Mentor to Many, and Scholar of Global Impact

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Professor Chris Cooper, a pioneering figure in global tourism education and research, a prolific scholar, and a deeply generous mentor. Chris passed away in 2025, leaving behind a legacy that spans more than four decades of academic excellence, international collaboration, and transformational influence on tourism as both a field of study and a force for sustainable development.

Born in Scarborough, North Yorkshire—Britain’s first coastal resort—Chris’s roots in tourism ran deep. After attending Scarborough Boys High School, he studied Geography at University College London, graduating with a BSc (Hons) in 1973. He later completed a PhD on the spatial and temporal behaviour of tourists on Jersey in 1978. From the very beginning, Chris combined academic rigour with practical insight, working in the tourism industry with Thomson Travel and Grattan Ltd while completing his doctorate. This formative experience shaped his lifelong appreciation of tourism as both an academic subject and an industry.

Chris began his academic career in 1979 and went on to hold prestigious positions at institutions across the UK and internationally. His journey included appointments at the Liverpool College of Higher Education, Dorset Institute of Higher Education, University of Surrey for 10 years and then Bournemouth University. Chris moved to the University of Queensland in Australia, where he served as Foundation Professor of Tourism and Head of the School of Tourism from 1999 to 2007. He later led the Christel DeHaan Tourism and Travel Research Centre at the University of Nottingham, before becoming Dean of the Faculty of Business and Pro Vice-Chancellor at Oxford Brookes University. At the time of his passing, Chris was Professor of Tourism in the School of Events, Tourism and Hospitality at Leeds Beckett University, where he remained intellectually active and professionally committed to the very end.

Chris Cooper's career appointments.

1976–1977	Market Planning Executive, Thomson Travel Ltd, UK
1977–1979	Marketing Planning Executive, Grattan Ltd, UK
1979–1982	Lecturer II in Geography, Liverpool College of Higher Education, UK
1982–1985	Senior Lecturer in Tourism Studies, Dorset Institute of Higher Education, UK
1986–1992	Lecturer in Tourism Management, University of Surrey, UK
1992–1996	Senior Lecturer in Tourism Management, University of Surrey, UK
1996–1999	Professor of Tourism, Bournemouth University, UK
1999–2007	Foundation Professor of Tourism and Head of School of Tourism, The University of Queensland, Australia
2007–2009	Director, Christel DeHaan Tourism and Travel Research Centre,
2009–2010	Dean, Business School, Oxford Brookes University, UK
2010 – 2014	Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean, Business Faculty, Oxford Brookes University, UK
2014 – 2017	Professor, Business Faculty, Oxford Brookes University, UK
2018 – to date	Professor in the School of Events, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Leeds Beckett University in the UK.

Source: Adapted from Scott 2014 and 2026

Throughout his remarkable academic journey, Chris was sustained by the unwavering support of his beloved wife Geraldine, who stood beside him through the many chapters of his career. He was also a devoted father to his daughters, Robyn and Amy Cooper, whose presence brought him immense pride and joy. Chris often spoke with deep affection and gratitude for his mother, the late Mrs Cooper, to whom he was profoundly attached. His love for his family was as enduring and wholehearted as his commitment to scholarship, grounding his global career in the warmth of home and the values of care, generosity, and humility.

A passionate academic and a global citizen, Chris worked in every region of the world. He collaborated extensively with leading international agencies, including the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)—where he chaired the Education Council from 2005–2007—the European Union, OECD, ASEAN, ILO, and the Inter-American Development Bank. In 2009, he was honoured with the UNWTO Ulysses Medal for outstanding contributions to tourism education and policy.

Chris's research interests evolved over time, reflecting the dynamic challenges of the tourism sector. He was one of the most influential and prolific scholars in the field of tourism studies, whose contributions over more than four decades helped shape the discipline's theoretical foundations, institutional infrastructure, and global reach. While he was widely recognised for his work in tourism education and textbook writing, it is his scholarly contributions through academic journals that stand as a testament to his intellectual leadership and commitment to advancing tourism as a scientific field.

As a scholar, Chris was immensely prolific and deeply influential. He authored and co-authored numerous seminal textbooks, including key textbooks taught around the world, including: *Tourism: Principles and Practice*, *Worldwide Destinations – The Geography of Travel and Tourism*, *Contemporary Tourism: An International Approach*, and *Essentials of Tourism*. His writing provided the theoretical and pedagogical foundations for generations of students and educators. His own journal publications reflect a breadth of interests and methodological approaches that emerged from his geography background. His early research focused on developing the concept of the destination lifecycle before turning to tourism education, knowledge management and network analysis. Most of his work centred around tourism development and destination planning, sustainable tourism, knowledge transfer, and education policy. He frequently published in top-tier journals such as *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Tourism Management*, and *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, contributing to academic discussions around the tourism system, destination competitiveness, and climate adaptation. His work on tourism knowledge systems and the science–policy interface was particularly influential, helping to articulate how research can inform, and be informed by, tourism governance at multiple levels. In his final years, he was leading projects on destination adaptation to climate change with partners in Croatia and Slovenia, supported by funding from the Slovenian Government and the ESRC (UK). His late work on future climate scenarios and tourism adaptation reflected his enduring commitment to a more resilient and sustainable global tourism system.

His scientific legacy lies not only in the volume and quality of his journal articles but in his tireless work to build, curate, and elevate the platforms through which tourism knowledge is produced and shared. His editorial vision and academic integrity have left an enduring mark on tourism research, ensuring that his influence will be felt for decades to come. He served as Co-Series Editor of the *Aspects of Tourism* book series with Channel View Publications and for *Contemporary Tourism Reviews*, Goodfellow Publishers. Chris was the Co-Founder of *Progress in Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation Research* and the *International Journal of Tourism Research*. He was then Co-Editor of *Current Issues in Tourism* (with Professor Michael Hall) until his final days and served on the editorial boards of more than two dozen prestigious journals in tourism, hospitality, and leisure.

His editorial vision consistently championed academic rigour, international inclusivity, and real-world relevance. Through his roles as editor, reviewer, and mentor, he nurtured generations of scholars and helped raise the standards of publication across the field. Together, his editorial work and journal publications created a durable intellectual architecture for the field—one that continues to shape research agendas and scholarly discourse globally. In recognition, Chris was part of the REF (Research Excellence Framework) 2014 Sub-panel 26, which covered Sport, Exercise Science, and Tourism. His role involved assessing the research, impact, and environment of tourism research submitted by UK universities. In recognition of his lifelong contributions, Chris was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a Member of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism.

Chris's most enduring legacy lies in his role as a teacher, supervisor, and mentor. Over his career, he taught thousands of students and, more importantly, supervised 23 PhD students, many of whom have gone on to become leading scholars in their own right. He inspired and mentored academics across five continents, always offering his time, wisdom, and quiet encouragement. His students remember him as humble, strategic, and unfailingly supportive. He provided space for independent thinking, nurtured confidence, and always led by example. Beyond his academic and professional accomplishments, Chris will be remembered for his kindness, humility, generosity, and unwavering dedication to those he worked with. He embodied the very best of academic life—curious, compassionate, collaborative, and committed to creating impact through knowledge. His scholarship, leadership, and mentorship have shaped the global tourism research landscape and touched the lives of countless students, colleagues, and collaborators around the world.

Chris Cooper's absence leaves a profound void, but his influence will continue to resonate for decades to come through the people he inspired, his graduates, the books he authored, the research he led, and the values he upheld. He leaves behind a powerful legacy of excellence, humanity, and global citizenship. He will be deeply missed and always remembered. He will be missed, but never forgotten.

On a personal note, Chris was not only my teacher, supervisor, and mentor for 35 years, but also a guiding light and source of inspiration throughout my academic and personal journey. He was my intellectual father and I had the honour of being his very first PhD graduate. With grace, patience, and wisdom, he guided me—even when faced with my passionate Greek enthusiasm—towards an academic path I could have never imagined on my own. His kindness, humility, tireless work ethic, and inspiring intellect left a mark on all of us privileged to know and work with him. I am forever grateful for the profound impact he had on my academic journey and my life. Forever grateful.

Dimitrios Buhalis

Sources:

- Scott, N. (2014). A portrait of Chris Cooper. *Anatolia*, 26(1), 122–128.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2014.908266>
- Scott, N. (2026). Chris Cooper: A pen portrait, in Buhalis, D., Costa, C., Gowreesunkar, V., Hashimoto, A., Scott, N., (eds) *Tourism Destination Management: Planning, Marketing and Impacts: A tribute to Professor Christopher Cooper*, Goodfellow Publishers Limited (forthcoming)