Foreword

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In 2011 I was invited to speak at Meiji University in Tokyo at a symposium on ecotourism. Little did I know how significant this very short first visit to Japan would be.

At the symposium, Philip Seaton came up to me and spoke briefly about the work he and a colleague were doing on 'contents tourism' and gave me two books on the topic in Japanese, which certainly fed my curiosity as I could really only look at the pictures owing to my total lack of knowledge of the language. Nevertheless, I was fascinated ... Around that time I had been thinking a lot about the relationship between my area of film-induced tourism and a broader popular culture tourism connection, of which film is an aspect. Certainly, Japan's love of manga, anime, J-pop and almost obsessive cosplay along with their world-breaking gaming culture seemed to fit with my growing thoughts on a wider relationship with tourism. Furthermore, the obsession the West was developing for such a culture had become clear to me in recent years, reflecting my own interests.

So began my relationship with Japan, pop culture and many of the authors of the chapters in this book as I began to look more closely at the ways that Japanese pop culture has influenced us in the West and our recreational/tourism activities. Was it simply a case of loving all things Japanese, or was there a deeper connection here? To understand this, I needed to further my very limited understanding of Japan and its culture and heritage, which led me on a powerful personal journey, where I have walked on sacred ancient roads, shared prayers with pilgrims at sacred and beautiful sites, followed the paths of famous artists and poets, pondered protected soundscapes and power sites as well as visiting film sets and sites, theme parks and museums and experienced the urban delights of Tokyo with its robot restaurants and themed cafes. I even stayed at a hotel that celebrated the stories of Godzilla!

One of the outcomes of such studies and experiences was that, while Japan is very different from Australia (and the rest of the Western world), pop culture often transcended such differences as we began to see not only Japanese anime on our screens and cosplay events, but also works that were clearly influenced by this, developed by Westerners for our consumption.

One of the founding principles of 'contents tourism' is its narrative component, immediately bringing to mind not only the narratives surrounding film-induced tourism, but also the increasing awareness of our tourism gurus of tourists being interested in 'experiences' as opposed to 'sites'. By their very nature, experiences contain (or create) a narrative. I saw a direct link here between what had been considered a very Japanese concept of *kontentsu tsūrizumu* to a more transnational notion of contents tourism. The work presented in this book by researchers from around the world not only demonstrates this, but also takes us even further on this fascinating journey, which is truly never-ending.