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Architect's new book examines the importance of tourist visitor centres

Professor Ruth Conroy Dalton has critically analysed 20 award-winning contemporary visitor centres across the UK, including those at The Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland; Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland; Stonehenge in Wiltshire and the newly-opened The Sill National Landscape Discovery Centre in Northumberland.

Her book, *Designing for Heritage: Contemporary Visitor Centres*, focuses on the most architecturally significant examples of visitor centres to be designed and built throughout the UK in recent years.

Through a series of short essays and beautifully illustrated photographs and architectural drawings, the book examines the social role of visitor centres; their focus on visitors' needs and how architects work to develop a relationship between the centre and its surrounding landscape.

As a Professor of Building Usability and Visualisation, Ruth is particularly interested in how architectural design can place the user at its heart. Her research specialises in the relationship between the spatial design of buildings and environments and their effect on how people understand and interact in those spaces.

Speaking about her inspiration behind the book, Professor Dalton explained: "With tourists expecting higher levels of service, information and retail opportunities, visitor centres have become a vital component in providing access to heritage sites, historic buildings, landscapes of natural beauty and monuments.

"As a consequence, numerous architecturally renowned centres have been designed and built in recent years.

"It is perhaps no surprise that many have been featured in architectural awards, as they not only offer a 'jewel' of a project to architects, being small in scale but high in profile, but the buildings must also respond sympathetically to a rich physical and cultural context."

Designing for Heritage: Contemporary Visitor Centres is published by Lund Humphries and is [available to purchase on Amazon](#).

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