

I have a very clear memory of standing in line at a grocery store in Portland, and up on the wall behind the checkout was a mural of a Maine landscape. There was a lighthouse in the distance, a rocky shore and a moose peeking out from some pine trees. Across the landscape in big bold letters was the phrase “Vacationland”. At the time I found it confusing, my state didn’t register so much as a tourism destination, at least not compared to the ones I had heard of. It didn’t have palm trees or white sand beaches, the weather was moody, and there wasn’t much to do. I had been fed stories of Disneyland and the Bahamas by my classmates, and took their word for it that those were the kinds of places people went on holiday. Of course, I now know that people come to Maine during the summer for similar reason that my classmates and their families went to Florida during April vacation. A change in scenery, and a gentler climate than wherever they came from.

Even though I live in a rural town, I go to school in a town where the main industry is the shopping-based main street, and I see tourists come and go with the seasons. The divide between tourists and locals is tangible, and I’ve often jokingly voiced my annoyance at tourists because they flood the crosswalks and make driving through Freeport impossible. This passive dissonance between local and “stranger” is real, and in her book *The Lure of the Local*, Lucy Lippard describes, “Class is often the unspoken qualifier. In Midcoast Maine, for instance, you can spend eighty summers in a place and are still ‘from away.’ But you can come from away ... to work at the Bath Iron Works, Maine’s major employer, for only a few years and you become a ‘local’ (though not a ‘native’) with the attendant privileges of complaining about those from away.” People who only value the land for its aesthetic quality and make very little contribution to the community they reside in unknowingly distance themselves from wherever they take their holiday in.

Class plays a huge role, the economic difference between places where tourists own vacation homes and the rural northern parts of the state is -- . This contrast has never sat quite right with me, as I have spent time at Oxbow, people I’ve talked to have given the name of a town where they vacation. Often times I have never heard of it, and they have never heard of my town either. My discomfort with the practice of tourism has always been somewhat present, but I’ve never made any serious point of it, just a joke or two to my friends when we walk past an overpriced lobster restaurant after school.

Tourism is somewhat strange in my own opinion. A very capitalistic phenomenon where a location is advertised and the experience of living/pretending to live there is sold as a commodity. With the growth of the middle class, tourism has become more accessible, the industry is expanding. Which means more people are stepping onto planes to go to whatever exotic corner of the world they please. Cheaper flights have given people access to the whole world, and international hotel lines have made staying in interesting places more affordable. As the tourism industry grows, so too does the damage to the environment, indigenous people and their land, and exploitative of workers.

Travel companies boast of the economic opportunity provided by tourism. “Tourism has been described as the world’s largest transfer of resources from rich to poor, dwarfing international aid” (qtd. Roberston). Unfortunately, this isn’t always the case. It would be ideal that visiting tourists would invest their money in the local economy of wherever they are visiting, but with the growth of the tourism industry comes international chains. Hotels and airlines are the bulk of money spent while travelling, and most of the cheapest deals are available through worldwide corporations. So even though you may walk the streets of a foreign city, you aren’t

necessarily contributing anything to the economy. The phenomenon of people's money falling into corporate hands instead of the people who work and serve in the community they visit is called "tourism leakage". For instance, most people who take cruises around the Caribbean only spend about \$28-36, which isn't a significant contribution to the economy, especially when they probably spend \$1000 dollars just to ride the boat that brought them there ("Should you go on a cruise?").

Another class divide in tourism comes in the form of how the industry treats their workers. Once again, there seems to be a dismissal of concerns since it's a *good thing* that the business is creating jobs. While this may be true, jobs don't always entail fair pay and equal treatment, and often people can get away with treating their workers poorly. Let's look to the UK, a popular tourist destination, with visitors averaging at 36 million a year ("International Tourism Highlights"). London is a beautiful city with plenty of famous places to go and see: Big Ben, the Tower of London, the London Eye. Behind the scenes at the hotels that travellers stay at is a serious issue, the hotel staff are often treated unjustly and are underpaid. Six workers from the Plaza Hotel County Hall recounted their wages and treatment to a reporter in 2015. They say that for a time they were paid £6.50 (about \$8) an hour to clean thirteen rooms within the span of eight hours. Even worse, after their company was taken over by another, they were then paid the same amount to clean fifteen to seventeen rooms a day in seven and a half hours. At the time, the minimum wage in the city was £9.15, meaning the workers are criminally underpaid.

The lure of eco-tourism, tourism fueled by the desire to see dramatic natural landscapes, brings people to all the far corners of the earth. It mostly got its start, however, in America. The rise of Romanticist art and literature in the 1800s, which was "... characterized, as a whole, by the substitution of the aesthetic for utilitarian standards" (qtd. Meyer-Arendt 426). The picturesque landscape painting that accompanied the movement brought attention to many great natural wonders for the viewers to see, which brought attention to the source material as well. Descriptions of the Catskill mountains and Hudson River Valley in the art and writing of the Hudson River School brought Americans to see the landscape for themselves. "The Hudson River Valley became America's first true tourism corridor, and the Catskills – where the Mountain House Hotel opened in 1824 – the first natural environment destination for urban tourists" (Meyer-Arendt 426). As America expanded westward, places like the Grand Canyon were "discovered" (a word insensitive to indigenous people who already lived there), tourists soon followed.

The corruption of indigenous spaces has been happening for centuries, with tourism playing a large role in the theft of aboriginal land. During the early twentieth century, the Grand Canyon was declared a national park. Problem being that this land was not a beautiful landscape waiting to be admired: it was inhabited by the Havasupai, an native tribe that had lived in the canyon for centuries. Once declared a national park, the Havasupai had been restricted to only 518 acres of land located in a side canyon. "Havasupai houses were destroyed and the U.S. Forest Service filled in their water wells. Many Havasupai died as a result of this traumatic experience. After years of court battles, in 1974 the Havasupai were returned a portion of their former homelands. (McLaren, Ramer, 1999)" Nowadays, the Havasupai are still struggling with the tourism industry that dots the nearby land with hotels and attractions, and tours offered by plane, helicopter, and horseback bring tourists around the scenery. Noise pollution and damage from hikers that visit the bottom of the canyon has not ceased despite complaints. People pay a \$15 fee to hike in the

Grand Canyon, and fortunately those fees go directly to the tribe, but this does not erase the continuous century long disrespect of their land and culture.

Tourism and the environment often don't politely intersect. Although a tourist may be enthusiastic about the beautiful natural outlook of wherever they are, and be very invested in the conservation of it, many sightseers don't consider their own impact on the places they visit and the planet beyond. For instance, to travel the world, most people take a plane, which has a heavy carbon footprint. With each flight emitting tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, travel by plane has quickly become one a massive contributor to global climate change.

Perhaps if a traveller didn't want to deal with the stress and associated pollution of air travel, they may consider taking a luxury cruise. Everyone has seen commercials of sleek white boats calmly drifting true crystal blue waters, happy customers sipping fancy cocktails, hot tubs and fancy pools, beautiful cabin spaces. Cruise ships are marketed as the ultimate fancy leisure trip, but seemingly have some of the most questionable ethics of the tourism industry. The cruise ship business has been growing quickly in the past twenty years. In 2011 there were approximately 16 million passengers throughout the year, and in 2019 there have been about 30 million. Working conditions, concern for the environment, and concern for the communities they dock in don't seem to be anything that these companies care about. Most cruise lines are registered under Flags of Convenience, which means a ship is registered under a certain nation rather than in the name of the owner, that the ship can operate under the regulations of the country it is registered under and not the one it operates in. Meaning, basically, that these ships can register in countries with poor employee protections and environmental protections. "Three of the four largest cruise ship lines have been convicted of abusing US environmental laws since 1998 and cruise lines have paid more than \$90 million in fines over the past decade for illegal dumping." Yes, for those hoping to avoid airline carbon emissions, sadly they cannot turn to leisure based water travel. Cruises come with their own set of environmental damages, including carbon emissions, trash generated by the thousands of clients on board, and damage to coral reefs through docking or tourists breaking off sections as souvenirs while diving. It is easy to just want to forget about the troubles of life, which is what vacation is marketed as, but there are still ethical considerations that have to be made by vacationers to preserve the rights of other people and the planet that we live on. I can't stress enough the unsettling picture of a polished white ship with thousands of customers partying and enjoying time off, while outside of the eye of the consumer these companies conduct disreputable business measures.

Another commonly cited pro of tourism is that it provides for a social and cultural exchange between the travellers and the locals. What is this supposed cultural exchange supposed to look like? Purchasing local goods as souvenirs, attending religious ceremonies? In ideal circumstances there would be a beneficial give and take between visitor and native, but the desire for being immersed in another culture results in an overtaking of personal and sacred space. Many tourists want to preserve the memories of what they see in photos, which is innocent in theory. when someone snaps a photo of someone in their religious/cultural attire, the person in the photo becomes an ornament.

Many organizations are active worldwide, with a driving purpose of making tourism a beneficial practice for both travellers and visited communities. Tourism Concern is a UK run nonprofit focused on bringing light to the damages that tourism causes. The organization has now become inactive, but has kept an updated archive of articles that encompass a large portion of the concerns brought up in this piece. Cultural Survival is a worldwide network of indigenous

cultures with the goal of restoring rights to their communities, with one of their goals being to cease the centuries old damage of colonial tourism.

One of the driving factors of the immorality present in tourism is the lack of information given to tourists. The workers rights violations, the environmental degradation, the damage to native communities, isn't visible and therefore does not come into consideration when somebody wants to travel. Concerns like money and timing are present in discussion, but the impacts that individuals have when they make the choice to travel are not made obvious, and in some cases are willfully obstructed. Not only the travelers have responsibility, as the power of the individual can only do so much: the industry (hotels, airlines, cruise lines, national parks and beyond) have to take responsibility for how it contributes to the world economically, environmentally, and socially.

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