

**Touring beyond the nation: a transnational approach to European tourism history**, edited by Eric G.E. Zuelow, Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2011, 250 pp., US\$119.95 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-7546-6656-1

*Touring Beyond the Nation*, edited by Eric G.E. Zuelow, represents an important volume that productively engages the nation-centric analyses that have often characterized histories of tourism. More significantly, it draws attention to an emergent interdisciplinary interest in what might be called comparative tourism history. At its core, this collection of essays focuses attention on rendering European national borders porous so as to show how 'the growth of tourism occurred amid a complicated matrix of transnational forces' (p. 4) and in even broader strokes, to demonstrate how 'the history of tourism unfolded across a broad, transnational canvas' (p. 7). In such ways, this volume brings into relief the salient discourses, loci, events and stakeholders that have delimited the histories of tourism in Europe (e.g. alpinization, seaside resorts, tourist boards, etc.), and at the same time, it attends to the ways that they cross-pollinate one another in specific historical contexts and geographies (e.g. postwar France, Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia).

In its call for a transnational (rather than international) history of tourism, *Touring Beyond the Nation* implicitly privileges the fluid exchanges 'across' borders, showing that movements *across* are equally constitutive of touristic praxis as they are of the complex interchanges *between* hosts and guests. While the essays in this volume deliberately blur national boundaries, they also reveal a coterminous shoring up of the nation-state, insofar as imagined communities remain the dominant organizing principles of the tourism histories in this book. Thus, there is a simultaneous dissolution and substantiation of borders at the center of what is described in this volume as transnational dialogue: on one hand, the nation-state is seemingly transcended, and on the other, it is continuously solidified. It is within the interstices between these two poles (dialogue, dialectic, interchange) that tourism history might fulfill the potential of a critical historiography that develops an interstitial historical imaginary in Europe. As such, the insights in this volume might be developed into a larger project that places tourism history at the heart of a transnational, and today, globalized imaginary mutually structured by the flows and ruptures between, *inter alia*, people, goods, ideas and capital.

The volume is divided into the three parts (spaces, commodification and politics). In Part I, 'Transnational Spaces: From Mountains to World's Fairs', four essays interrogate the relationships between physical and symbolic geographies – seaside resorts, Cap d'Agde, the Swiss Alps and World's Fairs – by positioning their historical developments within a pan-European, trans-Atlantic context. For example, John Walton reveals how seaside resorts, alongside their British origins, evolved into paramount loci for the flows between people, money and politics; or put differently, for modernity at large. Likewise, Laurent Tissot's essay demonstrates how Switzerland, as a privileged mountain space, emerged as a universal model for alpine tourism worldwide. In other cases, like the Cap d'Agde nudist resort in France, Stephen L. Harp explores how the decades-long interactions between local and foreign subjects – and more importantly, their ideological convictions – both created and transformed an international destination within a specific tourism sector. Angela Schwarz's contribution on world's fairs argues that these exhibitions 'promoted a rapprochement and synthesis of national styles on various levels of culture and

consumerism' (p. 81). In doing so, it echoes long-standing concerns about the simultaneous slackening and thickening of borders that occurs within the hyperreal spaces of world's fair exhibitions, the experience of which was not only transnational but has also been shown to be colonial, wherein the fair, at its most basic, spatializes the asymmetrical constellations of power inherent in colonizing enterprises.

The three essays that comprise Part II, 'Selling the National in a Transnational Context', consider the marketing of Budapest, France and Ireland, respectively. More significantly, the tensions inherent in commodifying political geographies as tourist destinations could be useful sites for future research, that is, by exploring the uneven transformations of such imagined communities into 'tourist products'. Alexander Vari's essay on tourism in Budapest examines the various promotional models tested there between 1885 and 1940 (in particular, the powerful influence of France at the fin-de-siècle) and shows how the reframing of the city vis-à-vis the Danube reflected a concomitant rise in Magyar nationalism. France is the subject of Patrick Young's contribution, which presents a disjuncture between two representational domains, publicity and hotels, and juxtaposes the promotion of French 'traditional regional distinctiveness' against 'national and international frameworks of tourism representation' (p. 140). Eric Zuelow's chapter on Ireland shows how the Irish Civil War (1922–1923) proved a tipping point in Irish tourism promotion insofar as, post-conflict, national debates about Irishness, coupled with transnational dialogues between tourists, developers and governments, increasingly conditioned the country's self-conscious efforts at touristic representation. What arises out of the contiguities in this case is a snapshot grounded in historical specificity: not only regarding the variegated relationships between authenticity and commoditization, but also the moments of socially negotiated 'emergent authenticity'.

Part III, 'The Politics of Transnational Tourism', investigates how political regimes in Russia and Germany used tourism to stabilize and also reflect specific ideologies, such as Leninism and Nazism. For example, Christian Noack's essay on the Sovietization of vacationing offers insights into the attempts to develop a 'proletarian tourism' in interwar Russia. In theory, tourism lent itself to the proletariat as an activity of the masses, yet in practice, Noack shows that organizational contradictions structured the industry. International tourism conferences in Nazi Germany are the focus of Kristin Semmens's chapter, which takes these conferences as sites of 'real cooperation' and 'a true transfer of ideas and information' (p. 196) that contraposed the regime's stringent politics of autarky. In the volume's final chapter, Michelle Standley reads Berlin's TV Tower Information Center as a metaphor for socialist modernity in the German Democratic Republic and as a symbol that East Germany had overcome its Nazi past. As such, these essays bring to light the politics of tourism under dictatorship in Russia and Germany, which in turn opens up the converse question of how these regimes of political and symbolic value became constitutively interconnected to modern tourist systems.

Together, these chapters make *Touring Beyond the Nation* an important addition to the growing body of scholarship that aims to move tourism historiography beyond the nation-state, while illustrating the ways that the nation still remains a powerful structuring analytic in tourism studies. While this volume covers many important geographies of tourism, what struck this reviewer was the notable absence of an analysis of the Mediterranean as Europe's most frequented destination and idealized vacation space. Although the chapters by Walton and Harp touch upon this

obliquely, via seaside resorts and Cap d'Agde, the Mediterranean has long functioned not only as a paramount tourist destination but also as a critical historical imaginary shaped by border crossings, transnational and otherwise. In this reviewer's opinion, a necessary component of any European tourism history would address in detail the well-documented traditions of pilgrimage, the Grand Tour and the rise of the package holiday across the Mediterranean, particularly in Italy, Greece and Spain, so as to situate them within a habitus conditioned by touristic practices and representations. Such a positioning would open to the possibilities for a broader project of critical historiography predicated upon touristic dispositions. Given the ephemeral nature of tourists-as-subjects, these dispositions exist in a state of constituent abatement and disavowal, and thus would allow one to productively challenge the very notions of habitus, power and sociality through historically grounded research on tourism. In such ways, tourism history becomes markedly slippery, and as a result, historiographical practices must change tack, perhaps through microhistory, or transnational assemblages (as in this volume), or another approach not yet articulated. In sum, *Touring Beyond the Nation* sets a high bar for the study of European tourism history by identifying the transnational as a critical discursive context, thereby opening up inspired possibilities for future scholarship working across disciplinary boundaries, theoretical frameworks and historical specificities, in Europe and beyond.

**Editor's Note:**

*The editor would like to thank Bertram M. Gordon, Professor of European History, Mills College, for soliciting and editing this review.*

Stephanie Malia Hom  
*Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, & Linguistics*  
*University of Oklahoma*  
*Norman, OK, USA*  
*smh@ou.edu*

© 2012, Stephanie Malia Hom