

## Leisure, Travel and Mass Culture – The History of Tourism

**Review Number:** 2114

**Publish date:** Thursday, 1 June, 2017

**Editor:** Adam Matthew Digital

**Date of Publication:** 2016

**Publisher:** Adam Matthew Digital

**Publisher url:** <http://www.amdigital.co.uk/m-products/product/leisure-travel-and-mass-culture-the-history-of-tourism>

**Place of Publication:** Marlborough

**Reviewer:** Susan Barton

*Leisure, Travel and Mass Culture – The History of Tourism* is an online archive of tourism resources, curated by Adam Matthew Digital. The site is beautifully presented and easy to access for users. Like all good tourism attractions, it is welcoming to visitors, who will be curious to explore its enticing content. The database is a delightful cornucopia of tourism and travel related source materials, produced during the period from the mid-18th century to the present, although most items come from the period between the mid-19th century and the dawn of the era of mass tourism in the 20th century. Although the collection will be invaluable to serious students and researchers in tourism and its history, it is also entertaining and full of fascinating surprises when approached in a serendipitous sort of way through browsing.

A key feature of the *Leisure, Travel and Mass Culture – The History of Tourism* website is the collection of scanned images of ephemera it makes accessible to researchers by acting as a gateway to other archive and library collections. These are arranged into themes: Accommodation, Hospitality and Entertainment; Beachfront: Seaside and Coastal Destinations; Children and Families; The Great Outdoors; Health and Medical Travel; Historical, Cultural or Religious tourism; International Relations; Package Tours, Cruises and Organised Travel; Planning and Business; Road, Rail and Air Travel; Urban Tours and City Breaks; Women and Tourism. Among the ephemera available for viewing in the database are railway, shipping and airline advertisements as well as resort posters and guides plus promotional material for individual tourist attractions such as Blackpool's Winter Gardens. These give an insight into the relationship between tourism and popular culture, for instance there is a programme for the Blackpool Tower and Winter Gardens from 1941 which shows that despite the war, the theatres and entertainment venues of the resort continued to offer a full season's programme. In the Grand Theatre the plays *Once a Crook* and *Lady Behave* were being shown. The New Opera House was presenting a show called *Hullabaloo* starring Max Wall and Arthur Brough and featuring the 'Hullabalovelies', presumably a troupe of singing and dancing chorus girls. Elsewhere in Blackpool, the film *The Thief of Bagdad*, starring Conrad Veidt was being shown at the Palace Picture Pavilion. There is a wealth of material from Blackpool but little from other important resorts, equally deserving of study or comparison with the Lancashire resort. This is explained as Blackpool Council's Central Library Local History Centre is a participator in this online archive project. It is to be hoped that other resorts' archives join the project soon and share some of their collections online.

Items in the collection come from around the world and are not just from Britain and the United States although these are where participating organisations are based. As would be expected, there is a great deal of British and American material but there are also items from more unusual destinations, such as Peru,

Honolulu, Oahu and New Zealand. They include some items written in French, German and Spanish, for instance a German brochure from 1934 offered holidays to the Republic of Spain, with accommodation at Alicante. The range of holiday and tourism material available for viewing on the website is quite astonishing. There is a series of Thomas Cook's magazines: *Cook's Excursionist and Home and Foreign Tourist Advertiser* from the 1870s, *The Traveller's Gazette* and *The American Traveler's Gazette* from the first half of the 20th century, all essential references for tourism historians. Specialist travel is featured, for example Battlefield tours to Waterloo and the trenches of the First World War in Europe and to Gettysburg, Yorktown Knoxville, Antietum and Vicksburg in America. Christmas breaks, coach tours, railway guides and holidays are all represented among the materials. Visitors to the site can also see the arrangements made by Thomas Cook for travellers to the Alps for winter sports in the company's brochures which were issued between 1908 and the 1950s. Travelling by rail with sleeping and dining cars to ensure a comfortable journey, St Moritz could be reached in just 24 hours for £11 return, including hotel accommodation in 1908. For the United States there are guides to reaching ski resorts in the Rockies by car, some produced by oil and petrol company Conoco. All these documents are internally searchable themselves. A particularly useful and unexpected feature was the links to external websites and databases, including the South Tyrol Tourism Museum, the John Murray Archive which contains material about explorers, Wisconsin Historical Society and the World Tourism Organization eLibrary.

The site not only gives access to printed ephemera but to moving images too. The collection of films is a real treat. There are short films from the Thomas Cook and Poly Tours archives, promoting Austria, coach tours of Switzerland and of the Italian Lakes, which provided travellers with the 'thrill of travel without any drawbacks, and the cosy feeling of being at home'. A particular curiosity is a film compilation of some Caravan and Camping Club Tours in the 1920s and 1930s, to Austria, Turkey, Italy and Nazi Germany.

The best and biggest surprise in the collection was the series of tourism- and holiday-related documents from the British government's Board of Trade, physically stored in the National Archive but accessible through the gateway of the AMD *Leisure, Travel and Mass Culture – The History of Tourism* website. These include papers from the years immediately following the Second World War, dealing with the problems of re-opening British tourist traffic with various European countries, and the possibility of exchange arrangements which would solve the problem of international currency conversion rates and not have an adverse effect on the balance of payments during the years of post-war austerity. This hand-written document shows how there was a genuine feeling among government ministers in the Cabinet that in relation to overseas tourism, 'something ought to be done about it!' The government was apparently 'under fire from the more civilised elements of the community', a quaintly old-fashioned use of language to describe the middle-classes which reflects the British class system at the time, to re-establish foreign travel after the war had made tourism abroad out of the question. To assist the tourism industry and to promote holidays in Britain, the Board of Trade was also investigating ways of staggering demand across the summer months by extending the season, removing some of the pressures of the peak demand period of August and lowering costs to holidaymakers..

What was surprising about the website was the lack of material relating to the package holiday or inclusive tour industry. The pioneers of mass tourism to the Mediterranean, Skytours, Horizon and Clarksons, are not represented in the database at all. Thomas Cook's brochures from the 1950s and 1960s show a different kind of inclusive tour to the now familiar package holidays, to beach resorts offering travel by ferry, coach or train to places such as Biarritz, Nice and the coastal towns of Brittany, city breaks to Paris or coach tours of Switzerland based in Interlaken or Grindelwald, St Moritz, Lugano or Montreux. Some holidays offered air travel as a more expensive alternative to rail. Now massively popular, Spain featured rarely in the brochures of the 1950s as a visa was necessary to travel there and restrictions existed caused by the Aviation Acts that ruled that no inclusive tour could cost less than the price of a scheduled flight on the nationalised flag-carrying airlines, BEA and BOAC. This meant that Mediterranean holidays were impractical for most holidaymakers. This was to change when Franco relaxed the requirement for travellers to have visas to visit Spain and package holiday companies were able to develop a product that included cheap charter flights, mass-produced hotels, excursions and entertainment at a single price, affordable to a wider market than previously as skilled working- and middle-class disposable incomes rose during the 1960s.

Another important and popular aspect of tourism in the 20th century was the holiday camp but searching the site for Butlin's, Pontin's or Warner's proved fruitless. These were the big three holiday camp businesses that students and researchers of this kind of holiday will surely want to investigate.

The Chronological Timeline feature of the site offers brief information or factoids about a very diverse range of tourism-related events beginning in 1756 with the reopening to the public of the Dyrehavsbakken in Denmark by Frederick V, the world's oldest operating amusement park, first opened in 1583. It concludes with the opening of Disneyland Shanghai in 2016 and Las Vegas setting a record number of 42.3 million visitors during the same year. Other interesting snippets of knowledge in the Chronology section include the fact that the first known picture postcard was sent from London by Theodore Hook in 1840; that in 1862 Margate Town Council decreed that all bathers wear swimming costumes and that there should be no less than 60 feet between male and female bathing machines; New Zealand became the first country to have a dedicated government Department of Tourist and Health Resorts in 1901; the '99' Flake was produced by Cadbury especially for ice creams in 1930; in 1952 the first Holiday Inn opened near Memphis; between 1956 and 1959 the Balearic Islands saw an increase in tourism due to simplification of customs and visa procedures and a relaxing of currency regulations. There seems to be fewer events recorded on the Timeline during the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s which is surprising as this period saw the growth of mass tourism in the developed world with the near-universal introduction of holidays with pay, greater access to a wider range of international tourism destinations through cheaper air travel, deregulation of the travel industry and the appearance of budget airlines. There also seems to be few events mentioned in the Timeline for spa and sanatorium tourism, despite there being an option to search for Health and Medical facts: Bath in England, with its heyday in the 18th and early 19th centuries, does not get a mention until 1916 when there were new additions to the Royal Baths there. Also disappointing is the fruitless search for Winter Sports and only four results for Skiing as a search term in the Chronology, despite their importance to winter holidaymaking. This is probably a work in progress which will be expanded and added to over time.

Exploring this online archive was both entertaining and informative. The site provides users with a facility to save items of interest they discover in their own personal file of documents and also a Lightbox feature to create slideshows using the materials. This archive is genuinely innovative and potential users should be grateful to the participating libraries and archives that have scanned and shared their abundant but geographically dispersed tourism related texts, ephemera and images. Materials are available to researchers anywhere in the world, removing the need to travel to distant archives and libraries. Participating libraries in Britain to which *Leisure, Travel and Mass Culture – The History of Tourism* acts as a gateway are Blackpool, Thomas Cook Archives, The National Archives and the University of Westminster. In the United States the participating institutions are Brooklyn Historical Society, California Historical Society, The Camping and Caravanning Club, John W. Hartman Center at Duke University, George A. Smathers Libraries at the University of Florida, Loyola University in New Orleans, Massachusetts Historical Society,

Michigan State University, New Hampshire Historical Libraries, the Newberry in Chicago, and the New York Academy of Medicine. As an online resource, presumably this archive will be added to over time, and hopefully the current omissions from the collection will be remedied in the future as more participants share their material by making it accessible online as part of this database or through integrated links.

With *Leisure, Travel and Mass Culture – The History of Tourism*, Adam Matthew Digital have provided access to a fascinating collection of documents, invaluable sources for researchers, students and teachers of travel and tourism but also of cultural studies and history as well as marketing, graphic design and advertising. It is also enjoyable just to browse and explore the database content with no clear educational or research aim, purely for the pleasure it can bring to a spare hour or two. After all, much of the psychological benefits of travel and tourism come from the anticipation of exploring new environments and looking back on the experience for years to come. This collection can provide these pleasurable experiences vicariously.

---

**Source URL:** <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/2114>

**Links**

[1] <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/item/208226>